

The City of Strathcona was named after Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, who drove the last spike of the CPR home. Lord Strathcona also served our country with distinction as a Conservative Member of this House. One might say that Conservative roots in Edmonton—Strathcona run deep. As a railway magnate, he contributed to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the impossible dream which joined Canada from sea to sea and made this country truly united.

It was the railway which facilitated settlement to the west and it is the railway which continues to play a vital role in the western economy and way of life. It is for this reason that my constituents and indeed all westerners support the survival of the VIA Rail service in our communities.

As a new Member, it is an honour for me to participate in the discussion on the speech given by the Governor General last week in the Senate Chamber. The people of Edmonton—Strathcona and all Canadians know this to be a Government of action and initiative and are looking for policies which will enable Canada to better compete in world markets. This is where the future prosperity of our country lies. This is why Canadians voted last November in support of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Canadians realized that liberalized trade was necessary to guarantee a healthier economy.

A first step toward this goal is the adoption of a strong commitment to increasing research and development. Canada must pursue an aggressive stance in the area of science and technology. Much has already been done. On March 12, 1987, Canada's first ever national science and technology policy initiative was signed by federal, provincial and territorial Governments. This project is to be commended in that it acknowledges at all levels of Government the importance of technological advancement to Canada.

As well, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) announced the creation of a national advisory board for science and technology. Its purpose is to offer the Government honest suggestions for the improvement of the status of science and technology in Canada. The Prime Minister himself is the chairman.

In addition, in January of 1988 the Government announced a Centres of Excellence program to encourage research and development in universities. This move signals a recognition of the importance of ongoing research at post-secondary institutions. The University of Alberta is looking forward to participating in this program.

*The Address—Mr. Thorkelson*

As part of the commitment of the Edmonton government caucus to this purpose, a task force on science and technology and economic development in Edmonton is currently being put together. It will consider ways of bringing increased federal participation in research and development to the City of Edmonton. I must commend my caucus colleagues for putting together this task force.

Advances in science and technology are important, but these exciting initiatives cannot take place if measures to control Canada's debt are not vigorously pursued. During the past week of debate on the Throne Speech, much has been said about the deficit and the importance of reducing it. On April 27, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) will announce this Government's Budget. A plan which will address the urgency Canadians feel toward the debt problem, a plan which emphasizes restraint and which will include measures to reduce the deficit and bring Canadians out from under the burden of the previous fiscal mismanagement, will be introduced.

It is mind-boggling, to say the least, when one considers that 31 cents of every dollar of government revenue go toward annual interest payments. Money is being borrowed solely to pay interest on the debt of the past. How can any Government pursue effective programs for the well-being of its citizens with such an oppressive weight upon it? It is my conviction and the conviction of this Government that this burden must be lifted. It will be lifted.

The Government further demonstrates its commitment to ensuring a better Canada for its young people through its acknowledgement of the necessity of addressing our environmental problems. We are spoiled here in Canada in that we enjoy a nation diverse in the character of its regions: the warm beauty of the western coast, the stark challenge of the Rockies, the rolling prairies, the sprawling urban centres in Ontario and Quebec and the historic surroundings of Atlantic Canada. These are precious features of our country, a proud legacy which we must protect for future generations.

This Government has illustrated its resolution to safeguarding Canada's environment and has committed itself to policies which reflect the concept of sustainable development, an exciting proposal in which economic policies are not removed from their environmental impact. This Government's endorsement of sustainable development demonstrates a commitment to pursue policies which do not treat economics and the environment as independent of each other.