



The Canada **We Want**



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE
to Open the Second Session of the Thirty-Seventh Parliament of Canada
September 30, 2002

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**Vertical lines in the margin indicate that the Governor General read the
passage in English.**





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

It is a pleasure to greet you in the Jubilee Year of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whom we will be welcoming to Canada very shortly.

We also mark this year the 50th anniversary of Canadian Governors General. To celebrate this, we invited to Rideau Hall an energetic group of one hundred 17- and 18-year-olds from every province and territory to participate in a Youth Forum on creating community. In Gaspé, in Nunavut, on Haida Gwaii, all across the country, we are meeting young people who are becoming catalysts for change, as they take their place as leaders in the fields they choose.

It is exciting and encouraging to hear what young people are saying and what they are doing. Already, they are innovative. They are diverse. And they will change things. Some of them will do so through journalism, the arts, business or the labour movement. Others will devote themselves to civic and public life, perhaps becoming in time your successors, to carry on the democratic traditions of Parliament to which you are committing your lives. Nothing is more precious and valuable than our way of creating a society through the exercise of our democratic rights as citizens.

And the sacrifices that some of our citizens make are deeply appreciated by their country. My trip in April to Germany, where our fallen and injured were brought from the tragic incident in Afghanistan, was emotionally shared by all Canadians, many of whom have expressed how much the sacrifice of these men has meant to them.

This kind of contribution, this kind of democratic participation, this kind of nurturing of young leadership make us what we are as a nation. It is a very precious life that we share as Canadians. And we must be prepared not only to praise it, but also to make sacrifices for it.

Canadians today are confident about their personal prospects and Canada's future. Less than ten years ago, our economy was in decline, our deficit and debt were rising out of control, our unity was under threat, our confidence was shaken.

Today, because of our collective efforts, we have new opportunities, new possibilities and new choices for the Canada we want.

We have established the foundations for great success: fiscal sovereignty, a unified country and a confident people. We will not put at risk the accomplishments of the last decade. We will continue to be prudent and live within our means.

Maintaining our fiscal sovereignty and a dynamic economy allows us to reach higher. To find new solutions to enduring problems. To set new goals and ambitious targets. To take responsibility for building the Canada we want, for ourselves and for future generations.

We now have a generation of Canadians who have grown up in the Internet world, a generation of Canadians who are global, at ease with change and diversity, optimistic and eager to create, innovate and excel. And who believe they can achieve their aspirations in Canada. Canada must tap into and unleash this energy.

The goal of the government is nothing less than making Canada a land of ever-widening opportunity. Ensuring that the benefits of the new economy touch every community and lift every family and every Canadian.

Working together, we can put in place the health care system for the 21st century. We can get Canada's children off welfare. We can close the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. We can tackle the challenge of climate change. We can be a world leader in innovation and learning, a magnet for talent and investment. We can build world-class cities and healthy communities. We can strengthen the bonds of shared citizenship and the partnership between government and Canadians. We can secure our place in North America and in the world as a mature country, confident in who we are and where we are headed.

■ This is the time for Canada.

CANADA AND THE WORLD

We live in uncertain times. The events of September 11 demonstrated that our progress at home can be affected in a moment by world events. We see unrest in many parts of the world. We still see far too much poverty.

The government will continue to work with its allies to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. Canada will continue to work through organizations such as the United Nations to ensure that the rule of international law is respected and enforced. At the same time, the government will remain vigilant and ready to ensure the protection of Canadians from emerging threats, and will work with the United States to address our shared security needs.

But there is more we can do. Canada has a long history of contributing solutions to global problems. We will continue to speak out in every forum for the values of pluralism, freedom and democracy, and contribute to reducing the growing global divide between rich and poor. We will double our development assistance by the year 2010, and earmark at least half of that increase for Africa as part of Canada's support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. As of January 1, 2003, Canada will eliminate tariffs and quotas on almost all products from the least-developed countries.

In the face of rapid change and uncertainty, the government must engage Canadians in a discussion about the role that Canada will play in the world. Before the end of this mandate, the government will set out a long-term direction on international and defence policy that reflects our values and interests and ensures that Canada's military is equipped to fulfill the demands placed upon it.

PUTTING IN PLACE THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

No issue touches Canadians more deeply than health care. Our health care system is a practical expression of the values that define us as a country. Of the willingness of Canadians to share risk and accept responsibility for one another.

In 2000, all First Ministers reached an agreement on health care that reinforced our collective commitment to the principles of medicare, to working collaboratively to reform our system and to measure and report on our progress. Resources were provided. Work is proceeding. And the first public report is now available.

Building on this work, Roy Romanow was appointed to lead a commission on the longer-term future of Canada's publicly funded health care system. He will report in November.

The Prime Minister will convene a First Ministers Meeting early in 2003 to put in place a comprehensive plan for reform, including enhanced accountability to Canadians and the necessary federal long-term investments, which will be included in the next budget.

At the same time, the government will move ahead with an action plan in health policy areas under its direct responsibility. Under this plan, it will renew federal health protection legislation to better address emerging risks, adapt to modern technology and emphasize prevention. The government will take steps to strengthen the security of Canada's food system and reintroduce pesticides legislation to protect the health of Canadians, particularly children. It will work with its partners to develop a national strategy for healthy living, physical activity and sport, and will convene the first ever national summit on these issues in 2003. The government will take further action to close the gap in health status between Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal Canadians by putting in place a First Nations Health Promotion and Disease Prevention strategy with a targeted immunization program, and by working with its partners to improve health care delivery on-reserve.

The government will also modify existing programs to ensure that Canadians can provide compassionate care for a gravely ill or dying child, parent or spouse without putting their jobs or incomes at risk.

HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY

Five years ago, Canada's governments launched the National Children's Agenda, engaging Canadians in every part of the country on how to ensure that all Canadian children have a good start in life; that families with children have the tools they need to provide care and nurturing.

No investments have greater payoff. No investments do more to break the cycle of poverty and dependency, and to maximize the potential of every Canadian.

The government will put in place a long-term investment plan to allow poor families to break out of the welfare trap so that children born into poverty do not carry the consequences of that poverty throughout their lives. It will again significantly increase the National Child Benefit for poor families, and will work with its partners to increase access to early learning opportunities and to quality child care, particularly for poor and lone-parent families. It will also put in place targeted measures for low-income families caring for severely disabled children, to help meet the needs of the child and of the family.

The government will take additional measures to address the gap in life chances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. It will put in place early childhood development programs for First Nations, expanding Aboriginal Headstart, improving parental supports and providing Aboriginal communities with the tools to address fetal alcohol syndrome and its effects. The most enduring contribution Canada can make to First Nations is to raise the standard of education on-reserve. The government will work with the recently created National Working Group on

Education to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children, and take immediate steps to help First Nations children with special learning needs.

Parents have the primary responsibility for providing their children with the tools to learn and develop. But Canadians also have a collective responsibility to protect Canada's children from exploitation in all its forms, and from the consequences of family breakdown.

The government will therefore reform the Criminal Code to increase the penalties for abuse and neglect, and provide more sensitive treatment for children who take part in justice proceedings as victims or as witnesses. It will also reform family law, putting greater emphasis on the best interests of the child; expand the Unified Family Courts; and ensure that appropriate child and family services are available.

THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Canadians know that our health and the health of our children, the quality of life in our communities and our continued economic prosperity depend on a healthy environment.

On a global scale, the problem of climate change is creating new health and environmental risks and threatens to become the defining challenge for generations to come.

As a northern country, Canadians will feel some of the effects of climate change sooner than will others. As a prosperous country, we must and will do our part.

As part of the Kyoto Protocol, Canada agreed to obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2012. Extensive consultations and preparatory work followed. The government is now intensifying consultations with Canadians, industry and provinces to develop an implementation strategy to meet Canada's obligations over the next ten years. Before the end of this year, the government will bring forward a resolution to Parliament on the issue of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Meeting

this challenge must become a national project, calling upon the efforts and contributions of all Canadians, in all regions and sectors of the economy — producers and consumers, governments and citizens.

To conserve our wilderness areas, clean water sources and key habitat, the government will create ten new national parks and five new National Marine Conservation Areas over the next five years. It will improve the ecological integrity in Canada's existing national parks. It will reintroduce legislation to protect species at risk.

The government will accelerate the clean-up of federal contaminated sites in Canada. It will work with the United States to further improve air quality. It will accelerate its work with the provinces on improved national water quality guidelines, and ensure their implementation in areas of federal jurisdiction.

A MAGNET FOR TALENT AND INVESTMENT

The Canada we want requires a strong economy. The government will maintain its unwavering commitment to balanced budgets, disciplined spending, a declining ratio of debt-to-GDP, and fair and competitive taxes. It will build on its investments in research, literacy and education, and in competitive cities and healthy communities. It will also adjust its policies to enhance the climate for investment and talent. The government will reallocate resources to the highest priorities and transform old spending to new purposes.

SKILLS, LEARNING AND RESEARCH

The fuel of the new economy is knowledge. The government has invested heavily in providing Canada's schools and libraries with the information technology to connect young Canadians with the best information and knowledge the world has to offer. It has invested in access to universities and in excellence in university research because Canada's youth need and deserve the best education possible, and Canada needs universities that produce the best knowledge and the best graduates.

The government will build on these investments. It will continue to increase its funding to the federal granting councils to provide young Canadians greater support for graduate studies and research. It will work with universities on the indirect costs of research and on strategies for its commercialization to create opportunities for entrepreneurs and to fuel innovation. It will continue to work with small- and medium-sized enterprises in the development and application of new technologies in traditional and emerging sectors.

It will strengthen government science, integrating its efforts across departments and disciplines, and focussing on the priorities of Canadians.

In November, the Government of Canada will host the National Summit on Innovation and Learning. This will be an opportunity to position Canada as a world leader in such areas as health sciences, biotechnology and clean energy.

The economy of the 21st century will need workers who are lifelong learners, who can respond and adapt to change. Canada's labour market programs must be transformed to meet this challenge. To this end, the government will work with Canadians, provinces, sector councils, labour organizations and learning institutions to create the skills and learning architecture that Canada needs, and to promote workplace learning. This will include building our knowledge and reporting to Canadians about what is working and what is not.

The Youth Employment Strategy has been successful in increasing job opportunities and experience for young Canadians. But the employment needs of our youth are changing. Government strategies have to keep pace. Working with youth and other partners, the government will redirect its resources in this area to develop skills for the future and to help those who face the greatest barriers to employment. It will also work with the provinces to fast-track a comprehensive agreement to remove barriers to participation in work and learning for persons with disabilities.

The government will promote entrepreneurial skills and job creation among Aboriginal people by increasing support for Aboriginal Business Canada. It will also tailor and target its training programs to help Aboriginal and Inuit people participate in economic opportunities such as the development of Voisey Bay, northern gas pipelines and similar projects throughout Canada.

One of Canada's greatest assets — and a unique advantage in a globalized world is our openness to immigrants from every corner of the globe. The demographic realities of an aging population and slowing labour force growth place an even greater premium on this immigration advantage. Canada must continue to be the country that immigrants choose to find hope, hospitality and opportunity.

The government will work with its partners to break down the barriers to the recognition of foreign credentials and will fast-track skilled workers entering Canada with jobs already waiting for them. It will also position Canada as a destination of choice for talented foreign students and skilled workers by more aggressively selecting and recruiting through universities and in key embassies abroad.

SMART REGULATION

The knowledge economy requires new approaches to how we regulate. We need regulation to achieve the public good, and we need to regulate in a way that enhances the climate for investment and trust in the markets. The government will move forward with a smart regulation strategy to accelerate reforms in key areas to promote health and sustainability, to contribute to innovation and economic growth, and to reduce the administrative burden on business.

As part of this strategy, the government will adapt its intellectual property framework to enable Canada to be a world leader on emerging issues such as new life forms. It will speed up the regulatory process for drug approvals to ensure that Canadians have faster access to the safe drugs they need, creating a better climate for research in pharmaceuticals. It will work with provinces to implement a national system for the governance of research involving humans, including national research ethics and standards.

The government will revise Canadian copyright rules to ensure that Canada has a progressive regime that supports increased investment in knowledge and cultural works.

It will reintroduce legislation to amend the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. It will also streamline environmental assessment processes, including implementing a single window for projects such as the northern pipeline. To pursue its strategy over

the longer-term, the government will create an External Advisory Committee on Smart Regulation to recommend areas where government needs to redesign its regulatory approach to create and maintain a Canadian advantage.

The government will implement the recently announced Agricultural Policy Framework and related measures to promote innovation in that key sector, which is vital to rural Canada and all Canadians.

The Canada-US Smart Border Declaration contributes to both our national security and the free flow of people, goods and commerce across our shared border. The government will build on this work and increase its consular presence to expand fair and secure trade and commerce, and to brand Canada in the United States. It will continue to work bilaterally and multilaterally to resolve trade disputes over softwood lumber and agriculture.

Recent events in the United States have weakened confidence in capital markets, not only in that country, but around the world. The government has been working closely with all parties to bolster investor confidence and improve the efficiency and integrity of Canadian capital markets. In this regard, it will review and, where necessary, change its laws and strengthen enforcement to ensure that governance standards for federally incorporated companies and financial institutions remain of the highest order.

Many investors and businesses have expressed concern that Canada's fragmented securities regulatory structure is inadequate and an obstacle to growth. They have urged reform to ensure that businesses can efficiently access the financing they need to grow, and to assure Canadians that they will be treated fairly when they invest. Co-operation among governments will be necessary. The government will work with all participants to ensure that Canada has the modern and efficient securities regulatory system it needs.

COMPETITIVE CITIES AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Competitive cities and healthy communities are vital to our individual and national well-being, and to Canada's ability to attract and retain talent and investment. They require not only strong industries, but also safe neighbourhoods; not only a dynamic

labour force, but access to a rich and diverse cultural life. They require new partnerships, a new urban strategy, a new approach to healthy communities for the 21st century.

Modern infrastructure is key to the prosperity of our cities and the health of our communities. Working with provinces and municipalities, the government will put in place a ten-year program for infrastructure to accommodate long-term strategic initiatives essential to competitiveness and sustainable growth. Within this framework, it will introduce a new strategy for a safe, efficient and environmentally responsible transportation system that will help reduce congestion in our cities and bottlenecks in our trade corridors.

It will extend its investments in affordable housing for those whose needs are greatest, particularly in those Canadian cities where the problem is most acute. It will extend the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative to provide communities with the tools to plan and implement local strategies to help reduce homelessness.

In a number of cities, poverty is disproportionately concentrated among Aboriginal people. The government will work with interested provinces to expand on existing pilot programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal people living in cities.

The government will target its regional development activities to better meet the needs of the knowledge economy and address the distinct challenges of Canada's urban, rural and northern communities.

The government will work with Canada's largest cities to develop targeted strategies to reduce the barriers faced by new immigrants in settling into the social and economic life of their new communities. It will introduce targeted measures to help children of recent immigrants to learn French and English, so that they can realize the opportunities that brought their parents to this country.

The government will also implement a national drug strategy to address addiction while promoting public safety. It will expand the number of drug treatment courts. It will act on the results of parliamentary consultations with Canadians on options for change in our drug laws, including the possibility of the decriminalization of marijuana possession.

A NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS

Canada has a unique model of citizenship, based simultaneously on diversity and mutual responsibility. This model requires deliberate efforts to connect Canadians across their differences, to link them to their history and to enable their diverse voices to participate in choosing the Canada we want.

The government will ensure that as Canadians take charge of their future, they will have access to their history by creating a new institution that brings together the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada, providing new tools to reach Canadians, young and old. It will also strengthen key arts and heritage institutions and protect significant historic sites and buildings.

It will create more opportunities for young Canadians to help clean up our environment and assist in achieving Canada's global priorities, particularly in Africa.

It will reform our citizenship legislation to reassert the rights and reinforce the responsibilities that go with being Canadian.

It will put into action the accord it signed with the voluntary sector last December, to enable the sector to contribute to national priorities and represent the views of those too often excluded.

The government will work with provinces toward renewal of legal aid so that Canadians can have access to adequate legal representation before the courts.

Linguistic duality is at the heart of our collective identity. The government will implement an action plan on official languages that will focus on minority-language and second-language education, including the goal of doubling within ten years the number of high school graduates with a working knowledge of both English and French. It will support the development of minority English- and French-speaking communities, and expand access to services in their language in areas such as health. It will enhance the use of our two official languages in the federal public service, both in the workplace and when communicating with Canadians.

The government will reintroduce legislation to strengthen First Nations governance institutions — to support democratic principles, transparency and public accountability, and provide the tools to improve the quality of public administration in First Nations communities. It will work with these communities to build their capacity for economic and social development, and it will expand community-based justice approaches, particularly for youth living on reserves and Aboriginals in the North. The government will also work with Aboriginal people to preserve and enhance Aboriginal languages and cultures.

Canadians want their government to be open, accountable and responsive to their diverse and changing needs.

Early in this session, the government will provide clear guidance and better enforcement of the ethical standards expected of elected officials and senior public servants. The government will strengthen the legislation governing its relationship with lobbyists. And the government will introduce legislative changes to the financing of political parties and candidates for office.

Canadians know the value and importance of the role of government and of the need for excellence in the public service. The government will introduce long-awaited reforms for the public service to ensure that it can attract the diverse talent it needs to continue to serve Canadians well.

CONCLUSION

The Canada we want cannot happen by government acting alone or by citizens acting apart.

We know that by pursuing the common good, we pursue our own good; that a country is more than a collection of narrow interests, it is a common enterprise to which all can contribute.

The priorities we have outlined today build on the conviction that we must add to the work of our ancestors, and leave Canada a better place for future generations.

May our future, like our past, be a story of achievement.

■ *Fellow Canadians:*

■ Respectful of our history, confident in our future, let each of us do our part.

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.