

*Supply*

for hospitals. We could give the same services to veterans without requiring two organizations to head the hospitals.

[English]

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Châteauguay for his first speech in the House. When he was first describing his riding, I thought he was talking about mine.

We do have many standing committees in the House. Maybe the standing committees did not work like they should have in the past. My lesson in life is not to look too far back but try to go forward. There are over 200 new members in the House. Coincidentally it is almost half and half on either side of the House. Although some members might have been affiliated with the previous government they are not here in great numbers any more.

I think the hon. member used the words "if we act intelligently". I would ask the member if we all act intelligently on all our standing committees and are very cognizant of the fact that we have a mandate and a budget in each of the committees, would that not enable us to take a better look at how we are spending our moneys?

Also, with respect to the public accounts committee the chairman is a member of the opposition as has been mentioned over and over again. The committee's effectiveness and whether or not things are done properly over the next 12 months will be recorded in the next Auditor General's report. Is that not the challenge we have now with the public accounts committee as chaired by the opposition, to perform better than in the past especially since we have 200 new members in the House?

[Translation]

**Mr. Godin:** Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague, it is often said that the past guarantees the future. But if I look back in the past, I see that we are now facing a \$500 billion deficit. And the existing system does not correct the present situation. What we want, what we are proposing is not another standing committee, but the striking of a special committee that could perhaps allow the existing committee to straighten up, so that we could really take the corrective measures that the Auditor General has been recommending for several years and that have still not been taken.

[English]

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this motion today.

As members in the House have heard, the President of the Treasury Board has already commented on the benefit we are already taking of the advice and analysis of the Auditor General to improve the way we do things as a government. At the same

time we welcome the scrutiny that the public accounts committee will bring to the report of the Auditor General and to other operations of government. We look forward to its advice on how we can make even further progress.

To this point in the debate we have talked about money. There is no doubt that the preoccupation of many of us in the House and of many Canadians is how we can move toward a balanced budget and how we can better control our spending and ensure value for those dollars that we do spend in terms of service to Canadians and the programs our country counts on.

I want to depart on a somewhat different track to simply say that while we deliver programs and services with money mandated by this Parliament, they are delivered by the people who work for the Government of Canada.

• (1210)

I am pleased to have this opportunity to set out today plans of the government to renew the Government of Canada. My colleague, the President of the Queen's Privy Council and minister responsible for federal-provincial relations, has set out a plan which he aptly calls "Getting Government Right".

Unlike the previous government which felt it could use the public service as the brunt of all its problems, without affecting the services Canadians have come to depend on, we are working closely with our employees to develop new and innovative ways of cutting costs. I intend to talk particularly about our plans to give them the tools to do their jobs in a more efficient and effective way.

Unlike the previous government we believe government can be a force for good in society. By working together with federal public servants and by establishing a harmonious working relationship with our employees we can produce the solid results the previous government found so elusive. We can reduce waste. We can eliminate obsolete functions. We can improve services to taxpayers and create a more productive government.

We have one of the most respected public services in the world. Federal public service employees are ready to rise to the challenge of the coming years.

Under the previous government, Canadians became increasingly alienated from their government. The sense of cynicism and distrust was reaching crisis proportions that were beginning to threaten the health of our democracy and our future prosperity. How can we manage our country's affairs or bring people together to face tough issues when Canadians have so little confidence in the country's decision makers and the decision making process?

The problems we face today, the heavy debt load left behind by the previous government, the dropout rate in our schools, the need to get Canadians back to work, the need to improve our competitiveness in the global economy, all are crying for