

The Budget—Mr. Comuzzi

I challenge the Member to compare our record from 1984 to 1988 with the record of any Liberal Government prior to that time. If the voters had the opportunity in 1988 to vote on the record of this Government rather than on the misleading untruths they heard about the Free Trade Agreement, I suggest there would be more Conservatives from northern Ontario than just myself.

Mr. Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend opposite for his remarks. While he was speaking I wondered how he was the only Conservative to win one of the 12 seats from northern Ontario. I suggest it is indicative of the way the Government has treated the people of northern Ontario.

I accept his challenge. Shortly after the election he visited the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. If the local newspaper recorded his comments accurately, I was amazed at how little he knew about the sawmill softwood lumber industry in northern Ontario. He did not even know that it was not a surcharge, referring to the \$50 million in the Ontario coffers to which he alluded, but an export tax. It is an export tax to stop the countervail by the United States so those funds would stay in Canada.

If the Hon. Member wants to challenge me about anything to do with the softwood lumber industry, I suggest that we can meet later. I would certainly open my file on softwood lumber for him so he could be better informed as to that very difficult and serious area that affects some 3,000 to 4,000 people in northern Ontario.

The Hon. Member talks about programs like Community Futures and the northern tax allowance. I thought the Member would have some appreciation for what the people of northern Ontario are all about. People in northern Ontario do not want handouts. They do not want something for nothing. They want the ability to work, earn a living, pay whatever is necessary and enjoy themselves. That is the fibre of the people of northern Ontario. They do not want to rely on those services that must be provided at times when they cannot find employment. The people who make up the fibre of our community are strong-willed people. Community Futures, although appreciated, is not what the people of northern Ontario are all about.

With respect, I suggest to my friend that those are programs to help the unfortunate, the poor and those who need additional retraining, but what the people of

northern Ontario want is the grain moving through the port of Thunder Bay. We want our fair share of grain. We want the sawmills operating at full capacity. We do not want that export tax that the Government put on softwood going to the United States.

I might say to the Hon. Member, to show him the fibre of the people in northern Ontario, that this weekend two ships left the port of Thunder Bay for a market in London, England. They were taking over 800,000 board feet of lumber to a new market which the people of northern Ontario developed without the help of any Government. They were forced to do that because of the 15 per cent export tax that the Government blatantly implemented, destroying an industry in northern Ontario.

Mr. Atkinson: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member was simply mistaken, but he indicated that there was a 1 per cent decrease in Established Programs Financing transfers to the provinces. I am sure he will agree that there will be an increase in those fundings this year, but the increase has been decreased. The increase will be down by 1 per cent, but there is a guarantee in the Budget Papers that that increase will not fall below the level of inflation. These EPF programs will be increased, not decreased, as seems to be the customary assertion.

I would also like his comments on the deficit, whether he considers it a problem, and whether he has any solutions to that particular matter. He has attacked every tax increase and expenditure decrease that has been made. I would like to hear his comments on exactly what he would do in regard to the deficit.

• (1740)

Mr. Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the Hon. Member. With respect to the 1 per cent, I did not intentionally mislead the House. It is 1 per cent less than what was projected to be turned over in transfer payments. Thus it is 1 per cent less than what was promised.

With respect to solutions, Members opposite had all the solutions up until November 21. There was no deficit problem. They told the people of Canada that all the spending commitments had been looked after and that the fiscal management of the country was in its best shape ever because of the Conservative Government.