

British Columbia's world exposition strikingly demonstrates the creative skills of our people.

I have had the honour of presenting my respects, and yours, to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her sixtieth birthday. At this time I conveyed to her Canada's feelings of loyalty. The warm affection accorded their Royal Highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales — so evident during their visit to Expo '86 — again reminds us of the vitality of the monarchy and its enduring contribution to Canadian life. I have also had the opportunity to be present at the marriage of Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York, and to receive here the visit of Her Majesty the Queen Mother, who once again charmed us with her intelligence and her amazing vitality. You may rest assured that I have, on these memorable occasions, given renewed expression to the respect which we all feel.

Two years ago, my government received a national mandate — a mandate for reform. It was a mandate that summoned Canada to the tasks of national reconciliation, economic renewal, social justice, and to a constructive internationalism. Today, my Ministers believe these goals are within reach.

We live today in a world of increasing uncertainty and interdependence. We live in a world where unforeseen events, both at home and abroad, demand flexibility and adaptiveness.

Although my government will remain sensitive to changing circumstances, it is determined to pursue these national objectives in the confidence that their fulfillment will bring lasting benefit to all Canadians.

Canadian agriculture is a vital part of our national economy. Aware of the present difficulties, my government will work in close consultation with provincial governments and farm organizations to help alleviate personal hardship in our farm communities.

The government has already taken special steps to lower farm input costs, improve stabilization programs, and help farmers in financial difficulty.

In the past, regrettably, agriculture has not been a priority in international trade negotiations. My government placed this issue on the agenda of the Economic Summit in Tokyo, and helped secure unanimous agreement to address subsidies in the new round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations.

In meeting its commitment to Canadian agriculture, my government will spare no effort in seeking to protect the interests of Canada's farming community in the face of unfair pricing and subsidy practices conducted beyond our borders.

My government has acted to enhance the effective operation of Canada's energy industry, by negotiating the Western, the Atlantic, and the Nova Scotia accords and by taking other strong measures to support activity in a period of depressed world prices. Close cooperation with the producing provinces and the energy industry is a foremost objective of my Ministers as efforts continue to sustain Canada's energy prospects through this difficult period. These efforts are consistent with the true meaning and spirit of national unity.

[The Hon. the Speaker.]

Despite current difficulties, encouraging progress has been made towards renewing and strengthening the national economy. Unemployment is at its lowest level in over four years. Average incomes of Canadian families rose in real terms in 1985 for the first time in five years. The federal deficit has declined for the first time in six years. The prime rate is the lowest it has been in eight years. And government program spending has significantly declined for the first time in forty years. These economic indicators are encouraging.

Our efforts are meeting with encouraging success. The challenge now is to forge ahead. My government will do so by remaining true to the course set in the past two years. My government will continue its policy of prudent fiscal and financial management and will seek practical ways to encourage self-reliance and provide individual Canadians the incentive and opportunity to achieve greater security and well-being for themselves and for their families.

I. National Reconciliation

My government's commitment to national reconciliation invites all Canadians to participate fully and actively in the development of their country.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and the Constitution remain incomplete without the assent of Quebec. My Ministers have begun consultations with the provinces on this important subject. Should there appear reasonable prospects for agreement, formal negotiations will proceed in the expectation that Quebec will take its rightful place as a full partner in the Canadian Constitution.

The question of aboriginal rights is still on the constitutional agenda as a result of the Accord signed with the provinces in 1983. Pursuant to that agreement, a First Ministers Conference on aboriginal constitutional affairs will be convened. This will be the third and last such conference provided for in the 1983 Accord. In cooperation with the provinces, my government will exert every possible effort to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion.

Official bilingualism is an indispensable feature of our national character. Seventeen years after its enactment, Canada's Official Languages Act now needs to be revised. Appropriate legislation will be introduced in this Session to ensure, as well, that this Act conforms with the Canadian Charter of Rights.

My Ministers will propose amendments concerning the objectives and powers of the National Capital Commission. It is their intent to give greater expression and meaning to our national symbols.

Canada's National Parks represent a heritage of great importance to the present and future generations. My government will ask Parliament to approve major reforms to the National Parks Act for the first time since the original Act was passed, over five decades ago.

The preservation of historic properties is important to fostering a sense of history and national identity among Canadians. The government of Canada, as the largest owner of heritage