

Supply

They also want the burden of government reduced. They want less government and better service. We have to look at ways that we can accomplish that. They also want to ensure the development of Canada's resources, our human resources specifically. They want better opportunities for people to improve their skills and they want steps taken to ensure that our social programs meet our basic needs as well.

I think most of all Canadians have indicated they want a renewed basis for confidence, confidence that jobs will be created and maintained.

It was these kinds of views that were expressed right across the country that led to many of the measures in the budget and responded to these concerns. I think the equation is simple. The budget reduced government spending and directed the savings to tax cuts that will help individual Canadian women, men and families and support economic growth. That is what in the long term obviously is going to be important for women.

At the same time the budget we enforced is a responsible and a prudent fiscal plan that will hold the deficit to \$31.4 billion in the coming year and reduce it substantially as the recovery takes place.

My colleague raised the issue of the new child tax program. This would be a point where I would disagree because I think that is a very important move. I think by taking what were three programs, including the old family allowance program and the child tax credit, combining them into a package, enriching it by over \$2 billion over the next few years and targeting it to the families who need it most, we can help to make a substantial difference, not only in alleviating poverty but in helping the many cases of women-led families to start becoming more economically independent and have those resources that are required.

I think that the proposed new child benefit is responsible as well for changing family circumstances because programs that were developed at one time are not necessarily appropriate today. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the new benefit can be as much as \$144 per month per child, tax free, for a total of \$1,733 per year. That is a lot of money to put into the pockets of women that they will have the discretion to spend for their children whether it is on food, clothing, or day care facilities.

Of course for low-income families with children this

new child tax benefit also includes a new federal earned income supplement of up to \$500 a year which provides additional support to the low-income working parents, the very people who indeed my hon. colleague has talked about, and I agree with her. This is the target group, particularly the women in that group, that we need to focus on and provide support for and help, assist them to get off social assistance and back into the work force. That indeed is why this program is targeting what is called, and I do not like the expression, the working poor. I think it is people who are trying to better themselves and help to provide those extra dollars. That is combined, of course, with the many programs that I know I have had the opportunity of being involved in through my colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, of funding, not only for language programs for immigrant women, but training and retraining programs for women, to help to give them those skills to get into the work place and then, through these kinds of programs, help provide the support to them.

As well, this program is simpler. I think it is fairer because it is based on total family income and not on individual incomes. It also rewards the work effort of low-income working families, as I indicated, many of which are headed by women. It will also assist them in balancing work and family. As my colleague mentioned, that too is an important issue that we need to address; how to ensure that women and men are able to find that more appropriate balance between work and family.

Mr. Speaker, you have indicated that my time is through. I have many more issues that I would like to address with respect to the budget. I know other colleagues will have an opportunity to speak later in the day, but I would like to say again that this budget is an important step forward in terms of dealing not only with the future and a healthier economy of Canada, but also in ensuring and working toward equality for all women in Canada as well.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for her comments today. There are, as she said, a number of issues that we all agree on, at least the women in this House. But there are a number of issues that we feel very differently about and we have strong differences on too.