

The Budget

surfaced prior to the release of the budget. No doubt most of this has now been laid to rest by the budget.

For those who might still have some lingering doubts, the best evidence of the government's unwaivering commitment to protecting our social programs comes from the social security reform initiative currently under way.

This initiative seeks to improve our current system by helping Canadians respond to technological and workplace change. It seeks to assure them of the jobs training and security they require. It does this by improving the efficiency of the system, thus guaranteeing its sustainability in the future.

At the same time, our government has no intention of waiting for the benefits that will flow from this budget and social security reform. Instead, we are acting now to ensure that all Canadians have the job and training opportunities they need to enter the mainstream of this country.

Here I think especially of those programs directed toward some of the neediest people in this country, the aboriginal people who have traditionally faced barriers to obtaining access to employment, training and promotions.

• (1605)

Pathways is a program designed for aboriginal people by aboriginal people in partnership with the Government of Canada. It is currently being reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of the aboriginal people in labour market training.

In addition, the new Canada social transfer, CST, will not affect aboriginal peoples living on reserves since there is no relationship between the CST and funding arrangements for social assistance and services delivered on reserves. This is because the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development provides funding on reserves through arrangements that are separate from the current Canada assistance plan. These arrangements will continue to be separate from the CST.

As well, the CST will not alter the existing responsibilities of the provinces for social assistance services to aboriginal peoples living off reserve. This goes for the government's program review as well.

While the program review will affect all aspects of government operations, the government is committed to providing programs and services to aboriginal peoples. We will continue to live up to our commitments in such areas as human resources development, aboriginal strategic initiatives, First Nations and northern communities child care and the pathways strategy which I mentioned earlier.

In preparing for the budget the government used a series of overarching principles to guide its course.

First, it was critical that government get its own house in order. The budget must focus on cutting spending, not raising taxes.

Second, every dollar counts. Governments do not have money. They are given money and with it they must act like every dollar counts because every dollar does count.

Third, it had to be fair and equitable, fair among our regions and fair among individual Canadians. In this essence the north has not been spared in the budget, but has shared equally and responsibly its burden of fiscal restraint.

As an example, the territorial formula financing payments to the Government of the Northwest Territories will be frozen in 1995-96 and reduced by 5 per cent in 1996-97. This will result in \$8 million less in the first year and \$58 million less in the second year. It should be noted that the majority of the population of the north is aboriginal.

Weather offices will close in Yellowknife and Inuvik, eliminating seven positions. There too, a bit of innovation and imagination is needed. It opens up an opportunity perhaps for the private sector to look at the possibility of offering this kind of service, maybe in partnership with learning institutions to train the individuals necessary to provide that service.

The Geological Survey of Canada office in Yellowknife will close. Considering the amount of activity in that area with diamond exploration, gold and a whole array of mineral exploration going on, it has been difficult to do that, but I think there is a commitment from the industry itself to pursue interests in that area. It is something we are living with.

The Canada-N.W.T. forestry co-operation agreement will not be renewed when it expires on March 31. The federal excise tax on gasoline and aviation gasoline increased by 1.5 cents, increasing the price of goods and travel in the north. We already have prohibitive costs since for the most part the first choice and option for travel is by air. We do not have a highway system. Most of the isolated communities are off the transportation grid.

The tax on airline travel increased by \$5 per flight from \$50 to \$55, increasing the cost of air travel which is so important to northerners. We do not have the luxury of just getting into our cars or vehicles and driving out onto the highway. The highways we do have are in need of repair and are being repaired constantly by the Government of the Northwest Territories with ever depleting resources.

It shows, that every part of the country was affected, including that part of the country. It is the whole effort of getting back