

March 17, 2003

Dear Government Member:

You know what you must do.

Last Friday, the Speaker of the Legislature urged government MPPs to assume their responsibilities as elected representatives by pressing the Premier to deliver the upcoming budget in the legislative assembly at Queen's Park, rather than in a television studio. Mr. Speaker Carr said the made-for-TV budget was evidence of a deterioration of the provincial parliament and an example of the anti-democratic influence of political consultants. We agree wholeheartedly.

Given the public outcry concerning this unprecedented decision, I ask you, on behalf of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, to urge Premier Ernie Eves to introduce the budget in the legislature in keeping with long standing parliamentary convention and to keep decision-making in the hands of legislators. As you know, the surest way to electoral defeat is when the public perceives that a government is no longer run by the men and women they duly elected, but by backroom political operatives.

Noted parliamentary experts have spoken out against this rash proposal. Indeed the last time a budget was delivered outside of a parliament in Canada was in response to an emergency stemming from a leaked copy of the budget. At that time, there was concern that parliamentarians were being ignored in the process. In the current case, parliamentarians are being deliberately excluded from the budget process for one reason, and one reason only: political expediency.

The very foundation of our democratic political system and the concept of responsible government hinges on the authority of parliamentarians — granted to them by the people — to approve or disapprove government spending. A budget is the pre-eminent piece of spending legislation. Failing to present the government's budget to the legislature is a serious affront to its members and our representative democracy. It is also an unnecessary expenditure to taxpayers.

I urge you to consider your constituents and the trust they have placed in you, and to do what is right by demanding the budget be tabled first in the legislature for the scrutiny of all elected representatives.

Sincerely,

(Sent electronically)

John Williamson
Ontario Director
Canadian Taxpayers Federation

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For more information:

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