

*The Budget—Mr. Hnatyshyn*

we consider these costs, the very limited information available to the Ministers who establish new regulations and the limited input by Parliament and the public into the system, the importance of regulatory reform and the need for it are obvious.

[English]

As Hon. Members know, regulatory reform is a term that has been in more or less common use for about 10 years. It is frequently associated or confused with the more dramatic but usually less accurate term, deregulation.

To me, deregulation is only one of several options open to the regulatory reformer. The key objective for proponents of regulatory reform is to improve regulation, that is, to make it rational and efficient, to limit its growth but not necessarily to dismantle it.

Although regulatory reform has been talked about a lot in Canada, very little has actually been done about it. A lot of people probably saw it as a short term political fad deserving lip service and nothing more. Others may have found it a hard issue to take seriously because regulatory matters sometimes seem too technical for mere mortals. Still others may have been put off by the subject by identifying it with ideological movements in other countries.

In my opinion, we have to move beyond these preconceptions and we have to do it soon. The fast movement of technology and the growing integration of the world economy are challenging and, in some cases, rapidly outpacing our traditional approaches to regulation.

Twentieth century economic realities need to be matched by twentieth century regulatory approaches. This is a matter not of ideology but of good, sensible and pragmatic government. I know I have good company in this House with these views.

In the debate following the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement of the regulatory reform strategy, I was gratified to see that the opposition representatives gave the strategy their approval, qualified perhaps, but fundamental approval nonetheless.

I am hoping that, as the details of the strategy are announced, any lingering doubts among my opposition colleagues will disappear. I am most serious in expressing this hope because I think regulatory reform is one of those issues on which bipartisan support and co-operation will make a great deal of difference in improving government efficiency, promoting economic growth and, most important, getting Government off the backs of Canadians. Indeed, I will go further, Mr. Speaker. I think it is the kind of issue on which Canadians would want their Members of Parliament of all stripes to work together.

With these general reflections on my new regulatory responsibilities, I would like now to announce details of two new initiatives which form an important part of the Government's regulatory reform strategy.

First, I am proud to announce and introduce The Citizens' Code of Regulatory Fairness. It is a unique initiative based on the principle that Canadians are entitled to know in as much

detail as possible exactly how much government regulators are carrying out their responsibilities. Citizens have a right to know the rules of the game and to know they will be fair. The code response to concerns expressed to the ministerial task force on program review that the federal regulatory system is almost inaccessible to ordinary Canadians, that regulation at all levels has become too much the preserve of public servants, specialized lawyers and lobby groups. The code's purpose is to provide a set of high standards for ensuring regulatory fair play. The code also provides an explicit basis for judging the performance of regulators. In this way the code is intended to regulate the regulators.

Copies of the code are being distributed to all federal officials with regulatory responsibilities. Mr. Speaker, not only will they be expected to comply with the letter and spirit of the standards, but adherence will be a prerequisite—possibly I could refer to it as the ticket of entry—for approval of new regulatory proposals by the Special Committee of Council. The code consists of 15 points and copies of it are being circulated to all Members' offices, so I will not read them in detail at this time. However, I think it would be of interest to the House and the people of Canada to know some of the highlights of this new Citizens' Code of Regulatory Fairness.

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Canadians are going to have a fuller opportunity, henceforth, to be consulted on regulatory initiatives. Second, they are going to have adequate early notice. Third, regulatory decision-making is going to become more prompt and efficient. The Government is going to tell Canadians in clear language what the regulatory requirements are and why they have been adopted. Regulatory officials are going to be held more clearly accountable for their actions and advice. Disproportionate regulatory burdens on small and medium-sized business are going to be avoided from this point forward. Regulations will have to pass cost-benefit tests, and sanctions and enforcement powers are going to fit the seriousness of violations. Finally, the public will have an on-going role in evaluating and criticizing ineffective or inefficient regulatory programs.

The report of the Macdonald Royal Commission affirmed the view that, in this day and age, big Government requires more democracy, not less. In its thought-provoking first chapter the report says:

The extension of democracy which is required by big government is not one of war fragmented participation, but one which addresses Canadians as citizens and seeks our involvement in common tasks.

I see The Citizens' Code of Regulatory Fairness as encouraging the democratization of federal regulatory activity. That is a goal which I am sure we all endorse.

My second announcement, Mr. Speaker, is that I am today releasing a major regulatory program improvement package. It provides a long list of regulatory reform initiatives which are now under way in 16 Departments and 7 regulatory agencies to address specific problems identified by the ministerial task force on program review.