

### *Government Orders*

**Mr. Andy Mitchell (Parry Sound—Muskoka):** Mr. Speaker, with this referral of the review of social policy to a standing committee, our government is about to embark on what I consider to be the most important undertaking during its first term.

If we are to bring about social justice to this country, if we are to have any ability to bring our financial house in order, if we are to find new and innovative ways of conducting business in this country, then the reform of our social policy is absolutely essential.

Our government is committing itself to a most extensive public review process. This issue will be debated not only in this House, both during the preliminary stages and later when legislation is actually tabled, but also through the parliamentary committee to which this review is being referred. In addition, we will be dealing with both the political and bureaucratic components of the provincial government and, through a series of consultative processes, with constituency groups, the general public, and in particular those individuals presently charged with delivering our various and sundry programs.

In referring this matter to the standing committee, it is vital to outline what I believe to be important governing principles that should be considered in the deliberations. These principles include equity, effectiveness, co-ordination and accountability.

Whatever system we develop must be equitable. To me this means we recognize that as Canadians, as a government and as a nation we have a responsibility to each other.

Going back to at least World War II, there has existed in this country an unwritten but very clear social contract between Canadians and their government. This contract essentially says that on the one hand Canadians will tend to pay more for government than perhaps their counterparts in the U.S. and other nations, but on the other hand, in return for this we as Canadians and as a government have a responsibility to ensure that we will not allow individual Canadians to fall below a certain level. We have determined as a country that we will not allow people to die for lack of medical service, to go hungry for lack of food, to be exposed for lack of shelter.

This contract is basic to what Canada and Canadians are. Whatever the result of our social policy review, it must maintain this basic concept of equity that our parents' generation formulated, that our generation has attempted to maintain, and that we must protect for our children and our children's children.

The second governing principle that must be adhered to in our deliberations regarding social policy is effectiveness. Whether we are speaking about income support, job retraining or life skills development, we must ensure the program provides full value for each dollar that is spent. We need to set as an objective

not a decrease in the number of dollars that are placed in the hands of individual Canadians but rather an objective that sees a reduction in the number of programs, a reduction in the administration costs and a reduction in the duplication of services. We do not need more money, we need money better spent. We need to bring to an end the bureaucratic practice of territoriality, we need to bring to an end the turf wars that consume so much of our precious resources, and we need to design our programs so that they put the necessary financial and other resources in the hands of recipients in a manner that does not require a massive bureaucracy be maintained.

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The third principle that I believe should govern our deliberations is co-ordination; that is, co-ordination within our own government, co-ordination with other governments and co-ordination with the private sector. We must bring to an end the massive amount of duplication of services that presently exists in the area of social services.

If individuals today wish to receive training, the largest challenge they will face will not be the actual course they might take, but rather finding the correct entry point into the system. They will find that they have to choose from several entry points and sometimes from dozens. Our system must be designed so that individuals have one entry point into the system and one exit point.

Does it make any sense that our income support system is made up of numerous programs and that these programs are delivered by various levels of government and in some cases duplicate programs are delivered by duplicate levels of government? Income support should be provided by one system, administered by one bureaucracy and developed in as simple a manner as possible, one that reflects the economic realities of the 1990s and not of the 1950s or 1960s.

I can see absolutely no sense as to why an individual who has lost his job receives his income support in one form from one level of government for a period of time and then receives his income support from a different level for another period of time, administered by a different bureaucracy. We need one income support program, administered by one level of government and delivered in a cost efficient way.

The final governing principle that I believe should be adhered to in our deliberations is that of accountability, accountability both from government who administers the program and from the individuals who utilize the program. As a government we need to design our income support and training programs with clear objectives as to what they are attempting to accomplish. The effectiveness of these programs should be measured on an ongoing basis, both by this Parliament and by the people of Canada, as to whether they are achieving their objectives. We