

*The Address***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1010)

*[Translation]***SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from January 24 consideration of the motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session.

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech contains a paragraph that is devoted to culture, heritage and the Canadian identity. The paragraph states that the Government will announce measures to promote these essential national values.

One might wonder how such a short paragraph can respond to the challenges facing a department that is as wide-ranging as the one I am honoured to head. So a few words of explanation seem to be appropriate at the beginning of this parliamentary session.

Straight away, the very name of the Department of Canadian Heritage poses a problem. What do we mean by "Canadian heritage"? How can we justify grouping together in a single department elements as diverse as communications, the status of women, cultural industries, official and heritage languages, multiculturalism, national parks and sites, State protocol and amateur sport?

If we take the term "heritage" in its widest sense as meaning all of the combined property that enables each of us to see ourselves as an individual who belongs to a group or country, we can see that the department's name is fitting.

[English]

Today we can no longer restrict the meaning of heritage to the legacy of the past. Far more than a simple collection of traces left by history, the country's heritage is first and foremost the manifestation of the connection among members of a community and of its distinctiveness inside the global environment. Thus it is closely associated with the question of a country's identity.

In this perspective the seemingly vast range of activities supervised by the Department of Canadian Heritage is justified.

[Translation]

I can see three broad structures that will lead us to the same goal. First, the management of our natural and physical heritage: our national parks, our historic monuments, and our heritage canals.

Second, the management of programs that protect official languages, that promote the status of women and amateur sport, and that enhance our society's culture in other ways.

Third, the management of cultural development in Canada, and of means of communication which are of the utmost importance, not only in ensuring that we remain independent, but also as potent tools for economic development.

I would like to describe each of these three structures in greater detail. Our heritage appears at first glance to be a collection of historic sites, composed of 36 national parks, 750 historic sites and nine canals, located in all parts of the country. This sector is of enormous economic importance as it generates annual revenues of more than a billion dollars and provides jobs for around 30,000 people.

This sector lies at the very heart of our tourism industry and it is the envy of the international community, as we are at the forefront of what is known as "eco-tourism". One single statistic illustrates the popularity of these sites among tourists: in 1992, some 27 million people visited Canada's national parks and sites.

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They are, of course, associated in our collective psyche with the beauty of our country. But they are also benefitting from the growing emphasis that western societies are placing on environmental quality. I feel, therefore, that they must follow the principles set out in the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

[English]

Choices will have to be made and all parties, including the federal, provincial, municipal and territorial governments, will have to work together to make these choices. For instance, we want to make progress toward our goal of establishing land and marine base parks in all our distinct ecological zones. We also want to increase the number of historic sites which must serve as witness to all facets of our history.

In this respect I will encourage the unveiling of new areas of our collective history such as those related to women and native people, but we are facing as well severe financial constraints.

[Translation]

Some degree of self-financing might well open up some interesting avenues, but we must avoid the indirect consequences of over-commercialization. My role in this will be to safeguard the ecological and commemorative integrity of this important component of our heritage, as well as to make judicious decisions about its development.