

*Government Orders*

federal government will then be paying as much on debt service as on all programs provided to individuals and the provinces. We will have a crisis on our hands. That is what this government is leading us into.

[English]

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join in the discussion today. For too long in Canada we have been living in a context which ignores the future implications of our actions. The government has done much more than sit back and wring its hands about the serious economic situation of our country.

Canadians and the governments they elect, whether locally, provincially or nationally, have for a long time been well aware of the impact of the deficit, of how it undermines consumer confidence, of how it diminishes our ability to compete internationally, and of how it robs our children of an economically viable future.

More often than not governments did not act, refused to act. On February 27, 1995 the government demonstrated its willingness to act. The government demonstrated its courage and commitment to make the necessary sacrifices to ensure a better future for Canadians. The Liberal government has submitted to the House a framework that will deliver back to our country and to its citizens the confidence and optimism needed to create a strong, dynamic economy, which is necessary in the context of market globalization.

To listen to the members across the way we would think that point has been missed on them. As a member of the human resources development committee of Parliament I am in a position to say that the strong actions taken in the budget reflect our determination to maintain our commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act and reinforce our commitment to work with the provinces to provide better and more affordable services.

The provinces have always argued that they are closer to the people, that it is their constitutional prerogative to administer social programs in a cost effective way. The Canada social transfer will be negotiated by the Minister of Human Resources Development and will allow them to do just that.

The bottom line is that Canadians want both government levels to work together to manage social programs better. The budget continues the fundamental structural reforms needed to do that. If we do not act now, our social programs will not survive in the future. We care about our systems of health and education. We care about protecting seniors and the most vulnerable in society.

I would like to share with the House some recent experiences in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore. My constituency office receives numerous calls on a daily basis. In the recent days

preceding the budget I received well over 800 calls from constituents asking me to convey their thoughts to the minister that personal income taxes should not be raised. This was a message that I as well as other members of the House communicated to the Minister of Finance.

I knew the finance committee had been around the country. We heard Canadians tell us what should be done. I am here to say that the process worked. The views of Canadians are reflected in the budget. I will give some instances.

• (1605)

In my own riding one of my constituents, Mr. Ted Morris, said:

Income tax remains the same, thank God. This is a budget that seems to have deflated indignation.

Mr. Morris also brought the message of a local bank manager happy about the increased value of the Canadian dollar, a local real estate broker pleased with the national unity implications, and a retired department store employee wondering whether the provincial government would follow suit.

To some of the residents in a popular Etobicoke donut shop yesterday morning there was an understanding that governments in the past have lived off their credit cards and that this government was ready to start correcting spending habits.

I have a letter here sent today by fax from a constituent, Mr. Michael Kern. He said:

I am pleased that personal income taxes did not increase. For the moment I feel that the new gas tax is acceptable.

He went on to say:

Over the past several days the media has been monitoring the opposition to the new budget. I am sure that you have seen news reports of the opposition parties giving their critique of the budget. However on the same news reports reactions from the public are usually shown. My opinion of the budget seems to be in line with that of the general public. We are satisfied. It seems that the only people upset are the opposition parties.

I can go on and refer to several other points that he said. He referred to the new immigration policy. He said:

That is not bad, not as bad as groups would make it out to be.

He said:

When you join a social club you have to pay an initiation fee and I believe that the privilege of immigrating to Canada should be no different. The bottom line is this. Mr. Martin has taken the initiative to reduce the deficit, something that previous federal governments seemed to dance around. In addition, Mr. Martin has done so through sensible cutbacks and corporate taxes. I am happy to see that the working Canadian finally does not have to shoulder the responsibility alone. Mrs. Augustine, please accept my congratulations to your government on a practical budget that I feel we can all accept.

I am not certain what messages the Reformers get.

Our government is committed to providing a fair and reliable system of protection for seniors. I know there are several seniors in my riding who are watching the debate today and who are concerned about protection for seniors, equality, balance and all