

*The Budget*

As I mentioned, six years ago the deficit was \$38-plus billion. Four years ago the deficit was at \$30.6 billion, as it was last year.

This budget forecasts the deficit to be \$28.5 billion and next year it will be \$26.8 billion. Those are positive steps. Those are things members of the Opposition ought to be talking about very proudly in their presentations. No, they did not rate a lot of mention in their presentations.

That is the improvement. This budget sets the stage for continuing growth and strength in the economy, which directly improves Canada's ability to deal with the debt. Until that debt is addressed, our ability to spend money in some of the very appropriate areas members opposite are talking about just cannot be addressed fully.

How did we accomplish these positive steps in the budget? No, contrary to the comments of some in this House, we did not attack social programs.

Exempt from any impact in this budget will be things like elderly benefits, old age security, family allowance, spouses allowance, guaranteed income supplements, veterans pensions, and unemployment benefits. None of those will be affected in any negative fashion by this budget.

Family benefit programs provided through the province will still be protected fully except in three provinces. One of those provinces is one in which I am a resident. In spite of the fact that they are not fully protected, they will still have an extra 5 per cent to spend on those programs if they need it.

It is not like we cut them back. We did not attack those people who need assistance the most. We made sure that the funds continue to be available. Since the government is holding all Government of Canada spending to a 3 per cent increase, it is not unreasonable to ask the provinces to share in that 3 per cent level. In the past, while we have been restricting ourselves to 3 per cent, we have been passing money to them at 6.6 per cent. We are saying to them, as we are saying to all Canadians, it is time for restraint. If you want money from the federal government, we will make it available to you on the same basis as we make it available to all government programs in which we participate at about 3 per cent. I do not think that is an unreasonable situation.

A lot has been mentioned about provincial transfers. There are various ways in which we transfer money to the provinces. Established Programs Financing is one. That has been frozen for all provinces, except for any adjustments owing to the variable due to population capacity.

This program traditionally funded health care and post-secondary funding, but since 1977 there is no relationship between the money we provide to the provinces and the services that they provide to their constituents.

Let me talk about Ontario for a minute. I read one headline a little earlier about how badly Ontario was affected. In Ontario we have lists of people in hospitals waiting for major surgery. Cancer patients have to travel from Toronto to Ottawa and even to U.S. cities for that special care they need. Never mind the problems that rural Ontario faces, even urban Ontario has some real serious problems with health care.

The Treasurer of Ontario just this week made a special point of flying back from Florida to announce that he has balanced his budget because of an unexpected transfer of \$950 million through taxation from the federal government. That is \$950 million extra that he was not expecting.

Did he use it to hire one more nurse or one more doctor? No, he did not.

Did he use it to send one patient to a distant hospital for that special care? No, he did not.

Did he use it to build one more hospital room or to fulfil his promise to my constituents to double the size of the Ajax and Pickering General Hospital? No, he did not.

Did he use it to fulfil his commitment to my constituents that he would enlarge the Whitby General Hospital for extended care beds? No, he did not. When members in the House argue that health care will be affected, it is clear that in Ontario at least the provincial government will use it as it pleases.

I should comment that the province of Ontario did not use that money to improve the cash problems that universities are experiencing either.

Prior to the budget release I read some views in some articles that defence spending would be hit and hit hard. It was not. It was capped at a 5 per cent increase.