

The Budget

Some hon. Members: Four.

Mr. MacEachen: —and work-in-progress.

Some hon. Members: Five.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, these decisions are the result of what I consider to be a valuable process of consultation.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Try another one, Allan.

Mr. MacEachen: They respond as well to legitimate concerns that have been raised by many citizens and delegations—

Mr. Epp: Thousands.

Mr. MacEachen: —who have visited me since November 13.

Mr. Clark: If they could find you. If they were in Scotland.

Mr. MacEachen: There will be ample opportunity for Parliament to examine all budget measures when legislation is under consideration. Finally, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that as Canadians focus more on the main thrust of the tax measures, the benefits of a fairer tax system and more effective incentives will be clear. I am also confident that the strategy of reducing inflation and interest rates will prove to be the surest and most direct route to create more permanent jobs and stronger growth in the Canadian economy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: You are going to be shuffled.

An hon. Member: So long.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, Christmas is coming close and I think we have seen for the first time ever that a minister of finance will be eating crow at Christmas instead of turkey.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: The minister has chosen today to make this announcement. It is the last hour of the last day of this session, just before Christmas, when the galleries are empty—fortunately, there is a few of the media here—but he has chosen today in order to hide his own embarrassment.

Let us not be too speedy about this. This is another MacEachen trick, another trick by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) similar to what I referred to on the night of November 12. It is another step, a giant step, toward the complete and total abandonment of this budget.

If this minister were honest, he could end all the speculation about what other changes will be made and admit that this amounts to a total withdrawal of his November 12 budget.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: Anyone who pretends that these are minor or technical changes, would argue that the budget is a major shift in the direction that the country is going, and that this has not done enough to change that direction.

The minister has abandoned his own budget. This should be the end of the budget and the end of the minister. Today the minister should offer his resignation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson: I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the performance this afternoon has done great things for Edgar Benson and Walter Gordon.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wilson: We are not looking at a few inconsequential changes in this budget. We have already had changes in the MURBs prior to today and we have had changes in the merger provisions. We now have 17 changes in a document that is longer than the minister's budget speech itself.

It is not just an embarrassment for the minister, it is not just an embarrassment for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) or the government or the Liberal Party, it is a major blunder and, if I may say so, it is a major setback to the minister's own ambitions toward switching one seat over.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wilson: Let us study this budget in the context of last year's budget as well. There were many warnings at the time of last year's budget about the impact it would have on the oil and gas industry and the energy future of this country. That was borne out by the fact of so many rigs leaving the country, the impact on employment in the very valuable oil service industry sector of the province of Alberta. That was followed by major changes last summer. These changes did not set the matter straight, but did do something toward changing the disaster which had been visited upon that industry.

The blame then was shared with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) but let us not forget that it was the budget of this minister. This year, the budget is all his responsibility. We have had the same result, same disruption and same drop in confidence. This year, the impact is much broader.

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The minister himself referred to the mammoth amount of criticism which has come into his office. It has also come into my office. I receive copies of many letters, and I am just astounded by the amount of mail which has come in over this past month as a result of the budget. The minister did not have the common sense to test the effect of his budget on many factors, many people and the many companies which would be affected. The transitional impact has been devastating. The impact on transactions which were already in place was devastating. The minister has had to step back from many of the