

voters throughout the country who think that this is a step in the right direction and who encourage me to go on.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues in the government caucus. Without their support, I would not have been able to make these savings.

• (1905)

My colleague, the deputy whip, and I are not the only ones responsible for these achievements. We were fortunate to have the support of all government members. I also want to thank the other whips and the members from the opposition who sit on the Board of Internal Economy and who approved our plan and made it all possible.

We still have a long way to go. As I said, this is only the beginning. However, I would like to outline our achievements, so that everyone watching us tonight can realize what we have done so far. Some of these things might not seem important, but all together, they show how courageous and determined the government is.

For instance, one of the things we did is look at the whole issue of members' special travel allowances. As everyone knows, each member is entitled to 64 trips from Parliament Hill to his or her riding and, according to the rules, these 64 trips could also be used to go anywhere else in Canada. We reduced this number to 20. This means that members are still entitled to 64 paid trips a year but only 20 of them can be used to travel across the country. I think this will generate very significant savings. We also looked at the whole issue of printing services and mass mailings. The board has just adopted these new regulations that will allow us to save over half a million dollars a year.

We did not cut services to members. They are still allowed four mass mailings a year, as they have been for a long time, to inform and communicate with their constituents. Although we kept these services allowing members to communicate with the public, we managed to save over half a million dollars by introducing new procedures.

We are now looking at the whole issue of food services on the Hill. Many journalists wrote that taxpayers have been subsidizing sumptuous meals for members of Parliament. Mr. Speaker, you and I, as well as my colleagues and all those who had lunch or dinner at the parliamentary restaurant know very well that nothing is subsidized and that the prices we now pay are the same as in any establishment and are sometimes lower elsewhere because of competition.

When we talk about the deficit related to food services here on Parliament Hill, let us not forget that we employ over 3,000 people and, as you know full well, any employer of this size has a partly subsidized cafeteria or restaurant for its staff.

Supply

We acknowledge that we have to make some cuts, that we have to save money. However, we also realize in this plan that as far as slashing expenditures is concerned, we have an obligation as an employer to ensure that a proper food services system is in place for our employees. We are in the process of finalizing our report. We have looked a little at what the private sector has done so that our system can be comparable and meet the target of savings in the order of \$1.5 million to \$2 million per year. We want to ensure that our employees have access to an adequate cafeteria at or near their place of work, as it the case everywhere else.

The newspapers made quite a big fuss over the fact that our members had access to an exercise room and to the services of a masseur, all at taxpayers' expense. We also reviewed this expenditure. Since April 1, our members have had to pay a fee to use the gym. This was also something that was in the plan.

• (1910)

We reviewed the matter of the barber shop and hair salon, two services which had also been the focus of some criticism and we rationalized these operations. Today, if a member or senator wants a haircut, he or she will pay the same price as shops located off the Hill charge their customers.

The operation of messenger services was also rationalized. This was very important. Our aim was not to reduce service to members or to rationalize a service that had not proven useful in the past. In fact, we wanted to keep pace with new technology. There is fax, electronic mail and many facilities we now have as members that we did not have before. So in view of this, we rationalized our messenger service.

We looked at the whole allocation for which we were criticized. Of course, the Committee on Procedure and House Affairs studied all these issues and approved the plans. We saved nearly \$2 million on printing the House agenda and other documents in order to streamline and save money, but still to ensure that hon. members have what they need to do their job and give our citizens the services to which they are entitled.

So as I said at the beginning, this is an initial plan. I intend to continue and I am sure that in the weeks and months to come, with the co-operation of my caucus, my colleagues and the opposition parties on Internal Economy, we can make other savings and improve the operation of this House at the same time.

When we said during the election campaign that we wanted to set an example starting with ourselves, that we wanted to regain credibility with Canadians, I think that we took a step in the right direction. We will continue as I said.

You are signaling me that my time is up. I would again like to thank my caucus, my colleagues and the Prime Minister for letting me help reduce public spending and also improve the