

We have a difficult and challenging task before us: to restore integrity to government and erase public cynicism. As one parliamentarian I stand here today and say to the constituents in York—Simcoe, to Canadians from across this land, and to my colleagues on the other side of this House: We have the political will to open dialogue. We have the political will to renew the social, economic and political institutions of the country.

• (1830)

This is the reason I decided to run for office. I believed it is important, now more than ever, to rebuild the trust that has been broken between the people of Canada and their elected officials. I am sure that many of my hon. colleagues in this House have similar goals.

As Canadians, the most important thing we can remember is that we are in this together.

When I was elected a member of Parliament I did not stop being a citizen of Canada. I also have a stake in this. I have a family that I love dearly, a community that I am committed to and I have a country that I honour.

Like other Canadians across the nation, like my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House, I want this country to succeed. I want this Parliament to succeed.

My colleagues and I need all Canadians to have patience because as the hon. Minister of Finance said yesterday in his speech, the challenge today is not to rush. The challenge is to get things right.

We are not asking Canadians to have patience while the government sits back and does nothing. We have acted on our commitments and will continue to do so. We have fulfilled our promises to reinstate the court challenges program and to implement the national infrastructure program, the youth services program, the aboriginal head start program, the women's centres of excellence, the Canadian technology network, as well as many others.

The red book lives in this budget.

We need to have an opportunity for ideas to be generated and tested without being torn down. Creative juices are quick to freeze in a climate of frosty, unconstructive criticism. Now more than ever, it is necessary to develop alternative understandings and approaches to problem solving.

To paraphrase Albert Einstein, everything has changed but for our way of thinking.

If we are to approach government differently, we must all understand that not only government must change but we must change as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am very sorry to interrupt the member during her maiden speech but is there unanimous consent to let her finish, another four or five minutes?

The Budget

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mrs. Kraft Sloan: I thank my hon. colleagues in the House for the patience they have shown me.

Government has a responsibility for taking leadership to create the framework and environment necessary for open, inclusive dialogue. The issue now is for government to continue to build on the consultation process that has lead up to this budget.

As members of Parliament we can support this process in our own ridings.

Fairness and equity are important principles upon which this budget is based. These principles must continue to be the cornerstones upon which the consultation process rests.

Equity is served when consultation is inclusive, when all perspectives that represent the differing aspects of Canadian diversity are respected and validated.

Our diversity arises from geography, race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, physical and intellectual capabilities, class, education and physical appearance, among many others. Equity is served when our intergenerational responsibilities are acknowledged, when our global roles and relationships are honoured.

Equity is also served when the natural environment is respected.

All costs, be they social, health or ecological, are economic in the long run. It is very important that the government, through these consultations, finds a way to include a new accounting, a new way to value the ecological and health benefits and costs that government programs, subsidies and taxes provide.

This new, ongoing budgetary consultation process, coupled with the review and renewal of major government departments and policies, particularly human resources, health, defence, and industry, means that this government is serious about taking action to meet the central challenges facing this nation.

This results in the kind of responsible government Canadians demand and deserve.

It was in my riding of York—Simcoe where the seeds of responsible government were first sown in Upper Canada. It was here that the rebel, William Lyon Mackenzie, joined forces with the farmers and small business owners to challenge the Tory family compact.

Although it has been over 150 years since responsible government has been instituted, the descendants of these rebels have carried on the tradition of farming and operating small businesses in York—Simcoe, a riding which I am proud to represent.

Today their farms grace the landscape of New Tecumseh, King, east and west Gwillimbury. The world famous Holland Marsh is located near Bradford. Small businesses were and are still the heart of the economic engine in communities like Newmarket and Bradford. Their trades have always been carried