

Routine Proceedings

Is there agreement for the proposition of the Minister of Justice?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANADIAN FLAG

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, as I said at noon at the ceremony on Parliament Hill: In the life of a country, symbols are an important visual manifestation of a nation. They embody a feeling of identity, pride and harmony that transcends all divisions. They are a force that unites citizens as members of one big family.

[*English*]

Today we celebrate perhaps the most visible and beloved symbol of Canada, our national flag. As we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the distinctive maple leaf flag we can't help but think back to what we have accomplished together and the heights we have reached since 1965 when the new flag was first raised over Parliament Hill.

The maple leaf flag will always symbolize a united and confident bilingual and multicultural nation at home and around the world.

[*Translation*]

Today, as we celebrate the historic anniversary of our flag, we celebrate our citizenship and our pride in belonging to a country that we cherish. Canadians from Newfoundland to British Columbia love their country in ways as diverse as their geography and often uniquely personal.

Let us celebrate today the anniversary of this flag that is a matter of personal and common pride, and let us keep building a just and compassionate society that can be a model to the world.

[*English*]

I urge all hon. members to join me in saluting our Canadian flag and the country for which it stands.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the new Leader of the Opposition for allowing me to take his place temporarily on this occasion.

Those of us in the Official Opposition who 25 years ago were on the government side and who followed this debate with great diligence cannot but rejoice in today's great celebration.

[*English*]

We all met earlier this morning a lot of young Canadians. They could not believe that we had a debate. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we had a long debate, a very long and very difficult debate. At long last we agreed with each other; agreed to disagree maybe, but at long last we gave Canada and Canadians a new Canadian flag.

A very few days after the debate was over, Canadians from every region and province of the country, as well as people from outside Canada, accepted what is so natural for a country—to have its own symbol.

[*Translation*]

—a symbol of pride. A symbol of pride is always something that does not denigrate others but gives us who call ourselves Canadians a symbol of our belonging to a country. And that is our flag, the Canadian flag!

On behalf of my party, on behalf of all my colleagues, and on behalf of three members who survived that time, the Right Hon. John N. Turner, the Hon. Herb Gray, our new Opposition Leader, my new Opposition Leader—

[*English*]

On behalf of my new leader and on my own behalf I want to say that it is a great day for us to celebrate 25 years.

We know that 25 years later we are going into some other debate, but we know that people of good faith will find a solution for Canada.

I could not conclude and take my seat without at least giving an extract of a speech that taught me what politicians should be: people of courage. I was very honoured as a young, new parliamentarian to be invited by the right hon. Mr. Pearson to go with him to Winnipeg—yes, Winnipeg—for an address by him as Prime Minister to the Twentieth Dominion Convention