

The Budget—Mr. Comuzzi

debt of our country increased by \$1.5 billion a year. Since 1984, for the last five years of Conservative rule, the national debt of our country has increased by \$34 billion a year.

In light of the largest personal tax increase in Canadian history our deficit will increase this year from \$28.9 billion to \$30.5 billion for the next fiscal period. All Canadians were told by the Minister of Finance that the deficit in our country could not be allowed to increase and that it was the number one problem in Canada. When we were discussing the deficit I was prepared like all Canadians to tighten our belts. We expected some harsh measures in the interest of reducing the deficit for the benefit of all Canadians.

How disappointing it was when the Budget was finally tabled in the House to see that the deficit had not decreased but in fact had increased. What did the Government do? It did an about-face and increased the deficit again, exactly opposite to what it told Canadians throughout the country that it was not going to do. This Government has failed miserably in its attempt to realize the goals outlined by its own Minister of Finance when he stated: "Our challenge is to restore fiscal stability and rebuild credibility in the management of government finances. The only way to do this is to set out a medium term fiscal plan with sustained deficit reduction and then hold firm to that plan." This is not what the current Government has done. It has done just the opposite.

Let me be specific in the main thrust of my intervention. A close review of the Budget suggests that the Government has little regard for northern Ontario. This Budget is cruel to rural and small town Canada. This Budget is particularly cruel to northern Ontario. Since 1984 the Government has ignored all of the people in northern Ontario. Since 1984 it has failed to let Canadians from northern Ontario share in the national dream. Since 1984 it has failed to let the people of northern Ontario share in the national pie.

The people of northern Ontario responded to being ignored in 1988. It is obvious from the actions of the Government that we are now paying our dues. No matter what the Government does or says, its actions count. It ignores those who exercise their democratic rights. It ignores those in northern Ontario like it ignores the good people in Prince Edward Island—look what the Government has done in Summerside. It ignores us in northern Ontario like it ignored the people in Ottawa—look what it did with the space program. It ignores us in

northern Ontario like it ignores the people in Newfoundland—look what it did to the vital fishing industry and the unemployment insurance. It ignores the people in Portage la Prairie—look what it did with the service base there. They ignore us in northern Ontario—take a look at what the Government has done to our softwood industry and the movement of our grain away from the traditional ports to the West Coast.

• (1720)

Do we need any more proof that the Government is not concerned about small-town and rural Canada? Do we need any more proof that the Government is not concerned about northern Ontario?

Gasoline prices in northern Ontario are 4 cents or 5 cents a litre higher than in southern Ontario or Manitoba. Fifty kilometres out of Thunder Bay gasoline costs 10 cents to 12 cents more a litre. What does that mean to the average person who lives in northern Ontario? It means if that person goes from the centre of my riding in Thunder Bay to the furthest point which is 290 kilometres away, it will cost \$5 more for a tank of gasoline. It costs \$5 more for a tank of gasoline every time one pulls up to the gas pumps. You can cut it any way you want, Mr. Speaker, but this is \$5 extra in income tax that is being paid for the deficiencies in the way the Government handles its fiscal responsibility.

The impact goes beyond economic considerations. Northern people must travel great distances to reach a neighbouring town. Increasing gasoline prices limits the mobility of people in northern Ontario. Northern people must travel to communicate with their neighbours. We must travel to socialize with our relatives. We must travel to receive a degree of health care. We must travel to obtain educational equality. Sometimes, yes, we must travel to survive. This is a cruel Budget to the people of northern Ontario because of those increased costs of taxation.

On April 12 I tabled in the House a petition from a group of concerned citizens from northern Ontario who are opposing the Government's 10 per cent telecommunications tax on long-distance telephone calls. Residents in the North are often compelled to make more long distance calls than our friends in the South due to the population and the distances between our communities.

How do you think those citizens will respond to this Budget, Mr. Speaker? In its disregard for matters pertaining to northern Ontario, the Government has again increased the tax on telecommunications services from