

Election of Speaker

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your election.

[English]

It was quite a day for all of us, for all politicians. Now we know that every vote is very important.

[Translation]

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier and the other candidates for this office. Indeed, it is because of the quality of the candidates in the running that it took us an entire afternoon to elect a Speaker.

[English]

It is a good omen for you, Mr. Speaker, because you have earned it. You sweated a lot all afternoon, but I can tell you that my party and I will support you. It is the desire of all members of the House to make sure that this Parliament will bring a new mood to this House, and you will play a very big role.

[Translation]

If we want to win the trust of all Canadians, it is extremely important that we show this country's institutions, especially the House of Commons, the respect they deserve. Your task, Mr. Speaker, will be to help us make this House what it rightly should be, namely the living room of the nation, the place where all ideas are discussed.

[English]

It has to be a place where everyone can speak freely, express the wishes and the views of himself and his electorate, but at the end of the day it will be the nation that will win.

• (1810)

I wish you the best of luck. You can count on our support and friendship. Good luck.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of the Official Opposition and of all my colleagues, it is a pleasure and indeed an honour to offer you my sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election to the important position of Speaker of the House of Commons. It was an arduous undertaking.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank all the members who expressed an interest in this position and who campaigned with the courtesy and generosity appropriate to the circumstances.

I may say that the members of this House have acknowledged your great experience and also your personal qualities which

will be particularly useful in the context in which we will be working and where we all hope to maintain the standards of a democratic debate, a debate which may be heated, as controversial ideas are raised, but which should never descend to the level of personal attacks, something which we must avoid.

We understand the significance of your duties, which include defending the rights of members and especially the rights and integrity of Parliament and the parliamentary system, so that we can engage in a thorough analysis of the major issues facing us today in Quebec and Canada.

Finally, I can assure you that throughout, you will have the full co-operation of the Bloc Québécois.

[English]

I would like to say in English that we also pledge full and total co-operation in the fulfilment of your so important task.

We also thank very much those candidates, our colleagues, who showed enough interest in the function to submit their names as candidates in this very important election we had today. It was a courageous thing to do. They will retain our full confidence in their work as members of Parliament.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I too want to extend on behalf of hon. members our congratulations and best wishes to you. I also want to extend our gratitude to your wife and family for the sacrifices which they make to enable you to be the servant of this place.

As the presiding officer of this Parliament we anticipate that you will play a key role in the reform of our procedures and activities. As a presiding member of the Board of Internal Economy we anticipate that you will play a key role in the reform of the financing of this institution. As you discharge your duties in all of these areas we pledge to you our full support and co-operation.

Again, congratulations and best wishes, Mr. Speaker, on your term.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the free spirits in this corner I want to join with the others in pledging our support in the months ahead and wishing you well, particularly with the difficult decisions you will be asked to make from time to time.

Our congratulations go out to our colleagues who let their names stand in this surprisingly lengthy election procedure. We recognize that today is a new era in Canadian politics. This is exemplified by your election, Mr. Speaker, by the new government, a new House of Commons, and 205 new members. This is a great opportunity to change the way this House has done business.