

Private Members' Business

Believe me, Albertans question this transfer payment ratio even more so as they work through a seriously difficult time, difficult days of deep, deep cuts to our provincial programs.

While we are doing comparisons, let us take a quick look at the United States provision for social housing. When the leader of the Queen's Loyal Opposition visited the U.S. I wonder if he discussed social housing spending habits with the Americans. Canada may not yet be a paradise of social housing but we are sure not doing too badly in comparison with the U.S.

We spend approximately \$114 a year per capita on social housing while in the U.S. that expenditure is about \$40 per year per capita. We spend almost three times as much right now.

Therefore Canada is not facing serious social housing problems. It is facing serious economic problems. This government fails to recognize that we are facing a financial crisis. This motion shows that the Bloc also fails to recognize it.

Canadian and international money markets are hugely unstable because this government cannot keep its spending under control and shows scant interest in doing so. The Canadian dollar is in a sinkhole, interest rates are rising and despite a decrease in the unemployment rate the dollar remains unstable, an indicator that investors have lost faith in our economy.

In principle the solution to the problem is simple. The government needs to put a cap on spending. The government needs to clearly demonstrate to the financial communities both within and without Canada that it is serious about reducing the deficit.

I can assure the government that if it introduced measures of this kind it would find support from my side of the House. All members of this Parliament should be mindful that we cannot spend ourselves out of a recession. Governments have tried this for 15 years and it has not worked.

It is for these economic reasons that Gordon Thiessen, the head of the Bank of Canada, stated on April 5 that to inspire consumer and market confidence this government will have to address its debt and deficit situation by cutting spending.

Given this, when members in this House put forward matters for debate, especially when those matters involve the spending of taxpayers dollars which are at a premium, they must ask themselves: Who will pay? Where will the money come from? Could this be done better and more cheaply?

I see no indication that the Bloc either heard what Mr. Thiessen said last week or that it considered even asking questions such as these. It must be too busy figuring out strategies for separation.

We cannot condone yet more money being siphoned off by Quebec. Constituents from my riding are getting very tired of seeing their tax dollars inequitably flushed into the province of Quebec, especially given the Bloc's mandate for separation.

Alberta's transfer payments have been capped and the need to cut spending has been recognized there. But here is the Bloc yet again with its hand out asking for extra money.

In its strategic plan for 1992 through to 1996 CMHC does not mention a need for increased funding nor a need to increase programs in Quebec. However, in a businesslike move in keeping with the private sector, the CMHC is promoting cost effective programming and management.

● (1830)

Finally, this demand for social housing support is an indicator of a larger economic problem. Simply spending more money to alleviate social housing problems is like trying to tend to a fever of 105 by rolling someone in the snow. You may cool the body for a short period of time but surely you have not found out why that body is sick.

Quebec needs to look more closely at this problem. The Bloc Quebecois is showing that as a province said to be on the verge of separation, it clearly lacks an appreciation for its own economic, social and political upheaval.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on this motion that raises important issues. However, since this is the first time that I rise in the House, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the constituents of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle for the vote of confidence they gave me last October.

I am pleased to address the House in reply to a motion that raises very important issues. Our country benefits from a shared heritage based on compassion. We do care about the well-being of our neighbours. We help them when they are in need and this government is not about to end that tradition.

I am convinced that hon. members in this House agree with me when I say that the federal government must be at the forefront, along with the provinces, to ensure that poor Canadians can live in adequate dwellings.

This government's vision of Canada includes all Canadians, regardless of their income, their language or their social condition. Our vision is that of a country where everyone can enjoy a quality of life, where we are responsible for the well-being of each other, and where people remain optimistic about their future and that of their children.

There is no doubt in my mind that this vision includes the provision of adequate dwellings to all Canadians. It is absolute-