

Government Orders

Reform MPs are driven by the grassroots. Ordinary citizens are finding that their voices are being heard by us. Party policies in our party are initiated by the members and the party leadership acts as a clearing house to expedite debate and decisions at our assembly.

• (1245)

Yes, we believe in service. That is the first principle that should pervade all levels of government. It is government of the people, for the people, by the people. If we could do a 180 degree turn in how governments operate compared to the past and the present, perhaps that would be the single most important move in restoring the faith of the people in the governments they elect.

The second principle is that public money should be regarded by governments as funds in trust and governments should practise fiscal responsibility. In particular, they should exercise the responsibility of balancing expenditures and revenues. There are not many issues that upset my constituents more than the issue of the burgeoning debt.

If we were a board of directors of a public company the shareholders would fire us. We are spending 20 per cent more every year than we take in. We are headed for financial disaster and for bankruptcy. Yes, the shareholders of a company would fire the board of directors if that was how they carried on.

Indeed, this is what the Canadian people have begun to do. They are totally fed up with the flagrant waste of their money by governments of the last 20 or 30 years. Beginning in the west there is a massive sweep of support for Reform because we are promising to balance the budget. We just cannot go on the way we are. In some form or another, if not now then in the very near future we will have to pay the bills that we have run up.

The most unfair transfer of responsibility in this country is the intergenerational transfer of debt. We are spending our children's inheritance. From our graves we will have to apologize to them for giving them the inheritance of such huge financial indebtedness that they will not be able to enjoy anything near the standard of living that we have stolen from them. I am embarrassed to be a member of this generation, leaving my children a legacy of profligate overspending, exercising no discipline in how we handle our affairs.

In speaking to Bill C-52 I believe that we are beginning to move in the right direction on these principles. I want to show my support and commitment to the principles by helping to hold this government accountable for the steps it is taking. I want to assume that the motives of the government are honourable. I want to assume that it really means it when it says it wants to do better.

I suppose it is almost impossible to do worse than the government that was defeated last fall. But there is always the danger that the frail ship can be blown off course. We will be there to help and to remind the government to abide by these principles.

The principle of service to the public should be demonstrated by the way that business processes are developed and implemented. It should be evident in the way that public property is managed, particularly office and warehouse space. It should be evident in the way bidding and procurement procedures are developed and implemented. It should be evident in the way technology will be utilized to increase effectiveness and efficiency. Most of all, it should be evident in the way we and all civil servants meet the people, the way we talk to them and the way we serve them. There should never be an attitude of condescension but always an attitude of helpfulness and service.

I would add that we should also always have an attitude of total honesty and openness, whether it is procurement or whether it is talking about the way government influences public policy. There should be total openness. It is the people's business. The people have the right to know everything.

With respect to the second principle I mentioned, the one of sound fiscal management and wise use of the limited financial resources available, I need to emphasize it is my opinion that we are not doing enough here in this bill.

• (1250)

It is insufficient to merely shuffle the deck to bring together two or three departments here and two or three there. It is not sufficient to merely reorganize the management tree. We need to look very seriously at the functions of government. We need to re-examine many things government is doing that is not supported by the people. There need to be some cuts. Some departments need to be eliminated because there is no longer a need or a demand for the functions they provide.

Can this be done? Would it be possible for us to discuss this in a meaningful, non-emotional way so that we could brainstorm our way to some positive solutions?

I can think of a number of examples in which we are not serving the people well with regard to monetary stewardship. I think of the \$60 million taken out of the accountability loop by the antics of the CCG. I think of the ongoing construction of a national GST processing centre in Prince Edward Island at the same time as this government is promising to eliminate the GST.

I am thinking of some extravagant offices and some unacceptable vacancy rates. I am thinking of moneys to crown corporations and special operating agencies and the way some of them are operating without full accountability. I am thinking even of the fact that the collection of hundreds and hundreds of smaller