

You have come here to form this new Parliament from across a great land, a land far wider than either of those older countries that first gave it birth. I am proud to contemplate the great heritage of this nation — the minerals, the forests, the lands, the waters, the sources of power and energy which fire your ever-growing industries. But I am more proud to contemplate the spirit and ideas which brought this country to nationhood, and now, drawing reinforcement and enrichment from many lands and peoples, have given Canada a national character peculiarly her own.

Yet in this age no nation can live unto itself. Through the overcast of international affairs the bright constellation of the Commonwealth illumines our times. The continuing admission of nations newly guided to self-government both broadens and strengthens our diverse Commonwealth as more of us come to share the great inheritance of those institutions and ideals which make our association a quiet but pervasive force for good in an unquiet world. This was manifest when the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth met in London last June to talk of great affairs; and again, only a few days ago when on Canada's invitation, the Finance Ministers met at Mont Tremblant and in a comradely spirit laid plans for a Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference to take place next year.

A similar spirit has been evident in the Colombo Plan, which is a part of the high venture of the peoples of South and South-East Asia as they move along the path of national development, and which my government will continue to support.

My Ministers believe that Canada's active participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is essential for the preservation of peace. You will accordingly be asked to maintain modern defence forces in being which, together with those of our allies, will continue to act as a deterrent to attack upon any part of that alliance.

While Canada plays a full part in these particular associations, my ministers remain convinced that in the wider forum of the United Nations we must also continue to seek such agreements as will preserve security and bring about a wide measure of disarmament. Indeed we must continue to hope that through the United Nations the aspirations of men and women for peace and security will be fulfilled.

In domestic affairs my Ministers look forward to meeting next month with the leaders of the Provincial governments in order to discuss fiscal relations and to seek better understanding and arrangement of many aspects of our public finances.

In the legislative programme to be laid before you, it is fitting that mention should first be made of measures to improve the lot of the senior members of our society. Accordingly, you will be asked to increase old age security pensions and to shorten the period of residence required to qualify for them. Changes will be proposed in the terms of assistance offered to provincial governments to enable them to increase the payments to be made under the Old Age Assistance Act, the Blind Persons Act and the Disabled Persons Act to a corresponding level.

You will also be asked to increase the scale of war veterans allowances and to enlarge the groups to whom they are paid. Changes will also be proposed in several sections of the Pension Act.