

• (1630)

I would like to step back a little bit to my municipal mode. It is interesting that about two weeks ago I was at the electoral boundaries commission meeting. Of course, I am the Liberal member of Parliament and my former colleague, Mayor Brian Turnbull, who is a staunch Conservative supporter, was there to support me in my quest. We do not want the wholesale rearrangement of boundaries in the region.

The other interesting thing is that the NDP candidate in the last election, Scott Piatkowsky, was also there making the same pitch. A motion from Waterloo city council was also moved speaking to the point that we do not like how the redistribution was proposed and we wanted to keep the boundaries intact. That motion was moved by the former Reform candidate who is now on the Waterloo city council. Following my presentation, my colleague from Kitchener made a similar presentation. The former member for Cambridge from the Conservative Party also came forward to make a presentation.

The reason I recount this is because it amazed me. I have been on the Hill for a time and we have partisan politics. Somehow we are not able to capture that sense of community where party lines are crossed to preserve the integrity of communities. That is essentially what we did when we were in Hamilton talking about the redistribution.

It would be very useful if we could bring that kind of spirit to the debates in this House. We probably would strengthen the country. Of course there is no question that the Bloc Quebecois is not interested in strengthening Canada, certainly not with Quebec in it. That is what they campaigned on and we all acknowledge it.

What is bothersome though is at a time when there is fiscal instability around the world and a lot of our economic performance depends on the confidence of the fiscal markets, it is unfortunate that debate is being ignited even more so by the leader of the Reform Party. I thought it was just the bailiwick of the Bloc Quebecois but I see the Reform Party is picking it up. That is too bad because at the beginning of this session in January the leader of the Reform Party would stand up and say he did not want the Prime Minister to break his promise not to discuss the Constitution, that he wanted us to get on with other business. It is unfortunate he has forgotten those statements.

I raise that because another area where the Reform Party has been less than helpful is with the fiscal markets. It is forever trying to say the road we are headed on is going to bankrupt this country. It has only been six months since the election. During that time we put our plan forward to the electorate. That plan was the famous red book. When I was at the committee on

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human rights and the disabled today, I was glad to see one of the Reform Party members quoting from it, which is good.

However we came through with a plan and we are essentially keeping our promise of doing what we said we were going to do if we got elected. I do not believe that Reform Party members would truly expect us to go counter to what we said we were going to do.

Let me touch on another point before closing. There is no question in my mind that government, certainly at the federal and provincial levels, has to get a lot more efficient. I have raised an issue, as most of my colleagues know, on waste and move management by the government. I think we can improve that. I look forward to improving that and I look to the minister of defence to realize some savings in that area. I am sure all members could act in that fashion collectively. Let us see to what extent we can eliminate waste.

• (1635)

This government has recognized the fiscal realities we are in. We said we are going to bring down the deficit to 3 per cent of the GDP within three years. We recognize the deficit problem cannot be solved by cutting out programs, the safety net and the UI benefits which are put in place to assist the people most hurt by the downturn in the economy.

We recognize that job creation has to be part of the solution. There is no question in the mind of my government that the best social program we can have is to make sure there is the economic climate so that all those people who want to work are able to work and contribute to society.

I call upon members of the opposition to support that aim. Ultimately we are talking about developing the Canadian people. We are talking about developing the country and we are talking about keeping our country united.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member's speech. I appreciate his sentiments with respect to working together as opposed to engaging in the rhetoric of partisan politics. However, I was very disappointed by his comments with respect to our being in opposition and therefore always opposing. I do not know how he did not hear what we have been saying today. The elements of Bill C-17 that we support were clearly enunciated. We basically support most of it.

The freezing of salaries makes a lot of sense. The government proposes it and we agree with it. We are on the same wavelength. We agree on the capping of the transfer of money through the Canada assistance plan. On the reduction in transportation subsidies though it affects us most vigorously in the west, we agree. In these times of fiscal restraint, those things need to be done.