

The Budget

[Translation]

HERITAGE LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State and Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

It is a fact that the government cut \$4.1 million from the Heritage Language Education Program in 2,000 schools.

I ask the minister to explain to the Canadian people why this government is committing \$6 million and establishing an institute at the same time that it is cutting educational programs. Is what the government is proposing an empty shell?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, reductions are always difficult. The budgets of our two departments were reduced by about \$23 million. Times are tough. We must do something with our deficit to ensure a more prosperous, more secure future.

Our duty is to deliver programs in the best way possible and we shall continue to do so.

[English]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): My supplementary is directed to the same minister, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. The government's stated policy is to preserve and enhance languages other than English or French.

In its budget the government has cut financing for heritage language schools. This flies in the face of its own stated policy. Why?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, restraint is always difficult and we certainly had to be sure in evaluating all the priorities of the department that we were continuing to provide Canadians with the best possible service. It is about time that heritage language schools stopped being marginalized. Others can participate and contribute to their growth and development.

Our commitment to multiculturalism is very clear from what we have done in terms of our Race Relations Program Community Support and Participation Program, and the Canadian Heritage Language Institute that will be established. Some funding has been reduced

but there are significant amounts of money that are still there for heritage cultures and languages.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that since 1985 there have not been any cuts to native programs, yet the budget completely does away with the native communication program which funds very important projects like the *Mic Mac News*, the only major native newspaper east of Montreal.

Why is the government giving the impression that it is helping the Micmac people when all it is really trying to do is silence them?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House yesterday, the government continues to help all of the native people of Canada and to increase funding by \$182 million in the coming fiscal year in the form of increased program funding for health, education, social and economic development programs directed to the native people across Canada.

Mr. Speaker: A very short supplemental.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, just last month the Marshall inquiry said that the Micmac people should have a greater voice in Nova Scotia. What kind of reward is that? What kind of greater voice is this when the government is cutting out the *Mic Mac News*? Why is the government stifling the voice of the native people? It is cutting programs. Admit it, and correct it.

• (1500)

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member will examine the Estimates of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, he will find that core funding for all of the native organizations in Canada has been preserved and that the programs will continue to serve the best needs and the requirements of the native peoples of Canada.