

most magnificent nations on the face of this earth, which provides for the beauties of its citizenship equally to French and English speaking Canadians, to new Canadians and old. That was the promise of Confederation, and we can deliver now on the promise of that Confederation to all citizens in Canada today.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: As Prime Minister, I am totally devoted to the unity of Canada, and as a Canadian I believe deeply in the fundamental decency and extraordinary potential of this country.

The initiatives that we took at Meech Lake, which were not easy—

[*Translation*]

I heard some of the Liberal members laugh when we were talking about Canadian unity. But all the members of this House have supported it, including the hon. member for Hamilton East who showed leadership by having the courage to rise in support of a proposal which, although flawed, was designed to promote unity among the Canadian people. We failed with the Meech Lake Accord but it does not mean that we compromised the country's future. And I think that, with the level of co-operation in this House and with the Canadian people's deep commitment to fundamental values, we can revive the soul of this great nation and rebuild Canada for tomorrow.

[*English*]

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the partnership of Macdonald and Cartier, of English speaking and French speaking Canadians was real. I believe that respect for that partnership and respect for the French and English languages that have become official languages of this country constitute an indispensable cornerstone of our political and cultural sovereignty.

• (1550)

The French language and culture—and I am saying it in English to make sure it is clearly understood—has enriched the identity of Canada, as surely as the English language has and every member of this House should stand for that fundamental principle.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put my faith in the resilience and common sense and optimism of the Canadian people. These are the strengths that will anchor the coming

discussions and make flexibility and accommodation possible.

Canada is simply, Mr. Speaker, an act of will. It lives in the minds and hearts of all Canadians, and Canada will endure only if Canadians want it to. I sense, even in the moments of difficulty, a will for unity across the country and I am sure that we are capable of finding a way.

I believe that it takes major changes. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that if it takes major changes to hold this country together, Canadians want those changes made. I believe that if it takes a new process to achieve those changes, Canadians want a new process designed. With the initiative the government is announcing today, I am signalling our determination to listen to Canadians, to listen carefully to Canadians, wherever they live across Canada and to work with them in building the Canada of the 21st century.

The wounds of past grievances are deep, but if we co-operate we can heal them. The gulfs created by our current disagreements are wide, but together we can bridge them, and the tests imposed by emerging global challenges will be difficult, but together we can pass them. Our parents and grandparents confronted and resolved the issues of their day and turned over to us one of the best countries in the world.

[*Translation*]

The Canada that emerges from the current process of change and renewal will be far different than the one we inherited.

Mr. Lapierre: It is too late.

Mr. Mulroney: The hon. member for Shefford says that it is too late. It is not. I will simply tell him that if we work together, we will give our children a country that is extraordinary and viable and that they will be proud to call their fatherland, Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*English*]

Mr. Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, I appeal to members on both sides of the House and to Canadians from St. John's to Trois-Rivières to Orillia to Victoria. It is time to repay Canada for all that has been given to us, handed to us, handed over to us without the slightest effort on our part, with the possible exception of being born in this country or having the good sense to come to it. It is time to do justice to the dreams of our founders and to the