

### *The Budget*

Based on the government's game plan I can tell members that they are attacking the wrong problem because they have ignored the debt. It will not work in the field of economics. However through his great political skills and wondrous humour skills, the Minister of Finance will certainly know how to talk to the reporters after the game. Will he blame the players, the game plan or himself when this plan fails?

The finance minister has promised to "put an end to real drift" by guaranteeing meaningful jobs, training and retraining. How does he plan to do this when he tells the people who pay our salaries to wait another year for government to fulfil its policies? It appears that he has learned nothing while he was eight years in opposition and has applied, I am sad to say, very little of his own business acumen.

I hope that the finance minister and the Prime Minister truly enjoy themselves as they travel across the country selling another year's worth of hope and weak promises on the rock solid financial foundation of living on borrowed money and over spending while those to whom they speak must live within their means.

I submit that the budget, like those before it, has missed the mark. The Minister of Finance has truly wasted some golden opportunities to reduce spending and here are a few of them.

The budget could have included the elimination of business subsidies and regional development programs; savings to the government, \$3 billion to \$4 billion. The budget could have outlined at the minimum a 25 per cent reduction of subsidies to crown corporations; savings to the government, \$1.25 billion. In this area our party would have gone further and outlined the value of some privatization, with the application of the proceeds from the sale to the national debt, another savings to government of \$3 billion to \$4 billion.

This budget could also have addressed old age security payments going to seniors whose household income is in excess of the national average of \$54,000 per year. That is \$54,000 and not \$35,000 as the finance minister seems to say on television. They are not truly needy. Savings to the government, \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

• (1555)

If the government or the finance minister had done nothing, in other words no new budget, with his own figures and estimates it shows us that the federal deficit would have gone down, dropped to \$41.2 billion from this artificially inflated \$45 billion, in the coming fiscal year, and unemployment would have remained at around 11 per cent. By doing nothing that is what we would achieve. What the finance minister did was shuffle the financial deck of cards and confuse everyone with a new hand to evaluate.

The finance minister has deferred the tough decisions and at the end of the day has ended up with virtually the same results.

Why did he bother? He has created a whole lot of pain with no net gain for those who have been asked to sacrifice. At the end of the day, in my opinion, if you are asked to contribute and sacrifice, there should be a reward, and there is none in the budget for those people.

In my estimation, Canadians have been dealt a rotten hand while the finance minister on the other side of the table has finessed four aces in the financial deck of cards. When will he play the ace of toughness and cut overall spending by the government? When will he play the ace of reality and stop hiding behind taxpayer funded task forces and committees to debate the obvious? When will he make the real choice; do what has to be done, reduce overall spending.

When will he play the ace of change and show something for his party's eight years of opposition, spent criticizing Tory budgets, and work toward helping Canadians see the benefit in attacking the debt instead of adding to it, more so than the previous Tory government did in their last year?

Finally, when will the Minister of Finance play the ace of all aces, the ace of tax reform, and eliminate the incredibly high, complicated and bureaucratic taxation system that all Canadians want simplified and lowered? Canada needs a simple, visible or flat tax that is the same rate for individuals and businesses alike; a tax with no exemptions or loopholes in the range of 15 to 20 per cent, which addresses the problem of equality, equity, neutrality and efficiency; a tax that increases disposable income for all Canadians and businesses and reduces the current bureaucratic, suffocating nightmare.

These are the key factors for an effective system of taxation. The Liberal budget addresses none of them. When the finance minister has the courage to play this card, the ace of tax reform, his government will have begun to address the real problems in the country.

This budget is not about change, but rather a nibbling at the edges leaving only high debt, high taxes and high unemployment, the exact opposite of what is intended.

The Liberal Party always challenges us for alternatives. Here in my speech I have provided over \$9 billion in cuts this year for the Minister of Finance to use which are not in his budget. I challenge him to take the initiative, take the credit, start reducing the debt and do what is best for the country.

I say to the Minister of Finance: Stop talking a good game. Make some real decisions. Get into the game. Get your uniform dirty and complete the grand slam to lower debts.

**Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Minister of Finance is not some kind of card shark who is gambling with the lives of Canadians. The Minister of Finance is someone who cares about the lives of