

S. O. 31

projects planned for 442 cities, towns and communities throughout the country.

The theme of this year's festival is "Book an Adventure". The activities planned are as diverse as the country itself. This year there will be public readings of prose, poetry and drama, writing workshops, instant book productions and many film festivals based on Canadian works.

I invite all Canadians to participate in this year's activities, and to take the time to read to our children and to help those who have reading problems. The ability to read is a skill that we should not take for granted.

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BANKING

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservative government gave the giant U.S. corporation, American Express, the right to go ahead and establish itself as a bank in Canada, and essentially do the kind of business that our own Canadian banks are, by the laws of Canada, not allowed to do.

Further, this Conservative government has given the American Express Company bank status that the company is not even entitled to in the United States, because the business that AMEX conducts is not considered appropriate to a bank in that country either.

Even if the government proceeds with the changes in the financial regulations, the head start it has given this American company is unconscionable. Is the selling out of Canadian interests the price this government is willing to pay for the support that AMEX has given it in terms of the free trade deal?

I find it appalling that this government has chosen to ignore the laws and the interests of Canada.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, in today's highly technological world, individual Canadians, industry and governments have to rethink the commitment presently being made to research and development in this country.

This government is instituting many economic reforms to make Canadian goods more competitive in the international marketplace. Not only is this an important step, it is essential. But we must not stop there.

To ensure the prosperity of future generations of Canadians, we must devote more effort to research and development, not only through government but through industry and universities as well.

In recognition of this fact, the government has established the Centres of Excellence Program, which promotes excellence in science and co-operation between these three institutions of our society.

This innovative program encourages research relevant to industrial competitiveness, working toward making Canada a strong player in the international marketplace. We can compete.

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CROATIAN ELECTION

Ms. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East): Mr. Speaker, this weekend members of the House were privileged to have been invited to monitor the first democratic elections held in the Republic of Croatia in more than 40 years. The results mirrored those of last month in the neighbouring Republic of Slovenia in a clear repudiation of the Communist party and all that it has represented.

It was heartening to observe this extremely emotional event and to witness the democratic zeal and excitement brought about by this unique opportunity. Croats take their democratic responsibility very seriously and the rejection of the iron fist of the Communist party, after a history of repression, was an honest expression of a people who have suffered greatly.

As my colleagues and I watched the political process unfold, we were acutely aware that history was in the making and that once the floodgates of democracy have been opened, it will be difficult to retreat from the course of ongoing reform.

I hope that all members of the House will join me in congratulating the Croatian people and welcoming them as the newest member of the international democratic family.