

The Address—Mr. Thorkelson

Does my colleague believe, as I do, that it is important to maintain our national rail service in order to link the various parts of our country together and to fight those pressures we have always had in this country which draw us toward the United States? Does he believe, as I do, that it is important to keep that railway in order to strengthen the national identity?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. MacDonald (Rosedale)): I am sorry to tell the Hon. Member for York North (Mr. Bevilacqua) that he will just have a couple of minutes to answer his colleague.

Mr. Bevilacqua: I want to thank the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell (Mr. Boudria) for his question. It seems to me that now more than ever it is important to maintain a sense of national identity as Canadians.

Historically, I believe the railway has been something which has maintained that very essential nationhood that is Canada. It is also important that when we talk about the railway we also talk about the people in the multicultural diversity of Canada who use those railways to see what Canada is all about.

With respect to the issue of multiculturalism, I think the time has come for us to begin to review our policy and look at Canadians as equal partners in building this great land. During the election I began to look at new ways to deal with the social reality of Canada in cultural terms. I began to see that indeed we must review the policy of multiculturalism, to make it all-embracing rather than perhaps risk it becoming a policy of ghettoization. By that, I mean when we talk about the policy of multiculturalism we should be talking about English and French Canadians in the same way as we talk about Italian, Portuguese and Greek Canadians.

I think it is time to initiate a policy that perhaps looks at the establishment of a super ministry of culture that will bring in everyone throughout the country.

We have talked about the railway and the people. I think they are both important elements in Canada.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In order not to be accused of plagiarism, I should mention that the poem I read was written by Mr. Jean-Paul Touchette, Mayor of Alexandria.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate.

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, in my first address to the House I want to begin by congratulating you upon your appointment and the Speaker for his election to office. I was privileged to have been able to work for the Speaker during his term as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. He governed for the whole country with distinction and my respect for him has only grown in the short time I have been in this Chamber. Once again, I offer my congratulations and best wishes.

I would also like to congratulate the mover of the Address to the Speech from the Throne, the Member for Calgary Southeast (Mr. Richardson), and the seconder, the Member for Bourassa (Mrs. Gibeau), for their significant and thoughtful remarks. While the Member for Calgary Southeast and I often disagree in our views on hockey—he actually thinks the Flames might beat the Oilers—we stand together in our support for the recent Speech from the Throne.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents of Edmonton—Strathcona for their support during the past election. I look forward to serving this recently redistributed constituency which encompasses the south centre of the City of Edmonton. It includes the historic old Strathcona area, the home of the Frinse Theatre Festival, the famous Strathcona Hotel and the Princess Theatre.

Historically, the City of Strathcona amalgamated with the City of Edmonton in 1912. At one time the riding of Strathcona went as far east as Lloydminster, and so far south that it almost went to Calgary.

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Edmonton—Strathcona shares with the rest of the city the beauty of the wide and deep North Saskatchewan River whose valley is reserved for parkland, playgrounds, picnic areas and golf courses.

My riding is home to the University of Alberta, the second largest university in this country, a world-class institution with world-class scholars and facilities. The university is keenly interested in our Government's science and technology initiatives and is looking forward to becoming partners with the federal Government in a number of endeavours. I am here to make that happen.

Also a part of Edmonton—Strathcona is the Walter C. MacKenzie Health Sciences Centre, a state of the art hospital with enormous teaching and research facilities. It, too, is excited about many of our Government's initiatives.