

Supply

I see the Minister for International Trade in the House today. I wonder if he as an advocate of the rights and equality of women in Canada might stand up and comment on the government's position, if the hon. member for Algoma would permit it.

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to have the hon. Minister for International Trade stand up and defend the government's budget with regard to the cuts, not only for women's transition centres, but the cuts that were made in this budget which often hit either low income or remote areas. That is what we are talking about in this motion today, although obviously there are low income areas in cities as well. These programs that the hon. member is speaking about are very important in remote areas. I must agree with him that the funding is always extremely tight for rape crisis centres, transition houses and programs for people who are disadvantaged, not only women but aboriginal groups. There are a number of them in communities in my riding or adjacent to them.

It is as if the government is taking the disadvantaged and cutting off their ability to communicate with the country at large or to communicate with the larger community. It is taking away their voice. If they are not organized, they do not have the drop in centre or the transition house. There is nothing worse than to be in difficulty and have no one to speak for you.

Funding has been cut to the CBC as well. If you really want to get your story out across the country, it is the local CBC station that can do it. The local radio station can broadcast the problem for the local community, but they have no capacity to carry it across the country unless they are tied into Canadian Press, and that often is not the case. I think the cuts to the CBC are another way of trying to smother or to push down any dissent or opposition there is to the government cuts in regional areas suffering great difficulty.

By the same token, our resource areas are going to be extremely adversely affected by cuts in the CBC nationally. I think of the situation where we have one national farm broadcaster, George Price, who covers meetings of the agriculture committee, transportation committee and other committees concerned with agriculture across the country. This is an important resource throughout our country. He is retiring in another month or so and is not being replaced. That hurts agriculture and those

resource industries across the country because there is no report going out.

We see this kind of unique national mechanism, which is so important to our country in trying to build understanding and knowledge of our country on a broader basis, being hamstrung by these cuts that were brought in the recent budget.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak today to the opposition motion which refers to the government's actions and policies across the country, and of course one of our policies was the last Budget which, as you know, is a major component of this country's economic strategy.

Madam Speaker, in the latest Budget, various types of government spending have been frozen, and this includes spending on transfers to the provinces. In my riding, Madam Speaker, and I am sure you have had the same experience, I have been asked a lot of questions because people don't understand the difference between cutting payments to the provinces and freezing the amounts they receive.

We have a major deficit which was created, although this falls on reluctant ears, by the previous Liberal government. If you tell me the deficit increased since the Conservative party came to power, you are right. But it is also true that since 1984, since we were elected, we have managed to control our expenditures. This year, excluding interest payments, government revenues exceed government expenditures by \$9 billion.

• (1620)

In 1984, when we were elected, the government was spending \$15 billion more than it collected in revenues, always excluding interest payments.

We have now turned the situation around and are in a position to say that by 1993-94, we will have enough money to pay for all federal spending, including the interest on our debt.

Madam Speaker, we must remember that Canada consists of ten provinces, and when interest rates go down as a result of Ottawa's policies, the provinces benefit. When inflation goes down across the country thanks to Ottawa's policies, the provinces benefit. And even when we have a debt of \$350 billion, it is also because the provinces have benefitted.