

*Supply*

great dedication with which they have served their country and this government over the past number of years.

The main estimates before the House are tangible proof of the government's serious approach to financial management. Although we have managed to take a very large chunk out of the deficit, particularly with regard to the operating deficit which has been turned around in the past nine years, there is still a great deal to do.

Perhaps now more than ever before Canadians are willing to help us do this because attitudes have changed immeasurably over the last few years. I think people now understand they have a say and should be saying what they believe governments should be doing, rather than perhaps being the passive recipients of programs and expenditures created by politicians for interests that may not be entirely beneficial to the general public.

I think people also know that we now have to separate what we want from what we need because there is no more money left for the kinds of luxuries we allowed ourselves over the past two decades. I would say in pointing this out that we have all been responsible and not just any particular government or regime. The world has been on a spending spree for a couple of decades and now it is time to pay the piper. I believe Canadians are telling us in no uncertain terms they are ready. They understand that tough decisions must be made to get the deficit wiped clean from the slate and put the operating surplus to work creating funds that will create choices for people in the future.

• (1815)

So these main estimates are a very good step in the right direction and obviously are one of the first steps in the second phase of this government's plan to turn around the economy of Canada and make it viable and vibrant to ensure that Canadians have future choices available to them.

I think the next step will be a preparation in our own minds, as one of my colleagues across the way said in an earlier speech this afternoon, to critically examine every single thing we do and every single penny we spend. I think all our programs and expenditures must be put to some acid tests and they are quite simply: Does this program deliver the kind of benefit that it was expected it would deliver to Canadians? Is there a measurable benefit from this expenditure or not? Does the program provide full value for the money that is being expended?

Frequently there are programs in place and after a few years one wonders why they are still operating but it is politically difficult to perhaps make the decision to stop them.

Finally, is this something we really need or is it just something somebody wants in terms of expenditure? Programs that cannot meet that acid test or expenditures that do not meet that acid test will have to be ended if we are really going to get serious about dealing with this deficit.

In a year from now I hope that I will be standing here dealing with the main estimates and saying that because of the good work that was done in 1993 we are now able to proceed with the next step and take even larger chunks out of the deficit and bring more rationalization to government. One of the ways that we can do this of course is by changing the way we do things now. We have to be prepared to take an absolutely critical look not just at what we are spending but at how we are spending money. Perhaps we should take a look at the way government operates and be prepared to make some structural changes to bring some rational thinking to bear on the way government operates.

I believe that there is also a greater role for members of Parliament, as one of my colleagues opposite also said earlier this afternoon, to be involved in this critical examination of government expenditure. It seems to me that every member in this House should find one of his most important tasks to be the critical examination of government expenditures and helping the policy makers and the cabinet to discover the kinds of changes that need to be made in the coming budget processes.

Obviously that is what we are here for. We are here to ensure that Canadians get full value for their dollars. Part of our job is to act as a watch-dog over government expenditures and to ensure that the money being spent is for Canadian priorities and not just for the priorities of some politicians.

We must also be careful to examine not just where our dollars are spent but how we spend them. Are they being spent in the most cost efficient manner? When somebody puts together a set of specifications for public works or for some other product we are buying are those specifications based on what is cost effective and will do the job or are they based on some other criteria that does not respond to the public need right now? I think there