

As a devoted father, husband and son, as a down-to-earth Canadian, you bring humanity, warmth and good humour, as well, to Rideau Hall.

As a westerner, you bring one additional factor to your tasks—whatever may be in your heart, however much you may prefer the Saskatchewan Roughriders over the Ottawa Rough Riders, however much you may favour the Oilers over the Leafs—I must mention that our nation's harmony, Your Excellency, demands, on such critical issues, your unwavering neutrality.

Your Excellency, on all issues of national importance, your challenge is to help us, your fellow Canadians, express and preserve what is best about Canada; to help us build a civilization for the next millennium—a nation where differences are respected and diversity is valued; a nation where open-mindedness and generosity of spirit are the standards which guide all races and communities; a country with the people and the resources and the national will to play a leading part in an increasingly integrated and competitive world.

A society that recognizes its own good fortune but cares genuinely about the less fortunate, at home and abroad; a people who ask no more than fairness and equal opportunity for themselves and for their children.

Those are Canadian qualities; those are qualities that can build a splendid future—if we act on our own best instincts, if we commit ourselves to redeeming the gift of Providence and of fulfilling the dreams of our founding fathers about our country and all its children.

Your Excellency, each generation of Canadians is called on to face its own challenges. Ours are to preserve and enhance the unity of our country, to assure its prosperity and to prepare a future, at least as golden as the vision of its builders.

Canada has constitutional promises to keep, multiple cultures to reconcile, and regional disparities to redress. The task of nation building is often difficult, and its fruits are rarely perfect. But they are the culmination of generous contributions to a noble cause—the building of a strengthened and progressive nation.

The late Georges Vanier, one of your most beloved predecessors, said at his installation into this office that, “each one of us, in his own way or place . . . must play his part towards the fulfillment of our national destiny.” Your Excellency, you have a major role to play in bringing Canadians together to fulfil that destiny.

You will be supported by your wife, Gerda, who assumes an equal share of your responsibilities and to whom we will all credit at least an equal share of your accomplishments.

On behalf of all Canadians I thank you both for taking on these important duties. I wish you happiness and success. May God help you and inspire you. May your duty be your satisfaction. And may Canada be the beneficiary.

REPLY OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR GENERAL TO THE ADDRESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Prime Minister,

I thank you for your very generous words to me. And I shall be honoured to carry to our Gracious Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth the Second, the message of loyalty and affection you have expressed on behalf of the Canadian people. I gladly accept that first responsibility as Her Majesty's representative in Canada.

Prime Minister and honoured guests, in taking up my duties today as Governor General, I am aware that I share with all Canadians a sense of new beginnings. We are only a few weeks into a new year and a new decade and, before long, we will enter a new century and a new millennium.

What does it mean, in that context, to be Canada's Governor General? How should Canadians—many of whom were born elsewhere and who have no historic links with the Crown—regard the very idea of having a Governor General? Most of all, what does the office mean at a time in our history when the only certainty is change and when the rate of change itself keeps changing?

There can be no question that life in Canada is being altered rapidly and in very significant ways. Each day Canadians face new jobs, new ways of doing old jobs, new technology and updates of existing technology. New ideas, new responsibilities, new ways of thinking, new personal expectations, new roles.

It is too easy to feel threatened by so many shifts in our lives and to reach for the false antidote of nostalgia. It is wise to remember, as I am sure many of us do, that the good old days were not all good.

Today, for example, we are more vigilant in the fight against racism; more sensitive to the reality of violence against women and children; increasingly aware of how society is enriched when it uses, as fully as possible, the talents of the disabled and the aged. Our medical sciences are more sophisticated; our world view is more realistic; our communications—and, therefore, our minds—are more open.

We need to remember, as we face change, that it is not merely inevitable but necessary if we are to enjoy the benefits of genuine progress.

One of the roles that has changed most substantially over the years has been that of the Governor General of Canada. In the early days of our history, the Governor General was authorized to exercise the powers of a reigning monarch, in that monarch's name. The changes since then are the result of two streams of historical evolution: in the way the Crown changed and in the way the needs of Canadians changed in their relationship to that Crown.

Those who, at the beginning of this country's existence, thought we were going to be simply a distant copy of what already existed in Europe were oblivious to the realities of our