

The Budget

report to the hon. member that the reductions in Quebec are the same type that were received in my constituency of Provencher.

With respect to unemployment rates, at the outset of his speech the member raised concerns about the inequities in terms of contributions in Quebec to the unemployment insurance fund and those collecting unemployment insurance.

• (1530)

Perhaps the reason there are not as many people collecting unemployment in Quebec as there were last year is the federal government's small business initiatives and the federal infrastructure program.

[Translation]

Mr. Nunez: Madam Speaker, I would like to point out, for the benefit of the hon. member for Halifax, that several members of her own party do not agree with the immigration fees.

Ms. Clancy: That is not true.

Mr. Nunez: Yes it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): Are you going to reply to the hon. member for Provencher?

Mr. Nunez: I would like to give the hon. member an answer. Once again, Quebec is hit harder than the rest of the provinces. In the dairy sector alone, cuts of \$32 million, and dairy producers are concentrated in Quebec. For the first time ever, this year Quebecers will contribute more to the unemployment insurance system than they will receive in benefits. The shortfall in unemployment insurance is \$118 million. And there is nothing in the budget to help job creation. What about the promises? What about the Liberals' promise to create jobs?

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to participate in the budget debate. During all my years in opposition, I heard many finance ministers deliver their budget speeches. From one year to the next, the same scenario repeated itself. The minister would make great forecasts and great promises only to tell us later that he had been completely mistaken.

[English]

Now the approach is different. This is a new era. For the first time Canadians can trust their government's economic assumptions.

The Minister of Finance has restored the confidence of the financial markets. He has also done something else of equal importance. He is restoring the confidence of Canadians and for that I salute him.

Today I want to talk about the implications of the budget for Canadian women. However let us be very clear. I am not only speaking to women; I am also speaking to men. Women's issues are everyone's issues. They are societal issues. They touch every citizen in the country.

Women are our mothers, our spouses and care givers. They are also taxpayers, consumers, workers and entrepreneurs. They balance the family budget. They manage businesses. They take jobs and they create jobs. They educate the next generation.

Women are very realistic. They know that as a nation we cannot spend more money than we make for a very long time. The time to pay back quickly catches up. Women understand that our country cannot continue to accumulate huge deficits year after year after year.

Now the time has come to face reality. The 1995 budget is the first step and only the first step. Our goal is to create good jobs and maintain our social safety net. We refuse to have decisions of prime importance for the nation taken by the bond sellers in New York, Tokyo or for that matter on Bay Street.

What lies ahead of us is a long journey, too long delayed. At the end of the journey we will emerge triumphant with our finances in order, a stronger economy, an ensured social safety net, and with renewed confidence in our abilities.

Before we reach that goal many sacrifices will have to be made by all Canadians. We will all have to tighten our belts. Everyone shall be called on to do his or her fair share to help eliminate the deficit.

Women really understand the need for fiscal restraint. They are ready to do their fair share but only their fair share, for fiscal restraint must never be used as an excuse to roll back the advances women have made in the past 20 years. Nor can it be given as a reason for delaying or postponing the further progress of women's equality.

• (1535)

[Translation]

The first piece of good news for women in this budget is that there is no tax increase.

We sincerely believe that the tax issue is not only a matter of tax rates; it is also a matter of fairness. By eliminating tax loopholes, the budget makes our tax system more equitable.

Second, the Canadian government wants to give the provinces more flexibility in managing programs like health care, post-secondary education and social insurance. We will achieve this goal through the Canada Social Transfer.

[English]

The minister stated that flexibility does not mean a free-for-all. There are national goals that still must be applied. We will combine flexibility with continued fidelity to our principles.