

The Address

have to impress on anyone the fragility of our social programs as we face a staggering federal deficit and debt.

There is a continuing and increasing sense of panic in our business communities and among the constituents I represent. It is rather like the panic you would feel if you suddenly found yourself unable to pay for this wonderful dinner you had just eaten at a city restaurant, after having been encouraged and invited to take whatever you wanted from the menu. Just imagine that the dinner is over, the last coffees have been poured and the waiter brings the bill. You have no cash. So you give the waiter your credit card, but he comes back saying that it is over your credit limit. You try to write a cheque but the waiter will not accept it.

So how do we explain this crisis in terms of a country? More important, how do we explain this crisis in terms of people?

I was elected on a platform that offers hope to all the people of Canada. But I can tell you one thing: No one is prepared for rhetoric any longer, nor for promises that cannot be kept. To realize that I only have to go back to my election campaign. I met so many voters on the doorsteps who were fed up, disappointed, either out of work or worried about job loss, or who were just plain mad.

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I know from these neighbourhood experiences that politics and politicians had better move toward major social change and do it fast. There has been much talk, profuse public professions of social concern for those who are less able to care for themselves: the sick, the old, the unemployed and the poor.

This leads me to believe that the legitimate role of government is to do for people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all or do as well for themselves individually or through non-government organizations.

With our mounting debt, the provision of government funds for various groups and organizations is no longer an option. As this reality becomes accepted, organizations are lowering their dependency on the public purse and indeed are taking pride in being able to sustain themselves as associations providing valuable community service without the need for taxpayers' dollars.

I can give an example. One couple in my riding has dedicated themselves to just such an idea. About a year ago, they co-founded a centre for recovering drug and alcohol abusers. This centre differs from other programs in that it provides a haven for these people for a three month period while they find themselves moving back into the mainstream of society. The need for a centre of this type is very great and there is now a large waiting list in Calgary for the services that this centre offers.

There is no immediate possibility for expansion as operations are dependent solely on the fund-raising abilities of this group and after they have taken care of their operations there really is not very much money left over at all. However, my constituents are proud that they are making a positive difference and that they are doing it independently of government funding.

I also believe that Canadians have a personal and collective responsibility to care and provide for the basic needs of people who are unable to care and provide for themselves. We can no longer afford, either morally or financially, to provide all things to all people.

This notion of universality has bred entitlement over assistance for those who really need help to care for themselves. As an idea, universality has a major economic impact because it continues to feed the national debt, now a half trillion dollars. It is time for a new definition that does not include social programs being run by bureaucrats.

Canadian society is founded on the principles of fundamental justice. Therefore a new approach is to consider rational and compassionate care for the poor, the sick, the aged and the young, ensuring that 100 per cent of those who need help will receive it 100 per cent of the time.

I remember door-knocking during the election campaign and being asked over and over again about the Reform's plan to include old age security reductions as it moved to balance the budget. It was a hard thing for people to understand, but I explained that our plan called for a reduction and gradual elimination of those old age security payments to homes whose family income exceeded the national average income of \$54,000.

Many people in my riding could never have imagined having money like that. If they did they said they would gladly forgo some it to assist those less able to care for themselves. However, entitlement has blurred the lines of real need and we find ourselves with an idea that is out of date and financially unworkable.

I believe in the common sense of my constituents. Nowhere is this better exemplified than by a group of seniors living in a Calgary Southeast provincially subsidized housing complex. They came to know me pretty well during the campaign because I would often stop by there and have coffee with them. They represent one of those groups who I see will need continued help and support through targeted social spending.

The last time I had coffee with them was just before the election. I was asked: "Will you come back and have coffee with us, Jan, after you're elected?" They had pretty positive sense there. "We want you to speak for us, to remember us, and to stop by once in a while so that we can see that you have not changed and that you are still the same". They expect no less than what I