

The Address

The Brant Waterways Committee, I am sure, has environmentally related jobs that would help our young people get that very important first work experience.

There is also a vibrant seniors community in my riding and the opportunity for inter-generational work, training and experiences exist. Our schools need young people to help younger people learn to read, write, do math and improve their computer skills.

When I read the speech from the throne I saw all kinds of opportunities for me as a member to go back to my riding and work with the people to make things better and to improve our local economy.

However, there is one idea that is not included in the speech from the throne and I would like to suggest it to the government for consideration. It is the idea of government decentralization; of taking certain government agencies, ministries and departments and moving them out of large urban centres like Ottawa and Toronto into smaller centres like those in my community.

The people of my riding are very supportive of this notion. In fact, we had been promised the relocation of the computer and telecommunications services department of the provincial government into our riding early in 1993. This made a lot of sense to us because Brantford is the telephone city. It is where Alexander Graham Bell made the first long distance phone call between Brantford and Paris.

We were very excited about the possibility and expected this relocation to occur. Unfortunately, with the change in government, there was a decision made to cancel that program. With that cancellation came depression, not only economic but social, to my community.

Decentralization is an interesting idea. It is not new. However, it can help us meet a number of our priorities. It can help improve economic equality across the country. It can help improve the physical and social well-being of Canadians. It is a strategy that we can use as we look to streamline the public service and increase participatory democracy. It certainly would require us to make quantum leaps in the development and use of the electronic highway.

Whether the federal government chooses to utilize the strategy of decentralization by itself or in concert with the provincial governments, as we try to affect reduction in duplications of government servicing or in new and innovative ways by working with the private sector in out-sourcing models and concepts, I believe that government decentralization is an idea whose time has come. I would encourage all our ministers as they look at their departmental management to consider this strategy. If they find that they have opportunities, particularly in the area of telecommunications, agriculture, the environment and others, I hope they would think of the riding of Brant.

• (1205)

I have enjoyed the opportunity to share with the members of this House a little bit about the riding that I represent. I also appreciate the opportunity to share with them the reasons why I so strongly support the agenda that has been put before us in the speech from the throne.

I would ask them all to vote in favour of the motion that is on the floor, put there by my colleague, the member for Bruce—Grey, and seconded by my colleague, the member for Madawaska—Victoria.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member from Brantford. I was in that community numerous times and it is indeed a beautiful community.

I am interested in asking the hon. member about the infrastructure program which she so adamantly supports. The question I have is, what does the hon. member see as the longest term effect on her community for infrastructure? Is it the bill that the taxpayer picks up from the municipal, federal and provincial portion or the short-term job that may be arranged as a result of the program itself?

Mrs. Stewart (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

I do not see these projects as only being of value in the short term. We are very anxious of course to get the shovels in the ground in my community because we do need job creation.

Certainly in the discussions that I have had with all my municipalities there is a true expectation that this work will provide longer term opportunities. It will provide economic benefits to Brantford, Paris, South Dumfries and Brantford township.

I have been extremely excited by the energy that all the municipal councils have shown toward the project. They feel they do have the moneys and can reallocate moneys collected for these projects.

I have no hesitation in supporting the program and encouraging it to other municipalities.

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, I too want to congratulate the hon. member on an excellent presentation to the House. I was extremely impressed.

I want to follow up on one area that she touched on toward the end of her presentation concerning government offices moving out to, I assume she was suggesting, various parts of the country.

In that light, I would ask the hon. member if it was her thought to do this only after investigation might take place as to the economics of making that transition and the economics of where they were going compared to where they are at the present time.