

Oral Questions

What happened is that the government set aside \$398,000 for the expense of doing this and it turned out that we did not have to spend that much.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been asking for ideas on how to help restore health to Canada's economy and get people back to work. The Liberal leader has stated publicly and in this House that the government should spend billions of dollars on job creation programs even if it inflates the deficit.

Can the minister tell my constituents why he has chosen to ignore that option and pursue the kind of policies that were in his economic statement last Wednesday?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question gives me an opportunity to advise him and other members of the House of the broad based support which the economic plan is generating from Labrador to the Yukon territory.

I think all members would be encouraged by a further reduction in interest rates today.

An hon. member: That is a bit of a comical act.

Mr. Mazankowski: A 51 basis point reduction in interest rates is not an act of comedy, nor the act of a comedian. It is real.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mazankowski: I would say that is a reflection of sound policy.

The hon. member refers to the infrastructure program that is advanced by my friend opposite. The Leader of the Opposition talks about spending \$15 billion on infrastructure but he does not tell Canadians how he would fund it.

He says: "We will put up \$5 billion, the provinces will put up \$5 billion and the municipalities will put up \$5 billion". They have deficit and fiscal problems as well, just like the federal government. It is almost being

irresponsible to suggest something or to recommend something without saying how you are going to pay for it.

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TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In last week's financial statement, he referred to a cut of \$73 million to transportation expenditures. Since this is 10 per cent of last year's budgeted Crow benefit of \$729 million, will he affirm clearly that this is where the cut will come. Will it come from that so-called Crow benefit?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the economic plan put forward by the Minister of Finance last week is a plan to protect Canadians from the difficult times that we have and to protect agriculture.

It is difficult when you enter into reductions. Yes, I can confirm that the reductions that the hon. member talked about on WGTA, those payments that go forward and have from the past the same as the other subsidies and the other grants and contributions in agriculture and throughout government, will be reduced by 10 per cent.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, since this will have the effect of reducing incomes of farmers, does this mean that the minister will be looking at these actions as triggering a third line of defence, since the policies have now changed and farm incomes will be reduced by a similar amount?

Is he content to continue with the current policies which permit a declining coverage under GRIP and NISA each year?

Hon. Bill McKnight (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member concluded his question by referring to GRIP and NISA. The income safety nets that have been established jointly with the producers, with the provincial governments and the federal government remain. The hon. member talks about declining income. I would like the hon. member to take note that for 1992 the total program payments in the province of Saskatchewan are expected to be from \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion. I want the hon. member to understand that over 70 per cent of that comes from federal programs.