

The Budget

The government has just created a feeling of uncertainty, which will have very serious repercussions on the performance of the public service as a whole and on other related areas of activity.

There is nothing in this budget for the 800,000 unemployed and people looking for work in Quebec. On the contrary. Fortunately, the Government of Quebec knows how to create jobs.

The only good federal program is the infrastructure program, and it is being cut by \$200 million.

We are all aware that Canada's debt has mortgaged the country's future. Quebecers have made this point repeatedly. At the hearings on the future of Quebec, everyone where I come from fears the worst, because it is clear that the ship is leaking and the captain has abandoned his duties. The people of Quebec will give a clear response to this government in the upcoming referendum, and neither fear nor threats will change the course of history. After the victory of the "yes" votes, the other provinces will have to decide what sort of country they want. I am sure that others will want to follow the road the people of Quebec are preparing to take.

In concluding, I would say: Long live Canada without Quebec, and long live Quebec without Canada.

• (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: It seems that I must split the time. First, the hon. member for Durham.

[English]

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. Every time we get into this debate somehow Quebec seems to be a very interesting place with no debt problems but a simple examination of its financial record indicates quite the reverse. I believe the province of Quebec's deficit is currently about \$70 billion. This was done in Quebec by Quebecers. It continues to expand and if my memory serves me correctly, it is probably expanding a lot faster than the federal government's deficit.

While the leader of the Government of Quebec is out talking about sovereignty, he is not dealing with the very problems of his own province. It costs \$5 million for a sovereignty debate that nobody wants. This is irresponsible. I do not believe the people of Quebec are going to be happy with this expenditure or with the continual pushing of Quebec into a deficit situation.

Bonds are a big financier of government debt. Quebec government rated bonds continue to escalate their interest costs. Why? Because people have many misgivings about where this is going.

The hon. member talked about job creation. Job creation and job losses are an absolute. They must be netted together. Sure, there will be job losses in the civil service. Everybody in Canada, including Quebecers, have said how necessary it is that governments downsize and become more efficient.

I have heard my colleagues from the Bloc say those very things. Stop duplication. When the government stops duplication they say: "You should not lay these people off". The reality is that 433,000 new jobs were created in Canada last year, net job creation. That is positive and it includes Quebec.

Finally, \$78 billion of the federal government debt is held by Quebecers. They believe in Canada, but what is their future with this crazy concept they have? How are they going to get reimbursed in this strange emulation of a new country? There is \$78 billion that Quebecers hold in Canada.

I would like to have the hon. member answer those questions.

[Translation]

Mr. Canuel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. You talk about duplication. I want to know what duplication has been eliminated over the past few years. None.

Another point. I agree that Quebec has a high debt. However, for years and years, decades and decades, the federal government has been transferring money to Ontario and to other provinces for research and development, while the money it has been transferring to Quebec has been in the form of unemployment insurance benefits. One thing is sure: when one region is without work while research funds are sent to another, there is something wrong.

Regarding sovereignty, I want to say that even though our debt is high, we can handle it, and that we are prepared to pay part of Canada's debt, because we are part of it and we have a moral obligation to do so. If I were on the other side of the House, a government member from Ontario, the maritimes or the west, do you know what I would say to the Bloc? I would say: "If you want to leave, go".

Why try holding us back? Why tire yourselves out in the effort? We are convinced, I am convinced that we are able to manage our debt intelligently and at the same time help to pay off yours.

• (1655)

Then what more do you want? I, myself, have never understood why the rest of Canada is saying: "Why not you stay with us. This is terrible. It is going to cost you". We are going to spend a few million dollars on the referendum. But how much are you going to spend? I rephrase my question. If we are so poor and have so many problems, why are you so desperate to keep us in the federation?