

Respecting taxpayer dollars

Canadians know that in order to be prosperous, you have to live within your means. You can't spend more than you take in and you have to make sure every dollar is used responsibly. Our Government knows this too. This is why we're ending our temporary stimulus spending and enacting our plan to balance Canada's budget and return to surplus by 2015.

However, we're not going to do this by cutting transfer payments to services like healthcare and education, as previous governments have. Our plan to help secure Canada's long-term prosperity is focused on closing tax loopholes and making government more efficient with taxpayer's money.

One of the ways we're doing this is by reforming the way the public sector operates, making it more in tune with the private sector. For example, our Government recently shed light on the fact that the federal public service had an annual absentee rate of 18.2 days per year. This number is two and a half times the number of absentee days found in the private sector. To put it in perspective, 18.2 days per year means that on any given day roughly 19,000 public sector workers are off sick. This number is unsustainable if we are to have a modern, 21st century public service.

Our Government is tackling this problem by reforming and modernizing the current disability management system. As it stands, this system has been untouched for 40 years and fails to both properly support employees and respect the taxpayers who end up footing the bill. One of the major reforms we'll be enacting is the creation of a short-term disability insurance plan. This plan is a more cost-effective method that will cover employees through illness while ensuring taxpayer money is used effectively.

We also announced a rigorous management system that will track public service employees' performance. This government-wide policy will help boost productivity, allowing us to help good workers become great workers and deal with poor performers effectively. Ensuring that everyone is pulling their weight is a common sense approach that will help make sure the public service is working to its full potential.

Another reform we've undertaken to overhaul the public service is to introduce 50/50 cost-sharing model for pension holders. This measure will save taxpayers roughly \$2.6 billion by 2017, while still providing a generous pension system that protects employees.

In addition, we're also eliminating voluntary severance for public service employees. This practice paid severance to those who quit or retired and is a measure that is not found in the private sector due to its overwhelming cost. In fact, this measure is expected to save taxpayers \$500 million per year.

Our Government respects taxpayer's hard-earned money. We're focused on making sure that each dollar is used efficiently and effectively so that we can keep taxes low and Canada can continue to prosper.

By David Tilson, MP