

A Canada Strong & Free



The Hon. Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, speaks about the state of Canada's economy at the Fraser Institute's annual gala event

THE fourth annual gala dinner celebrating Fraser Institute Senior Fellows Mike Harris' and Preston Manning's *Canada Strong & Free* project took place on November 24, 2008, at the Fairmont Château Laurier in Ottawa.

The *Canada Strong & Free* series was launched by Harris and Manning to provide an overarching vision that highlights the policy steps Canada must take to ensure that Canadians can enjoy the highest quality of life and the well performing economy, and can exercise their freedom in the security of the best-governed democratic federation in the world.

The Honourable Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance and this year's gala dinner guest speaker, was introduced by Mike Harris, who also provided a brief introduction to the *Canada Strong & Free* project. The project has included a range of concrete policy proposals that, if implemented, would help Canada expand freedom of choice and quality of service in education, child care, and health care; improve Canada's democracy; maximize economic prosperity by striking a new balance between economic freedom and regulation, taxation and government spending; and help Canadian foreign policy makers to strengthen our international position and maximize the benefits we gain from international trade.

This sold-out event was attended by over 30 members of parliament and the senators from various parties, including a

number of cabinet ministers. The Fraser Institute's growing international profile was highlighted by the presence of a number of senior foreign representatives, including the Ambassador of Iraq, His Excellency Howar Ziad.

Minister Flaherty's speech focused on the state of Canada's economy and the global threats and opportunities Canada faces. He shared his insights into the current crisis, noting the overwhelmingly negative view expressed by the G20 finance ministers in relation to their national and the international economic climate at the recent summit.

While the Minister stressed that Canada's past prudence means that it is in an enviable position to meet the economic challenges ahead, he also discussed the measures the government would take to minimize the impact of the global economic tidal wave on our country. These measures include a stimulus package that will be adopted by March 2009, steps to reduce barriers to interprovincial trade, and the creation of a single national securities regulator. Minister Flaherty also emphasized that taxes in Canada would remain low and that a deficit, if it occurred, would be a temporary and short-term departure from Canada's economic plan.

This year's *Canada Strong & Free* gala marks the start of a new endeavour for the Fraser Institute as we establish a permanent office and presence in Ottawa. ■