

*The Budget—Mr. Nielsen*

In his Budget, the Minister of Finance announced that the reports of the study teams to the task force on program review would be released on March 11, next Tuesday. I will be tabling those reports in the House on that day at 11 o'clock, Mr. Speaker.

The work of the task force on program review and its study teams fulfills a commitment the Government made when it was sworn into office, and an obligation I accepted personally when I became a member of this Cabinet. The people of Canada deserve good Government. In my view, they proved on September 4, 1984, that they wanted good Government by electing this Government. Part of the mandate we received from Canadians was to improve the management of government, to increase Government efficiency rather than its size, and to improve the programs of government rather than just add more programs. We, who sought the responsibility of governing this country, also promised to find new ways of doing things. Those new ways included involving Canadians from all walks of life in policy and decision-making processes.

● (1710)

The work of program review has been one mechanism to honour this mandate. As Members of Parliament and all Canadians will see next Tuesday, March 11, the work of the study teams on program review represents a service to the public which, I believe, is without precedent in the annals of Canadian public administration. The results of the work of these dedicated teams of individual Canadians, as represented in their reports, provide knowledge of how the federal Government functions in a manner which has never before existed in the history of this country.

I am always surprised by the litany of some Members of the House who claim we do not know where we are going or what we are going to do when we get there. In point of fact, we have been steering a very narrow and very deliberate course since the first days of this Government.

I remind all Members that I received the terms of reference for program review from the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) just one day after the new Government was sworn in. Our basic agenda for economic renewal was established by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) in November of 1984. That agenda was reaffirmed in the Budget of May, 1985, and in the Budget of last week. I am pleased to say that some of these measures had their origins in the preliminary results of the program review process.

It should be evident to all honest observers that the Government is following the same track that it has been on since the last election. It should be obvious by now that our actions are consistent with the directions we told Canadians we would pursue in our bid for election. Even more heartening, it is very obvious from our successes in both economic and social policy that we know exactly what we are doing. Moreover, we have a Minister of Finance who knows exactly where we are going.

From the perspective of the program review process, this means eliminating overlap and duplication. It means developing programs that are simpler, more understandable, and more

accessible to the Canadians they are designed to help. It means reviewing and revising administrative, personnel, and management processes.

The results of program review are more than just improving the management of government. We are trying to remove serious obstacles to economic and social growth which have developed through decades of unchecked government. We are renewing the confidence of the Canadian people in their Government by making it work for them.

I want to be clear on one thing, however. The study team reports are not, by themselves, the sole source of wisdom available to Government in choosing new approaches and new instruments of change. The study team reports will influence Cabinet in making choices. They will help to provoke a more informed debate, and, in some cases, the proposals contained within them could be accepted unanimously.

The reports do not represent decisions which the Government has taken or is about to take, nor do they represent an articulation of government policy. They are a very valuable decision-making tool, and a perspective on government programs and services which has never existed before. We invited the private sector into the process of program review because we wanted a cross section of opinions, and because we wanted advice that was, above all, independent. The Government assumed that we would benefit greatly from the insights and experience of individual Canadians with backgrounds and credentials in labour, in large and small businesses, and from the professions.

You will find these insights and these refreshing viewpoints in the study team reports. The reports were prepared by 122 people from the private sector and provincial Governments, with the assistance of 99 federal public servants.

Mr. Speaker, there were 19 study teams in all. Each of them had three months to complete their investigations, undertake their analyses of findings, and develop conclusions for their report. The teams worked sequentially in that they commenced their work as soon as they were appointed. Thus, while each team took only three months to report, all 19 teams took a year to complete their activities.

In addition, I was asked in September of 1984 by the Prime Minister to undertake a review of regulatory agencies of the Government. The report of this review process is also being released at the same time as the study team reports since it relates quite closely to the work of at least one of the program review teams.

In developing proposals and options, study teams had to deal with an often confusing and contradictory array of programs and services. Within the limits of time and available information, the teams together compiled a management mosaic of about 125 federal departments and agencies involving approximately 170,000 public servants. The study team reports, which will be released next Tuesday, contain descriptions and assessments of 989 federal programs and services. In addition to these program assessments, study teams produced summary overviews which analysed specific issues or combinations of