

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

RAILWAY SECURITY

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the committee reviewing the Railway Safety Act.

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MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table before this House a document on the expenditure management system of the Government of Canada, which describes the government's new decision-making process in matters of programs and expenditures.

[English]

With this overhaul, the first in 15 years, we ensure the system responds to today's economic and fiscal realities. It recognizes the way this government has been doing business since elected in October, 1993.

To reduce spending to meet our fiscal targets and to free up resources for reallocation to new priorities requires that we make tough spending and program choices. Our ultimate objective is to deliver quality programs and services within the resources that Canadians can afford.

We are demonstrating to Parliament and to all Canadians that we are fulfilling our red book commitment to fund new initiatives through reallocating expenditures, not with new money, not with adding further to the debt, but to set our priorities by reallocating for new expenditure items.

The document outlines the formal mechanisms that will foster greater fiscal responsibility and help this government to meet its targets.

I would like to bring to members' attention some of the system's major features, quite briefly. It formally eliminates central policy reserves. It integrates practically all decisions about spending into the budget planning process. The document clearly outlines the cycle that will now be followed.

We will deliver information on program performance to Parliament in better and more timely ways. Departments will produce documents on the outlook for their program priorities and expenditures over the next few years and provide them to Parliament. These documents will increase parliamentary involvement by assisting the standing committees in fulfilling

their mandates to examine future year expenditures, trends and priorities. These outlook documents are new to this Parliament and expand the involvement and role of members of Parliament in the budgeting and estimates process.

We will adjust these processes over the next few years. It will take some evolutionary time as we gain experience with them.

[Translation]

I am confident that they will help us make the difficult decisions that are involved in providing quality services and reducing the cost of government.

● (1510)

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must tell the President of the Treasury Board that I will carefully read the document he has just tabled on the expenditure management system of the Government of Canada.

Like all Quebecois and Canadian taxpayers, I am concerned about the current management of federal public expenditures. In view of the information supplied to us every year by the Auditor General, it is high time for the federal government to make an in-depth review of its expenditures and, above all, of its management practices.

I hope the document tabled today will address the concerns voiced by parliamentarians and that the proposed improvements will be consistent with the auditor general's recommendations.

The criticisms expressed by the auditor general regarding program evaluation, for instance, should be taken into account. Given the abysmal performance of the Canadian government in the area of program evaluation, the Bloc Quebecois hopes this new document will contain not only new tools to more adequately inform parliamentarians of public expenditures, but also real solutions to evaluate the results of such programs.

Each year, the auditor general presents us with an impressive list of waste in the use of public funds, and the government must, as a first step, clean up its expenditures before it can justify cutting programs.

By eliminating the central policy reserves, the government will lose its flexibility to fund new projects. Since such projects will be funded by reallocating moneys committed elsewhere, the government must clearly express its priorities for the coming years.

The Bloc Quebecois will be keeping a very close watch on the political choices to be announced in the upcoming budget. I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the minister for expressing himself so well in French.