

## **Question re: G8 and G20 Costs**

**November 1, 2010**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to follow up a question I asked earlier in the session with regard to the G8 and G20 summit costs. The timing of the question that day was interesting because it was the day that the Government of Canada announced it would stop funding some lighthouses, including the famous Peggy's Cove Lighthouse in Nova Scotia at the same time as it was funding fake lighthouses for the G8 and G20. That unbelievably wasteful, extravagant decision contrasted so much with the historic and traditional nature of real lighthouses in coastal Canada. So it was not just the lighthouses that was spent, \$186,000 for a fake lighthouse, there was a fake Toronto stock exchange built at a cost of \$208,000, metres away from the real stock exchange. There was the famous fake lake as well with fake animals.

Conservatives spend money like water off a fake duck's back. It is unbelievable. We also had the cost of communications around the G8 and G20 summits. The spending on this has really hit a nerve among Canadians who think at this point in time where the Conservatives have a deficit of \$56 billion, to add \$1 billion on this cost is totally wasteful, inefficient, egregious and unnecessary when we look at the cost of previous summits.

I want to bring people's minds back to 1995 when former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and the regional minister, David Dingwall, announced that the G7 would take place in my home community of Halifax Dartmouth. It was big news. In fact an article from the time quotes that: "The Halifax summit office confirmed today its budget for this year's G7 summit meeting will be approximately \$28 million and they came in on budget".

It went on to say: "The budget of the Halifax summit office encompasses all of the operational aspects of the summit from staffing to printing and security".

So we had a summit in Halifax and it was not a low-key event. People like Bill Clinton, Boris Yeltsin and John Major came to Halifax and had a wonderful summit. But even at that what was very interesting was that a spokesperson from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in 1995 from a news article dated April 30, said:

The federal government was wrong to put next month's G7 summit in Halifax because the city needs too many government funded fix-ups says a national taxpayers' lobby group.

The federal government, "should have chosen the location which wouldn't cost that kind of money". The person who said that is now sitting in the federal cabinet as the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. In 1995, \$28 million was in his view too much to spend on a summit and then his own government spent well in excess of \$1 billion. People simply do not understand how that could possibly be the case.

When we look at what we could have done with \$1 billion. The government cancelled programs like Canadian Council of Learning, \$80 million over five years, cuts to literacy, cuts to victims of crime initiatives. Canadians look at this and say we understand the government wastes money and is the biggest tax and spending government in history, but \$1 billion plus on a weekend meeting because of its incompetence by having it in one location and adding another location when we could have done it a lot cheaper.

Other countries have done it cheaper: Italy, Japan, Germany, Russia which held these meetings before did it much cheaper than Canada did. It was an incredible amount of money to be spent at a time when we are reeling from the incompetence that already existed in the government's handling of the national finances. People do not accept that. It was too much. It was too rich. It was too extravagant. Canadians could not afford it and they made that known.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, to respond to a couple of points, my colleague says that the costs are different than what they were estimated to be. Six months later and we are waiting for those actual costs. It is about time we had some real costs.

He talked about a post-2001 world. In 2002 we hosted the summit for \$93 million. The United States was \$25 million, the United Kingdom in 2005 was \$140 million, Germany was \$124 million in 2007, Japan \$280 million in 2008, Italy \$124 million in 2009. He says costs are buried.

I doubt there is a more secretive controlling, command and control government in the world now, certainly not in the democratic world, than the one that we have here. Therefore I find it hard to believe that costs would be buried any more anywhere else than they would be here.

Canadians are offended I think rightfully so by the egregious amount of money that was spent, and particularly what the money was spent on and the results that we got were very minimal. Since then we did not get our seat on the Security Council. Canada's place in the world has gone down. We can do a lot better and it is not by spending--