

Private Members' Business

ly out of the question to exclude people merely because they need help to meet their basic need for shelter.

Our support is necessary and we have found ways to help these people. I am referring to the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, or RRAP, and to the Emergency Repair Program, or EARP.

[English]

In his recent budget the Minister of Finance has struck a balance between the need for fiscal restraint and the need for social responsibility.

By reinstating RRAP including RRAP for the disabled and EARP the government is making a real difference in the lives of low income Canadians, families, seniors, people with disabilities, aboriginals. Through this program with a total of \$100 million, \$50 million over each of the next two years, we are helping these people make basic repairs to their homes.

[Translation]

We know, however, that these public funds are insufficient. To put an end to poverty, we must eliminate restrictive policies which prevent innovative solutions.

Given the budget constraints, we will look for available resources and tools to invest in Canadians, and to create a climate allowing native peoples to develop their potential and progress towards economic and social self-determination.

[English]

We are not alone in thinking that these programs are important to the people of Canada. We have approached the provinces about cost sharing to maximize the impact of these programs. We have received favourable responses. With the provinces contributing to RRAP and EARP, with the provinces working in partnership with the federal government, we will be able to help even more people than we expected.

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The social impact of these programs is not to be overstated. My colleagues need to be aware of an important element to these programs. It is an element I should think they would appreciate for not only is this government introducing programs to help house Canadians. It is also providing a much needed economic boost to the Canadian economy. There is economic stimulus. Yes, RRAP and EARP will create thousands of jobs in communities across the country.

It goes without saying that investment in renovating housing enhances older modest income communities and encourages other forms of neighbourhood improvement. What we are talking about here is an investment in the physical and social fabric of our communities, providing more affordable housing of adequate quality with a relatively small investment per unit.

[Translation]

The RRAP and ERP funds are smart expenditures that will pay off economically by stimulating the renovation sector and creating much needed jobs and, at the human level, by helping people repair their homes to bring them up to minimum health and safety standards. That is the purpose of these programs.

We are talking about minimum standards and not luxury; basic requirements for the health and safety of occupants and for energy efficiency. What every Canadian expects. Something the government should not have to justify.

[English]

I am proud of the fact that my government made a firm commitment in its red book to reinstate the residential rehabilitation assistance program. I am proud the Minister of Finance included RRAP and EARP in his recent budget. How many other programs do we know of that help low income families, seniors, people with disabilities and aboriginals all at the same time?

We believe we are making the right fiscal decisions and we intend to continue to do more. We intend to stretch our social housing dollars as far as possible.

The federal government currently provides approximately \$2 billion in assistance to over 659,000 households across the country. We know that the need is greater than our ability to meet it. We know we have to find creative and innovative ways to make our social housing dollars work better.

One way we intend to achieve this is by identifying savings and efficiencies. Taxpayers have a right to expect an efficient government. I have agreed with my provincial and territorial colleagues that we will work together to ensure efficient delivery of housing programs. We will continue to provide an acceptable level of service and we will do it while making the best use of taxpayers' dollars.

[Translation]

We are already moving in that direction. Last August, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation started making loans to finance and refinance social housing units to better use available resources and reduce expenditures. Through direct loans, CMHC will refinance social housing units at balanced rates, thus reducing the cost of housing assistance.

We are talking about improving social housing efficiency. CMHC will save about \$120 million in grants over the next four years, out of an \$11 billion budget. CMHC will lend directly to qualified social housing borrowers when loans come due or when advances are required for new commitments.

This is only one measure, one case of using resources more efficiently and reducing expenditures. I made a commitment to work with my provincial and territorial colleagues to reduce administration costs and make program delivery more efficient.