

The Budget—Mr. Chartrand

been undermining the Canadian economy for a number of years.

As Member for Verdun-Saint-Paul I am proud to be associated with this spectacular reversal in public finance and Canada's economic climate. Since our Government came into office we have witnessed a series of positive economic indications. All told, 580,000 jobs have been created since September 1984, including 129,000 during last January alone. The unemployment rate dropped from 11.7 per cent when we took over down to 9.8 per cent last January, the lowest it has been in four years. The national growth rate, productivity, housing starts and consumer spending were all rising indicators in the past year, a sure sign that there is renewed confidence in Canada's economic prospects. Private sector investments have increased considerably over the last two years and business circles expect this trend will continue.

Naturally, Mr. Speaker, our Opposition colleagues would rather not draw attention to these figures, intent as they are on making people believe that our performance so far has been negative. Unfortunately for them, the results can already be felt and Canadians are quite capable of seeing that for themselves.

One might wonder what prompted such a show of confidence in the economic renewal in Canada. The answer is simple, Mr. Speaker.

Right from the start in November 1984 the Minister of Finance outlined our economic strategy and has stuck to that plan ever since. In his economic statement he stressed that the Government would make a concerted effort towards lower deficits and public expenditures, and that it would take appropriate steps to boost employment. The May 1985 Budget and this one are the outcome of that policy, Mr. Speaker. They are part and parcel of a coherent approach which leaves little doubt that our Government will indeed honour its commitments. Last year's real deficit did not exceed the forecasts, an achievement unheard of under previous Liberal administrations.

A Government which keeps its promises and steers in the right direction, that is what explains renewed confidence in the Canadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, our Government's first priority has been job creation and, in that respect, our achievements over the past 16 months went far beyond anything ever done by our predecessors. We have no intention of resting on our laurels. A few months ago the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald) announced the Canadian Jobs Strategy program, a novel approach concerning the role of Government in job creation. By advocating ever more direct private sector participation, and particularly by promoting skill investment and training, the Government was finally able to stop allocating huge funds to the ad hoc job creation programs of the Liberal administration whose main objective was mainly to achieve a factitious decline in unemployment levels. When it

comes to job creation, Mr. Speaker, our Government has been able to set new trends.

Like the rest of Canadians, the residents of Verdun-Saint-Paul had been asking for a sensible and efficient job-creation program.

Those among my constituents who have the misfortune of being unemployed can now rely on a well designed and functional program to help them find a job. In addition, the Minister of Finance has shown the commitment of our Government to its employment strategy by injecting \$800 million more in this program for 1987-88.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the small business sector is the one which creates the most jobs in Canada, and this is especially true in Quebec and my constituency of Verdun-Saint-Paul. That is why our Government has taken the necessary action to encourage job creation as much as possible in this vital sector. The Minister of Finance has announced a 2 per cent decrease in the taxation rate for small businesses. The ceiling for loans available to these businesses will increase from \$1.5 billion to \$2.5 billion. The \$500,000 capital gains exemption should also encourage many people to invest in small businesses, which will create new jobs.

The Government is therefore addressing the problems in the small business sector as in many other areas.

One group of Canadian men and women will receive particular attention from our Government, namely that of welfare recipients. We see it as our duty to improve their lot, and it is in this context that the Government recently signed an agreement with the provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan. The Government will invest \$100 million a year to provide welfare recipients with a valid alternative and the possibility of finding productive employment. Equal amounts will be paid into the program by the provinces, which shows the extent to which harmony between Government levels is possible in a context of national reconciliation.

Another group to which the Government wants to provide special assistance is that of older workers. Mr. Speaker, I am particularly pleased by this initiative since my constituency of Verdun-Saint-Paul includes many such workers. This is a very vulnerable group, because when they lose their jobs, their lack of adequate training makes it very difficult for them to find other employment elsewhere. To remedy the situation, the Government has set up a new Program for Older Worker Adjustment. Once more, Mr. Speaker, this initiative will be made possible under agreements signed with the provinces. The Government will spend up to \$125 million under this new program during the next four years. Thanks to the consultations between the Minister of Labour (Mr. McKnight) and the provinces, as well as labour and business representatives, this program will be adapted to the real needs of our older workers faced with a constantly changing labour market.