

● (1030)

So the airports are choked, the road systems are inadequate for the rushes and the apartment vacancy rate shrinks to half of 1 per cent. Being hooked on drugs is one escape from the tensions. Ontario wrestles with the dilemma that the riches of the cities and of the prime agricultural lands are spread very thin in the regions, particularly in the north, where miners and lumbermen extracted the bounty that originally fuelled much of the prosperity of the south.

It is all very well to build an opera house and a domed stadium to signal the success of Ontario. However, to face up to the issues that threaten to spoil it all is what must be done by the legislature that directs the future of this province.

The role that the Government of Canada must play in easing the difficulties of my province is not inconsiderable. The health and prosperity of Canada as a whole depend, to a great degree, on the continuing success of Ontario. That prosperity has just been entrusted for another four years to the Progressive Conservative government.

A previous Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Trudeau, was given to reminding Canadians, when they were critical of his policies, that the only way they could change them was with their vote at the next election. I would not subscribe to the proposition that the ballot box is the only vehicle for effective expression of dissent; nor would I expect any member of this chamber to champion that thesis. Indeed, in its first mandate—the greatest ever given to a government of this country—Progressive Conservatives demonstrated a willingness to listen to and to act upon the response of the people to government initiatives.

Was that not the case with free trade with the United States, which had not been advocated in 1984 but which was found to be the wiser course when our great neighbour to the south entered upon a protectionist course in 1985? It was that year, honourable senators, that this chamber chose to participate in the joint parliamentary committee which held public hearings on free trade across this country. From Halifax and Vancouver, under the chairmanship of Mr. Tom Hockin and Senators Flynn and Simard, we listened to the briefs of businessmen, union members and consumer advocates. We came back to Ottawa, after an exciting summer of listening and arguing, and we prepared our report to Parliament. We urged that the Prime Minister immediately undertake the steps that would lead to a treaty that would produce freer trade between the United States and Canada. Both Liberal and Conservative members signed that report. When that treaty was agreed upon, it went to the Foreign Affairs Committee of this chamber and, at the end of six months, the chairman, Senator van Roggen, in an article of praise in *The Financial Post*, described the agreement as salutary.

The opposition insisted, and the Liberals in the Senate made certain, that the free trade issue was unresolved when the election was called. It was a use of Senate power beyond the reasonable purposes of this place. At least, that is my opinion and the opinion of many Canadians from whom more will be heard when the Meech Lake Accord has been ratified and

[Senator Doyle.]

Senate reform comes to the agenda of the First Ministers, as it most certainly shall in this new mandate.

But in the meantime free trade was the most discussed of all the issues before the Canadian people in the 1988 election. That ballot was not a one-issue referendum; in the end it had much to do with which party the people believed was best fitted to deal with the management of this country in the next four years. The management record of the Conservatives in the last four years, as the opposition kept reminding us, was another vital factor in the decision-making process.

As many of my colleagues on both sides of this chamber—colleagues who involved themselves in the campaign—can testify, there were questions asked on many matters, although we were never too far away from things related to free trade.

It was my privilege to speak at several campaign gatherings in Ontario, including those held at homes for senior citizens. At one meeting I was introduced as a “real, live senator”. I will tell honourable senators, as I told the audience, that the description was a compliment that would please any member of this chamber. To be realistic and to be lively was implied, and what more could a senator ask?

At the same meeting a woman in a wheelchair, who had a formidable visage and a firm voice, told us that she was tired of hearing all the nonsense about people in the homes and how they were worried sick about losing their pensions and their medical aid. “I’d be concerned”, she said, “if I thought there was any truth in that, but what I’m really worried about is what’s going to happen to my grandchildren, and nobody’s talking about that!” I should not have been surprised. Most older people I know are not selfish; they are concerned that the generations that follow them will be spared the trials they faced and will be open to opportunities they did not know. The woman who spoke up could accept free trade and rewards that might not be fully realized for ten years. She could accept that by voting for a candidate who seemed best equipped by record and by intent to provide prudent management of her country. Matters of such consequence are not settled by plebiscites.

I was reminded, honourable senators, of lines from the report of the commission which Mr. Trudeau appointed to look into the economy. Honourable senators will remember that that commission was headed by Donald Macdonald, the former finance minister who, three years ago, told us:

Protective barriers may seem on the surface to offer a measure of security in an uncertain environment. We must also recognize them, however, as unmistakable confessions of weakness. Until these barriers are gone, the exhilaration that can come from a true sense of maturity will remain beyond our reach.

How I have wished that those words had been on the tip of my tongue that morning in the senior citizens’ home!

Yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, Her Excellency noted that the people had spoken in an election and that we would be moving in this session to implement the free trade legislation so that it might be in place on January 1, as