

*Supply**[Translation]*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Resuming debate. The Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism).

**Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to share with you my reflections on the current constitutional debate and to outline the initiatives taken by the federal government to find, within Canada, solutions which will lead to a strong and united Canada, ready to meet the challenges of the next century.

Mr. Speaker, whenever I return to Canada from a trip abroad or upon visiting one of our regions, I am impressed and proud of the accomplishments of our parents. With a population of only 26 million spread out over the second largest country in the world, our parents overcame a forbidding climate and geography to build the eighth largest economy in the world. The quality of things our parents built, and which we continue to build, can be seen all around us: first rate schools, clean subways, excellent health care, safe streets, marvellous recreational facilities and wide-spread economic opportunities. Millions of people all over the world admire our quality and standard of living and line up to come to Canada because successive generations of Canadians have succeeded in building an open, democratic, peaceful and very prosperous country.

This is the Canada we have. This is the Canada I am proud of and it is the Canada I wish to leave to my children. However, if we want to continue to develop our economy and meet the intense competition of the twenty-first century, while safeguarding our linguistic and cultural diversity, we must commit ourselves to the challenge of re-Confederation. We should not be afraid to take a fresh and new look at what is best done by the federal government and what by the provinces—what we want to do together, and what we prefer to do separately.

*[English]*

In fact I heartily concur and support the views expressed by our Prime Minister on December 16, 1990, in Buckingham, Quebec.

In his speech, the right hon. Prime Minister indicated the distribution of powers devised by the Fathers of Confederation. I quote:

This distribution of powers admirably suited Canada's needs for many years, and it is entirely appropriate to review this to determine how best Canada can accommodate new realities internally while preparing to confront ferocious international competition for investment, technology, trade and prosperity. I believe it is now timely to review and modernize the Federation, to render it reflective of Canada's true diversity.

The government believes this. Whatever new arrangements we may develop over the course of the coming months, renewal of the federation must respect, above all, certain basic principles of change as outlined by the Prime Minister in his recent February speeches in Toronto and Quebec City.

Change should first lead to a more prosperous Canada. Change should secondly lead to a more efficient federalism and a more competitive nation. Change should respect equality, as well as diversity of citizens. Change, too, should be practical and it should be doable. It should maintain national standards and it should move decision-making closer to the people. We should safeguard rights of all Canadians.

The Prime Minister declared in this House on November 1, 1990: "I believe that if it takes major changes to hold this country together, Canadians want those changes made; and I believe that if it takes a new process to achieve these changes, Canadians want a new process designed".

These are the words of our Prime Minister. It was stated so well by him: "I am also confident that Canadians throughout the land have the will to change and to modernize the federation".

We hear so often that Canadians do not necessarily have the will to do this. I do not believe that is so; I think there is a will to change and to modernize.

*[Translation]*

Discussion and dialogue on change and on the modernization of the federation implies a two-way street. We must never forget that this is a vast and diverse country and we do not want everything run from Ottawa. On many questions and issues, the voices of the regions will be encouraged and not ignored—promoted and not stifled. I believe in a modern and flexible federalism, a federalism that reflects the diversity of Canada.

The federal government cannot modernize Canada alone; the federal government has therefore chosen to listen to all Canadians. In this spirit of listening, the