

In fact it killed the job-creating stimulus that the Government of Canada provided in its 1992 budget and provided a counterproductive measure that was at cross purposes with the intention of the federal government and federal fiscal policy aimed at creating some jobs and getting the economy moving again.

All of this illustrates how important it is for us to get our act together federally, provincially, territorially and municipally. It is important then, as the Minister of Finance pointed out in his budget, that we get together with the provinces and territories and the federal government. We must sit down and work out a common strategy for dealing with the economy so we are not acting at cross purposes.

I was pleased to see that in the budget. I am optimistic that when everyone does get together we will be able to work out a common strategy. That kind of meeting is something that is being called for by all of the leadership candidates in the leadership race in our party including the chief government Whip. I am sure he would applaud this initiative on the part of the Minister of Finance to get together with the provincial and territorial treasurers in order to get our act together and stop acting at cross purposes to one another.

In the budget as well the Minister of Finance also said that Canadians want less government borrowing and he is right again. Canadians are yearning for the day when we are going to stop borrowing and stop having to borrow to pay interest on the national debt. In fact we are going to start paying down the national debt.

I am one who truly believes that Canadians understand we now have an operating surplus and that our revenues exceed the cost of program expenditures. In fact they have since 1985.

I am one who believes as well that Canadians understand the growth in the national debt since 1985 is entirely the result of compound interest on the national debt that we had in 1984 and 1985 when the government came to office in the first place.

While Canadians understand that, that is not good enough for Canadians. As we know and the hon. member who is trying to cause an uproar in the House knows as well, Canadians really want to see us start to pay down

the national debt. They want to see it actually going down.

Words, promises and forecasts are not really good enough any more. For Canadians, seeing is believing. That is what they want and that is what the Minister of Finance wants for sure. That is what we want and all Canadians want.

• (1225 )

While Canadians understand all that and while we know that Canadians want that, we know that it is not quite as easy to achieve as snapping one's fingers or making a budget speech. In fact, it is easier said than done. You and I, Mr. Speaker, and a great many members of this House have been in this House now for some nine years or more. We have seen the difficulty that there is in cutting back on expenditures and not raising taxes in order to get at the root of the problem, eliminate the deficit and start paying down the debt.

I wish it were simple. However, I have been here for nine years in this House and at least once in each of those years I have seen the Minister of Finance stand up and announce very substantial spending cuts. Every budget and every economic statement that has been pronounced in this House as long as I have been here, for nine years, has contained very substantial spending cuts.

However, in each of those nine years we know that our friends in the NDP over there have opposed each and every expenditure reduction. At the same time those members complained about the size of the deficit and at the same time complained about the size of the national debt. If the voting records of this House were examined for the last nine years we would see that the NDP had not supported one expenditure reduction in this House.

As well, each year for the past nine years while I have been here and when ministers of finance have brought down these spending cuts, the Official Opposition, the Liberal Party, has opposed each and every one of those expenditure cuts. I have sat here dumbfounded as the votes took place, one after another, and listened to the Liberal Party, the Official Opposition, getting up to vote against each and every cut that has been proposed and been put into effect by the government in the past nine years. Again, if the voting records were examined we would see that that is the case.