

The Budget

In summary, I think that this budget provides leadership and does what Canadians say they expect the federal government to do. But it is also true that no level of government can make the economy healthy.

The economy will only be healthy if all levels of government and all sectors of the economy work together constructively to put long-term gains ahead of short-term interests. That is why our government, in close co-operation with the provinces, will try to strengthen the policy framework that our economic union provides for growth and future job creation.

The provinces will soon bring down their budgets. It is important that they follow a course compatible with this budget: better financial balance, lower deficits, tighter control on spending and on the tax burden. To repeat again what the Minister of Finance said, it is always the same taxpayers who pay and they deserve a break.

That is the message which Canadians gave us and we listened to it. I think the budget we tabled yesterday provides a clear answer to that message.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the minister of health. I have watched him serve in many profiles for this national government over the last few years. I think that his child tax benefit plan is an interesting one and it is the beginning of an interesting debate.

The minister says they are listening to the people of Canada.

• (1650)

I am hearing right across this country that people want to get back to work. In the province of Quebec alone we have 600,000 entrepreneurs. This minister is the Quebec minister. I have listened to some of these people and they are not feeling confident. The unemployment numbers in the province of Quebec are high. The minister talks about children and the ability to buy snowsuits and rubber boots, and having enough food to eat. The best way to provide this is to get these people back to work. The best way for children to be looked after in terms of their health and their welfare is their mother or father having a job.

I do not see anything in this budget that is going to kick-start the entrepreneurship of this country. There are 1,700,000 entrepreneurs in this country. The government says it is way ahead of its inflation targets. It has a very low interest rate. In spite of all those things, there is a low, low confidence in this country. I believe that the Minister of Finance, without being dramatic, without going to the deficit or to the debt, should have done something to kick-start that entrepreneurial spirit that exists in this country if he wants to get people back to work again. It seems to me that that would be just as powerful a way of looking after the children of this country as the program that he is on. I am not against exploring that program, but it seems to me the dignity of a person working is equally important as that tax credit.

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I want to say I appreciate the comment. It is positive. It is constructive. Maybe it is not based on the same perceptions, but I appreciate the way the member is approaching the issue.

I agree that the more we have the capacity to produce in the country, the wealth of the country will grow automatically and we will be able to do more for poor children. I totally agree with that and I agree that wealth comes first of all by working. People in the labour force who are able to get a job and to work produce wealth in the country.

However in Canada, as in any other country in the world, I would say we face today a kind of cyclical period. It happened in the 1970s and it happened at the beginning of the 1990s. I believe that my friend will agree with me that jobs are not coming. I will use the expression which is coming from French—I made a mistake this morning. I hope I will not make one this afternoon—which is spontaneous generation, which is coming so suddenly that we do have to take into account all different factors of the problem we face today. My colleague was and still is involved in the business sector. He knows very well that all those conditions are such that a few macroeconomic conditions like interest rates, dollar plays, and many other factors refer particularly to the question of restructuring of the economy and so on. When doubled with a recession as the one we face, it makes that very difficult. In Quebec, as in Ontario, it may be they are proportionally touched with problems with the recession.