

behalf of our children, our children's children and our children's children yet unborn or even thought of.

● (1620)

The motion that the NDP has put forward has received the time-honoured test of precedence in this House. We are simply asking the Government to reconsider what we believe to be an unreasonable request in seeking authority to borrow money for a future fiscal year for which there is virtually no projection and no indication of how the Government plans to spend the money. There is little, if any, indication of the direction the Government plans to take during that period and we, too, find it unacceptable.

My colleagues will have many, many comments to make about the Bill before us in the period ahead and I look forward to those specifics in later debates.

Mr. Claude Lanthier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, being a brand-new Member of Parliament and, incidentally, this being my first speech in the important function of helping the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), I would like to draw your attention to the fact that I am proud to belong to a national Party and Government whose senior members show us such a good example of behaviour.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the borrowing authority legislation before the House today underlines the urgency for adopting a general and basic program like the one introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) on November 8 of this year. The Bill also illustrates the need for making a clean start. The clear verdict at the polls on September 4 was eloquent, indicating that millions of Canadians agreed there was a need for change. We feel there are four challenges that must be met by the present Government.

First, we must put our own fiscal house in order so that we can limit, and ultimately reverse, the massive build-up in public debt and the damaging impact it has on confidence and growth in this beautiful country of ours.

Second, we must clearly redefine the role of Government so that it can provide a better framework for growth and job creation and be less of an obstacle to change, development and innovation.

Third, we, as a Government that has received a mandate from the vast majority of Canadians, must adopt clear-cut policies that will foster higher investment, greater innovation, increased international competitiveness and a positive climate for the birth and control of new enterprises.

Fourth and finally, we must bring about these radical changes gradually, in a way that is fair, open and consistent with the basic sense of compassion, tolerance and justice that is characteristic of Canadian society. We shall not weaken the basic income support programs which have served Canadians so well. Finally, through stronger economic performance, we shall seek to provide even greater assistance to Canadians in

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general but especially to those who truly need it. It is up to us, as the Government of this country, to demonstrate that we are able to meet these challenges, to make them work for us in our efforts to bring about economic renewal, and to put Canadians back to work.

When we consider the need for economic renewal and job creation, we see that no other obstacle is as great nor as menacing as the federal deficit.

Today, I would like to comment briefly on the crucial and almost direct connection between reducing the deficit and creating jobs. One may well ask why the deficit has suddenly become an important priority within our national policy. After all, one year's deficit is not necessarily a major problem. In fact, during recessions, Government and industry have regularly registered deficits they could later eliminate thanks to increased revenue in subsequent periods of growth.

Canadians are now beginning to understand that during the last ten years, the former federal Government ran up deficits not only during periods of recession but also during periods of growth, while there was a tendency for these deficits to increase at an alarming rate. The deficits that have accumulated year after year have led to a cumulative debt of incredible proportions. This year, our public debt will reach the staggering total of \$190 billion, representing \$24,000 per family across Canada. This cannot go on.

I have tried to establish a connection between the increasing debt load and its impact on job creation. Although indirect, the connection between high deficit levels and job shortages is a very real one. Persisting by high deficits and increasing debt loads put upward pressure on interest rates and undermine investor confidence, so that together they are a formidable obstacle to growth and job creation.

Our government's priority is to control that deficit because, first and foremost, we want to create jobs for all Canadians of all ages. This sad situation brings to mind the case of a man who wants to renovate an older house. If I may, I should like to draw an analogy, because barely a month ago, I was actively working in my capacity as structural engineer. Before rebuilding and enlarging a house, the first thing one should do is to remove all rotting load-bearing trusses and reinforce the structure. In the case of Canada, the deficit is undermining the foundation of our economy. Reducing the deficit—that is reinforcing the structure of our economy—is the only way to give renewed confidence to the business world and stimulate productive investments which are so indispensable for economic growth and the creation of the necessary jobs.

When we first looked at that frightening balance sheet as we took office in September, it became obvious to us that we had to take drastic action about the deficit.

During the election campaign, we thought we had a pretty fair idea of what to expect with respect to the deficit, that it would go down with the diminishing pressure on interest rates.