

Speech from the Throne

First, you must critically examine the relationship of Parliament with the people of Canada. Members of the House of Commons will be asked to approve the appointment of a parliamentary task force on reform of that House. The central focus of this task force will be the enhancement of the role of the private member. From that perspective the task force will examine and make recommendations concerning the powers, practices, organization and resources of the Commons.

Second, the massive undertaking that is the government of Canada must be made to respond to the individual citizen, wherever and however it touches him or her. A committee of Ministers headed by the Deputy Prime Minister has begun a review of all government programs. The objective is to reform and simplify the operations of government. From the citizen's standpoint, government will be made more understandable, more accessible, and more sensitive.

The taxation system will be made simpler and fairer and more accountable to the people's representatives in Parliament. The rights of taxpayers must be protected. In particular, legislation will be presented to ensure that no taxpayer has to pay taxes in dispute before an impartial hearing has been concluded.

Thirdly, a priority goal of my Ministers will be to breathe a new spirit into federalism and restore the faith and trust of all Canadians in the effectiveness of our system of government.

A constant process of consultation and cooperation must be restored. My Ministers are regularly meeting their provincial colleagues to eliminate irritants and to improve services to people where the federal and provincial governments have joint responsibilities.

My government's management of federal-provincial relations will pursue three basic objectives: to harmonize policies of our two orders of government, to ensure respect for their jurisdictions, and to end unnecessary and costly duplication.

National unity also demands that the two levels of government cooperate in supporting official language minorities and in fostering the rich multicultural character of Canada. My government is committed to ensuring that the equality of the two official languages—so vital to our national character and identity—is respected in fact as it is in law. My Ministers acknowledge the need for ongoing improvements and for vigilance in this indispensable area of our national life.

The reality of Canada is one of distinct regional identities, each rooted in many generations of history; of diverse cultures; of regional economic strengths: a country of many parts whose people share a profound attachment to one Canada.

My Ministers are determined to achieve a national consensus which will reflect that reality. A national consensus is also needed to reduce the persistent isolation of Canada's regions, to meet the challenges of economic and social disparity, to revitalize the strength of our traditional resource industries, such as agriculture, forestry, mining, the fishery and tourism, and to ensure that our critical transportation and communication links better serve the national purpose.

Ultimately such a new consensus must be reflected in the fundamental law of our land, for it is obvious that the constitutional agreement is incomplete so long as Québec is not part of an accord. While their principal obligations are to achieve economic renewal, my Ministers will work to create the conditions that will make possible the achievement of this essential accord. In this work, the cooperation of all partners in Confederation will be necessary.

Their generous cooperation is also needed to honour the commitment to Canada's aboriginal peoples contained in the Constitution Act of 1982. For these peoples, as for all Canadians, the high expectations that attended the act of patriation must not be disappointed.

Reconciliation and Economic Consensus Building

Nowhere is the need for national reconciliation more urgent than in Canada's economic life. Our repeated failure in recent years to achieve our economic potential cries out for correction by a truly sustained, co-operative and national effort. First Ministers will meet next week to discuss the agenda for a First Ministers' Conference on the Economy. My government will soon announce the date of a national Economic Summit to bring together important groups in our economy.

Thus are my Ministers embarked on the long, complex and painstaking road of building a national economic consensus. The national Economic Summit will not be the culmination of this process, but its beginning. At the table will be representatives of groups such as consumers, women, native peoples, business,

labour and government. Their goal is to establish a new and productive climate and context for economic decision-making in Canada.

In this regard, there can be no doubt of the importance or legitimacy of the trade union movement in Canada, or of the desirability of both management and labour playing a critical role in the consultative process through which the new national agenda is established.

Discussion of certain economic priorities, an understanding of the respective roles of the principal economic partners, a commitment to some immediate courses of action: such an outcome would make the Economic Summit a success.

Future summits could address in more detail issues such as the enhancement of productivity, and the responsibilities of industry, labour and government in training and technology. Over time, mutual confidence and a sense of shared responsibility for our national economy must lead to consensus on even more basic issues: how to share the benefits of economic growth, how to share the burdens of economic adjustment, how to preserve the integrity of our unique natural environment, and how to ensure that the ideal of social justice is pursued through programs that meet contemporary needs and circumstances.

In the absence of a national consensus, economic under-achievement would be Canada's misfortune for many years to come. The process of consensus-building will engage the private sector partners in consultation and cooperation on economic goals. In such a context, government would act as guide, mediator and catalyst, becoming less intrusive in the private sector but vigilant over the integrity of the national economy and of national standards.

Economic Renewal: A Three Part Strategy

The process of consensus building will take time. Meanwhile there are some important initial steps that the federal government can take to help generate economic renewal. The three-part strategy of my Ministers is to restore fiscal responsibility, remove obstacles to growth, and encourage new investment.

Later this week the Minister of Finance will describe in detail the state of the economy and of federal public finances. He will announce a plan designed to reduce the deficit in an orderly, balanced and fair manner, and to control the growing burden of the public debt.

That we must deal urgently with the deficit is beyond dispute. If allowed to continue to grow out of control, it will consume our available financial resources, undermine our capacity to respond to new opportunities, put increased pressure on interest rates, and inhibit investment and growth in our economy.

Second, my government will pursue approaches to improve the efficiency and flexibility of our capital markets; to improve job opportunities for Canadians through responsive market-oriented training programs; and to increase investments in research and development to improve our productivity. Proposals will be placed before you to improve the market environment by changes in competition laws and the regulatory framework of the financial services industry.

Third, my government will introduce for consideration during this session proposals to enhance risk taking, innovation and reward among entrepreneurs, especially in the small and medium-sized business sector.

Initiative will be taken to stimulate both domestic and foreign investment. My government is determined to regain Canada's reputation as a reliable and profitable place to do business.

This three-part strategy is aimed at renewing economic growth in order to provide the jobs our people need and to address the continuing tragedy of youth unemployment. My government views unemployment as Canada's most debilitating problem and most critical national challenge. For this reason the need to stimulate job-creating investment is urgent. My Ministers will be taking action to address these compelling issues.

My government recognizes that measures to improve and expand skill training and retraining are essential elements of a sound approach to providing job opportunities. During this session, you will be asked to consider an innovative employment strategy that will be cost effective and oriented to the private sector. It will be introduced following intensive consultations with the provinces, labour and business.

Social Justice

My government is determined to ensure that social justice in Canada keeps pace with the changing needs and circumstances of our people. In this respect the most significant development of recent years is the greater participation of