

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 45, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The Hon. Member for York Centre (Mr. Kaplan)—Auditor General—Auditor's access to Crown corporations; the Hon. Member for Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin)—Transport—Ferry services in Atlantic Canada. (b) Government subsidies; the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow)—Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission—Long distance telephone hearings. (b) Telecommunications policy—Request for Committee review.

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SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Ken James for an Address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her Speech at the opening of the session; and the amendment thereto of Mr. Allmand, (p. 252).

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, my first comments are to you and to your colleagues in the chair. I want to wish you well to thank you for the positions you have taken and for the dignity that you bring to the Chamber. Our best wishes go with you.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the residents of the riding of Provencher for re-electing me to this House of Commons. It is an honour that is afforded very few people. I think all of us are humbled by the fact that we receive that confidence from our fellow citizens.

It is important to understand, as we start this thirty-third Parliament, that Canadians gave this Government a mandate, a mandate for change, to change that which was not working but to change it with fairness, equity and sensitivity. That will be the central theme of my contribution to this debate.

My colleague, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) has outlined for those of us who come from rural Canada the advantages that have already been given to the farming community in terms of initiatives, prior to this House being opened and subsequently. Those of us in rural Canada are very much aware that we cannot isolate the farm community from the rest of our population. I would suggest also to our urban friends that it is important, as we take stock of what is happening in the farm community, that we build on the strengths that have been created largely by private and personal initiative. But we must be cognizant of what is happening in the farming community, because if the farming community does not only survive, grow and strengthen, all society will suffer. One cannot isolate what is happening on the farms today in rural Canada from the general well-being of the country.

The Address—Mr. J. Epp

I am pleased by the initiatives that have been taken, especially in the area of fuel costs. No matter how good a manager might be in a farming situation, he or she cannot do anything about reducing the price of fuel that farmers need for the production of food. I heartily commend the initiatives taken Thursday last.

It is also important that the basic industries that form the backbone of Canada, such as mining, pulp and paper, industries that are represented in my riding and which also form a vital part of the economic well-being of other parts of the country, show strength and growth. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the change we were asked to make and the mandate we were given are important. There is an important hallmark that I want to point out with respect to the responsibilities I have taken as Minister of National Health and Welfare. Let me outline them. Yes, Canadians have voted for change. We want to bring about that change in the manner in which I have just described. But I do not believe that Canadians have voted for revolution, that is, to revolutionize everything that they have come to hold dear or which they feel is part of the social fabric of the country. I want to address that as well.

The Government has now committed itself formally in the Speech from the Throne and again in the statement of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) to an approach and to principles that we articulated in the election campaign. The first principle is that of consultation. In contrast to the ways of the past, we believe that Canadians have the right and obligation to be involved in the determination of public policy. We are not afraid, we are not worried, and we are not concerned about what Canadians will say in that determination of public policy. In fact, we welcome it. If we were content simply to manage the affairs of national government, then consultation would not be so important. But we are not content merely to manage. We want to move ahead, and that requires the involvement of Canadians and the governments they elect.

The second principle is that of co-operation. It would be fine if everyone were agreed on where we should go and, as a result of that consultation, we would know exactly where we should go. In the challenges which are before our country, implementing change and moving ahead will require more than agreement. It will take joint action, joint initiative and a pooling of our resources. Despite the partisan nature of the House of Commons, I trust that this will be the character of the House. I also trust that such will be the character of federal-provincial relations. I especially want to emphasize that such must be the pattern if our economy is to be renewed and developed.

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The third principle is building upon what the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has called "the genius of Canada". It is the farmer, the man or woman running a small business, or the entrepreneur who has a vision or a dream who provide jobs in the country. It is the family and commitment to community which guarantee stability in our social fabric. It is my role as Minister of National Health and Welfare to put forward signals and initiatives which will strengthen the role of the