

Government Orders

not stay around to handle questions. He was probably frightened to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order. I know sometimes it is difficult when a debate is split, in this case by a vote. I think we all realize the commitments each and every one of us has to fulfil at times.

We should not reflect on the absence of any member from the Chamber at any time. I think it is a good practice and one we should maintain.

Mr. Duhamel: Mr. Speaker, I do want to add something else that has nothing to do with presence or absence. Mr. Speaker, have you ever envisioned that when Reformers speak a halo suddenly starts to appear around their heads? They come across as pure, white fallen snow. It is quite incredible. I am delighted to be a Liberal, because I am an ordinary human being who has strengths and weaknesses, unlike them.

Today gross exaggerations that I want to address were made by a member of the Reform Party, but they have not fooled anyone, and certainly not Canadians. Reform Party polls in the whole of Canada are lower than the Bloc's in the whole of Canada, and it is trying to tear the country apart.

Stay tuned. One of these days one of those Reformers will trip and the halo will fall down and crack. We will find out that the freshly fallen white snow is rather darkened and blemished. We will shortly see whether or not Reformers sin.

I want to get to this important piece of legislation.

[Translation]

It deals with the reorganization and dissolution of certain federal agencies.

What we are talking about today is a bill aimed at renewing government and restoring confidence in it. That is what this bill is about. It is a new type of government. A less cumbersome one. A government aimed at increased efficiency. A government that is responsive to the needs of Canadians throughout the country.

• (1835)

A government concerned with increasing government efficiency.

[English]

I want to quote this because it appears to be the only safe way to not be misquoted by certain members of this House. The red book says, "The most important asset of government is the confidence it enjoys of the citizens to whom it is accountable". That has been extremely important to this government.

We know that Canadians are tired of large government. They have entrusted this particular party with the task of ensuring the careful management of public funds. They want honesty and

integrity restored to their federal institutions. That is exactly what is happening in spite of the Reform rhetoric.

Some of my colleagues on the other side have a lot of difficulty listening to the truth. They jump and fidget and writhe whenever the truth is spoken.

Mr. Abbott: I will let you know if we hear some.

Mr. Duhamel: In fact some of them have to rise from their seats because they cannot stand the heat. They are probably hungry too.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that during the last budget the Minister of Finance announced that we would have a full-scale review to examine the size and relevance of existing agencies, boards, commissions and advisory bodies in order to achieve cost savings and ensure that if they were no longer needed or no longer played a useful role they would be taken out. That is what this bill is all about as well. The government has moved simultaneously on three fronts, which will lead to a leaner, more cost effective and efficient government.

Bill C-65 will bring into force decisions taken last July to reduce the numbers, and streamline or reduce the size of operations of certain agencies, boards and commissions where there is an interest to do so, when they are no longer as relevant or as important to Canadians, and where we can perhaps do without them.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that on July 8, 1994 the minister responsible for this particular initiative issued an interim report on the progress to date with the co-operation of his cabinet colleagues. He was able to report that decisions had been taken affecting 41 agencies and 9 different portfolios. Some people will scoff at that, but I assure you it is a major initiative and has been a successful one.

The legislation before the House today will place into law those decisions requiring legislative action, as necessary.

[Translation]

What I wanted to stress more is that we are abolishing and streamlining 22 government agencies. We are eliminating 150 positions filled by governor in council appointments. This is a lot; it is concrete, a success for this government. In concrete terms it means an annual saving of \$1.5 million for taxpayers. This is only the first round of measures.

I am going to give you a few examples of how thorough planning pays big dividends. This is planning that the minister initiated with his colleagues. He then began a long process of consultation which ended in success, as in the case of Petro-Canada with a reduction of its board of directors from the current 15 to three. This is a major reduction.

I will give a few other examples quickly: the Canadian Saltfish Corporation, created 25 years ago, will lose 24 posi-