



Hansard Address by Pierre Lemieux, Member of
Parliament for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell

Response to the Speech from the Throne

April 3, 2006

Address in Reply to the Speech to the Throne

The House proceeded to the consideration of the speech delivered by Her Excellency the Governor General at the opening of the session.

Mr. **Pierre Lemieux** (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with one of my colleagues.

I would like to begin by thanking the Governor General for graciously reading the Speech from the Throne. Her delivery was superb.

I would also like to take a moment to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your re-election to the House. I have no doubt that you will continue as the fair and impartial Speaker that parliamentarians and Canadians alike have come to know and respect.

[Translation]

I would like to officially thank the citizens of my constituency, Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, particularly the farmers, Franco-Ontarians, seniors, young people and families, and everyone who placed their trust in me.

[English]

I am very honoured that they have placed their trust in me and in our government. It is a great honour and privilege to stand here as their MP and to represent them in the House.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Prime Minister for having asked me to move the motion on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

[Translation]

I am honoured to address the House today in reply to the Speech from the Throne, which confirms our government's commitment to get Canada back on track by putting the needs of ordinary Canadians first.

[English]

Our government will be a government that delivers real results for all Canadians, be they families with young children, seniors who have worked hard to build this country, or young people just starting out. Simply put, the government will work for all Canadians, and ours will be a government of focused priorities. The priorities we will move on in the months ahead are the priorities of Canadians.

[Translation]

For example, introducing the federal accountability act will give Canadians the government they deserve, a government based on openness and accountability. Once adopted, this legislation will forever change how the federal government functions.

[English]

It will eliminate undue influence by banning businesses, unions and other organizations from donating to political parties and candidates.

[Translation]

It will prevent insiders from using their connections to lobby the government by prohibiting ministers, ministerial staff and senior political staff from lobbying for five years.

[English]

It will clean up the way federal grants, contributions and contracts are awarded by giving the Auditor General the power to conduct a complete review.

We are also going to deliver long overdue tax relief for all Canadians by cutting the GST from 7% to 6%, and eventually to 5%. Never will this government make the mistake of seeing taxpayers' money as its own. Canadians work hard to provide for themselves and for their families, and they deserve a break on their taxes so they can keep more of their hard-earned money.

[Translation]

We will also make Canadian streets safer by tackling crime and targeting those who create chaos in our communities.

This includes drug dealers, gangsters who endanger people's lives with illegal weapons, and sexual predators who attack our children.

We will ensure that those who commit serious crimes are severely punished.

[English]

This government is also going to move ahead with its promise to provide a helping hand to all Canadian families with young children, as opposed to the current discriminatory system that funds only one form of day care, ignoring the needs of many parents. As the father of five children, I am well aware that there is no one size fits all solution to child care, and so too does this government. Our choice in child care allowance will provide Canadian parents with the flexibility they need to make the child care choices that best fit their unique circumstances and needs.

Our plan will also create 125,000 new day care spaces over the next five years, which will be to the benefit of many Canadian families.

In short, under our plan, no Canadian family will be overlooked.

[Translation]

Our government will work to ensure that Canadian families receive the timely medical care they need.

Average Canadians have no choice but to rely on the public health care system, a system that is widely appreciated throughout the country and that must be protected and improved.

For many years, Canadians have agreed that every person, regardless of his or her financial situation, should have access to medically necessary services. This government could not agree more.

[English]

What we will not accept, however, is Canadians suffering, and in some cases dying, because timely treatment is not available. That is why this government will work with the provinces and territories to develop a patient wait times guarantee, to ensure that Canadians get the timely treatment they deserve.

[Translation]

Once in place, this guarantee will ensure that people who cannot receive timely treatment nearby can obtain it elsewhere at the government's expense.

[English]

In the months ahead, these will be our priorities: open accountable government, tax relief, cracking down on crime, choice on child care, and a better public health care system. These are our priorities because these are the priorities of Canadians.

Before I conclude, I would like to discuss an issue that is of particular interest to me: our Canadian Forces. I am honoured to have been able to serve our great country by devoting 20 years of my life to the military and to defending Canada. Our men and women in uniform are the finest in the world. Their dedication, professionalism and courage make them a source of great pride for Canadians across the country. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that is committed to doing what is right for these brave men and women.

Our government will turn the tide of neglect. We will ensure our military has the personnel necessary to defend Canadian sovereignty and to carry out our peacekeeping

responsibilities around the world. We will provide soldiers with the equipment they need to carry out their duties. We will restore Canada's influence on the international stage. Finally, we will ensure that veterans, those whose sacrifices are responsible for the Canada we know today, are treated with the respect they deserve by introducing a veterans bill of rights. This government will stand up for our military men and women because they bravely stand up for Canada each and every day.

Let me conclude by saying that I am very excited about the months ahead, for our government is committed to delivering positive change on the issues that matter most to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

This is why I am so pleased to be working with my colleagues in government and with members of the other parties to build a better Canada.

I am therefore delighted to move that the following address be presented to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I move:

To the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Chancellor and Principal Companion of the Order of Canada, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Military Merit, Chancellor and Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada:

May it please Your Excellency:

We, Her Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Commons of Canada in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Excellency for the gracious speech which Your Excellency has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament the Liberal government passed a budget that reduced income taxes from 16% to 15% on the first tax bracket and also increased the personal exemption by \$500. The savings to the average Canadian family making \$60,000 with two children was about \$400.

My question for the member is this. The government has now proposed to reduce the GST by one percentage point--

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South has the floor.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, what the government did not explain to Canadians, was what a 1% cut in the GST would mean to this average family. That family would have to purchase \$40,000 of taxable goods to get the same tax savings, which it will have to cut to pay for this unholy GST cut.

Does the member agree that a family making \$60,000 could not spend \$40,000 and does he understand and admit that companies may not even pass that savings on to those consumers?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on being the first to ask a question within this 39th Parliament.

As I mentioned in my speech, this is a very exciting time. We are at the beginning of a new session with a new government, and we are all here to work together to ensure that the priorities of Canadians are addressed. We as a government want to work with MPs from other parties. We also need to recognize, however, that on January 23 Canadians voted for change. They voted for a change in government, for a change in the manner in which the government conducts itself and for a change in policies.

Each of us here knows that Canadians have voted for change and so we cannot have it both ways. We cannot on the one hand acknowledge that Canadians want change, but on the other not want anything to change. This is what we see in that question. There are parties that do not want change. They want their policies advanced as if there had been no election. Our government's priorities were presented to Canadians during this past election and Canadians voted in favour of the government and of these priorities.

In response to the member's question specifically, under the previous government the GST burden on ordinary, hard-working Canadians doubled from \$15.9 billion to \$31.8 billion. Canadians want some of their hard earned money back.

[Translation]

The Speaker: We could perhaps go on to the next question. The hon. member for Windsor West has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member's maiden speech, as well as his 20 years of service in the armed forces of Canada. It is a very commendable attribute that should be recognized.

I would like to talk about the federal accountability act that has been proposed by the government. I have two specific questions to ask.

The first question is about freedom of information and whether he will agree with specific legislation that opens that up to all Canadians.

The second question is about banning floor-crossing in the chamber and whether he will support the NDP bill to stop it, a practice of which Canadians have grown very tired.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question on ATI, a standing committee will be investigating access to information and will be looking at the legislation that surrounds it. We want Canadians to have more access to an open and accountable government.

With respect to floor crossing, we are going to move ahead in this Parliament. We will be working together as MPs from different parties and will be examining that issue when it arises. Until that time, I defer that question.