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Budget

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister have to be commended for this budget. It speaks to the volumes of Canadians who want priorities.

In particular, the budget has substantial investments in health care. It has substantial investments in the areas of child care and the environment. For the first time I think in Canadian history, or as long as we can remember, there are substantial investments in our defence system.

In addition, a topic that I am personally passionate about, and I think as are many Canadians across the country, is that of international development and foreign aid. It is excellent to see that the budget provides substantial investments and a commitment in regard to the millennium development goals, an ambitious agenda to ensure that global poverty is reduced in half by 2015.

The increases provided in the budget would allow Canada's recent international policy statement, which would provide for an important new platform for Canadians, to play more of an important and effective role in relieving the plight of the world's poorest people.

The debate we are having today and the substantial commitment and investment that has been made in the Liberal budget in regard to foreign aid and international development presents an opportune time for us to reflect on Canada's role in the world. How can Canada and how can we as Canadians contribute to global poverty reduction and best help others to help themselves? Why do we as a nation want to do this?

There are two reasons in particular. We must contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. I think this truly reflects the values of many Canadians. It truly reflects our idealism and our interests. Our country's principles and values, our culture, are rooted in a commitment to tolerance, democracy, equality and human rights, to a peaceful resolution of differences, to opportunities to address the challenges we face in the marketplace, to social justice and development and to easing poverty.

Canadians wish for these values to be reflected and advanced internationally. Canadians care deeply about helping others. We always have and I think we always will. It is simply the right thing for us to do as a nation.

This was evident in an unprecedented country-wide response during the unfortunate tsunami disaster. During the tsunami disaster thousands of Canadians had an outpouring of spontaneous generosity to ensure that we as a nation and as individuals helped to rebuild the lives of individuals who were affected by the tsunami disaster, that we helped to rebuild not only their lives, but also their families and communities.

Building a better world is also in Canada's best interest. Canada recognizes that what happens in the rest of the world and at a global level truly affects us here at home. The time is gone when each country or each continent can look after its own security. We must work in collaboration. All nations must work together as a team to ensure that we have a more prosperous and productive global economy and global society.

In response to the recent United Nations threats, challenges and change report, Kofi Annan said, "The threats that we face are threats to all of us and they are all linked to each other". To address these many threats to human well-being and security, the world needs to share the benefits of trade. It needs to ensure that we collectively end the debt crisis and promote more efficient and effective aid.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast recognize that Canada has done much to respond to these threats, but we as a country must do better.

The millennium development goals to cut global poverty in half help Canada focus on this monumental but doable task, and 2005 is an important year for us to move forward on this important agenda.

In September the heads of state and government will gather at the UN for a five year review of progress to achieving these millennium development goals. This summit will provide Canada with a unique opportunity to inject new vision and to ensure that we have new energy embodied in the millennium declaration.

We must ask ourselves this. What exactly is Canada doing to contribute to making a better world for all, to building a better society for all people and for Canadians?

Canada, especially in this budget, is renewing its commitment to advancing Canadian values of global citizenship as well as Canadian interests regarding security, prosperity and governance. Canada is working hard to focus and to ensure that we reduce global poverty through an approach that matches the Canadian experience and expertise with developing country needs in coordination with other donors.

Since 2002, when CIDA, Canadian International Development Agency, launched its strengthening aid effectiveness policy, there has been a tremendous amount of work to refocus some of the activities. This entails building government-wide consensus on key elements of Canada's role in the world. It also means that we as a nation have coherent domestic and international policies, country-led development, areas where we are focusing on sectors of expertise, on a results based approach, on good governance and on building of a good, engaged civil society. The proposed increases reflected in the budget to official development assistance will contribute to these much needed projects and initiatives that are currently under way.

Canada is better coordinating efforts with other donors and other developing nations and it will continue to do so to ensure that we continue play a leading role internationally.

Canada is always thinking and reflecting very carefully about ways in which our country can add value. Canada knows its strengths. We have strengths in the area of health care. We have strengths in the area of the private sector development, in terms of education. We have strengths in our environment and in our governance policies. It only makes sense that Canada offers these areas of expertise to other countries to assist them so they are also well-governed and self-sufficient.

These principles and ideas are at the heart of Canada's international policy statement.

CIDA will receive much greater focus in its geographic programs. It will deliver at least two-thirds of bilateral aid to a core group of 25 development partner countries by 2010. These are countries that could use aid both effectively and prudently, and where Canadian expertise and resources can truly make a difference.

More than half of these countries, 14, are in the sub-Saharan Africa. This great concentration in Africa would be in keeping with Canada's commitment to double Canadian assistance to the continent by 2008 from the 2003-04 level.

That said, it is also important to realize that Canada will support other countries. CIDA has also embarked up to one-third of its bilateral budget for countries that are of strategic importance and other countries where Canada can continue to make a difference. It will use a multilateral and partnership programming to address the plights of other low income countries.

CIDA is also pursuing a greater sectoral focus. Canadian assistance will target and concentrate programs in five sectors that are directly related to the millennium development goals. They will ensure that we promote good governance, that we improve health outcomes, such as HIV and AIDS, that we strengthen our basic education, that we support private sector development and that we advance environmental sustainability. Ensuring gender equality will be systematically and explicitly integrated across programming for all of these five sectors.

With these actions, CIDA is increasing both the quality and the quantity of Canadian aid. However, the Government of Canada recognizes that more or better aid is simply not enough. That is why the international policy statement recently released reflects a comprehensive and whole of government approach. It enables Canada to harness all the tools and instruments at its disposal, such as promoting greater market access, more debt relief and more support for private sectors in developing countries.

Canada is poised to reclaim its rightful place in the world and the Prime Minister has said that we must seize the moment to reassert ourselves on the world stage. We must speak up with a persuasive voice for equality, human rights, democracy and fairer globalization.

Canada is already making a difference in the world. The increased funding that is going to be provided in this particular budget is going to ensure that we, as Canadians and as a nation, can truly make a difference in the international arena.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's remarks. I have great respect for the member. As the House knows, we share a common past career.

However, I would like to ask the member if she could comment on three things. How will purchasing clean air credits from foreign countries help Canadian air get any cleaner? Why did foreign aid in this budget have nothing to do with Haiti and what does the Liberal government have against Haiti? Why, after years of pushing the government to assist in the Sudan, has the government chosen to go there only now that its own fall is at risk?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Madam Speaker, I also have a great deal of respect for the member opposite, having shared a career in the same profession.

Our government has made a substantial commitment in regard to Haiti which was outlined in the initial budget. There has been a tremendous amount of work that has been done in Haiti. We must also realize that we do have a commitment to Sudan. We have a commitment to ensuring that we as Canadians can provide as much financial assistance and also personnel support. We know with the recently released announcement by the Prime Minister, there was a substantial commitment made in the range of \$198 million to provide both troops and assistance to the many families who have been affected in helping them rebuild their lives.

We must realize that in regard to the clean air credits, that was mentioned by the member opposite, the government has made substantial investments in ensuring that we as a nation have one of the best environmental policies in the world. We have our Kyoto plan. It is imperative that the member opposite consult and have dialogue with his particular party

members to ensure that they support this budget. This budget reflects the priorities of Canadians. It has made substantial investments in health care and child care.

Another area which is important to mention is that this budget provided significant investment to the recognition of foreign credentials. This budget has \$75 million allocated toward ensuring that health care professionals who are trained abroad can come into Canada, have their credentials recognized, have them accredited, and ensure that they are integrated into the labour market workforce so Canadians can get access to doctors.

This budget speaks to the priorities of Canadians and that is why it is supported by so many Canadians, and as of this morning, that is why it was supported by a former member of the Conservative Party and now a cabinet minister with our government.

Mr. Gary Goodyear: Madam Speaker, it appears that I am having a dialogue with members in the House this morning and I appreciate getting up a second time.

I would like to remind the member and then ask for a comment that this commitment to health care and child care and so on is for 2008-10.

As well, this commitment for accreditation of doctors is \$75 million over five years. That is \$15 million a year, or what anyone with a bit of math background could tell us is 50¢ per Canadian. There are 30,000 people in my riding without doctors. All we do is steal doctors from other communities. Could the member explain to us how 50¢ per Canadian shows any sympathy or any intelligence from the government?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Madam Speaker, health care is an issue about which I am extremely passionate, having been a health care provider and having seen on the front line some of the challenges that we face in our health care system. I must commend our Minister of Health, our Prime Minister and many members in our Liberal government for providing leadership on this particular issue.

We know that last year there was a historic 10 year deal signed of \$42 billion to ensure that some of the challenges that we face in the health care system are addressed, that Canadians do not have to wait for hours and hours at the hospital, that we have a reduction in wait time, and that Canadians who do not have primary care physicians or cannot get access to them do have that opportunity.

In terms of an integrated approach that has been done by health care, HRSDC, Citizenship and Immigration and Industry Canada on the issue of foreign credentials recognition and ensuring that doctors who are educated abroad do have the opportunity to come into our system and practice as physicians speaks volumes to that commitment.

The member opposite realizes that substantial investments have been made in the budget and health care was one of those substantial investments. I would urge the hon. member to discuss this with his party members to ensure that they support the budget.