

*Government Orders*

private sector is bearing fruit and working. I want to delineate how important that is to the government's philosophy toward a stronger scientific and technological sector in Canada.

Let me correct a factual error first. The hon. member for Ottawa West mentioned the cuts of the NRC at the senior management level. She argued that there was an increase in senior management of 13 people. She was contrasting that with decreases in employment in other levels. I want to help her with this. Since November 1989 there has been a reduction of four in executive management at the vice-presidential level in the NRC. I refer her to Part III of the Estimates on page 63. I will give this to her after I speak today. There has been a reduction in executive and senior management. Therefore, she has either misread the documents or she needed this exegesis of mine of the Estimates. I encourage her to look at page 63 of the Estimates.

The other point is more fundamental. The contribution of the government to science and technology as a proportion of government program spending has gone up under this government over what we inherited. When we came to office, the proportion of federal government spending on programs, as a percentage of federal government spending on programs, was a little over 4 per cent; it is now almost 5 per cent. This is at a time when there are tremendous other pressures, the claimants for government attention are growing, and a time when the government has had to be fiscally responsible. Science and technology has increased in that proportion. That over-all expenditure reality has been overlooked by hon. members opposite and it is very important for me to bring that back into the House so that hon. members will remember what we have done in terms of proving, with dollars and cents, how important science and technology spending is to the government.

Let me just move to some systematic comments about what we are doing. First, the problem with what we have heard today from hon. members opposite is that they are putting the NRC on a kind of Olympian pedestal, and they are doing a disservice to the NRC by doing this. What they want to do is put it on a pedestal. We even had a wonderful quotation from the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands. When the hon. member quotes proconsuls from some previous century, I listen carefully. He has good quotations and I like to learn

from them. In his quotation, a quotation against reorganization, he said we should not reorganize because that can be very difficult for the life and health of any institution. I want to address that. If an organization does not change, if it is not renewed, if it does not improve its context in the society of which it is a part, it will die. Those reorganizations are, of course, what we have encouraged and I am going to outline how we have done that.

We should not place this institution on a pedestal, far above the hurly-burly of day-to-day life; we should not do that. What we will do is involve the NRC far more than ever before in the most important challenges facing the nation. We want the NRC to be right at the vanguard of the challenges facing the nation, not to be incarcerated in some ivory tower. We have, in fact, helped that to happen in dozens of ways.

With our support, for example, the NRC's council is sharpening the NRC into one of the country's principal agencies for economic competitiveness. That is something else we have not heard a word about, economic competitiveness. The department of which I am a part is essentially the department in charge of industrial competitiveness. I did not hear a word about competitiveness. What hon. members opposite want to do is protect these institutions from change. I say, if these institutions are going to have strong morale and a sense of purpose, they must deliver on the country's economic competitiveness, and that is what the government has been doing.

The NRC has a very proud history, but it cannot flourish as a monument to past achievements and that is what we have been hearing. Members want this monument to past achievements not to be touched, not to be renewed, and that is not our philosophy. It must always be a national resource, helping to meet the country's most significant needs.

We heard the hon. member for Ottawa West talk about morale. The problem with her presentation was that she linked morale with a kind of glacial stasis. She argued that any change at all will affect morale. She knows that institution well and I do not believe that any institution believes that. Most institutions believe that their morale is improved if the changes made will give a stronger more pertinent long-term future.