

*Government Orders*

First is the question of whether the deficit elimination challenge has been faced. In the dying days of the Trudeau government a budget was tabled with a then unheard of deficit of over \$38 billion.

Michael Wilson six years ago said: "We have a serious problem, our large and growing public debt". The Tories had nine years to balance the books but failed to do so at each and every attempt. The closest they came to a balanced budget was \$19 billion.

Now the Liberals are back. The finance minister, as his predecessors before him, says the time has come to deal with this deficit crisis. When one looks at his three-year plan, the final goal is not deficit elimination, it is only modest reduction. If the challenge is a balanced budget, and it must be, given today's economic climate, this challenge has not been met.

Second is the question of whether fundamental choices have been made to meet the deficit challenge. There were clear decisions to be made: the status quo or new direction, continued deficit or no deficit, tax hikes or spending cuts.

The bottom line said it all. Program spending has decreased a mere \$5.1 billion out of a total of \$163.5 billion. That works out to only 4 per cent of program spending or a mere 3 per cent of total spending. These so-called cuts are a drop in the bucket compared with what must be done to bring our finances under control.

At the same time, there are new business taxes, gasoline taxes and new user fees. Clearly the government has not taken decisive action and has not made the fundamental choices Canadians have been demanding.

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Third, regarding the question of whether a new course in government spending has been charted in the budget, clearly for the past 20 years federal governments have followed a course leading from one deficit to the next at an accumulative cost of over \$548 billion.

Since the government came to power it has followed that exact pattern, predicting deficits past 1997. No new course has been plotted. It is still business as usual with deficits, deficits, deficits.

Several months ago I asked Cariboo—Chilcotin constituents in a householder survey for their thoughts on cutting the deficit. I placed before them the list of cuts the Reform Party presented to the finance committee and asked whether they agreed with this list.

There was overwhelming support for ending regional development programs, privatizing the CBC, stopping the funding for crown corporations, ending multiculturalism and bilingualism funding, immediately stopping support for special interest groups and downsizing the ministries of agriculture, industry, natural resources, and fisheries and oceans. These are the recommendations of my constituents.

Is the budget fair? The finance minister has been quick to stress the budget spreads the burden. No one escaped the pain, he stressed, and the burden has been borne equally.

Is it fair to Canadians? Is it fair to our families? Is it fair to our children? Is it fair to our grandchildren and great grandchildren and future generations to come? The answer on all counts is firmly no, it is not. It is not fair to thousands of civil servants who could lose their jobs based on their race or sex.

According to the minister of intergovernmental affairs cuts will focus on white males in the civil service despite the fact this violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Families will be strained, careers destroyed and the principles of merit ignored, all for the sake of pacifying radical special interest groups.

It is not fair to the grassroots which will continue to be shouted down on the national scene. Funding for special interests, the political fringes of our society, lives on. The radical agendas will continue to be pushed to centre stage while views and opinions of ordinary Canadians will once again be pushed out the exit doors.

It is not fair to young Canadians, our future workers, our future leaders. For the first time in Canadian history young Canadians are facing a future that will bring them less prosperity than their parents or grandparents. It is these young people and not their parents or grandparents who will eventually have to begin paying off a debt that now totals \$548 billion.

The finance minister has put off any major cuts for some time in the distant future. It is our children who will have to deal with his indecisiveness with even higher taxes and fewer social programs.

I have often said I did not enter politics for myself but for my children and for their peers across the country. When I graduated from school the opportunities were virtually limitless. When I wanted a job, I picked my field. When I wanted more schooling, admission was both easy and affordable.

I could count on having a good salary to meet my needs and the needs of my wife and family. All that has changed. Young people no longer have their pick of jobs. They have to take what they can get, often piecing together two or three part time jobs to make ends meet.

Tuitions are rapidly rising, enrolment falling and opportunities becoming fewer and farther apart. There are many reasons for these changes such as high payroll taxes, decreasing funding and economic restructuring but it all comes down to one thing, the debt.

As our debt increases over the next three years, our economy will be even more strained to pay ever more interest on our growing debt, meaning our young people will have even fewer opportunities in the years to come. For their sake we have to tackle the deficit now.