

*The Address*

Party was offering a policy alternative to Canadians, one that was reasonable and that could be implemented. In other words, it was a believable program.

Everything the government has done so far since it took office in November has been in fulfilment of those promises and has indicated to Canadians that it is a government committed to fulfilling its promises and that it is able to do exactly that because its promises are reasonable. I know that some of them will be difficult. We know that financial circumstances are worse than predicted, but the government is committed to trying to solve the problems that it was elected to solve and will continue to do that.

What were those problems? What were the problems that we were elected to resolve? There were two. I know the Reform Party likes to harp about the deficit. We acknowledge that is a problem. I call it problem number two. However the first and foremost and most difficult problem is that of unemployment in Canada.

Unemployment has reached what I would call crisis proportions because it has removed hope from Canadians. It has removed it from principally two categories of Canadians: first, our young people and, second, older workers who have lost their jobs and have no hope of getting another one. They have lost them prior to retirement age, prior to pension time. They have real despair with a lack of income and a breakdown in the normal earning pattern that their lives would have given them had things carried on in the usual way. It was a complete change in expectation. It was a totally unexpected downturn in events in terms of their prospects.

• (1340)

Most people who are working can manage some period of unemployment, but they do not expect to be out of work permanently for years just because their job has disappeared. That is what has happened all across the country as a result of the prolonged recession we have been through, a recession which I need hardly remind members was induced by the previous government. The previous government boasted about how it had induced that recession because it thought the best thing was to slow the economy down.

Here we are with these two groups of unemployed people. I turn particularly to the young people because, as many members of the House will know, Kingston is home to two of Canada's universities: Queen's University and the Royal Military College. I have spoken of this before in the previous Parliament and I am pleased to be able to do so again today.

There are thousands of graduates from these universities. RMC graduates fortunately at the moment still have employment in the Canadian Armed Forces, but the graduates from Queen's University are finding it extremely difficult to get jobs.

I am sure there are members of the House who have had applications for employment from people across the country, people with masters of arts degrees and people with doctorates who are unable to get another job and will take a low paying job in order to get work. It is happening all the time.

I told this story many times during the election campaign. On a drive back to Kingston one night about a year ago I stopped at a gas bar. The young woman who was working behind the cash recognized me when I put down my credit card. She asked if I were not the member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands and I said yes. How did she know? She had two degrees from Queen's University, a bachelor of arts and a bachelor of education, and she was selling gas. She could not get any other job. That is a national tragedy; that is a national disaster.

It is a tragedy for her because she is unable to get work for which she is well qualified. It is a disaster for us because we have invested big money in her education and now we are unable to get it back in terms of tax revenue. She should be working at a good job that pays a good wage and paying taxes so that we can afford to keep other people in school longer and we can provide for the sick and the helpless in our society who need money. Instead she is in a very low paying job, probably at minimum wage, and not contributing to society in the way that she has been trained to do.

That is a disaster for us. It is happening all around us and all the time. In its election platform our party committed itself to changing that around and creating jobs for people and keeping people at work. That is the fundamental mission the government is committed to. It has to be committed to it. Members of our party are working to achieve that goal.

I know that the members of the Reform Party say: "You have to be able to represent your constituents; you have to have free votes". I have no concern about voting for policies that support the principles enunciated in the red book. Indeed I consider it my duty to support those policies. I suggest to hon. members in the Reform Party that they have a similar obligation. They ran on a platform. Throughout the campaign I was pressed to read and look at copies of publications that enunciated Reform's solution for all of Canada's problems: all the deficit cutting figures, all the reductions in government expenditure that was going to bring salvation to Canadians.

I disagreed with them, and I said so. I expect Reform members in the House will support very strongly the policies put forward in those documents. If they do not support them there will be people to call them to account, because that is what they were elected to do. If their constituents decide in their wisdom later that those policies were the wrong ones and tell them so, what are the Reform members going to do? Are they going to listen to their constituents or are they going to stick by their promises? I predict if the cuts in the Reform package were made and their