

additional \$200 million a year for health services by the year 1980.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my party and my fellow citizens of the riding of Richmond that I have the honour to represent here in this august place to comment the last budget just introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner).

We must indeed take the trouble to give it very serious examination since this is a policy that will set the path for our economy to the extent possible for the months to come, at least in view of the fact, as was suggested by the Minister of Finance in his last budget speeches, that we can no longer talk of long term nor even middle term.

Indeed, we must now face very rapid economic fluctuations that prevent the government administration from operating in its usual way, with the result that we and the Canadian public realize quite well that, faced with those constant changes in the economic situation, the government must first try by all possible means to catch its breath and gain time hoping that that time will normally arrange things, before thinking in terms of an overall long term policy.

But before going any further and giving my opinion on the contents of this budget speech, I would like to obtain your permission, Mr. Speaker, as well as that of my colleagues in the House to emphasize in a particular way the terrific job that two of our colleagues are now doing. I am just coming back from a trip I made in western Canada with the committee on immigration policy commissioned to travel across this country to gather the opinions and suggestions of Canadians on the future Canadian immigration policy.

I even had to cancel the trip I was supposed to make with that committee in the Maritime provinces this week to stay in Ottawa and comment on the budget speech. I would like to congratulate in a very special way the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell), chairman of that committee on immigration policy of which I am part as well as its co-chairman, Senator Maurice Riel, for the fantastic way in which they are currently carrying out their heavy responsibilities. Their mandate is a big one and they are fulfilling it with a tact and a determination truly worthy of mentioning. The committee on immigration policy is now doing a job of very great importance to all Canadians.

I believe that this committee is now responsible for establishing what kind of Canada we shall have in the future. Everywhere we went, we were very cordially received and we met interesting and interested people. The only sad thing—and I am very sorry about this since I have the privilege of representing a Quebec constituency—is that we had our worst audiences in Quebec in cities such as Sherbrooke, Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City. Very few people came. There will always be some

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people, and perhaps in Quebec more than anywhere else, to criticize when we establish new immigration policies.

Yet, our French-speaking groups in western Canada took an active part in our hearings. We were able to note their great determination to remain French. Despite the many problems that they must face, they not only succeed in keeping their language and traditions, but they are increasingly asserting themselves. They have both feet on the ground. They have true pride and patriotism. They are about 90,000 in Manitoba, 35,000 in Alberta and 10,000 in British Columbia. They are a living example for us.

Indeed, after noting this pride, this open-mindedness and this assertion of our western French Canadians, I was even more disappointed to find in Quebec this dream that certain people have of isolating Quebec and forcing it to become self-centered, supposedly to assert their cultural or other identity. This is not the way to assert oneself, far from it, and our French Canadians of western Canada can teach us a very valuable lesson on this point. I will come back to this another time, Mr. Speaker. For the moment, I shall speak only of general matters and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having allowed me this departure from the subject.

I now come back to the matter under discussion, the budget speech. The first thing that comes to mind is that with such a budget, there will certainly not be elections this year. If there were, this government would lose quite a few feathers. Indeed, there are several very unpopular measures in this administrative policy which affects most Canadian citizens. The most negative effect to Canadians is no doubt the exaggerated increase in the price of gasoline for personal purposes. This very strict measure directly affects the whole population, and especially workers who cannot deduct the cost of personal transportation to and from their place of work, for income purposes. Indeed, when that 15c. a gallon increase was announced, C. D. Howe Institute economist Judith Maxwell clearly stated that it would primarily affect workers using private automobiles to go to work. Combined with the parallel increase on fuel oil, this clearly means that once more ordinary people will be in for it. They will pay most of the cost now imposed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that this is no novel thing under this government. But there must be an end to that, because the ordinary citizen's ability to pay is not infinite.

This unacceptable increase in the price of gasoline will indeed have immediate negative effects of a serious nature on the economy. Because this measure, I would say a very harsh one for the small wage earners, will immediately cause an increase of about 2 per cent in the cost of living, and thereby fuel inflation. This is also the view submitted by the vice-president of the Toronto Dominion Bank, Mr. Douglas Peter, who said yesterday, and I quote:

The increase in the price of gasoline is an economic faux pas. The timing of such a measure is bad, and will feed inflation.

On the other hand, it is clear this increase will seriously affect our important automobile industry, which is not faring too well as it is. All this means that we must denounce the gas price increase since its sole guaranteed consequences will be to undermine the national economy by aggravating inflation, further stifle taxpayers, surely