

The Budget

[English]

The bottom line is that we are delivering on our election promises. This budget puts us on track to reduce the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP in three years. This was what our red book commitment contained.

Some opposition members have been saying that we did not cut deeply enough. This is the position of most of the Reform Party speakers I have heard.

Their election platform as I understood it was a zero deficit in three years. In my estimation that would create untold hardship on Canadians. We have already seen the hardship that the present measures in the military cuts have inflicted on Canadian lives. To attempt to reduce a deficit of this magnitude in three years I submit would be untenable.

The Liberal approach is much more balanced and realistic. The majority of Canadians supported the Liberal plan. Canadians know one cannot stop putting groceries on the table in order to pay off the mortgage on the house in three years.

I do not expect the opposition to agree with this budget since they campaigned against the Liberal plan. I do not believe that they or Canadians can truthfully say the Liberal government is not following our red book plan.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I apologize to Mr. Collenette if we are bothering him, but we do have to speak up from time to time in the House.

First of all, I want to get back to something my hon. colleague from Simcoe North said. Throughout his presentation, he kept repeating that his government had delivered on its promises and had followed through on its red book plan, and so on. In their red book—as you can see, I have read it because I am familiar with the lies it contains—the Liberals promised to convert military bases into peacekeeping training and staging centres. A program is like a contract and when one fails to meet the terms of a contract, one must pay a penalty.

The Liberals did not promise to close military bases. They promised to convert them into peacekeeping training and staging centres. So, what did the government do? It closed some bases and consolidated others. As a result, jobs have been lost.

I would like to ask the hon. member, through you, Mr. Speaker, if the government gave any thought at all to the cost of redeploying thousands of military personnel who will have to be moved and reassigned? Did it give any thought at all to number of direct and indirect jobs that would be lost as a result of base closures? The government talks about job creation, but what I see are job losses.

In an editorial, Lise Bissonnette stated the following: "In five years, once the dust has settled, DND will not even have saved

\$1 billion. Not even \$1 billion after five years. The figure will be more like \$850 million. However, for the communities in which the designated bases are located, economic activity will grind to a halt. Everyone will feel the effects: the corner store, the movie theatre, the school and the restaurant. Activity will come to a standstill because direct and indirect jobs will be lost". That is the first part of my question.

The second part has to do with the promises you made. Did you promise during the election campaign to tax the elderly? Did you promise during the election campaign to penalize the unemployed? Did you promise during the election campaign to extend the wage freeze in the public service? Did you promise during the election campaign to close military bases? These are my questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. De Villers: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I have enough time to answer all of these questions.

[English]

I am sure the hon. member knows that the red book contained many promises. The present action taken in the budget with respect to the military closings was not an action taken lightly. It results obviously in some unemployment for people who are affected. The minister of defence has assured us that there will be early retirement packages available as well as relocation packages, et cetera, to try to deal with that. But the more significant issue is that the funds that are being saved by these cuts, which we are informed should have been made years ago and would have been easier to make at that time, are being reinvested into the programs, some of which I listed at the beginning of my speech, where there would be a better return for the job creation that is required than to continue to fund the military establishments that are no longer useful.

• (1645)

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I have a few points I would like to raise in response to the hon. member's speech in defence of the budget.

He took great pride in talking about the new programs that are being introduced in the budget. This was presented by the Minister of Finance as being a tough budget. Yet 18 new programs are being introduced. We have gone 125 years since Confederation without these programs. This was supposed to be a tough budget and here we have the government starting off and spending on programs in brand new areas.

I have another point, and it is the one to which I would really like the member to respond. He said we have an income crisis and not a spending crisis. The country is \$500 billion in debt. Canadians are groaning under the weight of taxes they can hardly afford to pay. I would like him to tell us why he thinks we have a revenue crisis rather than a spending crisis.