

*The Budget*

When the government talks about basic principles, I find it very hard to take it seriously. How could I when this government refuses to admit in the budget that there is anything wrong with basic principles which are aimed at maintaining interest rates and the Canadian dollar at current levels and goes against the best interests of Canadian business? The same government also refuses to acknowledge that the GST and the free trade agreement were a terrible mistake.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this government's economic policies have led to record levels of personal and business bankruptcies in Canada. There can be no economic growth until businesses are able to develop in an environment that is relatively stable and healthy.

[*English*]

I want to outline some of the effects of the budget as it pertains to my riding, the riding of Restigouche—Chaleur in northern New Brunswick.

As I mentioned previously, the Atholville mill is on a permanent shutdown. We are hoping that it will be reopened, but we are looking at 300 lay-offs in that area. The Dalhousie mill is looking at 400 lay-offs. It may even be as high as 500 before time is out.

We have businesses that are going bankrupt. In fact, I spoke to a senior citizen yesterday who is trying to make ends meet with a restaurant in Tide Head in my riding. Mrs. Joyce Mabie, when we spoke for about half an hour, mentioned some of the problems that she is having with her business and some of the help that she needs. Adjacent to my riding, at Stone Consolidated of Bathurst where a lot of my constituents work, there is a possibility that mill may close as well. Therefore, the budget that we see before us does not give us any solutions to those types of problems. It does not give us any hope.

• (1120)

What I am trying to say today, and I hope government members and ministers will be listening, is that we need some assistance. We need the government to start stimulating the economy and it has not been doing that. It has been doing the opposite in some respects.

What we need in our riding at the Dalhousie mill is a new paper machine. I do not expect the government to

say it is going to buy a new paper machine for the mill in Dalhousie, but I expect it to make it easier for that company to be able to purchase a new machine, to be able to invest in new machinery. I would hope that the government would sit down with company officials and look at that situation in a realistic fashion and say: "What can we really do to help with the Dalhousie situation?"

There is a similar situation in the Atholville mill. We need that mill reopened. We need a value added product there. It is now making chlorine-free pulp. There should be a market out there. The dollar has fallen slightly and there should be a reason to reopen that mill in the near future.

The province of New Brunswick has developed a plan to help the forestry industry in New Brunswick. It is a controversial plan in some respects, but the federal government has not really sat down and said: "This is what we want to do for the natural resource sector". What is its plan? That is what we are asking the Government of Canada to do. It has that responsibility.

There should be a diversification agreement specific for the northern New Brunswick areas, not just to get those mills back on line but to assist the unemployment rate in my riding which is 18.2 per cent. There are other people out of work as well. There should be some type of strategy, some type of plan put in place to assist those people to get back to work.

There should be more federal presence in the riding. The existing federal presence should remain. There should not be any cutbacks. The Chaleur airport has been threatened with a cutback. There should be no diminution of services at the Chaleur airport.

Post offices should remain open. They should not be closing. What type of signal or message is being sent out to the business community? If the government is withdrawing services from an area, what confidence does this give to businesses to continue to expand, or even to stay in business?

The ports of Dalhousie and Belledune have no strategic plan. There is no development, no promotion of those ports by the federal government. That has to be done.