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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, January 29, 2001

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 29, 2001

FIRST SESSION—37TH PARLIAMENT

• (1100)

[*English*]

The 36th parliament having been dissolved by proclamation on Sunday, October 22, 2000, and writs having been issued and returned, a new parliament was summoned to meet for the dispatch of business on Monday, January 29, 2001, and did accordingly meet on that day.

Monday, January 29, 2001

This being the day on which parliament was convoked by proclamation of Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada for the dispatch of business, and the members of the House being assembled:

William C. Corbett, Esquire, Clerk of the House of Commons, read to the House a letter from the administrative secretary to the Governor General informing her that the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, in her capacity as Deputy Governor General, would proceed to the Senate chamber to open the first session of the 37th Parliament of Canada at 11 a.m. on Monday, January 29, 2001, at Ottawa.

• (1110)

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Members of the House of Commons:

It is the desire of the Honourable the Deputy to Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada that this honourable House attend her immediately in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the House went up to the Senate chamber, where the Speaker of the Senate said:

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

I have it in command to let you know that Her Excellency the Governor General of Canada does not see fit to declare the causes of her summoning the present

Parliament of Canada until a Speaker of the House of Commons shall have been chosen, according to law; but tomorrow, Tuesday, January 30, 2001, at 2 p.m., Her Excellency will declare the causes of her calling parliament.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

And the House being returned to the Commons chamber:

The Clerk of the House: Pursuant to Standing Order 3, I invite Mr. Caccia, member for the electoral district of Davenport, to take the chair and preside over the election of a Speaker.

* * *

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): Dear colleagues, I would like to begin by congratulating all of you on your success in last November's election. As we know, getting used to the House is no easy matter, particularly if one is newly elected.

• (1130)

But as time goes along, the House starts to feel like home. To all those in the class of 2000, I extend a hearty welcome.

[*English*]

Having allegedly been around here for the past hundred years, a few observations might be in order.

We all know this is a place for debates, announcements, questions, petitions, a place where the public interest is pursued as seen from different perspectives and where we can also rise above partisanship.

It has been said that parliamentarians have a noble task to perform for they have the unique privilege of speaking for their electors, of engaging in the exploration of the long term and in anticipating the needs of generations to come.

As parliamentarians we have the confidence of those who elected us and an obligation to those who did not cast their vote for

Election of Speaker

us. As parliamentarians we all have the special mandate to implement the commitments made in the election campaign by our respective parties. As parliamentarians we all have an obligation to make this place productive, creative, relevant and meaningful.

Finally, the noble role assigned to the parliamentarian requires also that we treat this Chamber with care, gently and softly, respecting its rules and ensuring that the next generation of parliamentarians inherits an institution worthy of respect.

Let me note, as I did in 1997 when I had the honour to perform the same role, that the rules are silent on whether or not candidates for the position of Speaker can speak in the House before the vote is taken. Obviously, such a rule would give interested Canadians an opportunity to hear and see the candidates, perhaps for the first time, as most likely would be the case for the 47 newly elected members.

Such a rule, if adopted during the life of this 37th parliament, would become effective at the opening of the next Parliament of Canada. In doing so, Canadians would finally see institutionalized in this event a greater degree of transparency and informed choice in keeping with the growing expectations the public has from this venerable and vibrant institution.

We shall now proceed with the vote.

Pursuant to the standing orders the House will now proceed to elect a Speaker. The list of members who have withdrawn or are ineligible as candidates has been placed on each member's desk and is available at the table.

• (1135)

The list of members who are eligible as candidates has also been placed on each member's desk. It is available at the table and has been placed in each polling station.

After the Clerk has unsealed the ballots, I will suggest a method of proceeding which will help to accelerate the voting process.

It is quite clear that members know how to proceed. Hon. members are now asked to proceed with the vote. Once they vote they are to leave the area and take their seats.

The polling booths are now open.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1200)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): If there are any hon. members who have not voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now.

All members having voted, the Clerk will now proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my own vote.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): Before I suspend the sitting may I bring to the attention of hon. members that when the counting of the ballots has been completed there will be a very short bell calling the members back to the House. The sitting is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 12.03 p.m.)

• (1235)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 12.39 p.m.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): It is my duty to inform the House that a second ballot will be necessary.

The names of those members eligible for the second ballot are as follows:

Bakopanos, Eleni	McTeague, Dan
Kilger, Bob	Milliken, Peter
Lincoln, Clifford	White, Randy

If any hon. member whose name I just read wishes to withdraw as a candidate for the second ballot, will that member please rise in his or her place and state the reason.

• (1240)

For the benefit of hon. members, the revised alphabetical list of candidates for the second ballot will be placed in each polling station within the next five minutes at which time the voting will commence.

The polling booths are now open. The ballots will be green in colour.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1300)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): If there are any hon. members who have not voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.04 p.m.)

Election of Speaker

• (1325)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 1.28 p.m.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): Order, please. It is my duty to inform the House that a third ballot will be necessary.

The names of the members eligible for the third ballot are as follows:

Kilger, Bob	Milliken, Peter
Lincoln, Clifford	White, Randy
McTeague, Dan	

If any hon. member whose name I have just read wishes to withdraw as a candidate on the third ballot, will he please rise in his place and do so.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1350)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): If there are any hon. members who have not voted yet, will they please vote now.

All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.52 p.m.)

• (1410)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 2.11 p.m.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): It is my duty to inform the House that a fourth ballot will be necessary.

The following members are eligible for the fourth ballot:

Kilger, Bob	Milliken, Peter
Lincoln, Clifford	White, Randy

If any hon. member whose name the Chair has just announced to the House wishes to withdraw as a candidate on the fourth ballot, will he please rise in his place and do so.

While the Clerk is unsealing the ballots, the Chair would like to indicate that the fourth ballot will be of a different colour and that the list of the names of candidates on this ballot will be placed in each polling station shortly.

• (1415)

The polling booths are now open.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1430)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): If there are any hon. members who have not voted and wish to do so, will they please vote now.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 2.31 p.m.)

• (1455)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 2.58 p.m.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): It is my duty to inform the House that a fifth ballot will be necessary.

The names of members eligible for the fifth ballot are as follows:

Kilger, Bob	White, Randy
Milliken, Peter	

If any hon. member whose name the Chair has just announced wishes to withdraw as a candidate on the fifth ballot, will he please rise in his place and do so.

A revised alphabetical list of candidates for the fifth ballot will be placed in each polling station shortly.

(Members were issued ballots and marked their ballots in secret at voting stations)

• (1520)

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): If there are any hon. members who have not voted, would they please come forward.

All members having voted, I do now instruct the Clerk to proceed with the counting of the ballots after I have cast my ballot.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3.21 p.m.)

• (1545)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 3.48 p.m.

(The Clerk of the House having provided the Presiding Officer with the name of the member having received a majority of the votes cast:)

Election of Speaker

The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia): It is my duty to inform the House that Peter Milliken, member for the electoral district of Kingston and the Islands, has been duly elected Speaker of this House.

It is with great pleasure that I do now invite the hon. member to take the chair.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

(The Presiding Officer having vacated the chair, and the mace having been laid under the table, conducted Mr. Milliken from his seat in the House to the chair)

• (1550)

The Speaker: Hon. members, I beg to return my humble acknowledgements to the House for the great honour you have been pleased to confer upon me in choosing me to be your Speaker.

With those historic words, which are very historic because they have been used so often, I want to say how much I appreciate the kind support of all hon. members throughout the period from election day on November 27 to today.

[*Translation*]

Over the past two months, I have had the opportunity to speak to a number of members by phone or in person. It was a great experience to discuss the business of this House with you. It was a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak with my colleagues in the House before, during and after the election.

[*English*]

I have appreciated very much your kind words and your support today in the election. I am very grateful that you have chosen me to be the Speaker of the House.

I also want to express my thanks to the electors of Kingston and the Islands who have on four occasions chosen me to be their representative in the House.

It is a great honour to be a member of parliament. Those of you who are new in the House have now realized, I am sure, what a great experience it is. I well remember my first day in the House in 1988 when Mr. Speaker Fraser was elected to be the Speaker of the House, on one ballot, frankly.

I realized then, sitting in my seat, that the House was complete because we had chosen a Speaker and we were then a House complete and ready to act as the House of Commons, which of course the law requires the House to do. We have now done it.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your support.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the constituents of Kingston and the Islands for all they have done for me over the years I have represented them here in the House.

[*English*]

As many of you will discover, your constituents will be very kind to you. You will have wonderful interaction with them. You will get a lot of encouragement in all that you do in the House, of course assuming it is reasonable. You will also enjoy interaction on a regular basis by phone and by correspondence. In particular, I hope new members will find the experience rich and rewarding. I certainly have in my 12 years and I continue to find it so.

I would like to pass on my gratitude to my family, who have worked for me in election campaigns in Kingston for the last 12 years. A number of them are here today. Perhaps you would permit me to indicate those who are here. My mother, Peg Milliken, is sitting in the gallery. With her are my sister Amanda and her husband Marc; my brother Bill and his wife Pat; my sister Catherine and her son Ben McIlquham; and my dad, John Milliken.

• (1555)

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Throughout all the elections in which I have been involved, they have been of great help to me. I know that my colleagues have had the same experience in their constituencies, and I wanted to share that with the House today.

Finally I want to say one other important thing.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker cannot do his job unless he has the ongoing support of the honourable members, not just some of them but all members of the House. I am well aware that, from time to time, the Speaker will make a decision that will not be totally acceptable to one group or another in the House. That is the nature of the House.

[*English*]

For the most part, even if the decision is one that some hon. members do not like on a particular day, I hope that you will continue to support the Speaker, because without your active support and co-operation it would be impossible for any Speaker to do his or her job in the House.

I look forward to having a wonderful experience working with you in trying to make the House as great an institution as I believe the House of Commons is and always can be. We will work together to make this 37th parliament a great parliament. I look forward to the opportunity of working with each one of you to make that happen.

Election of Speaker

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

And the mace having been laid upon the table:

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): It is a very great pleasure for me to call you Mr. Speaker for the first time, dear member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*English*]

It is for all of us a great occasion on which to congratulate you. You have had a lot of experience and have served the House of Commons for a long time. I am told that when you were at the advanced age of eight you said that you wanted to be the Speaker of the House of Commons. You have been a very persistent person and I congratulate you for that.

I know we will all be well served. You have devoted many years to learning the rules and the friendships you have with everybody will help you. You will be a very distinguished Speaker.

[*Translation*]

And so, I wish you the best of luck. I am sure that all members are pleased to have made a choice this afternoon. We know we will be well served indeed with you in the Chair in years to come.

[*English*]

I take this occasion to congratulate everybody who offered to serve as Speaker. They are all very good people and they would have served us very well.

However, as we know, in an election only one can finish at the top and it is your fate today. We know that the others would have been very good and we have to be grateful to them. They all came to our caucus yesterday and made very good presentations. It was a delight to listen to their views. I was thinking about the difficulty that many of us would have today in the election, but now we have to turn the page. I want to thank them all for offering their services.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

This is what the House of Commons and democracy are all about. We put ideas forward, we do not always get our way, but we know that if we act in good faith and our ideas make sense, they will eventually be incorporated in House of Commons procedures and be part of the lives of all members.

I offer you, Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons, my expressions of respect and my wishes for success.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate you first. I am told you are thoughtful and studious, a man with a passion for the rules and procedures of parliament. That is interesting.

Rest assured that the official opposition will support you, not necessarily in examining all the rules and procedures, but certainly in maintaining decorum and respect in this House.

[*English*]

It was interesting to note today, as you were dragged most unwillingly to the chair, how it was reflecting a centuries old reality that at many times it was a high risk position. In fact, one could literally risk one's head depending on the decisions that were made.

Today, by a happy coincidence, you are comforted by the presence of Speakers from across the country who are in the galleries and whom I am sure you will be introducing. I have met with each one of them and I can assure you that their hearts and heads appear to be in the right place. I think that will also be your future.

As the Prime Minister indicated, the interesting work that took place in the caucuses was, I believe, somewhat historic. If you reflect back, as I am sure you could, it was Louis-Joseph Papineau who was elected as Speaker of the Assembly of Lower Canada in 1827. When he presented himself for the formal ratification to the governor, the governor actually refused his ratification thinking that he would send him back to the assembly and the members would then show deference to the governor and change their view.

In fact, it was a serious moment in history because the members said no. They said that it was up to the members to decide these things. Almost a year went by in which the activities of the assembly did not take place. It was only then that the governor said yes, and that the vote and the will of the members took place.

I encourage all members, after the demonstration we have seen today of working together and voting freely, to show a similar resolve in some of the parliamentary obstacles that still lie ahead of us and to work together for the good of all Canadians on whose behalf we were sent here.

Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to offer my congratulations to you. I know you have long dreamt of this. It proves that tenacity has its rewards. We will take note.

I would like as well to congratulate those who put their name forward for this position today. I think it is one of the important

Election of Speaker

jobs of the House, permitting debate even when we do not share—especially when we do not share—the same ideas. As the English say: “To agree on how to disagree”.

I have no doubt that you will direct our proceedings with an eye on both sides of the House. I am announcing my intention to ask the National Film Board to begin preparations now for the sequel to *The Custodian of the Hill*.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker for this House, which will really be beginning tomorrow.

[English]

On behalf of my party, I want to extend our hearty congratulations and express a vote of thanks to all members who put themselves forward in order to serve all members of the House in the role of Speaker.

• (1605)

[Translation]

It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Speaker elected.

[English]

When parliament implemented the recommendation of the McGrath committee to establish the election of the Speaker by secret ballot, it was an important step forward. It was an important symbol in establishing the non-partisan nature of the Speaker. It was also intended to be a step in the direction of important parliamentary reform.

Mr. Speaker, all members share with you an interest in and responsibility for moving forward with other parliamentary reforms. Providing the necessary leadership in this regard should not be your responsibility alone, but I do hope and genuinely believe that you will show such leadership.

You have been a serious student of parliamentary procedure. In your role as Deputy Speaker you have always presided over this Chamber fairly, firmly, and with a twinkle in your eye. I think that is important. Unfortunately we are not quite as able to see the twinkle in the Speaker's eye today from this vantage point.

In addition to being very serious about the importance of the role and its non-partisan nature, the Speaker elected today genuinely loves this parliament, loves the role that has been bestowed upon him, and will discharge his obligations with a real sense of joy and fun that will benefit all of us.

I want to just say one word to the Speaker's family members who are here. Many think that graduating from Queen's University is the highest honour a family member could achieve. In addition to having honoured your family by graduating from Queen's Univer-

sity, and having been four times elected to represent the people of Kingston and the Islands, you have today enjoyed the ultimate confidence of your peers in being elected to serve us, and thereby serve the people of Canada, in the role of Speaker of the 37th parliament.

On behalf of my colleagues I want to wish you *bonne chance, félicitations et bonne santé*. Let the work begin.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary-Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, may I extend my congratulations to you. There is nothing extraordinary about the member for Kingston and the Islands playing such an important role in the life of parliament, nor is it the first time such a thing has happened. Sir John A. Macdonald, as well as Flora MacDonald, have represented this riding. It is a riding that has a strong tradition of service to the country and, today, you are part of that tradition.

[English]

I also congratulate the other candidates who put their names forward. I encouraged the members of my caucus not to put their names forward for this, and you are just fortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member for Saint John followed my advice on this occasion.

Mr. Speaker, we all recognize your long interest in this institution. As the Prime Minister said, you were a student of this institution before you were a member here. You understand the reason there is a parliament. You understand the responsibilities of this institution. You understand the importance of treating each member here as an individual with equal rights and equal responsibilities.

We as your constituents will be holding you to account for that view as we go forward.

• (1610)

We also all know that we are meeting at a time and electing a Speaker at a time when there is a declining respect for parliament and the profession of politics as a whole. It is a responsibility upon all of us in the next four years to ensure that we change that pattern and re-establish a respect for this institution.

That has to do with more than just comportment on the floor of the House. It has to do with more than what might be called respect. It also has to do with ensuring that this place becomes a House that has the power to determine the destiny of the country.

The House of Commons was established to have members of parliament with power, to have influence over affairs and a parliament with power to control the spending of government. We are all equal here.

There is a great difference between a government and a parliament. In a government there is a *primus inter pares*. The Prime

Opening of Session

Minister is a leader among others but not here. In the House of Commons we are all equal as members of parliament. With the greatest of respect to you, we expect to be treated that way in the days to come.

The House of Commons itself will consider changes in the rules and the regulations that need to be introduced. We are counting upon you to ensure that the rules now in place are interpreted in a sense of fairness and equality and make the House earn the respect of the people of the country. We all want to serve our country. We know you do too.

We congratulate you on your election today. On behalf of my party we look forward to working very constructively with you in the interests of parliament and of Canada.

The Speaker: I thank all hon. members for their very kind comments.

[*Translation*]

In my maiden speech, I forgot to thank all the other candidates from both sides of the House. It was a pleasure to work with them during the election period.

[*English*]

I must say that I think all of us enjoyed very cordial and pleasant relations during the campaign, if we can call it such, and particularly at the all candidates meetings yesterday and this morning when we made our presentations.

I thank all of them for being so graceful and pleasant colleagues in the election.

* * *

OPENING OF SESSION

The Speaker read to the House a letter from the Deputy Secretary to the Governor General informing him that Her Excellency, the Right Hon. Adrienne Clarkson, the Governor General of Canada and His Excellency John Ralston Saul, would arrive at the Peace Tower at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, January 30, 2001, and when it has been indicated that all is in readiness, their Excellencies would proceed to the chamber of the Senate to formally open the first session of the 37th Parliament of Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I also wish to inform the House of the presence in the gallery of speakers of Canada's provincial legislatures: the honourable Bev Harrison, the honourable Kevin O'Brien, the honourable Lloyd Snow, the honourable Ron Osika, the honourable Tony Whitford, the honourable Murray Scott, and the honourable Mildred Dover.

If they would all rise, we would be delighted to welcome them to the House of Commons today.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. at which time the House will proceed to the Senate, where Her Excellency will open the first session of the 37th parliament.

(The House adjourned at 4.15 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, January 29, 2001

FIRST SESSION—37TH PARLIAMENT			
Opening of Parliament	1	The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	3
The Clerk of the House	1	Suspension of Sitting	
		(The sitting of the House was suspended at 2.31 p.m.)	3
Election of Speaker		Sitting Resumed	
The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	1	The House resumed at 2.58 p.m.	3
The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	2	The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	3
Suspension of Sitting		Suspension of Sitting	
The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	2	(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3.21 p.m.)	3
(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1203 p.m.)	2	Sitting Resumed	
Sitting Resumed		The House resumed at 3.48 p.m.	3
The House resumed at 12.39 p.m.	2	The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	4
The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	2	The Speaker	4
Suspension of Sitting		Mr. Chrétien	5
(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.04 p.m.)	2	Mr. Day	5
Sitting Resumed		Mr. Duceppe	5
The House resumed at 1.28 p.m.	3	Ms. McDonough	6
The Presiding Officer (Mr. Caccia)	3	Mr. Clark	6
Suspension of Sitting		Opening of Session	
(The sitting of the House was suspended at 1.52 p.m.)	3	Presence in Gallery	
Sitting Resumed		The Speaker	7
The House resumed at 2.11 p.m.	3		

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