

The decisions we make in this 35th Parliament will not greatly impact on our lives, but they will influence tremendously the Canada our children and grandchildren inherit.

One of the most encouraging points in the speech from the throne was the commitment to parliamentary reform. Trust is a two-way street. If we are to earn it from our constituents we must be prepared to place a level of trust in them.

Canadians have said very clearly they want more voice in the decisions affecting their lives. The Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future chaired by Mr. Spicer listened to 400,000 Canadians as well as another 300,000 Canadian elementary and secondary school students.

One of the strongest messages the forum received was that Canadian people had lost faith in their political leaders. They did not feel their governments, especially at the federal level, reflected the will of the people. They did not feel that they had the means at that moment to correct it. Many of the participants were prepared to support substantial change of the political system if they would result in a responsive and responsible political process and in responsive and responsible political leaders. The forum cost the Canadian taxpayers about \$27 million. However, if we can change and respond to this message, it will be a bargain.

If there is a constant in today's world, it is change. After 48 years of Tory representation Simcoe Centre voted for change. I thank it for that. With the improvements in communications and technology changes are occurring within an ever shrinking timeframe. Many of us are reluctant to change but change we must. This Parliament must examine new approaches to the way existing institutions and procedures are used. Changes must be made so that members can be made more responsive to their constituents and more responsible in the exercise of their judgment.

The time to look at these things differently has never been more important or opportune. With over 200 new members we have a window of opportunity for parliamentary reform that must be taken advantage of. There should be changes such as amending the Canada Elections Act to eliminate clauses that place members of Parliament in a position beholden to their national party executive or party leaders rather than their constituents.

We should amend the MPs' oath of office such that they swear a fundamental allegiance to their constituents as well as to the Queen. We should place restrictions and limitations on the number and types of orders in council permitted by a government during its term in office. In the interim my caucus will strive to make parliamentary committees effective in reviewing any regulations before implementation.

The Address

We should insist all laws that apply to individuals in the private sector should apply equally to the Government of Canada, its personnel, its agencies and Parliament. On Monday the Hon. Gilbert Parent in his acceptance speech indicated the comfort he felt in the comments made during the past weeks about restoring dignity and respect in the House. Doing things differently, civility and parliamentary reform are words that I have heard and give me hope that the will exists to bring about change.

• (1530)

In closing I will again make reference to the Spicer commission report. The final paragraph in the report was not a quote from Mr. Spicer or one of his commissioners. These are the words of one of the citizens who participated and I quote: "No hyperbole or political hedge can screen any member of any legislature who thwarts the will of the people on this matter. The voters are watching and waiting".

The previous government ignored this message at its peril. I trust and hope this 35th Parliament will not make the same mistake.

Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Simcoe Centre for his excellent address. Like him when I campaigned in my constituency I did hear those kinds of remarks about politicians.

However, there is a larger problem with the question of representation that he is talking about. In the House of Commons over the last few days we saw the example of a question from a constituent that was sent in to the hon. member for Calgary Southwest. This person was a doctor. It seems this method of gaining public opinion, replying on a fax which you pay for and secretaries in some cases when you can afford it, illustrates the kinds of difficulties faced with making democracy more representative. The previous speaker from the Reform Party related the same difficulties.

We have heard questions from the Reform Party about reform of RRSPs. I recall reading recently in the newspaper that only four out of ten Canadians use RRSPs and there is certainly a role for government if that is the case. Only about 20 per cent of Canadians make the maximum contribution allowance to RRSPs.

When I was canvassing in my constituency I encountered people who were in opposition to the gun control legislation. I make these comments with respect because it is a broader question for all of us who are seeking to represent our constituents. These people said they were joining the Reform Party because they were told to do so by their local executive. All of these things strike me as a real problem with the member's definition of what representative democracy is. I believe it was the Prime Minister who said that you are the grandchildren of