

The Budget

economy going again. That assumption is wrong and the Tories know it.

They ignore the every day reality of Canadians on welfare, on unemployment insurance, those whose job security is uncertain and those in my community who have been put on the unemployment list by the budget of this government. There are 500 people living in the Ottawa-Carleton area who will be losing their jobs because of the closing down of some agencies. These people will not be on a spending spree to ensure this government is pulled out of the economic mess it has created. I remind Canadians that the recession we are in was a made-in-Canada recession. It was announced the Prime Minister some time ago. I tell Canadians to remember that, if the Tories have the guts to call an election. They are the ones who put us into this position.

• (1210)

Confidence in the economy is low. *The Ottawa Citizen*, a newspaper in my community, reported on January 15 that a poll conducted by Angus Reid and Southam News in late December and early January found that one in three Canadians feared losing his job or feared even losing a job in the family. Further, Ontario residents were the most depressed about their personal finances and almost 40 per cent expressed concerns that a family could lose a job this year.

The finance minister says: "Oh, I have a short-term fix. Don't worry". We say to him that his short-term fixes will not work. We must focus on the medium and long term. We must set our sights on those medium and long term solutions. Since no significant measure was announced in this budget to stimulate the economy in the short term, at least let them have the guts to call an election and we will take over and make sure there are programs to look after the needs of Canadians in terms of job creation and in terms of getting the economy back on its feet.

Much of the disappointment of this budget lies in lost opportunities. They have lost the chance to do it. Some people even had the naivety to say this was a pre-election budget. I dare say that if it is a pre-election budget it does not speak very highly of this government's capacity. Of course when one speaks for 11 per cent of Canadians, I guess one's credibility is only so much. That is what

government members do and they are at about 11, 12 or 13 per cent in the polls at best.

We suggested some things to get the economy going. The Tories listened to the request to get the down payment on a house purchase from 10 per cent to 5 per cent. They put that in, thank you very much. That is going to be helpful. They listened to the requirement of the real estate industry. For the last four years they have been coming around lobbying members of Parliament for at least four years on their approach to allowing RRSPs or a portion of them to be used to purchase a main residence. They have listened to that, except that I say it may produce from what I am told by the experts at best 10,000 to 12,000 new starts this year, possibly about 6,000. They did not listen to us on the infrastructure program that would have had in our opinion substantial spinoffs.

They followed the time honoured Tory tradition. They hit the national capital region very hard.

The Ottawa Citizen reported Wednesday: "This budget will cost this region an estimated \$150 million in lost jobs and government spending". Up to 500 jobs will be lost as a result of the elimination or merging of 39 agencies and advisory boards. As I said, this budget will add to the unemployment rolls in this region. For the government to add to the 1.5 million Canadians on unemployment appears acceptable to them. I say that it is not acceptable. No Canadian in this country should go wanting. No Canadian who wants to work should be put in a situation where he or she cannot find appropriate remunerative employment.

It is indeed astounding, as my colleague from Toronto said a few minutes ago, that they would choose in a time of such great difficulties in the economy to cut agencies such as the Economic Council of Canada, the Science Council of Canada, the Law Reform Commission, the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council, and so on. We wonder. These were agencies giving government and the Parliament of Canada advice at arm's length. I admit that it was not always pleasing to the government, but at least it was objective, it was arm's length and it was constructive. Yet the government chopped it. Has the government lost sight of the value of independent evaluations of its policies and of its recommendations for future action?