

it. After paying the mortgage, taxes, heating, etc, they have \$18 remaining in their monthly budget for food. Will they be among the 12,500 people to receive the minister's meagre assistance? Will they be among the select few? What about another couple who have a mortgage of \$38,000? They used to pay \$356 a month in mortgage payments. Now their payments are \$635 a month. In this home live a husband and wife, four children and an invalid mother. Are they going to be among those who receive assistance? How will we know? What criteria will the minister use to spread among the people who are so desperately in need? That is the question thousands of Canadians are asking tonight right across the country.

● (2150)

The Minister of Finance has ignored the House of Commons since he brought down the budget. He rarely appears. If the government and the minister will not pay attention to the advice of the opposition, perhaps it will listen to one of its former cabinet ministers. Goodness knows, there are enough former cabinet ministers to fill a whole town in dire straits. To quote the Hon. Eric Kierans, who was the first to leave but not the last, he said:

The budget as a whole reflects a complete ignorance of, or refusal to deal with the economic reality of Canada—the enormous social and economic costs imposed on 90 per cent of a population living with soaring prices and the deliberate use of high interest rates to restrict production when 8.3 per cent of the work force is unemployed.

I ask what this government offers and what this budget offers to the youth of Canada. Their prospects of employment are bleak indeed in one of the world's richest countries.

Unemployment for young men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 has increased. In a country of such vast potential in both human and natural resources, the government offers them little hope for a better future.

At a time when we should be developing the potential of Canadians through post-secondary education, cutbacks in transfer payments are on the finance minister's menu of restraint.

A federal task force set up by the government warned of severe shortages of highly-skilled workers in Canada today. Government cutbacks now as a result of this budget will undermine the long-term development of a work force essential to our country's economic growth and position in the world community.

We recognize, however, that when it comes to talking about cutbacks, the Minister of Finance has a talent for cosmetic surgery and the budget attempts to mask his real intentions. As hon. members will recall, the minister said on budget night that there would be no cutbacks to post-secondary education or to health and medicare programs. That is just an example of more deception. There will be cutbacks, and there will be long-term cutbacks at that. The minister proposes massive cuts known as the revenue guarantee. He can dismiss it, but I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, "a rose by any other name", because eliminating the revenue guarantee will seriously

reduce the funds available for education, for health and for hospital care.

Since 1972 the revenue guarantee has been used to finance these programs. Its elimination directly translates into a reduction of \$5.7 billion in transfer payments over the next five years and \$915 million in 1982-1983. As hon. members will remember, the all-party parliamentary committee on federal-provincial fiscal relations concluded that the revenue guarantee must be considered part of the health and education package.

Cutting out that huge amount of money will mean that the provinces will likely have to increase taxes or reduce services or both.

The minister talks of equity in his budget. Cutbacks to post-secondary education will be devastating to the lower-income groups. The vibrations from university, students across the country are clear. There are organized lobbies on every campus and student protests on the Hill. Students are up in arms. Their futures are at stake.

At Queen's university this fall, I addressed 500 students, fearful and anxious about their future. The budget confirmed their worst fears. The Minister of Finance has closed the door on thousands of students.

Cutbacks mean that services and facilities will inevitably be cut. Enrolments will fall. Institutions will close. Higher tuition fees will mean higher education only for those who can afford it. Why is the minister at this point undermining Canada's future by denying our youth the opportunity to develop their potential through higher education? He should be paying attention to the students' slogan: "Mind power is Canada's energy," instead of doing all that he can to destroy it.

Not only will thousands of students lose their right to a decent education, but the budget has also ensured that thousands of pensioners will continue to eke out a meagre existence below the poverty line.

Of Canada's elderly, 575,000 live below the poverty line. As the minister responsible for the status of women knows, just over 400,000 of these are women, mostly widows.

Many of these people have worked hard all their lives only to arrive at a time when they see their savings eroded by inflation, their minimal pensions unable to keep up with rising costs. Pensioners spend about 80 per cent of their incomes on four basic necessities; shelter, food, home heating fuel and transportation. And the cost of each of these items goes up faster than the quarterly cost of living to which their pensions are indexed. Thus their pensions buy less and less with every passing month. There is no equity for the pensioners living below the poverty line.

This minister is content to lavish far more attention and money on things such as Mirabel airport than he is on Canada's elderly citizens in need. He is far more prepared to spend \$2,000 on a luncheon than he is to worry about the diets of the elderly poor. There is no equity in this budget. There is