

*Government Orders*

Canadians universally will be upset when they hear me say that the National Capital Commission bought new office furniture for around \$2 million, selling their old stuff for \$50,000. I do not know how old and how decrepit it was. Maybe it really was down to the place where when it was sat on the chairs collapsed. That is possible but I doubt it. If that were the case I do not know how it received \$50,000 for the used stuff.

In these times of restraint it would be totally appropriate to say, okay, it would be nice to have \$2 million worth of new furniture, but perhaps in deference to the taxpayer we should not spend it. Perhaps we ought to be under budget instead of working so hard to spend every penny that is allocated in the budget.

The NCC now has a new building that occupies 11 floors. It is larger than most city halls. We have an organization just in this city, aside from the city hall organization, occupying 11 floors in a building with \$2 million worth of new furniture. I am upset with that. I represent all of the citizens in Elk Island and I believe most people across the country would agree when I say that is an obscenity which has to be stopped.

I know it is nice to have a beautiful family rendezvous centre on Sussex Drive for \$250,000, but when we cannot afford it that is when you say it is a lower level of priority.

I would like to point out to the members here and to all Canadian citizens that when I say we need to get the horse moving it is not just rhetoric. It is not just trying to make a point. There have been some accusations even today about the Reform Party trying to gain popularity by making the tax revolt thing. We did not cause it. We were talking to citizens who were telling us increasingly that the deficit must be brought under control.

What is the government's plan? I will round off the numbers so I do not have to read them all. The income of government is around \$120 billion per year. It spends \$160 billion; hence it needs to borrow \$40 billion. As a result of this bill and the savings that are promoted by it, which I cannot really figure out, when I add up the numbers in the document that we were given they come to \$5.9 million. I believe the minister said the savings would be \$15 million. The member for the Bloc said it was going to save \$1 million. I guess at this stage we do not have any solid accounting for how much it will save. However, if we take the safe number of \$15 million how big a dent does that make in the deficit? Instead of having to borrow \$40 billion we now have to borrow \$39,985,000,000. Big deal. It is almost insignificant.

• (1535)

I was a math teacher in my previous life. I taught for 31 years. Let us look at this as if it were proportioned down to a family. Let us say that a family has an income of \$48,000. If it was patterned along the Canadian government that family would be spending \$64,000 a year. With a family income of \$48,000 it has

to borrow every year \$16,000 in order to keep going with its spending patterns which it is not willing to give up.

That family would have to reduce spending or get more income. If more income was not available it would have to reduce its spending by \$16,000 a year in order not to go further into debt.

It is illustrative to look at the Liberals' projection and their goals. We hear so often—and this is wonderful—the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance saying, "We will meet our goals". The minister was very clear. That is great.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Epp:** Go ahead and applaud. It is a wonderful goal.

Again, if you look at the goal in terms of the family, it would bring its borrowing down to \$10,000 per year from \$16,000. That is the goal. In other words, it is still going into debt \$10,000 per year.

What does this bill do to reduce the deficit? For this family, which is spending \$64,000 a year and borrowing \$16,000, it reduces its annual spending by \$6,000.

Yes, it is important. But I am saying let us get the horses moving. It is good to save \$6, but we need to save \$16,000. That is the proportion that this bill proposes to save in our budget. I am appealing to hon. members in the government who have the responsibility, who have the power to do something about it: Let us get with it. The longer we wait the harder it gets. While this is good, we are wasting a whole day talking about pennies when we should be talking about the billions that are threatening the well-being of all of our citizens and, indeed, this whole country.

I am very pleased the government is heading in this direction. But from all of the information and all of the input that I get, not only from residents in the Elk Island constituency but from right across the country who write to us in huge volumes, it is becoming very urgent that we reduce our deficit. Let us get on with it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger):** We will now proceed to the next stage of the debate where members will have up to a maximum of 20-minute interventions, subject to 10 minutes of questions or comments.

**Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Outremont.

I would like to respond before I begin debate on this bill to the points raised by the hon. member for Elk Island. One of his specific remarks was when he talked about the agency review being conducted in secrecy. In fact, there will be a report on the process which will explain what the process was, how it was