

stantial amount of our expenditures on training and adjustments in their communities.

This government understands fully that community involvement is the key to a healthy, local economy. We showed that understanding when we brought in the Community Futures Program to help rural and remote communities facing severe labour market adjustments. Community Futures committees reflect the diversity of local interests. They create initiatives from the input of their community, initiatives that the government can then put into action.

Besides local committees', business development centres are another key component of Community Futures. The staff at business development centres have the expertise to counsel and give technical assistance to small business people and entrepreneurs.

Speaking of entrepreneurs, this government also has a Self-Employment Assistance Program that provides income support to UI claimants and persons eligible for social assistance. Rather than pay people to be unproductive, we are helping those with the skills and desire to become self-employed to get their businesses off the ground.

Our government is committed to saving jobs. Is the hon. member aware of other innovative programs like work sharing, which enables employers to avoid lay-offs during temporary slowdowns?

Our local human resource planning program helps employers develop a productive work force. As well, this government recognizes that some Canadians are willing to move to find employment. With that in mind, we have a mobility assistance program to help individuals seek employment somewhere other than where they are currently living.

There is also the problem of long-term workers who suddenly find themselves unemployed due to industrial restructuring. The Department of Employment and Immigration will spend \$300 million to help displaced workers once again become productive citizens.

In this current fiscal year, our \$3.55 billion budget has enabled 850,000 Canadian workers to participate in the government's labour market programming administered efficiently and effectively by the Department of Employment and Immigration.

Supply

In the coming fiscal year, we are allocating approximately \$3.8 billion for labour market programming. I think even the hon. member will agree that figure represents a significant increase over the \$2.1 billion spent in the 1985-86 fiscal year. Of that \$3.8 billion, \$2.21 billion will provide active training and adjustment measures for UI claimants.

I trust that I have made it clear to my hon. friend that this government is taking all reasonable steps to ensure economic growth and to help workers train for jobs that will give them and Canada long-term prosperity.

Our programs are working. The unemployment rate fell to 10.8 per cent in February, the lowest it has been in the last year. Since August approximately 156,000 higher paying, full-time jobs have been created.

I say to the hon. member, and to all hon. members, this government welcomes constructive suggestions to keep the economy moving upwards at a steady, healthy growth. Let us pull together to help all Canadians fulfil their potential and ensure that Canada has a prosperous future.

Mr. Jean-Marc Robitaille (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to my colleague from Québec-Est, the parliamentary secretary, who described in detail the importance of the \$3.5 billion in funds for training. I will also remind the House of the training measures which the opposition opposed in Bill C-21 and wants to oppose again in Bill C-113.

• (1730)

My colleague touched on a variety of subjects. One of those which has the greatest impact on our economy is the debt load. We remember very well that when the Leader of the Opposition was in power his government increased spending by 15 per cent a year on average. Our government has brought this rate of increase down to an average of 4 per cent. The Liberals let the deficit rise as a percentage of the gross domestic product from 0 to 8 per cent. We have managed to cut it almost in half, to 5.2 per cent.

I have a question for my colleague. We have seen the waffling of the Liberal Party, which for four and a half years has voted against every spending reduction measure here in this House, just as it opposed the GST. The Leader of the Liberal Party is now trying to take a position on the goods and services tax, saying that he will