

*Oral Questions*

now that our plan can be implemented immediately. The home builders' association reported 152,000 housing starts in Canada last year and expects at most 156,000 this year. With the measure we are proposing today, there would be 210,000 housing starts in Canada this year. Why does the government not want to follow this plan, which would create 100,000 new jobs right away, in housing alone?

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I did indicate to the hon. gentleman earlier that this was a matter that was under active consideration, and that it is.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, I too have a question for the Minister of Finance.

Even with the government's announcement today of lower down payments for homes, there will still be hundreds of thousands of construction workers without jobs. The Minister of Finance himself admitted last week that they had little or no prospects of going back to work this year. Does the government not realize that they can go back to work if it takes more action now, together with the provinces, municipalities and private sector?

Therefore I ask the Minister of Finance: Why won't the government immediately adopt the plan outlined last Friday by the Leader of the Official Opposition to create a national community public works program, an infrastructure program, to create needed improvements in our roads, our bridges, our pollution control and transportation systems, and to get more Canadians back to work not next year, not some time in the vague future, but now?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I know this may come as a surprise to the hon. member, but construction output has increased for the eighth consecutive month in the last month. We recognize the recovery is sluggish primarily due to the slowing down of the world economies, and particularly that of the United States. Obviously the hon. member suggests that we drive up the deficit further or we tax Canadians more. It is one thing for the hon. member to suggest the expenditure of \$3 billion; it is another thing to find out where we will find the money.

Is the hon. member suggesting that we should add \$3 billion to the deficit? Or, is he asking that we should tax Canadians more? If so, where?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance says the economy is sluggish. Why does he not level with Canadians and say it is not only sluggish, the recovery is slowing down because this government is doing nothing?

I ask the minister this: Why won't he adopt the Liberal community works plan which will get Canadians back to work, cut government spending on unemployment insurance and welfare, create wages for workers, profits for business, and generate revenue that will get the deficit down and help Canadians? Why won't this government adopt a practical plan that will create much needed hope and confidence for Canadians?

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I thought this program was a Federation of Municipalities of Canada program. I am rather surprised that the Liberals have adopted it.

I repeat the answer to the hon. member: If he could provide me with some insight as to how he would pay for the \$3 billion works program—

**An hon. member:** A billion.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** All right, a billion dollars. Is he proposing that we increase the deficit by \$1 billion, \$2 billion or \$3 billion? Or, is he proposing that we increase taxes? If so, who does he want to tax?

**Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Over the course of the last six weeks I have spoken with hundreds of Canadians, Canadians who have one message for this government, and that is that things have to change. There is a phenomenal lack of hope and sense of despair out there that is crippling this country. Right now this government's policy creates unemployment. I want to point out to the Prime Minister that unemployment is not a no cost option. Taxpayers are paying over \$30 billion for the unemployed and those receiving social assistance.

• (1430)

I want to say to the Prime Minister that the best way to bring down the deficit is to bring down unemployment. Will the Prime Minister assure Canadians that there will be some hope in the February budget and that he will bring in a budget with job creation?