

Government Orders

I want to say in the few moments I have left that this budget will not do much to create jobs in my constituency and elsewhere in Canada. True, there is the registered retirement savings plan initiative, but as I said a moment ago, the cancellation in regard to co-op housing makes it such that there is a net loss in the forecast of home construction this year as a result of that particular announcement.

We were all elected to this place to do something. It is the role of government to be pro-active, not to just say that things will take care of themselves because that is not so although we could wish that they would. Frankly, given that the government has done so little in the budget, I still wish that things correct themselves, too. Why do we want to continue to make 1.49 million Canadians suffer in the meantime? Today 1.49 million Canadians are out of a job. How many Canadians are unofficially out of a job? How many Canadians are not even part of the statistics because they are working part-time. You probably are familiar with the work share program. Many people are only working two or three days a week right now. They are not even included in the jobless statistic we talk about of 1.49 million people.

[*Translation*]

As far as I am concerned, this budget is unsatisfactory. I am sure that all Canadians will ask the government in the coming days to make major corrections to the budget presented this week, in order to create employment so that the 1.5 million or so Canadians who are unemployed today can again earn their living in some way. For all my constituents, Mr. Speaker, that is what I want. I say to the government members opposite: It's time to act. They are now at 11 per cent in the public opinion polls. Canadians no longer have confidence in them, but they were still elected to make decisions, I admit. So, in spite of their unpopularity, they have a duty to act and to act immediately.

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise with the hon. member the dilemma of the cuts to advocacy services and support for advocacy operations within the offices of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and the Minister of Labour.

In Powell River, British Columbia, the Canadian Bank of Commerce has driven 22 of its employees into the street, all 22 women, some of whom are single parents trying to raise families. It is determined not to bargain in good faith. It did, with undignified haste, drive those women out of their jobs before Christmas in order to make them and their families suffer through Christmas in the hope that they would come back, give up their union and take the conditions imposed by the bank.

It appears that another very crafty stunt has been put in place by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. It is spreading a rumour that it will close the branch and that when it removes itself from the community of Powell River and the particular mall an arrangement has been made with another non-unionized chartered bank branch to come in and replace it, leaving the 22 women totally devastated and completely without any hope of returning and bargaining. Actions like this on the part of the chartered banks are not uncommon, particularly the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

A plan of action set forward by these women and thousands of the citizens of Powell River by way of petition basically says that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women should use her offices to meet with these women and assist them to get back to the bargaining table and get their employer bargaining in good faith.

The Minister of Labour for Canada should be involved in attempting to bring these parties together, to meet with these women, to meet with the bank, to get them back to the table and to discuss with the bank what constitutes fair labour practices.

There should be, on the part of the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, the member for Capilano—Howe Sound, an initiative to create a widespread public inquiry into the practices of the CIBC and other chartered banks in the exploitation of women employees and the union busting activities that have been going on.

The final step in this is that all citizens who work in an organized labour operation, who support trade unions, should be transferring their savings out of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, transferring their RRSPs away from that institution, failing to take up any of the offers by advertisement or other inducements, and making it clear to the bank that they are doing so