

The Budget

I could use an hour to recite the many programs we have put in place to help Canadians to assist themselves, to recite the list of difficult decisions we have taken to address the debt crisis we face, tough decisions—not politically popular but tough decisions—that are taken for the betterment of Canada.

Many governments are frequently fond of speaking of the future. The fact is that the future is now; it has arrived. The bottom line is that there is a \$41 billion drain on the Treasury to meet the public debt charges. The federal government alone cannot build a sound fiscal base for this country. It cannot do so if some provinces continue to chip away at this base with inflationary overspending, such as the province of Ontario has done. It should be obvious that this is a supragovernmental issue. It involves all governments, not just one. We are doing what is right for the country.

Some members of this family must stop acting like spoiled children and do their part. I would suggest that David Peterson and the province of Ontario stop acting like spoiled children. I do not think that by asking the rich provinces to give some thought to value before spending the money the federal government gives them is asking too much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, further to the minister's last comments, I would like to talk about "spoiled children". I may remind the minister, and this concerns his departmental responsibilities, that yesterday he was asked in the House why the government had set up offices for the government's most important ministers in various regions across the country, at a cost of about \$1.6 million, which is exactly the amount cut from women's programs, which, if I am not mistaken, supported 80 centres. These centres helped women in this country deal with problems in their daily lives.

Does the minister feel that women are among what he called the "spoiled children of this system," because they are complaining, and rightly so, about this government's complete indifference to their problems? How can he justify a decision he made as the minister of his department to spend \$1.6 million on large ministerial offices in big office buildings in Halifax and elsewhere? How does he reconcile that with the fact that women are now

saying: You don't have the right to cut \$1.6 million from programs which are there to help women take care of themselves and achieve a better understanding of what they can do with their lives? How can you reconcile cuts in women's programs with this excessive spending to accommodate the government's most important ministers?

[*English*]

Mr. Dick: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question. I tried to answer it in yesterday's Question Period, when I pointed out that about four years ago the government announced it would open up regional ministerial offices rather than have the exorbitant spending of the previous government whereby many ministers opened up very expensive departmental offices in their own constituencies or the nearest city to them. That is what the Liberals had done.

I also want to point out that these are offices which are available to all ministers to use whenever they are in that area. We have tried to consolidate and lower the costs in total. I think it was a very wise and sensible way of trying to go ahead and do that.

Mr. Gauthier: Why cut the women's programs?

Mr. Dick: Now, the member asks why we cut certain programs. Decisions are made. It was not in my ministry. There are other ministries to which he would perhaps like to put the question. Ministers put priorities on things. Certain programs, over a period of time, perhaps are not as high in priority as other programs. I point out to the hon. member who just spoke that it was this government which recognized the difficulty of battered women and battered wives and put up the \$40 million. His government never did it in the 14 years it was in office. It was this government which did that for the first time when we announced \$42 million. So remember that for a change. You did nothing most of the time except spend money ridiculously.

Mr. Gauthier: What bloody nonsense.

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that I would get a very clear answer to my question. I find it particularly alarming that there is a stubbornness on the part of government members who are unable to admit and accept that one of the reasons for spiralling costs in some provinces is that transfer