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fundamental and far reaching of these is the government's review of Canada's social security system.

The Minister for Human Resources Development is leading this review. He has already launched a dialogue with Canadians and the provinces on our social security system. The entire range of social programs and issues will be covered in this review. They include unemployment insurance, training and other employment programs, the Canada assistance plan, security for families and children, assistance for persons with disabilities, post-secondary education and student loans.

• (2105)

The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development will begin consultations on the action plan in the very near future. Members of this House will be invited to undertake their own consultations.

Redesigning services and programs to meet the real needs of Canadians is absolutely imperative to ensure that the most valued services and programs are delivered efficiently and affordably. However, it is just as important that public servants are ready and equipped to deliver these services.

As part of this broader re-engineering effort, the government released the blueprint for renewing government services using information technology. The blueprint contains a vision of how the government can use today's information technology to deliver responsive and affordable services. It identifies the need for a government wide electronic information infrastructure to support service delivery renewal.

The common infrastructure will allow the development of knowledgeable employees free from organizational constraints and able to answer questions and deal with the programs of a number of federal governments.

The blueprint is one of many approaches to advancing the one-stop shopping concept and eliminating the stovepipe attributable to government organizations.

The government is taking other measures to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent wisely, with true consideration given to real need. For example, with the introduction of operating budgets managers were provided with one sum of money to cover employee costs and operating and maintenance costs. This eliminated the person year control system. This person year control system often acted as a barrier to improving services to Canadians by not allowing managers to achieve the right input mix of staff, services and equipment.

To cut down on the wasteful year end spending practices that we often read about in the Auditor General's annual reports, departments were allowed to carry forward from one fiscal year to the next 2 per cent of their operating budgets. There was therefore no need to rush out and purchase computers or lab

equipment that departments did not need right away but knew they were going to need in the next fiscal year.

This government is currently evaluating whether the 2 per cent carry forward has been effective in eliminating the so-called year end spending binge or whether it needs to be increased to 5 per cent. I am confident that the President of the Treasury Board will advise us of the results of this study in due course.

Departments and agencies that are closely located are starting to share common services like meeting rooms, libraries, internal mail distribution, to free resources that have been used in this kind of duplicative and costly overhead. To date there are over 200 such initiatives being discussed or implemented in every province across the country.

We are streamlining and updating our payments and procurement processes through the use of modern technology. This will have tremendous benefits both in terms of cost avoidance and in terms of better service to those firms that want to sell goods and services to the government.

In conclusion, let me assure hon. members of this House that the government intends to keep its pledge to deliver the services Canadians want and need in an affordable and efficient manner.

I have talked today about a number of management initiatives the government is pursuing. The list is just a start. It is just a beginning. As we look at how we are serving Canadians and delivering our programs, as we continually strive to learn and improve, other such initiatives will follow.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. I would like to ask a question related to the infrastructure program.

Canadians will remember that recently the United Nations had a study which said that Canada was number one in the world to live. However, if you looked more closely at that study, when the status of women in Canada was factored in Canada dropped to ninth place of the most favourable to live in the world. The same study also cited that women's net income is 51.5 per cent of that of men in Canada which is one of the reasons that we scored so low in terms of the status of women in Canada.

• (2110)

The infrastructure program was certainly in our jobs plan. The New Democratic Party supported having an infrastructure program. We think it is very important.

It is true however that the majority of jobs in that infrastructure plan will provide jobs for men. I think this is good. I am not suggesting that we should not be doing that but I would like to ask the member if in his government's plans, in his own looking into the infrastructure program or other employment programs, he would both support and perhaps give some examples of how the Liberal government has directly decided to address the very serious issue of poverty among women and increasing unem-