

CHAPTER 9

REFORM: THE ELIMINATION OF UNCERTAINTY

PRINCIPLE: Our recommendations are designed to substantially eliminate the uncertainty and confusion reflected in the present system of developing and legislating budgetary measures.

The purpose of the recommendations contained in this Report is to provide the people of Canada with an improved budgetary-taxation process. By virtue of our recommendation that an economic statement be presented by the Minister of Finance in the fall, some of the options which are being considered for inclusion in the budget should become known. An opportunity is then given during the fall for those who are interested to react to these proposals.

The budget which is to be presented in mid-winter is to be preceded by another financial statement dealing with the overall economic situation of the country. This should provide an appropriate backdrop against which to present the budget a few weeks later.

It is our intention that tax bills be presented with the budget and disposed of by Parliament within a reasonable time. The practice of collecting taxes without legislative approval is to be discontinued. The purpose of these recommendations is not to limit debate in the House of Commons or its committees but to eliminate the present practice wherein tax bills are not given first reading in the House until long after they are announced in general terms in the budget. This lack of concern about the timely presentation of the tax bills is encouraged because in many instances the taxes are already being collected without any legal basis.

These reforms combined with those concerning technical tax changes and government borrowing should give the public a legitimate opportunity to become acquainted with the economic matters being considered by the House of Commons. It is our hope that similar reforms will be considered by the Senate of Canada in the areas which are of concern to it.

We urge the House of Commons and the Government to implement our recommendations and request, pursuant to Standing Order 70(16), that the Government provide a comprehensive response to this Report.