

*The Budget*

I could see in the debate so far, these are two aspects of the bill that prompt people to oppose it, often fiercely.

Moreover, the bill calls for stricter controls on the import, trafficking and smuggling of firearms in Canada. It provides for stiffer sentences of imprisonment for individuals who commit serious crimes with firearms. The current minimum sentence of one year, under section 85 of the Criminal Code, would be increased to four years with this bill.

At last, certain types of handguns would now be prohibited in Canada. The bill prohibits the import or sale of handguns using .25 or .32 cartridges as well as handguns with a barrel equal or less than four inches in length. This provision applies to approximately 85 per cent of handguns in Canada.

Finally, the bill makes any violation of the provisions regarding licensing and registration a criminal offence.

There are perhaps seven million firearms in Canada today. This is an estimate, as any round figure, because no one knows for sure. Some people have had firearms for many, many years in their closets or basements. I personally have two: a small .22 calibre rifle and a 12 gauge shotgun. They are in a closet. I have not used either of these firearms in over ten years, but I think I have owned them for 20 years. No one knew that I owned firearms. Like many other Canadians, I fall in that statistical category.

It is also a fact that Canadians are in favour of firearms control. I will continue next time, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** You will have a lot of time to do so then, dear colleague.

SITTING SUSPENDED

**The Speaker:** We will suspend the sitting of the House for a few minutes.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 4.27 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 4.30 p.m.

**The Speaker:** Order. It being 4.30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), the House will now proceed to the consideration of Ways and Means Motion No. 20 for the budget statement.

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[English]

**THE BUDGET**

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.)** moved:

That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the budget documents, including the notices of ways and means motions. The details of the measures are included in the documents.

• (1635)

Pursuant to an order of this House, I will introduce today a bill seeking borrowing authority for the 1995–96 fiscal year. I am asking that an order of the day be designated for consideration of these motions.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard):** Mr. Speaker, a lot of people think I should sit down now.

Mr. Speaker, there are times in the progress of a people when fundamental challenges must be faced, when fundamental choices must be made, and a new course charted. For Canada, this is one of those times. Our resolve, our values, our very way of life as Canadians are being tested.

The choice is clear. We can take the path, too well trodden, of minimal change, of least resistance, of leadership lost. Or we can set out on a new road of fundamental reform, of renewal, of hope restored. Today we have made our choice. Today we take action.

[Translation]

This is a window of extraordinary opportunity. Thanks to the hard work of millions upon millions of Canadians, our economy is now stronger than it has been for years.

Last year, economic growth in Canada was the highest of any G-7 country. We are projected to lead again this year. In the past year, 433,000 jobs have been created, and Canada's exports have never been higher. As a result, our balance of payments has improved dramatically.

Productivity has surged. Our cost competitiveness is at its highest level in more than 40 years. Canada remains one of the lowest inflation countries in the world.

Canadians want to keep it that way, and so does this government. The targets that we set with the Bank of Canada will make sure that happens.

These statistics tell a story of an economy in bloom; an economy of growth and new jobs. However, there are two clouds that loom over our country's horizon.

The first is the uncertainty that some would create over the future of Quebec. Let there be no doubt—that challenge will be met. Quebecers do not want Canada, their country, torn apart. The second cloud is the debt and deficit. Dealing with that challenge is our purpose today.