

Supply

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question concerning the minister's comments on aboriginal housing on and off reserve.

The statistical material that I have been able to make available indicates to me that housing on and off reserve for aboriginals has a habitable life span of some 16 to 25 years as compared with 35 to 50 years for other housing, for non-aboriginal housing. This would indicate to me either there is substandard housing being provided in those cases or that housing is not being properly maintained and cared for.

Has the minister taken into serious consideration those statistics in providing the renewal of housing?

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to comment on the efficacy of the statistics that my colleague has used, although being in the House for some time I will have to accept them at his word.

The only thing that I can reply to the question is that in my deliberations over the last three months, the last 103 days as a minister of the crown, with aboriginal groups across this country I have found an attitude among aboriginal leaders that they do not want handouts. What they want is an opportunity like we have had over the years to be able to have affordable housing. They are coming forward with creative, innovative, dynamic ideas which will involve the private sector, which will involve governments at all levels, and which will involve other stakeholders to provide that kind of quality housing.

In terms of the substance of the question that the hon. member has asked, there is substandard housing on reserves across this country. Governments should work with aboriginal people, not against them, to provide meaningful solutions to real problems.

To quote a friend of mine who shall remain nameless, shelter in this country, next to water and land and the air we breath, is probably the most important aspect of Canadian life.

I hope I can call upon the hon. member for creative ideas, creative suggestions and support when we put our money where our mouth is.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that the period reserved for questions and comments is over.

[*English*]

We will continue debate with the hon. member for Macleod on behalf of the Reform Party.

• (1625)

Do I understand that members of the Reform Party wish to divide their time?

Mr. Hill (Macleod): Mr. Speaker, I inform the House that we would like to divide our time. Could the member for Calgary Southeast speak prior to me?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, it is with keen interest and deep concern that I rise today in the House to address the motion put forward by the Bloc Quebecois.

Acknowledging the seriousness of our discussions here today is more than just debating how to provide more effective and efficient support to those in need. It is a challenge most fundamental coming to the realization that responsible financial management requires thoughtful planning. Nowhere in this motion do I sense a strategy or any idea for that matter of where that money is going to come from.

Spending in the country continues at an alarming rate. Even as I speak every minute represents \$88,410 in additional debt. The jobless, the discouraged, the fearful and the poor are still out there. That is very overwhelming. What are we going to do?

I believe we have to ask ourselves three things when we consider expenditures of any kind, especially in the area of social spending. It takes courage to be objective when reviewing social reforms because our emotions are involved and that is when it is most difficult to make a decision.

My questions are what do we want, how do we get there, and what will it take?

Let us look first at what Canadians want. People are outraged that our government has been in an out of control spending mode for two decades. Our nation is like a Hollywood front, all glitter and glass purchased on borrowed money with nothing of substance holding it up.

It is a stunning picture on the reality of this House that not since the minority Parliament of 1972-74 has Parliament directly acted to cut expenditures. Even in that situation in which the government lacked a controlling majority, the House of Commons achieved two small cuts amounting in total to \$20,000.

To give a sense of proportion, since the current procedure for committee review of estimates was initiated in 1969, Parliament has authorized about \$2 trillion worth of expenditures. This means that Parliament has made cuts that represent only one millionth of one per cent of total expenditures that it approves.

Here we find the Bloc Quebecois having spoken eloquently on numerous occasions about deficit control and debt reduction, bringing forward a motion to spend money but not explaining within that context how that money will be found.

If we want to reduce the deficit and begin a meaningful effort at getting our economy on track and our social reforms in place, the second question I ask is how will we get there? We begin with the right people. We need people who will stand up and say this is not good enough, we are not willing to solve tough issues