

Oral Questions

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker, and yes, we are. The economic statement outlined a number of initiatives to enhance the small business sector which has generated 80 per cent of the jobs over the last 10 years in this country.

Investments and further enhancements in research and development, further investments in training and skills upgrading, and investments in infrastructure to improve the competitiveness and the productivity of our country, in addition to the 161,000 jobs created since August of last year, are good indicators of what we see occurring.

All the economic indicators with respect to growth in the GDP, housing starts, retail sales, investments and export sales are leading in the right direction. Those are the indicators that reflect the buoyancy of the economy that is occurring. It is not as robust as we would like, but we are also going through a restructuring and adjustment process which the economic statement tried to deal with in terms of facilitating that adjustment for people and for industry.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The minister says that we are going in the right direction. The direction for most Canadians is still the unemployment line.

In the estimates the minister says that he is looking at adjustment programs. In fact this government has cut funding for the Program for Older Workers' Adjustment. How is that increasing adjustment for Canadians?

The government in these estimates has cut regional economic development. That is certainly not increasing jobs. The government has cut funding for farmers, for young people, for aboriginal peoples, for aboriginal groups, for older workers and for retirees. All these programs provide not only jobs but an infrastructure in a community to support those volunteers.

Having chosen these priorities and yet spending \$5.8 billion on helicopters, will the government stop spending money on attack helicopters and attack unemployment instead? That is where the priority should be.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we do not see how we

can spend \$100 billion over five years and reduce the deficit by \$8 billion or \$10 billion as the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party has suggested. That kind of economic nonsense is laughable.

We are trying to invest in people through enhancements in the training program; \$3.8 billion is being spent on training. We are encouraging the private sector to become involved more in training. We are encouraging the small business sector to create new jobs. We have advanced on an infrastructure program that is not the \$15 billion or \$25 billion program the hon. member has suggested.

I say to the hon. member in all sincerity that the economic program she released last week is laughed at around the world. It does not make economic sense. It certainly does not make fiscal sense.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to me that when a political party brings out a job plan that will create jobs in this country and reduce the deficit, this minister feels it is laughable.

This is a government that has discouraged more Canadians in the employment market and discouraged more Canadians in every region of this country who have lost hope than any other government before it. This minister should be ashamed of what he is setting out.

[Translation]

Even worse, although according to the government these helicopters would be less expensive to maintain, they will cost \$33 million more annually in operating costs than those we have now. Just imagine what the government could do, all the programs it could finance.

Why does the government not drop this crazy helicopter program?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the recipe that the hon. member outlined in her statement last week would result in a bigger deficit, higher inflation, higher interest rates, less investment and fewer jobs created.