

*The Address*

Like most of my colleagues, I would not be here without the presence of a strong and effective campaign team. To all of you, a team too numerous to mention individually, I salute you and I thank you.

I come from the riding of Brandon—Souris which is nestled in the extreme southwest corner of Manitoba. Most of my staunch supporters would never dream to have lived long enough to have seen the vanishing of the political support enjoyed by two of my predecessors, Mr. Walter Dinsdale, who served and represented the riding for over 30 years, followed by Dr. Lee Clark, a member for almost nine years up to and including the 34th Parliament.

My riding was colonized in the 1880s as the CPR spawned a string of towns across southern Manitoba. At approximately 16-mile intervals towns sprang up, roughly the same, along Brandon, Kemnay, Alexander, Oak Lake, Virden and Elkhorn on the northerly end and a second branch line of Crystal City, Killarney, Boissevain, Deloraine and Melita at the south.

As I mentioned earlier, the towns in general conformed to the CPR square mile survey system with 18 blocks to the mile. Grain elevators and lumber sheds were on one side of the track and the residential area on the other. Fairgrounds and stockyards were on the extremities of these hamlets and schools were located several blocks back so as not to disturb or endanger the children in attendance.

The colonists were largely French, Belgian, Scottish, Irish and English, with a predominance of the latter three. They were experienced farmers from Ontario who had capital and equipment and who were well educated and extremely self-confident. They soon came to dominate the province politically, economically and socially, a domination that some would argue has lasted to this day.

My riding is approximately 100 kilometres square in dimension. It has roughly 70,000 people, 45,000 of its citizens residing in the city of Brandon and 25,000 to 30,000 outside. We are not without unemployment, recession, high costs, low prices and a shrinking rural economy and population. Like most rural Canadians we are optimistic about our future with a new government in power, a government committed to rebuilding our economy and the revitalization of the elements that support our quality of life: jobs, roads, technology, education, personal integrity and social security.

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The riding is home to numerous significant components, not the least of which is CFB Shilo, the home station of the Royal Regiment Canadian Artillery of Canada and the best artillery range in Canada. Shilo is the seventh largest community in the province of Manitoba and the fourth largest employer. To illustrate the breadth of activity in Shilo are the peacekeeping duties in Cyprus and the IRCHA and augmentation of the UN

forces in former Yugoslavia. Shilo also serves as a training centre annually for 5,000 armoured troops of our NATO ally, the Federal Republic of Germany.

In Brandon—Souris we incorporate two aboriginal communities, Sioux Valley and Oak Lake, both of which are well positioned to assume greater responsibility under self-government.

At the most southerly end of this constituency is the International Peace Gardens located 10 miles south of Boissevain. This is a spacious park and a recreational centre dedicated to the peaceful relations between Canada and the United States and is part of the longest undefended border in the world.

Brandon University is another important component in the riding. It is an outstanding facility and I am proud to say it is my alma mater. It has a tradition of academic and social service spanning over 100 years and is well represented in this House by the Hon. Stanley Knowles, our chancellor emeritus.

Brandon University is home to the Bobcats, three times national university basketball champions, and is the producer of the Canadian Journal of Native Studies and a new innovative partnership program in education and business administration.

*Maclean's* magazine called Brandon one of the ten best cities in which to live, an observation which I would extend to the other communities I mentioned earlier.

There are several issues of major concern to the Brandon—Souris constituents.

Agriculture is the most important industry in Manitoba. It has diversified greatly in the value added process. There are strong views about the intent to expand or diminish the role of the wheat board and allow more choices to market products on a niche basis.

Every town and city in Brandon—Souris has a list of infrastructure projects that are necessary in rejuvenating our rural economy. The city of Brandon is proposing bridge, water and flood protection projects that are desperately needed. Other specific infrastructure projects from the rural components of my riding are also being submitted.

Communication and transportation infrastructure will increase the job opportunities and ability of rural Canadians to compete internationally and be employed locally. Brandon—Souris is the only riding in Manitoba that has an oil resource. Oil has been a key player in our local economy, particularly in my home town of Virden, Manitoba.

Brandon—Souris also wants to develop a stronger tourism base aimed at its natural attractions and world class sporting events. I am honoured to say that Brandon—Souris will be playing host during the life of this Parliament to national and world curling competitions, Canada games and world junior baseball.