

Canadians are cynical, yes. They are very cynical about the government. They do not want their members of Parliament to be in their constituencies listening on the weekend in the coffee shops, in their constituency office, at a Rotary Club or a business luncheon or at an ethnic group sitting.

That is not what Canadians want. It is part of the equation. It is a very important but small part. Canadians want their members of Parliament to act on their behalf. What better example of hypocrisy of the government House leader and the government opposite than the goods and services tax?

Every Canadian I have talked to in my constituency, every small business person, everyone who pays taxes in this country—we have had some unprecedented levels in tax increases with this particular government—have opposed the goods and services tax.

They have petitioned members of Parliament. They have petitioned ministers of the Crown. We have had a lengthy debate in the House. We have had a lengthy debate in the Senate. We have had committees travel this country and what has happened? The government has said: “Up yours, we are not going to listen”. So what is this argument, this smokescreen of spending more time so we can find out the problems? That is fine, but what are we going to do about the problems? The Conservatives did nothing with regard to the GST. It had 57 per cent of the Canadian population against it in the last federal election. It has many economic measures which are opposed by labour groups, by various regions in this country, whether it be health care, whether it be post-secondary education, a whole host of things.

The argument is being made and written by some of the editorial writers in this country that Parliament will become more efficient, that yes, it is wise to send members to their constituencies. No one has said it is not wise to send members to their constituencies, but do they ever stop and think that a government has to act when it talks and when it listens to people? This government does not listen to people because if it did, it would not be where it is in the polls today.

### *Government Orders*

I find it rather shocking and disturbing that the government House leader would come forward today and say: “Canadians are cynical”. Do not paint every politician, every political party with the same brush. We are the ones who opposed the free trade agreement. We are the ones who opposed the goods and services tax. We are the ones who opposed the cutbacks with regard to health care in this country, with regard to post-secondary education. We are the ones who opposed the cutbacks to VIA Rail, the privatization of some of our Crown corporations. We are the ones who opposed the unprecedented level of higher taxation in this country.

This government has not listened. Do not tell me, do not tell my party and certainly do not tell the Canadian people that all of a sudden the Conservatives have taken a shower and all of the toxics inside have now come out and have gone and that they are going to start listening to Canadians because they are 18 months before a general federal election. Let us not be cynical, Mr. government House leader. Let us not be cynical. Let us be candid. Let us be realistic. Let us be pragmatic. Let us be honest with ourselves that these rule changes are not in the best interest of Parliament. They may be in the best interest of a few ministers of the Crown and maybe a few backbenchers on the other side who wish to get to the constituencies a little bit more often.

Surely to God we can work out systems within our respective caucuses to allow members of Parliament, if the need be, to spend more time in their constituencies if the issues and the subject matter arise. That is the real crux of the problem that we are facing here today.

People are not demanding to speak to their MPs. They are demanding positive action on their behalf. As a result, they want to have their members of Parliament whom they believe, by and large—I do not know of any public opinion poll that would substantiate this sentence—but I think most constituents understand that their member of Parliament, whoever he or she may be, whatever political party, is working very hard on their behalf. They also believe that we are paid a fairly good wage. To get that wage the government is now telling us: “You will get that big salary but you are going to spend 235 days in your constituency”.