

The Budget

and development or small business or industry, they can do it much better than any government level can.

This government is supporting that. It is supporting a partnership with private business and industry. We will continue that support in the future.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed many budgets tabled in the House. Usually the next day constituency offices' telephones ring off the hook with complaints, support or whatever.

This year I checked with my constituency office on how many calls it received the day after the budget. My assistant in Parkdale—High Park told me it received one call. That caller said the minister did not go far enough in reducing the deficit.

• (1245)

Because the hon. member works very closely with and listens to his constituents, what kind of reaction did he have from them directly on the budget, positive or negative?

Mr. Culbert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. To be honest, it was an excellent one. Like he I expected my phone to be ringing on the budget. However I can honestly say it did not happen.

Last week we had an opportunity to be back in our constituencies. On Monday I had did an electronic town hall meeting specifically on the budget. The headline in the newspaper the next day was: "First attempt on an electronic town hall meeting" because we had done all the others personally "went very smoothly". There were many questions. Every person in the television studio was very positive about what the government had done in the budget and how it was done fairly and equitably right across Canada for all Canadians.

It was quite different from a radio interview I did on Friday morning. It was supposed to be on the budget. When I arrived at the radio station it was on Bill C-68 or gun control and I was facing a lawyer sitting there debating it from another perspective.

It showed the amount of negative concern there was toward the budget. I found out from my constituents exactly what the hon. member mentioned he heard from his constituents. It was accepted. It was supported. It was tough. It was fair but it was equitable.

[Translation]

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance, for delivering a courageous and innovative budget, which, most importantly, takes on the deficit yet respects the red book commitments. This was no easy task and the minister did a great job.

Having had the honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Finance, I am very happy to see that the minister incorporated 80 per cent of the committee's recommendations into his budget. This means that the minister took into account the suggestions and concerns that Canadians expressed during the public hearings held nationwide.

This budget takes the steps needed to control the deficit. These budgetary measures are the most rigorous undertaken by a federal government in 50 years. They will permit us to bring the deficit down to 3 per cent of the gross domestic product by 1996-97.

This budget also allows us to meet our goals without increasing personal income taxes for the second consecutive year. The government refuses to reduce the deficit by offloading it onto Canadian taxpayers. Like Canadians as a whole, we believe that we must strive to balance the budget. We will achieve this in a responsible and realistic way without jeopardizing the strides we have taken regarding the economy and on the job front over the past 16 months and without discarding the values and priorities of Canadians.

[English]

We use forecasts that are more prudent than the private sector average. The budget anticipates the debt charges in 1995-96 alone will be \$7.5 billion above last year's estimates.

This is why we must act now or risk missing our deficit target altogether. The budget takes some tough actions to prevent the probability of failure. To hit our targets we are implementing cumulative savings of some \$29 billion over the next three years. This is the largest single set of actions in any budget since World War II. These actions mean changing the size and the shape of government. By 1996-97 program spending will fall from \$120 billion to just under \$108 billion.

• (1250)

The structural changes we are making will assure that significant deficit reduction continues in 1997-98 and, more important, beyond. The bottom line benefit will be dramatic. By 1996-97 the deficit will be lower than that of any G-7 country.

[Translation]

We have taken measures that will have far-reaching effects and are result oriented.

We have substantially cut spending while at the same time preserving principles that Canadians hold dear, namely economic recovery, protection of the disadvantaged and government streamlining.

If we want our efforts to put our fiscal house in order to be efficient and sustainable, it is imperative that we reconsider the role and structure of government and focus government activities on the priorities set by Canadians.