

*The Budget*

• (1640)

**Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on February 27, the Minister of Finance tabled his budget in this House. This event extensively covered by the media was preceded by a fear-mongering effort to scare the public. They said the budget would hurt all taxpayers, but they did not tell us the most important part.

And that is that the creditors to whom the Canadian debt is owed wanted to make sure Canada would be able to pay the interest on its debt in the years to come. That is what the problem was. It was also most important to let it be known that the federal government was waiting until after the Quebec referendum to make major cuts, once again deceiving the people.

When I was first elected to this place by the residents of the riding of Matapédia—Matane, I was sure I was coming here to serve the interests of my region and that is what I have been doing ever since: serving the interests of my fellow citizens. But since February 27, I have had to admit that it is not really the hon. members and ministers opposite who run the country, but rather big financial players.

What are the ministers and members across the way doing here if they let their Minister of Finance table a budget like this without saying a word? I must admit that certain members did stand up and denounce this budget and I am proud of them. I only wish others would follow suit.

What power do these members and ministers have in this House? I hope they are not mere puppets. When the creditors of a country tell its finance minister what to do, it means that the country has lost its monetary and financial independence.

Who has led us into that tunnel? None other than the Prime Minister, when he was the Minister of Finance. The process started with him. That farce shows a serious lack of respect for Canadian taxpayers, particularly those from Quebec, for whom the big cuts will come after the referendum.

Why not tell the people the truth? Why not tell them now what they are in for? Stop hiding your despicable and partisan goals. The Minister of Finance's action lacks any consistency and is a monumental hoax. I can tell the minister that Quebecers will remember him and his party on referendum day. My constituents in the riding of Matapédia—Matane will not be fooled.

The federal budget will hit them very hard. Let me give you a few examples. There will be cuts at the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, in Sainte-Flavie, in the Supply and Services division in Matane, and in the offices of the Department of Human Resources Development; fishermen will be hurt by the service charge in fishing ports and harbours; cuts will also affect

farmers and milk producers; finally, there will be a gas tax increase, in a region where gas is already more expensive than elsewhere. Last year, Rimouski residents blocked a road in an attempt to have the price of gas go down. It did go down one cent, but now it is going up one and a half cents.

Since the budget was tabled, the only ones to speak in favour of the government's strategy were the creditors, and even they had mixed feelings about it.

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A few days later, we were again faced with rising interest rates and a falling dollar on financial markets, a quick response to the minister's budget.

Blaming Quebec for this country's financial situation shows an unprecedented lack of logic. If Quebec were to blame, would members opposite not tell us to become sovereign as fast as possible?

The impact of this budget will be shocking, and pretty soon the minister will tell this House he can no longer control the deficit or stop the growth of the debt.

In the days following the budget, we saw that Canada's provinces, including Quebec, rejected the minister's vision, and today, everyone openly condemns that vision, especially Ontario.

And now for a closer look at the disastrous impact this budget will have, starting with the catastrophic impact the spiralling federal debt will have on job creation and corporate investment.

For people who do not have a job and those who will be affected by unemployment insurance cuts, the future is very bleak. Because of the poor economic climate, consumers will spend less, and businesses will postpone investment projects because of the high cost of borrowing.

It is clear that this government, which promised hundreds of thousands of jobs, has missed its target by a mile. It misled everyone. I would say it practically lied to the entire population. It has turned its back on its commitments.

In addition to letting the debt grow at an alarming rate—everyone is saying it will reach \$603 billion in 1996—the government has just cut 45,000 jobs in the Canadian public service. This government is now producing unemployment instead of encouraging job creation. How many of these government employees will join the ranks of the unemployed? And there are hundreds of indirect jobs that will disappear in the process.

In the outlying regions, these job losses will have a disastrous impact on an economy already weakened by a recession that is still smouldering.