

The Address

I presume that while you waited with bated breath, while your colleagues took a second look before firmly ensconcing you in the Chair, but I have no doubt whatsoever in your ability to lead us in our deliberations with decorum and respect.

I would also like to congratulate the Prime Minister and his colleagues. Who would have predicted that the red book which was so long on rhetoric and so short on substance could have led to such a stunning and upset victory?

I would also like to thank the citizens of the St. Albert constituency for the confidence they expressed in me. I spoke to them during the election campaign about fiscal prudence and sound management of the public purse. I believe it was their desire that I stand in this House and carry that message to the government.

Hon. members can be assured that I will persistently advocate the principle of fiscal responsibility during my tenure in this House.

To the hon. member for Calgary Southwest, my congratulations. Of all the particular challenges that he could have chosen, he selected a riding that was perceived to be the most daunting. Yet he triumphed in the most outstanding manner. I look forward to working with him and the rest of my Reform colleagues as we explain to all Canadians our vision of a new Canada which was so eloquently articulated by the member for Calgary Southwest "as a balanced democratic federation of provinces, distinguished by the conservation of its magnificent environment, the viability of its economy, acceptance of its social responsibilities and recognition of the equality and uniqueness of all its provinces and citizens".

I would also like to recognize the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean and his colleagues. Their agenda differs from ours but I hope that before the end of this Parliament the issues that currently pull this country apart will eventually pull us together to realize our hope of a new Canada.

His Excellency the Governor General spoke of his government's desire to create jobs for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are losing hope and faith in the economic miracle that has been Canada's until the last number of years. We have seen feeble attempts to maintain a robust economy on a philosophy of borrowing and spending our way to prosperity. That false god of prosperity without effort has taken this country into the long dark tunnel leading to economic ruin. We now have double digit unemployment, mushrooming welfare rolls, regions dependent on government handouts; in essence, breadwinners without bread. That story is repeated a million times across this land. Canadians are crying out for leadership, vision, hope, but most of all for jobs and careers. But where do they turn when their hope diminishes with each passing day? There is no plan in place for them to realize their hopes and aspirations.

• (1105)

Over 30 per cent of every tax dollar collected by this government is now paid to bankers and investors as interest on the money that we have already spent. As the debt continues to mushroom, so too does the cost of servicing that debt. On our current economic path Canadians can only look forward to a future of higher taxes and declining services while they work to fill the pockets of lenders and investors.

The Auditor General said in his report tabled in this House yesterday: "Looking at where we have been is not enough; it is also necessary to see where we are going". We are going down the road to economic ruin. He also said: "Hard choices lie ahead".

This government must choose the road to a balanced budget. That is the hard choice. That road is not paved with more social programs that destroy the initiative of Canadians to work. It is not paved with simple quick fix band-aids such as the \$6 billion infrastructure program. A balanced budget means that we as Canadians accept the consequences of the follies of previous governments. The hard choice is that only 70 per cent of tax dollars collected can be returned to Canadians by way of services delivered. If we do not accept that consequence today, tomorrow we will have to live with only 60 per cent, or even less, being returned in services to Canadians.

That is the hard choice. Do we bite the bullet now or do we wait until it is too late?

During the election campaign we, as Reformers, spelled out a complete program to balance the budget. Two and a half million Canadians voted for that program. They are prepared to make that hard choice now, yet there is little evidence in the speech from the throne that the government has even heard the message. How long before the government does the right thing and makes that hard choice?

We want jobs in this country. The myth that deficit financing creates jobs was debunked long ago. If that theory worked there would not be a single unemployed Canadian today.

Where do we go from here? I ask this government to make a commitment now to balance the budget by the end of this Parliament. Business is looking for a signal that the upward spiral of government spending will come to an end. With that signal we will know that tax increases will no longer be the order of the day. Declining services will not be the way of the future. If business can believe that this government has the resolve to make these hard choices then investment will follow. That is the creator of real jobs. The private sector will pick up where the public sector leaves off.

Canada was forged by people who want to build a future for themselves and their children. I came to this country to participate in a young and vibrant nation but I have watched as socialism has wrung this vitality dry. Our economy is feeble and we must rebuild it for our children. Our heritage is free enterprise. It created our prosperity. It developed products and