

The Budget

There are a number of factors where seniors are going to be hurt. By cutting these things to seniors we are ignoring seniors in the future. We have an ageing population. We have to face the facts that we must redirect our priorities in looking to the future, not only for the next generation but for our generation who is now ageing. My question to the member is this. Will he try to convince the Minister of Finance, the members of his party, the cabinet minister, his colleagues and the Progressive Conservative government that they cannot continue to ignore the aging population of Canada? They must fortify not destroy the programs that have been set in place up until now.

Mr. Soetens: Madam Speaker, it was certainly a very well thought out question. I guess the only debate I would have with the question is on the facts contained within it. Let me give some clear examples.

The member talked about the One Voice Seniors Network. They are well known supporters of particular viewpoints that the member is concerned with. I understand that.

In the presentation that the One Voice Seniors Network sent out to many of its membership, they talked about the impact of the goods and services tax. As I suggested during my speech, members of the opposition want to debate the goods and services tax rather than the budget. I will try to answer partially the hon. member's comment about the goods and services tax and partially his comment about the impact.

The goods and services tax in the brochure sent out by the One Voice Seniors Network talked about a new tax on telephone communication, a new tax on fuel, a tax on rents and of course, as Madam Speaker is aware, those are misstatements of the information that is provided.

If we are concerned about whether a senior should pay tax on golf, I can understand that that would be of concern to the member who asked the question. I am not sure I can say that seniors who have contacted me are concerned about having to pay tax on their golf.

With regard to the clawback, it is awfully nice to again hear the member speak about protecting the rights of seniors who make \$77,000 a year and have to pay back their entire old age security. He talks about taxing high

income earners and when we do that, he says we cannot do it.

Ultimately he is concerned about how Canadians are affected by this. Are seniors being affected? Let me put it this way. Seniors would be far more affected in the impact of social programs if we did not bring the deficit under control. Without a controlled deficit, all programs for all Canadians will be under attack. By reining in the deficit, we have a much stronger ability to protect all the social programs that Canadians want and expect.

Mr. Schneider: Madam Speaker, I rise today with great pleasure to ask my hon. colleague a question relative to the remarks that he has given today on a subject that no doubt is near and dear to the hearts of a lot of Canadians.

When I say to the hearts, I am talking about those who are capable of looking at the entire problem and not just looking at isolated problems. Our national debt is in fact a national problem of the kind of magnitude that it will take the credibility of people like my hon. colleague to resolve. My hon. colleague and I got to know each other as we spent a week in Saint-Jean, Quebec and learned a little bit about each other. I find that he is a man of integrity and I would entreat him to the residents of the constituency of Ontario.

I found as I followed him around the finance committee hearings throughout the past year that he indeed was a man who did provide a lot of work to the committee. I have a couple of questions or points to which I would like him to respond.

First is the matter of Petro-Canada. He did touch on this subject. He did not touch on another component to it that I think if he had the opportunity he would like to and that is how much more effective Petro-Canada will be once the pride of ownership is given as an opportunity for these individuals who own these service stations.

Second is perhaps a little enlightening experience with respect to the fact that we are a government that does not govern by poll. Of course, we are doing some pretty unpopular things. Perhaps he could address to his constituents and to the members of this House how tough it is to be a member of the finance committee and a member of a government which believes in paying its bills.