

Government Orders

and I only have to listen to this kind of speech for three hours a day. I understand that you have to listen to this day in and day out for five days a week. My condolences are extended on the basis that you have to tolerate speeches of this nature that castigate or credit the government. I do have great sympathy for you.

I am really pleased to participate in the debate on this borrowing bill. We are asking the people of Canada to allow the federal government to borrow another \$26 billion or so. That is an awful lot of money. I would be just as happy to stand here today and say that we are not borrowing any money, that this is a bill to pay down some of our debt.

Unfortunately, that is not what is in front of us today. We are having to borrow money. Why are we having to borrow money? There is no secret to it. We are spending more than we are collecting. That is it in a nutshell. We are here to ask for money to pay the bills for those things we are going to spend money on.

I listened to my colleague opposite who just finished speaking. In his whole debate did he make one suggestion about where the government might have spent a little less money, or where the government might have cut \$500 million here, \$2 million there, or \$3 billion there? Did you hear any concrete suggestions, Mr. Speaker, as to how the government might further cut its expenditures? No. In fact, you did not hear any concrete suggestions at all from the member for Kingston and the Islands. I understand that. He will argue that that is not his role.

The member did bring out the book called "Legacies" put out by the Economic Council of Canada. He quoted from that book. We have all received copies of that book. He did make some valid comments about the recommendations contained therein. I say comments, but really what he did was read what they said. But did he say he agreed with their recommendations? No, he did not. Did he say he disagreed with their recommendations? No, he did not.

Let me just refer back to their recommendations so that you can determine for yourself whether you think that we as a government are moving in the right direction. He was quoting from page 28 and 29 with regard to an alternative Canadian policy. It says:

There would be no "catch-up"—i.e., the reduction in spending attributed to the freeze would not be recouped.

That relates to their recommendation for a two-year freeze in five areas of government spending. For their purposes they chose as one of the areas to be affected by the freeze the capital assistance to business. Well, as you know, in the budget there were in fact a number of capital assistance programs cancelled. They were not just frozen but out and out cancelled. That is what the business community wanted. In fact, in the process in which I was involved on the goods and services tax we travelled across Canada and heard more and more business groups saying to cut out the grants to business. You will find that in fact the government did exactly that.

Did the member who spoke previously agree with that? I appreciate he is a Liberal so he really does not want to show his position on some of these issues.

Mr. Richardson: Or he does not know.

Mr. Soetens: Or he does not have a position, or he does not know. That is right.

Subsidies to business was another point he referenced. As I have just mentioned, we have addressed the subsidies to business. In fact, our position now is that business subsidies are in fact loans that are repayable, unlike the kind of loans that previous governments were involved in.

I can recall a loan from a Liberal government of the past to a trucking company which hauled material back and forth between Montreal and Toronto. Did that government honestly believe that if a certain trucking company went bankrupt goods would stop flowing between Montreal and Toronto or vice-versa? It did. It lent that company money. The company went broke anyway and the end result was that goods still travel back and forth between Toronto and Montreal. The difference is that it took an awful lot of taxpayer money with it. That is the difference between Conservatives and Liberals. We do not make loans of that nature.

Mrs. Catterall: No, you specialize in strip clubs.

Mr. Soetens: Here is another one. The member mentioned transfer payments to the provinces. If you read all the newspaper articles from across this country and listen to budgets of various finance ministers or treasurers from the various provinces you know that they are criticizing the federal government for not freezing transfers as was recommended by the Economic Council of Canada. We only increased them 3 per cent. Can you imagine? We did not give them less money, we did not