

*The Budget—Hon. B. Bouchard*

explains the deficit we inherited in 1984 and which we are still struggling to control.

The extent of the deficit made it necessary for us to make some difficult choices. However, those choices produced results. They have helped us to reduce the deficit and bring the inflation rate down to acceptable levels. Thanks to responsible financial management and concrete action, our economic growth rate is one of the highest among the world's major industrialized countries.

Budgetary responsibility and the state of the economy are two concepts that are closely linked. We cannot, Mr. Speaker, neglect one without compromising the other. They have both, however, reached a stage that will be crucial for Canada's future.

At a time when national economies are becoming increasingly open and free trade offers us tremendous scope for development, there are a number of basic conditions that must be met: Canadians must be competitive, they must be trained, and they must be technologically advanced. There is also a broader but nevertheless essential condition: the Canadian economy must be capable of sustained growth.

All this cannot be fully achieved with the kind of deficit we have today and with a national debt that costs us more than one-third of each dollar that we spend.

Mr. Speaker, Members on all sides of the House cherish certain values that are very much of this country. We all believe, for example, that the state must maintain many high-quality social services. We believe that the state must fight regional disparities and that environmental protection remains an absolute priority. We all believe in the need for national standards for the distribution of services.

Well, if we all believe in these objectives, we must ensure that our economy can maintain them. But that is not all, Mr. Speaker. There is also an important question of moral responsibility to future generations. We do not have the right to leave our children in straitened circumstances because of an uncontrollable debt burden.

And the Budget presented to the House by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) is not an easy one to present, but it had to be done if responsibility means anything. This Budget is not only forward-looking. It also deals with today's realities, Mr. Speaker. The measures proposed to us by the Finance Minister are a

solid foundation for our economic prosperity in the 1990s. The measures to control the deficit and public debt are a key to the future of this country. And the measures designed to establish a framework for long-term economic growth are also essential.

Mr. Speaker, the same reasoning applies to the Department that I direct. Transport has always been the motor of the economy. It is, so to speak, the arteries through which circulate the agricultural commodities, raw materials and finished products that feed this country's economy.

The various modes of transport account for 4.8 per cent of our gross domestic product and 3.9 per cent of our total employment. Every day, 130,000 Canadians travel from one city to another using commercial transport and every day, the Canadian transport system handles 1.9 million tonnes of merchandise of various kinds.

Mr. Speaker, over these last few years, we have been committed to providing Canadians with a transportation system that is first of all safe, reliable and efficient and that in every way promotes the freedom to move which lies at the heart of what Canada is about. Since free trade with the United States is a reality, the contribution of transportation will be even more decisive for our future economic development.

[English]

Pre-confederation Canada had to struggle constantly to meet its transportation challenges. This rugged land of vast spaces needed unifying bonds. Our early needs for unification were met through the realization of Sir John A. Macdonald's grand dream of a transcontinental railway. The openings of the St. Lawrence Seaway and the Trans-Canada Highway in 1959 and 1962 had enormous positive impact on economic development and transportation. Our expanding airways and communications have reduced the size of the country. We are all now truly neighbours in this great nation.

Transportation must continue to play its vital role as we enter the next decade and the next century. In looking forward I see a transportation system with at least these four essential elements.

First, it will be safe. Second, it will be efficient and effective. That is to say it will make the best use of each mode of transportation: air, rail, marine, car, truck and bus. Third, it will be responsive. That is to say it will meet the needs of shippers and travellers. Fourth, it will be