

*Supply*

Minister of Finance in the February budget. I will be happy to explain that for the benefit of hon. members opposite.

As I mentioned earlier, the main estimates cannot incorporate any budget measures that require the legislative approval of the House. Likewise, the budget includes planned spending for which Parliament's authority will be sought later this year in supplementary estimates, once program details are fully developed and approved. Also, some budget decisions were made too late to be reflected in the estimates documents that had to go to press. Members will know that the estimates were filed the day after the budget was presented in the House.

These are only three examples of the many technical reasons that the estimates and the budget figures differ, as they do every year. This is a normal situation because of the legislative restrictions.

I want to assure hon. members that we have the internal controls under the authority of the Financial Administration Act needed to achieve the full savings announced in the budget. The information hon. members are seeking will be set out in the public accounts. This report and not the estimates is where members can expect to reconcile the planned expenditures laid out in the budget with actual departmental expenditures.

Reducing the public service was not an objective of program review. It soon became clear however that changes of this scope would require reductions in the size of the federal workforce. As a result, we developed a program of options to help departments deal with the planned reductions and to help affected employees make a successful transition from the public sector. We intend to treat all of our employees fairly and reasonably.

These options include the early retirement incentive and the early departure incentive programs. Our goal in introducing these and other transition measures, for example training and counselling measures, is to be fair to the taxpayer as well as to the affected federal employees. I believe that the programs we have put in place to carry out the downsizing have balanced these objectives.

I am enthusiastic about the prospects of a smaller, more effective and more affordable government. I believe we can develop a government and a public service that will have a greater sense of satisfaction for employees, for the customers they serve and for the taxpayers that we all serve.

I suggest that members of the House should support our request for full supply in the 1995-96 estimates because the estimates reflect strong decisive action that meets our fiscal targets. They prove our commitment to being fiscally responsible by providing quality services to Canadians that Canadians need and that Canadians can afford.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech has given me further incentive to voice my objections to the vote in the amount of \$1,329,481,000 under Employment Insurance Program, money that is part of the Human Resources Investment Fund, since the hon. member just said that these estimates were the result of a program review by the federal government and concluded that they represented the most effective use of these moneys for all Canadians.

It would be appropriate to say at this point that, on all these policies for manpower and employment development, embodied in the estimates before the House today, in Quebec at least there is a consensus. The people of Quebec, through its representatives, wants these policies to be the responsibility of Quebec.

When we held our hearings on social programs reform, we heard the Association des manufacturiers du Québec—this was in December 1994—say the following in its presentation: "Such measures mainly involve vocational training programs, apprenticeship programs, direct job creation programs and work force adjustment programs". The Association des manufacturiers du Québec made it clear that these proactive measures should be the responsibility of the provincial government, in their comments on patriating federal budgets for manpower development to Quebec.

The labour unions were just as emphatic. They said that by initiating this debate on social programs reform, the government confirmed their apprehensions about the constitutional aspect, in other words, the present team in Ottawa was led by a consuming desire to make Canada a strongly centralized country. This objective, which was apparent throughout Minister Axworthy's Green Paper, was diametrically opposed to the reigning consensus in Quebec and, contrary to the designs of the federal government, members of the CEQ, the CSN and the FTQ firmly believed that only full and complete recovery by the Government of Quebec of control over all economic, social and cultural instruments would create an environment that was conducive to developing the full potential of Quebec society.

After these comments by the Association des manufacturiers du Québec and the labour unions, I need hardly recall that this abiding desire to control manpower training and, even more so, job development and job readiness training, has been manifest throughout Quebec's history. When the minister tells us that these estimates are the best expression of the effectiveness of the decisions that Ottawa can make, I would like to say, with respect, that as far as Quebec is concerned, he is wrong.

The G-7 summit, soon to convene in Halifax, confirms the apprehensions of Quebec about the central government's desire for further centralization.