

Oral Questions

There has been a 73 per cent take up with an average payout of \$53,000 for those people announced last year. We envisage that these people will be dealt with fairly and humanely and will accept the buyout packages.

• (1450)

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, according to the budget estimates tabled this morning, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation has a budget increase of 69.3 per cent. That is right, an increase of 69.3 per cent over last year. I thought the Minister of Finance stated yesterday that he was going to cut spending.

How can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services possibly justify this increase in spending in his own riding? Justify that to Canadians in the rest of the country.

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

He should be aware that the cutbacks to ACOA and Enterprise Cape Breton come to a total of \$173.5 million over a three-year period. The reductions with regard to Enterprise Cape Breton are in excess of \$2.5 million, with a 24 per cent reduction in personnel in that particular office.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): I thought I said it was an increase of 69 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

I also noticed in the estimates that the Department of Canadian Heritage will be spending \$1.8 million on a golf course in Cape Breton.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said: "Cut spending". He also said that the second principle of the government is that priorities must reflect the needs of the people and that the third principle is frugality, that every dollar counts.

Does the Minister of Public Works and Government Services not understand what the Minister of Finance said, or does he refuse to give up this pork barrel way of spending?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

He should be aware that regional development agencies have been cut in excess of \$550 million by the Minister of Finance. All ministers of the crown and every agency of the Government of Canada has been looked at under program review. Each and every one has had to sustain a reduction.

ACOA amounts to \$173.5 million over a three year period. In that category 50 full time positions will have to be removed from the books.

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Science, Research and Development.

Yesterday's budget reflected the very serious fiscal situation we face as a government and as a nation. It is important in coming to terms with our deficit that we also continue to build the framework for future economic growth.

With that in mind, could the secretary of state advise the House how the budget affects science and technology funding and its future?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, science and technology was given priority treatment in the budget.

For example, while the budget of the Department of Industry Canada was cut by some 43 per cent, the cuts to the two granting councils which fall within the Industry Canada portfolio, NSERC and SSHRC, are only 14 per cent over the next three years. The cut to the National Research Council is only 15 per cent over the next three years.

Thus the budget is tough but fair. It has given priority treatment to science and technology which is important for our future.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The minister has stated that a cornerstone for his budget is regional fairness. Yet today if you are a farmer, a fisher, a small business person in a rural community or a miner, this has not just been a tough budget, it has been devastating.

Will the minister agree that it is small town and rural Canada that have been held hostage by Wall Street in this budget?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): No, not at all, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. member knows we have a debt and deficit problem. Canadians wanted us to face up to it. This action has been delayed for virtually a decade. In fact it was the very industries the member refers to and small town and rural Canada that were suffering because the Canadian standard of living was declining, not because of this budget but because governments had refused to face up to it.

In facing up to this issue we have provided rural and small town Canada with an enormous amount of hope. The hope is that now our social programs will be preserved, that the basic industries will be preserved and that Canadians will continue to create jobs. That is really what we have done in this. This is a budget for Canadians.