

Obviously, this country is facing an economic crisis; 1.6 million Canadians are out of work and there is little indication that this will go down any time in the near future.

In the last year thousands and thousands of businesses have gone bankrupt. Agriculture in this country is in decline and cities and towns that desperately need infrastructure work are literally falling apart.

I think it is fair to say this is all a fair indication of the failed economic plan of this government. We can no longer put the blame on past governments. We have to face the reality of today's.

I know that sitting on this side of the House it is easy to criticize. As a member of the Official Opposition, my role in many ways is to criticize government policy in an attempt to make the government responsible. At the same time I do realize, and many here on this side realize, that we too have to offer constructive criticism, that we have to offer alternatives. I believe that my colleagues on this side of the House throughout this morning and this afternoon have been outlining these positive alternatives for Canada.

To start off, it is really fair to say that the jobs, jobs, jobs strategy of the government has really been a failure and that these jobs have not materialized. If they have materialized they have really been short term jobs and they really have not been able to lead Canadians into futures, into careers that they can feel comfortable with and feel that they can be with for some time.

Unemployment is a staggering 11.3 per cent and close to 19 per cent of Canadian youth are unemployed. I think that we can say with much certainty that the economic policies of this government are not working for Canadian youth. They are not putting them back to work.

The point is that we are in a recession and we all agree that the world is in a recession. This recession has hit Canada harder than any other G-7 country. It has hit us hard when we look at our youth and at our high unemployment rates.

I can safely say that this government policy direction has done nothing to get us out of this recession. I think most hon. members would agree. The government has to admit that our unemployment rates are higher than anywhere else in the G-7, that we have failed Canadians by not putting them back to work.

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We know that with the government's economic policy the consumers did not start spending again. We know that people did not start building houses. We know that businesses did not start investing. It is certainly fair to say that industry did not modernize its plants or expand production because of the government's economic policies.

The point is that because of low interest rates there has been no economic growth. We all called for low interest rates, but we also called for other action by this government and the government has refused to take that action. On Wednesday the minister reduced the economic growth that he had suggested only in February would be 4.5 per cent down to 2.5 per cent. Most other analysts predict it will be somewhere around one per cent.

What kind of economic growth is that? The simple fact is that we have to make economic growth and job creation among Canada's top priorities, especially as they relate to our younger people. This next generation sees no hope or no future in this economic plan of the government.

Strangely, we hear from this government that Canada has to be more competitive, more challenging on the international markets and be willing to be more forward looking, better skilled and more educated. The government talks well and it brought out a good study on competitiveness. It talked about a lot of the problems.

It did not give us any solutions. The Minister of Finance in his economic statement has essentially told Canadians that he is not listening to his own study.

I have always said that in order to become more competitive in Canada, we must be committed to new initiatives to promote labour force training, research and development and marketing support. I know members opposite would agree to that. Ultimately our commitment to that has to be unequivocal. We have to be willing to put our resources there, no matter what the problems, and direct what limited resources we have in that direction.

Unfortunately, nothing in the minister's economic statement addresses this area in any meaningful way. What we have are promises to fulfil old promises and to fulfil previous promises. The promises are not being fulfilled. In fact Canadians are not buying it any more. Canadians want action and they want action today.