

The Address—Mr. Cassidy

they had confidence in the future of the city and of the province.

It is evident from the Throne Speech and the economic and fiscal statement that this administration is attempting to breathe a new spirit into federalism and restore the faith and trust of all Canadians in the effectiveness of our system of government. Canadians voted for change, and from the indications in the Throne Speech debate I am convinced that this new direction will benefit Canada, the Province of Alberta and my constituency of Edmonton West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Are there questions or comments on the maiden speech of the Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Dorin)? If there are no questions or comments, I will recognize the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy).

[Translation]

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your election to the Chair, and I would also like to congratulate this new Government.

[English]

I think it is quite clear that in the election the people of Canada did vote for change, and as a consequence decided to turf the Liberals out and, hopefully, to make them a historical vestige in Canada. I believe that people also voted for the kind of compassion and concern for ordinary people which New Democrats have traditionally represented and certainly intend to represent in the course of this Parliament.

I would like to thank the electorate of Ottawa Centre for their confidence in electing me. The House may be aware that my majority was a modest one of only 54 votes, and therefore I congratulate other Members of Parliament who were elected with a larger landslide than I was able to attain this time. I will attempt to catch up with them in the 1988 election.

This is a new venue for me, but it is also a return. I was in this House as an observer, as a parliamentary journalist for *The Financial Times* of Canada, from 1966 to 1970, before spending 13 years in provincial politics as an MPP. It is good to be back in my home city. I recognize and fully sympathize with those Members who have distant ridings, because for 13 years I have been living in one community and representing another. I know the difficulties that that represents. To those new Members who are residents of my riding I offer a particular welcome and a promise that I will inform them regularly through my householder of my work in politics.

I would like to talk about the election campaign as well as the economic statement and the Throne Speech. I believe there is a real danger of polarization between Bay Street and Main Street, and I think that that danger has already been amply demonstrated by the two policy statements which the Government has delivered this week. I do not believe that the people of Canada voted for the values of Bay Street when they voted for change on September 4. I also fear that too much, too quickly and too soon the new Government is beginning to look like the Liberal Government which it replaced, rather than

bring in real change which will benefit the ordinary people in my riding and across Canada.

I have a number of priorities I would like to speak on which relate to the people of my riding as well as to many people across Canada. One of those priorities is the question of housing. More than half of the people living in Ottawa Centre are tenants. We have a vacancy rate of 0.2 per cent. One apartment in 500 is actually vacant, as some new Members may have discovered when seeking accommodation after being elected to Parliament. Rents as high as \$500 or \$600 for a one-bedroom apartment. For family accommodation as well as apartments they are far beyond the affordability of large numbers of people who live in Ottawa Centre, despite the fact that Ottawans are perhaps fortunate in having a higher level of employment and somewhat higher incomes than people in many other parts of Canada.

In my area, homes which rented for \$100 a month in 1966 have been renovated. Then are now renting for up to \$1,000 or more a month, 18 years later. That is symptomatic of what has happened to the housing situation in Ottawa. The question is, what do families on modest incomes do?

Over many years as an MPP I fought for the rights of tenants. I was among the first people in the Ontario Legislature to seek and successfully gain rent review to protect tenants in the Province of Ontario. But that protection is not good enough if housing is not being provided for people on modest incomes. That is why I regretted so much the cut-backs on co-operative and non-profit housing allocations which were taking place under the Liberals, and why I equally regret that in the Throne Speech and the economic statement there was no thrust at all to have a job-creating investment in new housing directed to people on modest and moderate incomes.

It is to our shame in Ottawa that last winter we had to open emergency shelters because there were hundreds of adult men and women who were homeless. They had no place to live and no place to sleep. There is no form of social alienation in our society which is more intense than that of a person who does not have a roof over his head. In our province, people cannot even qualify for welfare unless they have a home address. There are now sizeable numbers of people in Ottawa who do not qualify for that minimum level of assistance because they have not got a home of their own.

The market system, in which the Minister of Finance and the Conservative Government have put so much trust, is not succeeding in providing housing for people who are poor and people who are on moderate incomes. There are a million Canadians who face an affordability crisis in housing, many of whom are here in Ottawa and in my riding of Ottawa Centre. If the market system is not going to work, people in that situation are either condemned to inadequate accommodation—to paying 30 per cent or 50 per cent of their income in rent—or to having no accommodation whatsoever. I fear that is what the Government is doing because of its lack of housing provisions in the Throne Speech.

The Throne Speech and the economic statement indicated that the Government intends to make cut-backs in the Public