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while making it possible to protect jobs and meet job security commitments to our employees.

At the same time as taking these necessary reduction measures, the estimates provide for \$700 million for the implementation of the national infrastructure program. This is a key element in fulfilling our red book commitment to create jobs. We know there are two sides to the ledger. There is the expenditure side and there is the revenue side. With so many Canadians out of work the revenue side of our ledger book is not in good shape either. We are paying attention to both sides of the ledger book.

It was the Prime Minister who launched the infrastructure program in his December 1993 meeting with the premiers. Within eight weeks agreements had been signed with every one of the provinces in Canada. In spite of those who said it could not be done, a three-level program was put together in a matter of weeks. The municipalities have found the money to participate and all three levels of government are working co-operatively.

Furthermore the federal government came up with its \$2 billion share of the program without increasing the deficit. As we promised, funds were reallocated from other less productive, less high priority federal programs.

I take this opportunity to say that we expect 80 per cent of the project funding will go toward core infrastructure such as water and sewer systems, roads and bridges. We are committed to funding projects with the municipalities that are their priority. Some of these projects are non-traditional but nevertheless are innovative and worthwhile.

• (1945)

When the budget discussions take place this fall it is important that Canadians understand where their tax dollars go, what benefits and services are provided and who receives them. It is important because I believe that many Canadians have been given the impression that with a few minor changes here and there, a bit of tinkering we could balance the budget and live happily ever after and nobody would be hurt.

This is nothing but a fairy tale. We can and we will return to full economic health but difficult choices lie ahead and making the right choices requires that the public be fully informed and involved.

When the main estimates were tabled in the House in February both official parties in opposition predictably expressed their disappointment and claimed that the budget did not go far enough to eliminate waste in government.

We recognize that we must constantly find more efficient ways of delivering services to Canadians and we are doing that. The Treasury Board secretariat is pursuing a variety of initia-

tives to improve efficiency, including a number which take advantage of the exciting potential of new information technology. These initiatives promote responsive and affordable government services.

In one of many examples 18 government departments are together establishing 10 Canada business service centres, many of them with the participation of the provinces and local authorities. These centres reduce complexity and overlap for business clients and provide one stop shopping with no increase in costs.

A wide variety of initiatives to improve service and reduce costs is described in part I of the estimates. It makes good reading for those who want a current picture of what the government is really doing to improve efficiency.

[Translation]

I certainly recognize that, in a parliamentary system, the role of the opposition is to oppose government's measures. Moreover, it may be that the two sides truly disagree as to which policies would best serve our country. However, we are not doing Canadians a service by implying that the deficit could be reduced overnight if only someone had the courage to take the bull by the horns.

Last February, the hon. member for La Prairie said that there was some fat and some waste in the government operations, and that billions of dollars could be saved if only the government eliminated waste and poor management practices. The fact is that if these simple measures were enough to solve the problem, we would already have taken them.

[English]

As the main estimates show, the cost of operating the entire Government of Canada, excluding defence, is just 12 per cent of the total expenditures of \$160.7 billion, about \$19 billion. If the government were to shut down all of its operations, cancel every one of its programs, fire every one of its employees, there would still be a deficit of more than \$20 billion.

There would be no food inspectors of course, no air traffic controllers, no prison guards, no scientists working for Canadians in the fields of health and the environment, and no tax collectors either. Some of us might like that, but then the deficit would be even higher. That there would still be a deficit without any government operation assumes of course that there would be somebody to write cheques for the other 88 per cent of government expenditures.

The other levels of government receive transfer payments of almost \$29 billion, most of it going to health care, to social services, to post-secondary education and the equalization payments which ensure that from coast to coast to coast in this country the less wealthy provinces have an opportunity to provide comparable services to their citizens.