

billion. Imagine what we could do today, if we did not have that debt.

“We repeated our warning half way through the year—these were public servants talking to the Liberal government—but the department did nothing because the government had to”. Well that is interesting because these are news clippings from 1987, and they say: “the department did nothing because the government was about to start its election campaign, Mr. Dye explained, appearing before the House of Commons public accounts committee”.

Today a member moved a motion calling for an election! Let us go back to 1987. The quote continues “if it had intervened sooner the Liberal government could have saved substantial amounts. Very substantial amounts, since billions of dollars were involved. This controversial tax credit became the costliest tax fiasco in Canadian history. When it was announced in 1983, former Finance Minister Marc Lalonde expected the program would not cost the government, i.e. the taxpayers, more than \$200 million”.

Scientific research is important. I supported this \$200 million program. We welcomed this program. It was welcomed by business people, students and our universities. Everyone was delighted, because \$200 million was reasonable. But look at what happened.

The program was abolished by the Conservative government—and we are still in power—and it was criticized for doing so. It was in all the newspapers, and the media really attacked us. However, what the media did not know was that shortly after this government came to power, the program had mushroomed to the tune of \$3.5 billion, and up to \$1.9 billion of that amount had disappeared as a result of fraud.

How could anyone expect a \$200 million program, paid for by taxpayers, to end up costing \$3.5 billion, while \$1.9 billion of this disappeared as a result of fraud? Just think if we had been able to save that money, those \$1.9 billion, how many hospitals we could have built for the sick, how many schools we could have built for our

children and how much money we could have invested in regional development.

Fraud was committed when businesses and private citizens applied for tax credits without doing research. The purpose of the program was to offer generous tax credits as an incentive to companies and private citizens to invest in research and development.

According to Mr. Dye, the Department of Finance should have had some suspicions from the very beginning, considering the flood of requests for application forms as soon as the program came into effect in January 1984. However, Mr. Lalonde was confident he had a program that would produce results.

Today many people look at the polls and some look at the figures for their ridings. Polls may be important, but before calling an election, I think we should look at all the Liberal dossiers, the previous government and all its programs.

They did some good things. They helped the people, but when we look at a \$200 million program that mushroomed into a \$3.5 billion-program, of which \$1.9 billion disappeared as a result of fraud, one wonders what happened. As far as elections are concerned we are ready for an election. We are ready to defend our ridings. But I want to make one thing clear to the opposition: We are working for the people of this country. It is not easy today. We are trying to find solutions, but we should all remember that together we can do the job. Together with the opposition. It does not matter who the parties are. Let's find solutions and do what has to be done, in the best interests of all Canadian taxpayers.

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Madam Speaker, thank you for letting me make some remarks to my colleague, the hon. member for Abitibi, whom I find very enthusiastic and even humorous on occasion and with whom I sit on the Public Accounts Committee. I commend him for agreeing that an election should be held. The hon. member for Abitibi tells us that he is quite ready for an election as of November 21. As you might expect, we will wait a while, perhaps until the snow has melted in Abitibi, so that people can go and vote in large numbers for our colleague from Abitibi. I say that tongue in cheek because our friend, the hon. member for Abitibi, has made gratuitous assertions throughout his speech in this debate.