

*Oral Questions*

Does the Minister of Finance have any idea of the despair that exists in Montreal and the province of Quebec? Last night, I was in Montreal, and there were for sale and for rent signs all over the place.

When will the Minister of Finance finally understand that this fight against inflation at any price is an absolute disaster? When will he act responsibly to give Quebecers a glimmer of hope and change his economic policies which have been condemned across the country by business people, workers, social groups, in fact everyone? When will the government finally understand that the time has come to change its economic policies?

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member would sort of sneeze at \$500 million being invested in infrastructure programs that can commence almost immediately. I think it is important. In addition, there are a number of private sector initiatives that can be undertaken.

I understand the seriousness of the problem, but I can assure the hon. member the steps that we announced in the economic plan on Wednesday are genuine, are real and they will be acted upon with dispatch.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition):** The Minister of Finance constantly asks us for suggestions. Yesterday in Montreal I saw the places where Mayor Doré told me he was ready to begin work immediately. I saw the mayor of Laval not very long ago. He told me that he has specific projects on file that would put people to work immediately, two or three days after the government decision.

Why does the government absolutely refuse to accept this proposal from the Canadian union of mayors and municipalities, who are ready to invest one-third in each of these projects? The provincial governments are ready to go ahead, only the federal government is blocking it.

Why does the government stubbornly refuse to trust the municipalities, which could put people to work tomorrow morning? Why does the minister not see the good sense in it?

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we are acting. There will be tenders called for improvement to the bridges which are federal government property, \$125 million in that particular area, \$75 million on another group of transportation priorities, \$36 million on the Montreal Port Corporation. All of these things will create a number of jobs and will create economic activity. The total effort will provide a number of new jobs and encourage the engineering and the construction sector. These things are going to start almost immediately.

In addition to that, there are a number of steps that have been taken to stimulate the small business sector incentives, improvements in access to capital, improvements in terms of providing incentives to hire more people; all of these things. The small business sector is very vibrant and alive and well in the province of Quebec. I expect that they will utilize the programs we announced and utilize them very effectively.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** In the same vein, Madam Speaker, the minister is directly depriving the unemployed and their families of \$2.4 billion.

[English]

The minister says the recession is over. In the last week we have heard that 10,000 people at CN have lost their jobs; 2,000 people at Dofasco are going to lose their jobs; 2,500 people at CIBC are going to lose their jobs and GM workers in St. Catharines were delivered another blow, 800 more people to join the ranks of the unemployed. What do we hear from the minister of employment? He calls them couch potatoes and accuses them of spending their winters in Florida. He has the nerve to say the unemployed should be proud to assist in paying off the national debt. How can the government make these gross statements and, worse still, how can it take these disgusting actions, these punitive measures against people who are already on their knees?

**Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Madam Speaker, there is a report, admittedly out of the United States, which indicates that under NAFTA the Canadian portion of the auto trade in North America will continue to be very strong, much