

Government Orders

by Liberals who are proud to have the same policies as the previous government, the Tory government.

The real solutions to restore the confidence of Quebecers and Canadians lie in tackling the deficit, reducing departmental waste and duplication, reviewing tax measures, and creating permanent jobs.

This government put in place, before the budget, a municipal infrastructure program, which will create some 45,000 temporary jobs. Once the roads and sidewalks have been paved, the workers will go back home to live off whatever is left of the unemployment insurance program. However, this program will cost Quebecers and Canadians \$2 billion in federal taxes, \$2 billion in provincial taxes and \$2 billion in municipal taxes.

• (1710)

Quebec and Canada need stable permanent jobs that generate progress and development. Has this government thought of developing the transportation industry in Canada? As transport critic for the Official Opposition, I listened carefully to the finance minister's speech. When I heard him present his forecasts to us, I said to myself that a government cannot build the future of a people on temporary projects. Maybe in a few minutes, he will announce a major project, something that will excite the people's enthusiasm, one that will serve several provinces or all of Canada, but the speech ended and I heard nothing, except the following paragraph that I quote from *Hansard* of February 22: "The Minister of Transport will implement needed improvements to the surface freight transportation system with his provincial colleagues and stakeholders".

When the Minister of Finance presented the government's policies for the next few years to this House, I expected him to give more importance to one of Canada's basic industries, namely transportation. Since this House opened, we have suggested possibilities to him.

Several projects could develop the economy, and I mention some that I would have liked to see in the budget speech: the future of the rail system, the high-speed train, the future of air transport and the future of the merchant marine in Canada.

The Minister of Finance had no concrete solution in his budget speech for improving transportation and thus solving the problems of economic development and unemployment.

If you allow me, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this House about the benefits of these projects for economic development.

First, there is the rail system. Canada's railways have brought the people together from the Atlantic to the Pacific. They developed the Canadian West. They also enabled Canada to become one of the world's largest wheat producers and to

transport this product from coast to coast across the country. Yet today, at a time when other countries use railway transport as the basis for their development, the Canadian government is abandoning it everywhere in the country and particularly in Quebec.

The National Transportation Agency authorizes the dismantlement of numerous lines by CN and CP while, as I said earlier, these two carriers keep coming up with projects, especially in Quebec.

Without a drastic move to support railway transport, both for passengers and for freight, Quebec and Canada are going to be stuck with a spiralling increase of costs, not only because of the maintenance of the road network and the accidents which occur, but also because of the energy inefficiency and the pollution associated with automotive transport. The government, and the Minister of Transport in particular, must urgently develop a policy which will first take into account the public interest and which will be firmly turned towards the next century. Most industrialized countries, including the United States, are already doing so. I formally ask for a moratorium on any new abandonment of lines, as well as for the setting up of a parliamentary task force to conduct an in-depth review of the impact on the economy, tourism and especially the environment, of transport services as a whole in Quebec and in Canada.

Let us now talk about the high-speed train. I mentioned that our party had made suggestions to the government to develop the transport sector and improve the economy. Yet, the government and the Minister of Finance did not take our suggestions into account in the budget. What a surprise to hear the Minister of Transport tell a CBC reporter that setting up a high-speed train link between Quebec and Windsor was not a priority. Yet, on February 1, I described to this House all the benefits a high speed train along the Quebec City-Windsor corridor would have for Quebec and for Canada.

• (1715)

I have read and reread the report the Working Group submitted on May 31, 1991, to the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Robert Bourassa, and to the Premier of Ontario, Mr. Bob Rae. This report bears the signature and meets the approval of key figures known to be influential members of the Liberal party now in office.

I do not think that I have to convince anyone in this House that Canada does need short-term jobs to boost the economy, but it also needs long-term jobs to solve the economic problems it is facing. The Working Group mentioned in its comments that it had the distinct impression, like a great many representatives of the industry, the business community and the population in general, that a high-speed train providing hourly service between the cities of Quebec, Trois-Rivières and Montreal and the cities of Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto, London and Windsor would