

● (1850)

Today we begin an action plan for reforming our social security system. I am pleased the minister has asked me and members of this House to participate in the working groups. We have a lot of work to do, but I join my colleagues in welcoming the challenges ahead. I encourage all Canadians to participate in this process.

In closing, I would like to thank my constituents in St. Catharines, my family on whom I rely, my wife, Carol, daughters, Tamara and Virginia, and all of those in the riding who worked tirelessly to give me the opportunity to serve in this Chamber.

The riding of St. Catharines has been represented by some very effective members from my party, namely Jim McNulty, Harry Cavers and the Hon. Gib Parent. It is a proud moment for me to join my predecessors in service to my city of St. Catharines. I look forward to representing St. Catharines in this great House.

[Translation]

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the comments made by the hon. member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis a few moments ago. I had the honour of serving with him in the National Assembly.

The Speaker: Order. You can only ask a question or comment on the speech of the hon. member for St. Catharines. Do you have a question?

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Very well, Mr. Speaker.

Then I will simply follow your instructions and comment on this debate and on the position taken by our party and by the government. Obviously, we would like our party and the Reform Party to reach a consensus on the big issue of the allocation of public funds.

We know that Ottawa collects roughly \$28 billion in taxes from Quebec each year and we would like to know how this money is redistributed. For the past several years—and the \$500 billion debt confirms this—we have been making suggestions. We are always accused of harping on the same old Péquiste arguments. However, if the government accepted our suggestions, then we not go over the same ground again and again.

We are calling for an end to duplication of services. This is nothing new. We are calling for an end to cuts in social housing. The situation is pitiful in my riding. There is a shortage of social housing and yet the government is poised to make further cuts in this area. A decade ago, the soup kitchen in my region served up about 35 meals a day. Today, it serves up 400 meals a day. This is completely unacceptable.

We have made suggestions to the government as to what measures should be contained in its upcoming budget. We proposed the elimination of family trusts and we targeted such areas as duplication in the taxation and services fields. For the

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sake of greater efficiency, we are asking that the federal government withdraw from manpower training programs and hand this responsibility over to Quebec.

In conclusion, let me say that Mr. Le Hir, the president of the Association des manufacturiers du Québec, as well as Mr. Ghislain Dufour, the President of—

Mr. Dingwall: Question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Mr. Speaker, there was a report in this morning's edition of *Le Devoir*. The hon. member is upset by the truth. These people are not Péquists, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): Why have you called for order, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I have no objections to what the hon. member is saying.

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): I am prepared to co-operate, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member has a question.

Mr. Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry): I do have a question, Mr. Speaker.

Why is the government not willing to follow the recommendations put forward by the opposition party, the Bloc Québécois? Why will it not eliminate trusts, end duplication of services and tax large corporations? Why?

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[English]

Mr. Lastewka: Mr. Speaker, I thank the questioner. I think all Canadians have come to the point where they have had enough of paying taxes. I agree that we need to take a look at the various systems and the waste in the systems. However, we cannot forget about the important item of trying to improve the system. We need information and consultation from all parties and from all Canadians.

This is a process the minister has started. I think it is important for us and for Canada that we continue to have debates and consult back and forth and that the people of Canada have an opportunity to provide input. Let us not forget that I am here representing St. Catharines and Canadians. Canadians feel it is important that we do something, that we eliminate the waste right across Canada.

I agree with that. However I have to do it for the good of all Canadians, no matter what province they live in. I am proud of my province of Ontario, but I am also proud of Canada. It is important, as we consult and debate, that we get input from coast to coast and that we make a better system for Canada on a continuous basis.

Let us not be afraid. For the next two or three years, let us make continued improvements for Canada.