

The Address

I represent a riding where a third of the adults are over the age of 65. The concerns of seniors in Canada are certainly a major concern of mine. I represent many small businesses, individual or family owned businesses, and a number of companies that are right in the vanguard of where our economy is heading in the high technology field. I represent the hopes and aspirations of all those people.

I sensed in this election as never before a distrust in our Parliament, a distrust in our institutions, a distrust in one another and a deep agony about our future. I look at this Parliament as a time for not only recovery of our economy but renewal of our nation. I look at it as a time of restoring our faith in one another and our faith in the future we have together.

I believe we do that by renewing our commitment to one another, by renewing our commitment to those young people out there who are fresh, eager and well educated but with no jobs to go to. I do not want to look back in the year 2000 and say that people who were young and unemployed in 1994 are still unemployed. The problem is that they are not young any more.

I want to give those mothers raising their children on welfare a chance. Too often I have been involved in trying to get them training programs, knowing how eager and how anxious they are to make a better future for themselves and their children and knowing that they are trapped in social programs whose design is no longer capable of helping them to become self-sufficient.

I want to make a difference in terms of how we spend our money and how we run our economy so that it leaves our children and our grandchildren with air they can breathe, water they can drink, and earth they can grow their food in.

• (1515)

Finally I want to make a contribution in Parliament to one of the major commitments of this government; a more open, participative type of decision-making. I suppose it comes from long years in municipal government but I believe the more we listen to the wisdom of the people, the better decisions we make.

I hear this talk about free votes, about referendums and recall of members of Parliament. The people of Ottawa West sent me here to represent them and their points of view. They also sent me here to help continue the dream of a nation called Canada. They sent me here as well to listen; to listen to the voices of the north, the west, the east, rural communities, urban communities, mining communities, fishing communities and to blend their voices with the voices of Canada. As we do in our caucus every Wednesday morning, we listen to each other and at the end of the day come out with plans and programs we believe are good for

this country, not just good for me, my neighbour, my friends or even my constituency, only good for this country.

That is why they sent me here. That is why I am here. I am excited by the new voices I hear in this Parliament. I am excited by the new voices I hear in my caucus. I am excited by the opportunity of being on the government side of the House, to truly make a contribution in a more participative, a healthier and a more productive society, a society in which again we are committed to one another and not only to our own self-interest.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Madam Speaker, since this is my maiden speech, I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his election and all members of his team on their recent appointment to their distinguished positions.

I would also like to thank the people of my riding of Trois-Rivières for having elected me as their representative in this House last October 25. The riding, with a population of about 62,000, includes seven municipalities, namely Trois-Rivières, Trois-Rivières-Ouest, Pointe-du-Lac, Yamachiche, Saint-Sévère, Saint-Barnabé and part of Saint-Thomas de Caxton. Located halfway between Montreal and Quebec City on the north shore of the majestic St. Lawrence River, my riding is highly urbanized but its western part includes very beautiful farmland.

Founded in 1634, some 360 years ago, under French rule, the city of Trois-Rivières is not only the major centre in the riding but also the regional capital of the Mauricie-Bois-Franc region stretching from the city of La Tuque, to the north, to Victoriaville and Drummondville, to the south.

Trois-Rivières is the site of a university with growing influence, two colleges, one diocesan centre, three hospitals serving the surrounding area, three television stations, four radio stations, a deep-water port, as well as a regional airport. It was long considered the pulp and paper capital of the world. However, with the decline of that industry, Trois-Rivières has been suffering and its unemployment rate now hovers between 13 and 14 per cent.

Trois-Rivières also boasts two historic educational institutions, currently serving as high schools, namely the Ursulines' College founded in 1700, whose well-preserved main building has become a major tourist attraction, and Saint-Joseph Seminary of Trois-Rivières where I completed my classical studies just like the former Quebec Premier and MLA for Trois-Rivières, Maurice L. Duplessis, and the current member of Parliament for Saint-Maurice and Prime Minister of Canada.