

The Address—Mr. Thorkelson

The creation of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy as well as initiatives mentioned in the Throne Speech, such as the intention to limit the impact of toxic chemicals through regulations in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the creation of a centre for the international promotion of sustainable development to be located in Winnipeg, the promotion of environmentally friendly products and others are policies which the citizens of Edmonton—Strathcona and indeed all of Canada encourage and support. They are important for today and important for tomorrow as well.

Canada's future, for that is what we have been discussing this past week, will be shaped through our ability to adjust and compete in the technologies of tomorrow. It will be shaped through our ability to reduce and manage our deficit. It will be shaped too by our ability to accept responsibility for the damage being done to the environment and to reverse the frightening trends of today.

Canada's future will be shaped as well by our ability to face the challenges of constitutional change. The Meech Lake Accord has provided Canadians with the opportunity to strengthen our Constitution and to reinforce national unity. For the people of Edmonton—Strathcona, our Government's commitment to this purpose brings Senate reform that much closer to its realization.

Our Government has supported western Canada and has done much to alleviate western feelings of alienation. It was our Government that ended the National Energy Program, a Liberal program which crippled the western economy. It was our Government which eliminated the PGRT, a tax that devastated the oil sector in the West. It was our Government which put an end to discriminatory freight rates which favoured central Canada. Our Government has provided the avenue for the meaningful Senate reform the West has been seeking.

Last December, I rose in this House to express my wholehearted support for the Triple-E concept of reform of the Senate. I reaffirm today my commitment to that proposal and encourage those who are working, as I am, for a Senate which is elected, equal and effective. Only through election can the Senate have the mandate

to act in the manner originally defined for it. Only through equal representation can the Senate ensure that the concerns of each province are heard. Only through redefining the powers of the Senate can it be made effective in its intended role.

• (1620)

The Speech from the Throne has made clear the commitment this Government has to improving Canada's ability to hold its own in a world grown more competitive in its nature. There are many challenges ahead that this Government is dedicated to meeting, challenges which this Government must address to ensure a prosperous future for all of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pronovost: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member, who is a newcomer to the House like myself and many other Members, took a very broad view and referred to all the regions in this country, something I appreciated very much. He spoke to environmental issues among other things. I am referring to the Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Thorkelson), one of the youngest Members in this House.

I would like to ask him the following question. He made a reference to the Meech Lake Accord. Considering the political climate in this country when the Liberals were in power, when we had almost total confrontation between the federal Government and the provinces, how does he see a re-elected Conservative Government as being instrumental in making Canada the united country it was before Liberal attempts to achieve the opposite?

[*English*]

Mr. Thorkelson: I want to thank the Hon. Member for his question. I agree that before the Meech Lake Accord was arrived at, there was much dissension and conflict within our federal system. The people in western Canada for the most part support the Meech Lake Accord because it helps Canadians shape their own destiny. It helps communities achieve their own aspirations and goals.

The Meech Lake Accord puts Senate reform at the top of the constitutional agenda, which is very important to western Canada. Premiers, by submitting lists of names to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), have an input into an important institution. In Alberta, Premier Getty has indicated he will hold an election to help him put together a list for the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). I support this. The people of Alberta support this. I