

The Budget

account for more than one quarter of the GDP. It also acknowledges that priority should be given to increasing the exports of the small and medium-sized business sector, which account for only 10 per cent of the total volume of exports. It fails, however, to take concrete measures to realize its wishes.

The Minister for International Trade himself declared that measures to stimulate expansion in this sector are insufficient, overlooked and therefore inadequate. Several members received complaints from heads of small and medium-sized businesses who say that they cannot get the information, the expertise or the logistical support needed to access foreign markets. It is therefore urgent for the government to correct the situation and ensure that the information, which apparently exists, is made available.

• (1105)

This is only the tip of the iceberg. This sector's real problems result from the treatment small and medium-sized businesses receive from banks and their inability to access funds. In this regard, the minister does not have anything concrete to propose apart from planning a vague consultative process between himself and Canadian financial institutions, but, of course, without the main stakeholders, namely small and medium-sized businesses. Once again, the Minister only uses the future tense. Unfortunately, action must now replace discussions and pious wishes.

We know that, in the past, the governments of some provinces, especially Quebec, made efforts to promote small business development. What is the federal government doing to coordinate its initiatives with those of the provinces? The fact is that small business assistance programs, particularly those related to exports, are not only inadequate, but often competing and conflicting.

Solutions to problems are deferred. After being so alarmist for several weeks, the government finally tabled a budget which had no real direction and managed to make everyone unhappy. Once again, the government resorted to a policy with no long-term vision, thereby leaving us with the poor result that we know.

This budget reminds us of an administration which, not long ago, was vehemently criticized by the Liberals themselves. This budget, like the ones tabled by previous governments, fails to reach the original objectives set by the government.

It does nothing to reduce the deficit. It does not provide adequate measures to create employment. Moreover, it targets social programs, instead of eliminating costly waste and overlapping in government expenditures. One could almost think, and I will end on that note, that it was Michael Wilson or Don Mazankowski wearing the Minister of Finance's work boots, last February 22. And that certainly does not augur well for Canada and for Quebec.

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Hamilton—Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Verchères for his very interesting remarks and I would like to make a comment. He said that one of the reasons for the high cost of federalism was overlap and duplication between the federal programs and provincial programs. I took note of that fact.

In that context I wonder whether he would agree that it would be a net saving and a reduction in the deficit if Quebec returned control of immigration to the federal government as it is in the rest of the country and as it is constitutionally. Would he agree that is a good plan?

[Translation]

Mr. Bergeron: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

The hon. member commented on one part of my speech where I most specifically addressed the issue of costs inherent to our federal system. I mentioned of course the costly overlap and duplication, but I could also have talked about the scattering of public moneys all across Canada, supposedly to defend regional interests and to avoid offending regional susceptibilities. This is one aspect of Canadian federalism which, because of our vast territory, is at the root of some of our financial problems.

To reduce overlap, the hon. member suggested that Quebec opt out of the immigration field. At the outset, I find it horrible that members opposite would only take note of the fact that we find that overlap costs us a lot of money. First, we were expecting a lot more from them. We thought you would act energetically to eliminate overlap and duplication between the federal and provincial governments. Second, Quebec negotiated with the federal government a special immigration agreement which, in a certain sense, does not involve additional costs either for the federal government or for Quebec. This agreement only transfers the responsibility for managing the case files of immigrants and applicants. In my opinion, what the member suggested was somewhat irrelevant, since it has more to do with the Quebec government than with the prerogatives of the Official Opposition.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his speech. I know we are the opposition on this side of the House, but I do not think that means we have to be so negative. The hon. member knocks the budget but there is nothing concrete, no proposals being put forth by Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition that also sits on this side of the House. He talks about the bank's being difficult on small business, about the underground economy growing, about all things that are negative in the country. As members of the House we should be talking about the positive aspects such as how the federal