

Supply

Mr. Speaker, it must be said, we talk a great deal now about the financial deficit in Canada, the budgetary deficit. It is a tragedy, as we all know, and that is why this Government is proposing the measures you know to Canadians and adopting them. But there is another deficit, the environmental deficit. And both deficits feed on each other and make the other worse.

What is an environmental deficit? It is nothing but the planet's decreased ability to support life and economic activity, in two ways. The first is the release of artificial and natural substances in the environment, this pollution that overloads the planet's ability to clean and regenerate its environment and which is a serious danger to health.

The second way is the direct decrease in the planet's productive ability: for example, overfishing, poor forestry and farming techniques. Eight per cent of our gross national product, Mr. Speaker, or \$32 billion, comes from forestry, tourism, maple syrup production and related industries. All these fields of activity suffer from acid rain. The regions whose economies are most affected are Québec and the Atlantic provinces.

The Science Council of Canada has estimated that our national economy loses \$1.3 billion annually because of the declining agricultural productivity due to soil deterioration. In Ontario, the corn crop has decreased 30 to 40 per cent and agricultural yields are down 10 to 75 per cent on the Prairies.

The resource sector provides gainful employment for one out of three Canadians and accounts for roughly 50 per cent of all our country's sales abroad. Regional economies rest squarely on most of these industries, but because the sector has been losing some of its productive capacity we can see that regional disparities are growing ever wider and we have to give large subsidies to individuals and companies alike. This has a very negative impact on the Budget deficit.

Repairing damages to the environment does call for new measures, better use of existing mechanisms, and an improved decision-making process. Far from being satisfied with picking up the broken pieces left by past mistakes and shoddy environmental management, we must gain full control over current activities, in total respect for our natural habitat, and adopt the kind of approach, method and technique which will prevent us from making the same mistakes ever again. That is the goal we have set for ourselves. That is our commitment

to our fellow Canadians, and we are honour-bound to strive for the successful completion of all endeavours dictated by this commitment.

So this is why—despite the austerity program it must implement—the Government chose to boost the environment budget by something like \$75 million while increasing the number of employees and cancelled this year's cut-backs which were planned a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, that works out to a 9.4 per cent increase over last year's estimates and gives the department the biggest budget ever since it was established 17 years ago. So much for financial straits! Mr. Speaker, it reflects the reassuring approach taken by the Mulroney Government with respect to the quality of life in this country!

And now, when we are discussing the Budget, one of the Opposition Parties moves a motion condemning this Government for failing to make the environment a priority. No government ever did as much for the environment as we did in the past few years or made such substantial commitments in a Budget tabled in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean): This budgetary increase, will enable us to proceed with a host of worthwhile projects. A centre for the international promotion of sustainable development will be established in Winnipeg. The National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy will provide leadership and form new partnerships of effort among Canadians in order to deal more effectively with environmental concerns and their relationship to the challenges of economic growth. None of the initiatives that are part of the new environmental agenda has been dropped. We intend to do what is necessary to limit the environmental impact of toxic chemicals through the development of regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

We will also adopt new legislation to improve the quality of our water, and we will protect the environmental integrity of our arctic regions. We will work on improving the quality of the atmosphere through the negotiation of an acid rain accord with the United States and the implementation of the Ozone Protocol. We will pursue our international efforts to control toxic emissions and to stimulate the evolution of international institutions with a genuine responsibility for the economy and the environment.