

Government Orders

Canadians, and they will be operated in the interests of Canadians". [English]

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Ms. McLaughlin: Those are the actions of a government that cares about Canadians, that cares about unity. The commission that has been appointed is a good step to begin the kind of dialogue, but it cannot just be the exclusivity of that commission.

I would like to see the government take action, as well as dialogue, and listen to Canadians to create ways for Canadians from coast to coast to coast to talk with each other and to learn about each other in French, in English, in aboriginal languages, in all of the languages people are most comfortable with.

Canada, as it is today, is still a very rich and prosperous country. We are rich not only in resources but in ideas. We are rich in cultures. We are richer for having Quebec as part of Canada. We are rich because of the north, because of the first nations of this country, because of the number of people who have chosen Canada as their home.

Yes, we have a financial deficit, but we have an even greater deficit if we do not all work to preserve this country, to pass this country on to our children, and to say that the worst deficit is the person who is homeless, the person without enough to eat, the young person who has no hope for a job in the future.

In order to bring us together, we must indeed resolve a Constitution that provides for equity and fairness from coast to coast in this country, equity between races, between language, between provinces and territories, between men and women. I believe very strongly that we can do this, because what Canadians do not have a deficit of is the spirit and the will. We have much to learn from each other. People in the Yukon have a lot to learn from people in Quebec, and vice-versa. That is true for across this country.

[Translation]

In spite of all these flaws and injustices, our country is still a great accomplishment: a meeting of various cultures and people separated by great distances, of communities united in their efforts to achieve the same goal.

We will await the terms of reference of this committee. I hope the Prime Minister will ensure that we do have a standing committee on the Constitution, that we do expand the process, and that we are able as parliamentarians to share in an ongoing way in the discussion of the committee's work. I would ask that the Prime Minister ensures that this committee will report not just to himself but to all parliamentarians and to all Canadians in a public and an open manner.

There are many things that we have to resolve. There is one thing I am sure that all parties can agree on, and that is that we must not lose what those before us have built and we must not give away what those of us hold in trust.

I wish the commission well. We in the New Democratic Party will participate in any way that we can across this country. I believe that we can create a more caring and compassionate country. I urge the Prime Minister not only to open the dialogue on constitutional matters but on economic, social and environmental issues that are of concern to all Canadians.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Prince Albert—Churchill River—the environment; the hon. member for Hamilton East—the environment; the hon. member for Chambly—the environment.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments following the speech by the Leader of the New Democratic Party, and I must say that unlike the hon. member, I do not think this committee will accomplish anything of any substance, and that basically, it amounts to an admission of weakness by the government.

It is as though the government had shed its responsibilities and leadership and handed them over to the local quilting club and the kitchen-meeting circuit.