



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

TO OPEN THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH
PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

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Canada^{ca}



HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE,
MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I congratulate both the returning members of Parliament, as well as the more than one hundred who are newly elected, as you take up your duties in the House of Commons for this Thirty-Eighth Parliament of Canada.

This year, Canadians commemorated the 60th anniversary of D-Day and the landing of allied forces in Europe—an event that spelled the beginning of the end of the Second World War. Canadian soldiers, sailors and aircrews fought with dogged bravery and were ultimately victorious on Juno Beach that day.

Shortly, I will be going to Italy to commemorate the significant campaign in which six thousand Canadians sacrificed their lives. To me, personally, these commemorations are a symbol of our eternal gratitude and an affirmation that we have not forgotten.

On these occasions, we are reminded of the huge debt we owe to those in uniform who have served this country—then and today. Our veterans connect generations and Canadians. As a country and as individuals, we gain in pride and in purpose from their deeds and their service.

I recently concluded extended visits to six cities of varying size—Saint John, Quebec City, Toronto, Saskatoon, Calgary and Vancouver. In them, I found remarkable, innovative projects for social renewal and individual commitment. They express the confidence and love that we all hold for this country. This is the spirit of Canada I see as Governor General.

The Government starts this new session with a commitment that all parliamentarians share—regardless of political affiliation—to contribute to real progress for Canadians, for this country, for our future. The Government faces a new Parliament fresh from an election. The people of Canada want this Government, and all parliamentarians, to rise above partisanship to address the public interest. They want their political leaders to catch up with Canadians’ own ambitions for the country and their readiness to take on the world with confidence.

Each of us must take responsibility. The Government will do its part to ensure that this minority Parliament works. Working together, we can unite the voices of all Canadians in common purpose.

The Government’s actions on behalf of Canadians will be guided by these seven commitments:

- to be unwavering in the application of fiscal discipline, the foundation of so much of Canada’s success over the past decade;
- to promote the national interest by setting the nation’s objectives and building a consensus toward achieving them;
- to pursue these objectives in a manner that recognizes Canada’s diversity as a source of strength and innovation;
- to aim for tangible, practical results for Canadians and report to them so that they can hold their governments to account;
- to defend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to be a steadfast advocate of inclusion;
- to demand equality of opportunity so that prosperity can be shared by all Canadians; and
- to assert Canada’s interests and project our values in the world.

Together, we can move Canada forward.

A STRONG ECONOMY

Our quality of life, job opportunities and capacity to support our social goals rely on a globally competitive economy.

Canada has a solid record of economic achievement. Over the past 10 years, we generated over three million new jobs. Since 1997, we have led all G7 countries in the growth of living standards. And low interest rates have made home ownership easier than it has been in decades.

This has not happened by accident. A *virtuous circle* led to increased confidence, lower interest rates and robust growth of well-paying jobs. The increase in revenues and the recovery of fiscal sovereignty have in turn permitted the Government to reduce and improve the fairness of taxes, and make new social and economic investments. This virtuous circle will continue.

We have been successful, but we will not be complacent. The Government will not spend itself into deficit. It will continue to pay down debt. Its objective is to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 25 per cent within 10 years. It will provide transparent, accountable management, treating every tax dollar with respect. The Government will make the difficult decisions among competing priorities and systematically review all expenditures, reallocating from old to new, from past to future.

Canada must now elevate its economic performance to the next level. Advancing technology and pervasive global competition demand of Canada a commitment to excellence, the pursuit of greater productivity, and a vision directed outward to the challenges and opportunities the world presents.

The Government will pursue a five-point strategy to build an even more globally competitive and sustainable economy.

The first element is to invest in people, Canada's greatest source of creativity and economic strength.

We must invest in helping workers to continuously enhance their skills to keep pace with constantly evolving workplace requirements. To that end, the Government will develop a new Workplace Skills Strategy, including steps to enhance apprenticeship systems, and to boost literacy and other essential job skills. This will be

complemented by up-to-date training facilities and labour market agreements to be developed in collaboration with the provinces and territories, unions and sector councils.

The Government will continue to review the Employment Insurance program to ensure that it remains well-suited to the needs of Canada's workforce.

Efforts to improve the recognition of foreign credentials and prior work experience have yielded too little progress. Looking to the growing contribution that will be required from new Canadians as our population ages, this Government will redouble its efforts, in cooperation with the provinces and professional bodies, to help integrate them into the workforce.

To increase access to post-secondary education, the Government will introduce legislation to implement its Learning Bond, an innovative savings vehicle that it announced to help low-income families provide for their children's post-secondary education.

The second element of the economic strategy is to strengthen Canada's ability to generate and apply new ideas.

The Government of Canada has made substantial investments—more than \$13 billion since 1997—that have built a strong foundation in basic science and technology, including the Canada Foundation for Innovation, health research and other initiatives to create leading-edge capabilities. It will continue to build on this strength.

The National Science Advisor is assisting the Government to ensure that these investments are strategic, focused and delivering results, and is working to bring about a fuller integration of the Government's substantial in-house science and technology activity.

The next challenge is to turn more of Canadians' bright ideas into dynamic businesses, great jobs and growing export earnings. To that end, the Government will ensure a supply of venture capital, particularly for early-stage businesses—for example, through the venture financing arm of the Business Development Bank of Canada.

The Government will develop policies to foster Canadian capabilities in key enabling technologies—such as biotechnology, information and communications, and advanced materials—which will be drivers of innovation and productivity in the 21st-century economy.

Providing “smart government”—the third element of our economic strategy—aims to make it easier for businesses to do business in Canada.

Smart government includes a transparent and predictable regulatory system that accomplishes public policy objectives efficiently while eliminating unintended impacts. This can be a key competitive advantage for Canada. That is why the Government welcomes the just-released report of the External Advisory Committee on Smart Regulation.

Smart government also includes providing an up-to-date legislative framework for business. The Government will therefore propose changes to modernize the Competition Act.

The fourth element of the Government’s overall economic strategy is a commitment to regional and sectoral development.

The Government will do its part to enable the success of important sectors, including automotive, aerospace and other manufacturing, as well as agriculture and other resource-based industries.

Canada’s regional economies are a vital source of economic strength and stability. Support for regional and rural economic development will target the fundamentals—skills upgrading, support for research and development, community development, and modern infrastructure such as broadband communication—by employing the regional agencies and tools such as the Atlantic Innovation Fund.

The Government’s regional objectives will be complemented by the most fundamental reform of the Equalization program in its 47-year history. The objective is to make more stable and predictable the total payments by the federal government to the less-wealthy provinces in support of key public services.

A region of particular challenge and opportunity is Canada’s North—a vast area of unique cultural and ecological significance. The Government will develop, in cooperation with its territorial partners, Aboriginal people and other northern

residents, the first-ever comprehensive strategy for the North. This northern strategy will foster sustainable economic and human development; protect the northern environment and Canada's sovereignty and security; and promote cooperation with the international circumpolar community.

Promotion of trade and investment is the fifth pillar of the Government's economic strategy.

Strong investment will be the primary generator of growth and good jobs for the future. The Government will foster investment by attending to the conditions that encourage entrepreneurs and providers of risk capital. These include sound monetary and fiscal policies as well as competitive taxes, efficiently targeted to promote economic growth.

Canada has always been a trading nation, but never more so than today. It is therefore vital that we secure and enhance our access to markets, both in North America and the world. To this end, the Government will continue to push for an open, rules-based international trading system and a successful conclusion of the Doha Round of global trade negotiations.

Issues such as softwood lumber and BSE underline the importance the Government attaches to obtaining more reliable access to U.S. markets. It will build on the successful Smart Borders initiative and on measures designed to develop a more sophisticated and informed relationship involving business and government officials in the United States.

The Government will enhance its capacity to expand international trade and commerce, with a particular focus on North America and emerging markets.

To complement its international commerce initiatives, the Government is determined to forge a stronger Canadian economic union, free of the internal barriers that still diminish opportunities and reduce our competitiveness.

THE HEALTH OF CANADIANS

Canadians have told their governments, year after year, to renew Medicare, to stop bickering and work together to ensure that it will be there for them and their children. Governments have responded. On September 15, all fourteen First Ministers agreed on the *Ten-year Plan to Strengthen Health Care*.

The Plan sets out a clear commitment, shared by all provinces and territories, to achieve tangible results—results for patients. What united all First Ministers was the commitment to a meaningful reduction in wait times for health services because it is key to transforming the health system. The Plan holds all governments to account by establishing a requirement for evidence-based benchmarks, comparable indicators, clear targets and transparent reporting to the public on access to health care. This means that the needs of patients will drive change.

The Plan will accelerate reform and ensure better access to key tests and treatments. It will increase the number of doctors, nurses and other health professionals. This will be helped by quicker assessment and integration of those who have received their training abroad. The Plan will improve access to home and community care services and to safe and affordable drugs.

The Plan commits to a 10-year track of substantial, predictable long-term funding, closing what has been called the “Romanow Gap.” The Plan creates a Wait Times Reduction Fund, so that Canadians can see tangible progress in key areas such as cancer and heart treatment, diagnostic imaging, joint replacements and sight restoration.

The Plan addresses the unique challenges facing the delivery of health care services in Canada’s North, including the costs of medical transportation, and encourages innovative delivery of services to rural Canada.

As part of the Plan, governments will, for the first time, set goals and targets for improving the health status of Canadians. The Health Council of Canada will provide an annual report on health status and health outcomes, and will report on progress in implementing the Plan.

Funding arrangements will require that jurisdictions comply with the reporting provisions agreed to by First Ministers.

Better health for Canadians requires more than just timely access to health care. It requires the promotion of healthy living, addressing risk factors such as physical inactivity and nutrition; the prevention of injury; and integrated disease strategies. The Government will also work with partners to enhance sports activities at both the community and competitive levels.

The Government has already appointed a new Chief Public Health Officer for Canada to drive real change. The Government will also proceed with new health protection legislation. And it welcomes the development of the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, which will strengthen collaboration among public health organizations nationwide. The Network will build capacity and provide coordinated responses to infectious disease outbreaks and other public health emergencies.

CHILDREN, CAREGIVERS AND SENIORS

For a decade, all governments have understood that the most important investment that can be made is in our children. That is why, even when it was fighting the deficit, the Government established the National Child Benefit—the most significant national social program since Medicare.

There is more that must be done to help families help their children. Parents must have real choices; children must have real opportunities to learn. The time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care, a system based on the four key principles that parents and child care experts say matter—quality, universality, accessibility and development.

The Government will put the foundations in place with its provincial and territorial partners, charting a national course that focuses on results, builds on best practices and reports on progress to Canadians. Within this national framework, the provinces and territories will have the flexibility to address their own particular needs and circumstances.

As our society ages, Canadian families are caring not only for young children but increasingly for elderly spouses and grandparents as well.

The Government recognizes the vital role of Canadians who care for aged or infirm relatives or those with severe disabilities. It will improve its existing tax-based support and will ask Parliament to consult across the country on additional initiatives.

Building on previous measures, the Government will assist people with disabilities in becoming more self-reliant by drawing on the upcoming recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee on Tax Measures for Persons with Disabilities.

Canada's seniors are healthier and living longer than ever before. Many want to remain active and engaged in community life. To help them, the Government has announced the New Horizons program and will explore other means of ensuring that we do not lose the talents and contribution that seniors can make to our society.

Canada's seniors have earned the right to be treated with dignity. As one step, the Government will increase the Guaranteed Income Supplement for Canada's least well-off seniors.

ABORIGINAL CANADIANS

We must do more to ensure that Canada's prosperity is shared by Canada's Aboriginal people—First Nations, Inuit and Métis. We have made progress, but it is overshadowed by the rates of fetal alcohol syndrome and teen suicide in Aboriginal communities. These are the intolerable consequences of the yawning gaps that separate so many Aboriginal people from other Canadians—unacceptable gaps in education attainment, in employment, in basics like housing and clean water, and in the incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

The Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable held last April was a major step along a new path of partnership and prosperity. The Government and Aboriginal leaders agreed to measurable goals to reduce these gaps and their consequences.

What could be more profound than targeting real change in the rate of fetal alcohol syndrome and teen suicide?

At their meeting on September 13 of this year, all First Ministers and Aboriginal leaders took action. There, this Government undertook to provide \$700 million to encourage greater Aboriginal participation in the health professions, to address chronic diseases such as diabetes, and to create an Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to better adapt existing health care services to Aboriginal needs.

The Government is working together with Aboriginal Canadians and provincial and territorial governments to create the conditions for long-term development—learning, economic opportunity, and modern institutions of Aboriginal governance—while respecting historical rights and agreements.

The Government and Aboriginal people will together develop specific quality-of-life indicators and a “Report Card” to hold all to account and to drive progress.

CANADA’S CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Canadians want their communities, towns and cities to be great places to live—safe, with affordable housing, good public transit, clean air and water, and abundant green spaces. Communities are key to our social goals and our economic competitiveness. They are the front lines in building a better quality of life.

Through the *New Deal for Canada’s Cities and Communities*, and working with the provinces and territories, the Government will make available, for the benefit of municipalities, a portion of the federal gas tax, growing over the next five years. These funds will enable municipalities to make long-term financial commitments needed to help contain urban sprawl and to invest in new sustainable infrastructure projects in areas like transit, roads, clean water and sewers.

To address key issues such as urban renewal, immigrant integration and the challenges facing off-reserve Aboriginal Canadians, the Government will expand the partnership approach used to develop the Vancouver and Winnipeg Agreements and proceed to implement its recent agreement with the Government of Ontario to cooperate in service delivery. The Government will also build on the work of the Harcourt Advisory Committee.

Shelter is the foundation upon which healthy communities and individual dignity are built. The Government will extend and enhance existing programs such as the Affordable Housing Initiative, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative for the homeless, and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

What makes our communities strong is the willingness of men and women from all walks of life to take responsibility for their future and for one another. We can see this in the number of voluntary organizations and social economy enterprises that are finding local solutions to local problems. The Government is determined to foster the

social economy—the myriad not-for-profit activities and enterprises that harness civic and entrepreneurial energies for community benefit right across Canada. The Government will help to create the conditions for their success, including the business environment within which they work. To that end, it will introduce a new Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.

What makes our communities work is our deep commitment to human rights and mutual respect. The Government is committed to these values. It will modernize Canada's Citizenship Act to reaffirm the responsibilities and rights of Canadian citizenship and our values of multiculturalism, gender equality and linguistic duality. It is implementing the Official Languages Action Plan and will continue to promote the vitality of official language minority communities. It will take measures to strengthen Canada's ability to combat racism, hate speech and hate crimes, both here at home and around the world. And it will table legislation to protect against trafficking in persons and to crack down on child pornography.

What makes our communities vibrant and creative is the quality of their cultural life. The Government will foster cultural institutions and policies that aspire to excellence, reflect a diverse and multicultural society, respond to the new challenges of globalization and the digital economy, and promote diversity of views and cultural expression at home and abroad.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Our quality of life today, and the legacy we bequeath to future generations, demands fundamental change in the way in which we think about the environment.

The Government will work with its partners to build sustainable development systematically into decision making.

As the ethic and imperative of sustainability take deeper root worldwide, human ingenuity will turn increasingly to ways to produce and use energy more cleanly and efficiently; to eliminate toxins from our air, water and soil; and to build more sustainable communities. Here lie great new opportunities for the world economy. Canada's entrepreneurs must aim to be at the leading edge.

To that end, the Government will work with the private sector to improve the commercialization of the best new environmental technologies. Major investments funded out of the proceeds of the sale of the Government's Petro-Canada shares will support their development and deployment.

The Government will work to get its own house in order. It will consolidate federal environmental assessments and will work with the provinces and territories toward a unified and more effective assessment process for Canada. By 2006, the Government will implement a new Green Procurement Policy to govern its purchases. It will also introduce legislation that will strengthen the focus on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks.

Nowhere are the challenges and opportunities of sustainability more evident than in the way in which we use and produce energy. The Government will place increased focus on energy efficiency and energy research and development. It will engage stakeholders in developing comprehensive approaches to encourage increased production and use of clean, renewable energy and to promote greater energy efficiency. This will build on efforts already underway, including support for wind-power production in Canada, stimulated by a quadrupling of the Wind Power Production Incentive.

The Government reiterates that it will respect its commitment to the Kyoto Accord on climate change in a way that produces long-term and enduring results while maintaining a strong and growing economy. It will do so by refining and implementing an equitable national plan, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments and other stakeholders.

As the Government builds a sustainable society at home, it will continue to pursue multilateral and bilateral approaches to what are ultimately global challenges. For example, it will work with the United States and agencies like the International Joint Commission on issues such as clean air, clean water and invasive species. In 2005, the Government will bring forward the next generation of its Great Lakes and St. Lawrence programs, underscoring its commitment to protect and preserve these internationally significant shared ecosystems.

The Government will also move forward on its Oceans Action Plan by maximizing the use and development of oceans technology, establishing a network of marine protected areas, implementing integrated management plans, and enhancing the enforcement of rules governing oceans and fisheries, including rules governing straddling stocks.

A ROLE OF PRIDE AND INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD

In today's world, effective international engagement is needed to advance national aspirations. Now that time and distance have lost their isolating effect, it is no longer possible to separate domestic and international policies. Canada's internationalism is a real advantage, but we must find new ways to express it if we are to effectively assert our interests and project our values in a changing world.

Just as Canada's domestic and international policies must work in concert, so too must our defence, diplomacy, development and trade efforts work in concert. This fall, the Government will release a comprehensive International Policy Statement that will reflect this integration. Parliamentarians and other Canadians will have the opportunity to debate its analyses and proposed directions.

Meanwhile, the world does not wait. The new security threats that face Canada demand new approaches immediately. The Government has already responded. In April of this year, it introduced Canada's first-ever comprehensive National Security Policy, which will ensure a more focused and integrated approach to securing our open society. The Government is now implementing this policy. In this context, the Government is also deepening cooperation with the United States on mutual assistance in the event of major natural or human-caused emergencies.

This new context requires us to manage wisely our relationship with the United States, to know our friend better, and to strengthen our economic and security relations. Our relationship must be built on shared values, on mutual respect, and on a strong and independent voice for Canada.

Enhancing Canada's security means that we have to invest more in our military as part of defending ourselves at home, in North America and in the world. We have to earn our way in the world. But ours will never be the biggest military force, so it must be smart, strategic and focused.

Canada's proud tradition as a leader in peacekeeping is being tested today by increasing demands in extremely dangerous and politically complicated situations, often involving failed and failing states. We have seen what extraordinary work Canadian men and women can do in places like Afghanistan, Bosnia and Haiti. We know that Canadians are among the best in the world in meeting the challenge of being soldiers to make the peace, diplomats to negotiate the peace and aid workers to nurture the peace.

That is why the Government will be increasing our regular forces by some 5,000 troops and our reserves by 3,000 so that they may be better prepared and equipped to meet these challenges.

As Darfur and other situations have shown, sometimes intervention is best achieved by regional forces attuned to their cultural and geographic conditions. In such cases, particularly in Africa, Canada intends to continue playing a role by training regional peacekeepers, to prepare them to conduct challenging security operations within the principles of international humanitarian law.

In so many of the world's trouble spots, establishing order is only the first step. Poverty, despair and violence are usually rooted in failed institutions of basic governance and rule of law. This is where Canada, with its commitment to pluralism and human rights, can make a unique contribution.

That is why the Government is establishing the Canada Corps. Its mandate is first, to put our idealism to work by helping young Canadians bring their enthusiasm and energy to the world; second, to bring our skills and ideas to bear by ensuring that experts of all ages and backgrounds—for example, in governance, health, economics, human rights—can get to the places in the world that need them; and third, to coordinate the efforts of government and to work with civil society. The Canada Corps will bring the best of Canadian values and experience to the world.

For all that we as Canadians want to achieve, and for all that we want for others, we also need international institutions that work. Dealing with complex issues like the “responsibility to protect” and managing the global commons will require leadership from all continents—from North and South. For that reason, the Government will work to bring about a meeting of G20 leaders to address common and pressing concerns, such as how to improve public health systems, combat terrorism and reform our multilateral institutions.

GOVERNING IN COMMON PURPOSE

The Government's agenda for this Parliament is based on a comprehensive strategy to build a prosperous and sustainable 21st-century economy for Canada; strengthen the country's social foundations; and secure for Canada a place of pride and influence in the world.

Supported by a committed and excellent public service, the Government will work diligently in this minority Parliament to address the priority areas it has identified. It will also introduce initiatives in many other areas, including commitments from the last Speech from the Throne, and will build on the work of Parliamentary committees, involve parliamentarians in the review of key appointments, and examine the need and options for reform of our democratic institutions, including electoral reform.

The Government invites members from both Chambers to join with it in the same democratic spirit: committed to unity and the inclusion of all regions and all voices, ready to work in common purpose on behalf of Canada.

Members of the House of Commons:

You will be asked to appropriate the funds required to carry out the services and expenditures authorized by Parliament.

Honourable Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Commons:

As you carry out your duties and exercise your responsibilities, may you be guided by Divine Providence.