

*The Budget*

to basics. People are taking another look at how they do business, how government runs its administration, its bureaucracy and delivers services.

• (1610)

The elimination of the public utilities income tax transfer is not just a problem for Alberta or some of the other provinces. It is a problem for different communities in my area. It will mean the elimination of \$700,000 in transfers to consumers of private utility companies.

This is a very hard pill to swallow. In this country we have a partnership with individual Canadians to get our house in order and this is what this is all about.

As difficult and painful as it is, cuts in budgets and programs to aboriginal friendship centres will affect how the friendship centres in the north operate and deliver their programs. However, northerners are resilient people. Like every Canadian, they recognize the importance of getting our fiscal house in order.

Northerners also see opportunity in this budget. Occasions like this one when new arrangements are to be forged and new relationships to be established create positive opportunities for the territorial government to have greater flexibility and for northerners to have a greater say in developing and administering the programs and services which address their needs.

This is an excellent opportunity to see the successful completion of the northern mineral accord. This can give the territorial government along with its other partners the aboriginal groups greater responsibility and autonomy over the economy and fiscal situation in the north. Greater autonomy also means greater flexibility over the programs and services required to meet the needs of northerners.

Every part of this country wants to become self-sustaining and the Northwest Territories is no different with all of its complex diversity of cultures. Its population is not just one race or one group of people, but it is a whole mix of people. Greater autonomy also means there is greater opportunity for co-operation, for consensus building and a whole range of human dynamics that must be considered.

Restructuring through program review, the territorial transfer or the CST also presents the opportunity for constructive dialogue in a process that is inclusive. It is a process which gives a greater voice to all stakeholders and not just government, including community leaders, activists, social workers, youth organizations. It is a comprehensive and inclusive process. It is an opportunity that can lead to greater independence from government, to become increasingly self-sufficient and self-empowering, to become masters of their own destiny and masters of their own ship.

The fourth principle used by the Minister of Finance is that we must have priorities as a country that mirror our needs as a people. These priorities must be reflected in the way government defines its role. It is that principle I would like to expand on and what this will mean on how government will operate in the future, but more important, on what role government will play in the lives of people.

In order to ensure that the needs of Canadians are met, to ensure that programs and services remain relevant and to ensure our continuing economic sovereignty, the budget measures also included a major restructuring of government through program review. Its main objective was to review all categories of federal government spending in order to bring about the most effective and cost efficient way of delivering programs and services to Canadians.

The exercise of program review is not simply a way of bringing down how much government costs. It also makes government more competent and more relevant to the people who really need help and support.

It is time for government to get back to the basics and to reflect the priorities of people. As the Minister of Finance stated in his budget address: "We are acting on the new vision of the role of government in the economy and in society. In many cases that means smaller government. In all cases, it means smarter government".

This government restructuring will have implications on what role government will play in the daily lives of people. To a certain degree government restructuring also means a restructuring of society, and that is where the real opportunity lies in the budget. As government gets back to the basics there are opportunities for Canadians to step forward, to rethink and redefine their values and responsibilities to themselves, their families and their communities.

• (1615)

Governments do not have all the answers and solutions. In redefining its role in Canadian society, the government will need people to step forward and share the burden of responsibility. Where governments have failed in the past, individual Canadians will have to stand up, play positive roles and contribute not only their knowledge but local solutions to local problems and also their sweat equity, their sweat, blood, and tears, to ensure success.

The government is calling on Canadians to participate and to be part of a process that is going to set the future straight for years and generations to come, to ensure a future for our children. This commitment will need to be ongoing even with restructuring; government can only go so far.

I conclude by saying that in the end active participation is the ultimate challenge of the budget. It is a challenge and a