

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker. As a result of this decentralization, the number of Treasury Board submissions will be reduced by 40 per cent. I think that is quite substantial.

By giving more responsibilities to our regional managers, I think that across the country there will be more opportunities to take advantage of federal involvement. The reduction in the number of management levels is another important aspect. Ten per cent of management category positions will be eliminated. There is also the issue of transfers which will help all public servants acquire more experience in a variety of sectors. We must not forget that once people have had an opportunity to acquire more experience at the same level, they will be in a better position to obtain advancement within the Public Service.

Of course, a reduction in the number of professional groups, which now total 71, will be a significant improvement.

There is also the whole aspect of surplus Crown property. It is so complicated that every department has trouble disposing of its own surplus property. I think that legislation to rationalize this area will enable those officials, deputy ministers and ministers to feel more responsible.

Regionalization is extremely important. Our government has put more emphasis on regional development because we put even more trust in our officials who work in the regions. Most departments, especially Supply and Services Canada, CIDA and the Department of Industry, Science and Technology, are definitely moving towards regionalization. So I think that it is an important step toward the future and towards better service for all our fellow citizens.

For all these reasons, everything our government has done in the past seven years, whether in the economic, social or some other field, has helped us to be the country rated most highly by international organizations. I am thinking of the OECD and the International Monetary Fund, among others. It is not so well known, but I think that our fellow Canadians will gradually realize that what the government has done in each department, especially in terms of the budget, has given us a top national and international rating.

If you allow me, Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with employment equity at greater length today. For seven years, our government—this year, for example, we will invest \$1.8 billion in worker training programs, while respecting the employment equity principle. I think it is good that what our government is doing for all Canadians it is also doing for our Public Service as a whole.

The bill expressly gives the Public Service Commission and Treasury Board authority to carry out programs to improve employment and career opportunities for disadvantaged persons. That is a very good thing, Mr. Speaker, because I think that the Public Service will then better reflect the make-up of Canadian society. In protecting the merit principle as Parliament has instructed it to do, the Public Service Commission will ensure that recruitment outside the Public Service and promotions within it help deputy ministers achieve employment equity in their respective departments.

Treasury Board and the Public Service Commission work closely together to establish special programs to make it easier for members of target groups who do not have equal opportunity to apply for satisfying positions in the Public Service to find employment and be promoted. I am talking about positions that women did not usually occupy before but in which they want to have a real chance to show that they are up to the challenge.

The Public Service Reform Act will enable the Public Service Commission and the departments to ensure that members of the target groups for employment equity can participate in competitions if they meet the established criteria. In its white paper on reform, Public Service 2000 believes that it is necessary to reduce the number of occupational groups in order to simplify the staffing process and to provide better career opportunities.

The new position classification system that has been developed will eliminate all systemic obstacles that prevent members of target groups for employment equity from obtaining a position or a transfer in the Public Service. We will thus have a neutral classification system that takes no account of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Members will no doubt want to know how the new classification system will favour employment equity. According to my information, it will make it possible to eliminate education criteria that are applied systemati-