

Government Orders

That being said, this can work both ways, since in Quebec we eat a lot of beef from Western Canada, which is probably more expensive than beef we could buy elsewhere. In the event of a sovereign Quebec, if the market dries up for Quebec dairy producers, we will buy our beef elsewhere. Business is business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Order! Before we proceed, I must inform the House that at the beginning of today's sitting, we forgot to inform the House of the absence of the Speaker. I therefore order the clerk to make the appropriate entry in the *Votes and Proceedings*. Resuming debate. The minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Public Service Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to participate in this debate. This is a budget of very strong measures, because this is what it takes to break the deficit's hold on our policies. This budget contains the most draconian measures taken by a government in 50 years.

[*English*]

The budget achieves our deficit goal without increasing personal income tax rates. For the second year in a row the government has refused to reduce the deficit on the backs of individual Canadians.

I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity to explain the process and significance of the program review, one of the core elements of the budget.

Last September in Quebec City the Prime Minister outlined the four key elements of the government's jobs and growth agenda. This week hon. members have witnessed with the unveiling of the 1995-96 budget the details of one of those fundamental elements, the program review.

Last year the Prime Minister asked me to lead, in co-operation with my cabinet colleagues, the most fundamental review of government operations in two generations. The review was meant to be and was an exhaustive examination like none ever undertaken before of every government program and service, with a view to getting government back to basics and focusing on the priorities of Canadians.

I worked closely with my colleagues and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them once again for their commitment to the exercise designed to get government right.

Unlike previous governments we listened to Canadians and the result we have seen in the budget tabled by my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, demonstrates that we have the courage to set the country on a new, much more secure course.

I believe the Canadian people will agree that the budget and the program review results are ushering in a new approach to government.

• (1030)

It will be a dramatically changed national government. It will be a government that is getting back to basics, a government that reflects the priorities of average Canadians, a government that is affordable, a government that protects the most vulnerable, and a government that responds to the true needs of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister detailed our intentions last September before the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce saying that control over the size and cost of government was vital to economic growth and job creation. It was in this perspective that the program review was developed and became one of the basic components of the budget.

This review will enable the federal government to focus on its major priorities, to return to basics while enabling it to reduce its expenditures in an orderly fashion. The review was guided by three objectives.

First, to strengthen public administration of federal programs and services; efforts in this regard will lead to a smaller but more efficient federal administration, which will provide the programs Canadians consider important. Secondly, to help modernize Canadian federalism; the government should provide only those programs and services it is best suited to provide. Thirdly, to help the government attain its financial objectives.

This involved, therefore, totally rethinking what government did and what Canadians could allow themselves. In the future, departments will have to drop all but fundamental responsibilities. They are amalgamating like programs and services found within a department or spread among several departments. They are eliminating job duplication and costly overlap. They are reducing the operating costs of programs through new approaches, while raising standards of service. They are funding necessary programs through cost recovery and user fees.

It must be stressed that the aim of the program review was not to identify or make cuts solely in response to financial needs. On the contrary, we asked each minister to review their programs and activities according to six criteria.

First, public interest: Does the program or activity continue to serve the public? Second, the role of government: Is it necessary or legitimate for the government to be involved in the area of the program or activity? Third, federalism: Is the present role of government appropriate, or should consideration be given to transferring it to the provinces? Fourth, partnership: What programs or activities could be transferred wholly or in part to the private or volunteer sectors? Fifth, efficiency: How could the efficiency of the program or activity be improved? Finally,