

This country has become dramatically more confident in itself over the last decade and a half. Now I speak as an actor in the drama who has been privileged to play different roles, some admittedly more satisfying than others. At various times in the last 15 years, I have chaired the Cabinet Committee on Trade with the United States, I have kept my maiden name, I have led the opposition to both the National Energy Program and the Trudeau Constitutional proposal, I have been involved in extraordinary grassroots Canadian responses to famine in Africa and to the plight of refugees cast adrift from Vietnam and, perhaps most instructively, I visited, not regularly, but regularly enough, Nakusp, and Vineland, and Paspebiac, and Old Crow and Witless Bay, and other Canadian places you may never have heard of. One of the curiosities of my profession is that I am required to travel across this country often and I have the chance to see parts of it that I hadn't known before and to deal directly with Canadians and see the revolution.

If I may say so as an Albertan, a western Canadian, and this may well have been covered in debates already entered into here, there is no question that one of the profound changes that has occurred in our country has occurred in the province where you are meeting and, it has occurred with regard to the role and the place in Canada of Francophone Canadians. That has been a question with a long history and of great importance for the country. It's not the only change that has occurred in the country. There has also been, in my humble submission, a quite profound change in the sense of capacity and assertiveness and sense of wanting to change the country to respond to its view of Canada too in western Canada.

I remember in 1960 when I secured my first summer job in Toronto; I was quite proud of it and I went out and spoke to a man I respected in Alberta and I said, Mr. Watkins I just got a summer job in Toronto. He looked at me and said, Why? That expressed then a fairly common attitude in western Canada. One of not being welcome in the east, but also one of not wanting to really go forward and try to become part of the whole. I think that has changed in the last several years and I think that change while different in quality and in implication from what has happened in this province is also something very much worth understanding on the part of people who want to appreciate the common ground and the differences between two nations whose origins originally were in Europe, who settled on this continent with different traditions, and different purposes, and have evolved different societies and different senses of who we are.