

the last 20 years. However, it ignores a crying need. This is no time for another mindless revenue grab from tobacco. The Government should realize that this cash cow is dying. I represent an area with a large number of tobacco growers who desperately need help to convert their operations into other products which will give them a decent return on their investment.

I would like to spend a couple of minutes to repeat a few things I have said in this Chamber on other occasions. When those hard-working tobacco growers started growing tobacco 50 or 60 years ago in the tobacco belt of southwestern Ontario they took a great risk. They went into an economic wasteland, the backwater of southern Ontario which was not much good for producing anything else. Through hard work, worry, borrowing, and paying their taxes year in and year out they fashioned for themselves a decent standard of living while building up some very viable family farms. For a number of years they prospered. However, in recent years, due to many different obstacles, not the least of which is the health factor, the tobacco industry is now on the decline. Judging by the predictions of most of the experts, the tobacco industry will continue to decline in this country.

It is very easy for us to say that people should stop smoking, that we should stop advertising tobacco products, and that we should bring in every kind of regulation and law imaginable to encourage people to quit smoking. I am a living example of a person who smoked cigarettes for 30 years and finally quit. I am happy I quit. I got scared. I knew that the writing was on the wall and that smoking was a dangerous habit to indulge in.

However, on the other side, we must look at the tobacco industry and the tobacco producers in particular. Is it fair to pull the rug out from under them and say that not only has their product been scientifically proven to be dangerous but that we do not care about them any more, that we will let them fend for themselves other than putting \$15 million in the kitty to help them get out of tobacco and into something else? Tobacco farmers need about three years of good prices and then will not need government assistance to get out of tobacco. They will be able to leave with dignity, independent of government aid. They will have enough money to set themselves up in another industry or business or to enter a trade.

Unfortunately, both the federal Government and the provincial Government of Ontario are doing very little other than saying a lot about what should be done rather than putting a meaningful program into place to assist the tobacco growers. It is a shame that because of the health factor some 20 townships in southwestern Ontario will suffer drastically in terms of their tax base. The families of tobacco growers are going through tremendous adversity, depression and anxiety because their livelihood is literally being taken away from them. I hope that the Government will put together a program to assist these people in a dignified way which will allow them, of their own volition, to move into another kind of business.

While so many farmers are going bankrupt and their land is falling out of production, no government aid has been

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announced. The Government has an opportunity to tell those farmers that they are not alone. The Government could have said that this year's tax hike on tobacco would be directed exclusively to developing alternative crops, researching new markets, and providing assistance to convert tobacco farms to other kinds of production. That opportunity was missed. Tobacco farmers found out what other Canadians learned the hard way, that they cannot trust the Government to fund fairness.

By looking at what is not in the Government's fiscal plan you can see the real curdle, if I can use that expression, of this Budget. There were no plans to create jobs. There were no new plans to help farmers. There were no new plans to correct regional economic problems, and there was no tax reform. Each of these glaring omissions says something about the Government. The Government tells us something with each studied silence. If you do not have a job, the Government says "tough". If your farm is in trouble, the Government says "sell out". If you live in a depressed part of the country, the Government says "move". If you want a fair tax system, the Government says "wait until election time".

These issues should be addressed when the Government lays out its plans for the coming year. I know the Government will argue that job creation is part of its over-all plan. It will point with pride to the number of jobs created since it came to office. That is fine if you live in or around Toronto. Of these new jobs, 95 per cent were created in Ontario, but even in Ontario jobs are not being created equally. The region I represent has unemployment of approximately 11 per cent. That is about 4 points above the provincial average in one of the most prosperous areas of the country. Imagine the despair in Atlantic Canada, in the West, and in the North. There should have been a clear target for lowering unemployment, especially in depressed regions of the country.

There should also have been some attempt at tax reform. I will not repeat the tax increases which have been heaped on the average Canadian family in the last two and a half years. They have been put on the record again and again. The federal taxes of the average family have increased by approximately \$1,350 a year since the Conservatives came into office. Canadians were looking forward to this year because they had been promised tax reform. Indeed, that was supposed to be the main attraction of this year's Budget. We would have welcomed the closure of loopholes such as the capital gains exemption. Perhaps I should not call that a loophole. It was simply a special tax concession given to investors. Canadians would have been happier with a simpler tax system where every individual and corporation paid a fair share. Instead, it was put off. I expect the Government wanted the delay so that the new system could be announced closer to the next federal election. However, every day that the Government delays will cost it dearly, because it is another day that Canadians are forced to endure an unfair tax system. If there is one thing that Canadians want today, it is a fair tax system. They do not