

S. O. 31

In addition, the department has not published an annual report since 1992. This deprives us of an opportunity to properly scrutinize efficiency of program delivery.

The federal budget calls for spending reductions in all federal departments except for Indian affairs. The government is asking Canadians to share in deficit reduction yet is increasing spending by 12 per cent over three years for Indian affairs. Much of Indian affairs' program spending is outside of constitutional, legal or policy commitments.

Given these concerns, the budgeted increase in Indian affairs funding is unacceptable and unfair.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance tabled the government's budget yesterday. This budget, along with the one tabled in 1994, established the challenge and goal of the government: to bring the deficit and debt under control.

Canadians have requested and supported a combination of cuts in government spending and the continuation of our agenda of jobs and growth: growth that has led the G-7 countries over the past year and growth that will continue as a result of this strong budget.

The measures taken in the budget ensure we will reach our deficit target of 3 per cent of gross domestic product that was outlined last year.

The minister has produced a fair and equitable budget to provide social programs for Canadians' needs and the spending reductions they require.

Congratulations to the Minister of Finance for his dedication to controlling the deficit and debt and building the confidence of all Canadians.

* * *

● (1410)

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been a tough budget but it had to be done. And true to our commitment it has been done fairly.

The best time to make cuts is during periods of growth. In the agricultural sector, prices are increasing, export markets are expanding and producers are in an excellent position to adapt to change.

The buyout of the Western Grain Transportation Act, the WGTA, with tax benefits, will put \$2.2 billion in the hands of prairie farmers this year. We will ensure those dollars are paid out in a fair and equitable way.

I am confident that the men and women of Canadian agriculture will continue their proven track record of adapting to the constant changes of their industry to ensure that Canada remains a world leader in agricultural production.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for the excellent budget he tabled yesterday. It seems that the money markets were pleased with the resolve the minister showed in his fight against the deficit and their reaction was quick.

Indeed, the Bank of Montreal, the Laurentian Bank and the mouvement des caisses populaires Desjardins have already announced a reduction in their prime rate. In light of this initial reaction we can expect a drop in mortgage rates in the short term, which will contribute to a much needed recovery in the construction industry.

Such good news should reassure Canadian consumers and sustain our present economic growth. Congratulations to our Minister of Finance and to our government for sticking to their commitments.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers now know what to expect from Ottawa in this referendum year.

Far from proposing a decentralisation of powers, yesterday's budget shows that Ottawa still refuses to retreat from areas of provincial jurisdiction. In fact, Ottawa seems determined to step up its interventions, particularly in the area of job training.

The only thing the federal government has transferred to the provinces is the deficit. With yesterday's budget the federal government has tried to shift the burden of the deficit to the provinces: \$2.5 billion next year, \$4.5 billion the year after.

The federal government wants to delay until after the Quebec referendum the bulk of the cuts in transfers to the provinces and in federal services to the public. That would be the real cost of a "no" in the referendum, the real cost of the status quo.