

● (1405)

THE DISABLED AND THE HANDICAPPED

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention before the House how pleased I am with the increased disability deduction for persons with severe cardio-respiratory failure, mental retardation, profound bilateral deafness and other serious disabilities. The 1986 Budget has increased the deduction by \$250, thus bringing the total deduction to its new level of \$2,860.

As a result of this Budget, a number of disabled Canadians will also be able to take advantage of the refundable federal sales tax credit, while items especially designed for guide dogs for the blind may now be imported duty free.

These measures will benefit more than 185,000 disabled Canadians and reflect the compassion shown by the Mulroney Government for the least fortunate in our society.

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[English]

THE BUDGET

FAVOURABLE REACTION AND PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT SMALL BUSINESSES LOANS ACT

Mr. Norman Warner (Stormont-Dundas): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House today that the reaction to the Budget from my riding has been most favourable. My constituents realize that the Budget is a tough one but they are prepared, as are all Canadians, to share the responsibility for reducing the public debt.

They recognize that great progress has been made in the past 18 months toward the reduction of the deficit and the creation of new jobs.

Although unemployment is still a problem, my constituents appreciate the Government's continued support and encouragement for small business to create more new jobs.

However, at a public meeting held in my riding on Saturday, serious concern was expressed about the effectiveness of the Small Businesses Loans Act. They applaud the program and our initiative to expand the amount of the loan guarantees, but they also note that some bankers are not making these loans available to their customers. Access to financing at the bank's prime rate plus 1 per cent should be available to all qualifying small businesses so they can maximize their potential for growth and, at the same time, create new jobs.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Sixty seconds.

S.O. 21

ROYAL CANADIAN MINT

CONTRACT AWARDED TO UNITED STATES GOLD COIN CONSULTANT

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, once again the Government of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) has displayed the business like manner in which it handles taxpayers' money, which we saw previously in the Habitat flip.

This time it is its handling of a consulting contract to a gold expert in the United States on how to market the Maple Leaf coin. The Royal Canadian Mint paid Mr. Morrie Sandler of Stamford, Connecticut, a consulting fee of \$250,000 U.S., \$50,000 U.S. in expenses, and an open-ended incentive bonus based on sales. When all of this is worked out, this gentleman received \$480,000 Canadian in 1984, and \$2.73 million Canadian in 1985. All of this was for part-time work.

This led a Canadian authority on gold bullion to exclaim: "How many people in the stock and bullion business have a \$250,000 contract plus \$50,000 in expenses and a guaranteed incentive? I know of very few".

A New York trader said: "The 1985 figures are shocking".

We on this side of the House are also shocked. The Government should hang its head in shame, considering what the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has been saying—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Sixty seconds.

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CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MEETING OF FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL, AND TERRITORIAL MINISTERS

Mr. Jim Caldwell (Essex-Kent): Mr. Speaker, at a federal, provincial, and territorial meeting on March 3 and 4, the Ministers responsible for culture and historical resources met in the spirit of co-operation that has been the hallmark of the Government since September, 1984. Solutions relating to the present difficulties experienced by the Canadian film and book publishing sector were proposed, which make allowances for regional differences and diversities as well as provincial policies.

The conference, under the co-direction of our Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) and Quebec's Deputy Premier and Cultural Affairs Minister, Lise Bacon, agreed to take steps to ensure that Canadian cultural products have better access to domestic markets and to reinforce the Canadian presence in the production, distribution, and marketing sectors.

To the doom and gloom merchants of the two Opposition Parties who accused the Government of selling our cultural sovereignty, I say that, on the contrary, we are strengthening our sovereignty over our cultural industries and will continue to do so.