

Government Orders

tions; the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will now have seven board members instead of 18. Another major reduction. Seven positions will disappear with the abolition of the board of trustees of the Queen Elizabeth II Canadian research fund, which manages funds intended for research on children's diseases.

• (1840)

But the interesting point is that this agency will no longer exist to manage the funds, yet research will be carried on and will from now on be performed by the Canadian Medical Research Council. That is good planning.

I can give the House another example of amalgamation of this type, namely the elimination of Emergency Preparedness Canada as a separate body. The protection it provided will not disappear, will always be necessary and Canada will continue to be well served in this regard, but this role will be taken on by National Defence and that makes sense. There is another example.

We tried to establish whether certain roles were still relevant, still served their purpose or had become superfluous. If they were found no longer to be relevant, had become superfluous, we eliminated them.

In cases in which it proved necessary to retain an agency, we attempted to determine whether its role could be carried out with fewer people, at a lower cost and perhaps more effectively.

[English]

Over a dozen organizations will have the number of their board members reduced resulting in significant savings. A few of those included in this group are, for example, the Canada Council, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Arts Centre and the boards of four of Canada's national museums.

Bill C-65 will give effect to the government's objective of identifying sensible and practical actions to eliminate overlap and duplication, and simplify government wherever possible.

As I have already mentioned, the review of agencies, boards and commissions is but one aspect of our government's overall approach to streamlining, restructuring and reorganizing government. The program review and the work in improving the efficiency of the federation are two additional initiatives which attempt to reach similar objectives.

For example, the government has signed action plans that deal with specific sectoral issues where overlap and duplication can be reduced or eliminated within specific timeframes. That has been done, if my memory serves me correctly, with nine provincial governments and two of the territories. That is important progress.

The program review is the other very significant initiative that will give the government a new look. It will result in a substantially different government, which focuses on core roles

and responsibilities. It is very important to focus on what can be done and what we can afford to do.

There will be more announcements made with respect to those initiatives very shortly.

[Translation]

I would also like to mention, and I believe this is a point we should emphasize, the status quo does not exist, federalism is evolving. It is a system, not because of its ability to evolve but rather because of its ability to change and respond to changing needs and always be aware of the needs of its population.

Our ability to embark upon the measures which I have just mentioned is a function of a body, a system which is flexible, adaptable and able to respond to the needs of our society and our country.

By the same token, federalism is a form of government characterized by its adaptability. Our entire history illustrates the extreme flexibility of our system of government.

[English]

This point needs to be accentuated time and time again. Some people like to pretend government and its institutions have not changed, but this is blatantly false. Government continues to change. Those who will not admit it have not taken the time to look at it, study it, and really get into government to understand the profound changes that are occurring.

Perhaps more than anything else, Canadians want their government to be more responsive. They want governments to listen to the people.

• (1845)

I understand that all MPs want to suggest they hold the truth, that they listen to their constituents and that they should be listened to. I believe that collectively somewhere lies the truth. I have never believed that there is necessarily one answer to one problem, particularly in today's society. I have never believed that one member or one party holds all of the truths. I wish all of us could think about that.

[Translation]

By the end of this program review, we will, as government, have dissolved many other agencies, boards and commissions; eliminated more than 600 positions and effected savings of over \$6 million a year for the taxpayers. In my book, this is an enormous success.

To sum up, there are three points I would like to stress. First, we have just reduced duplication and overlap in government. Positive progress has been reported but, more importantly, work will continue in that area.

In addition, agreements were signed with the provinces and territories to ensure that every level of government can deliver the services it is responsible for. What we want to do, above all, is to ensure the efficiency of government operations, so that