

Oral Questions

The Minister of Finance knows by the figures this morning that we have literally hundreds of thousands of highly educated Canadians with post-secondary degrees who are unemployed. There are people with Ph.D.s driving cabs.

The Minister of Finance knows that one of the engines of job creation in this country is small business and tourism. Would he call together the ministers from across the country and territories responsible for small business and tourism to find ways and means of creating jobs in those two critical sectors so people can get to work?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that my hon. friend and his party have discovered tourism and small business. I have to say that this is a very important part of the Canadian economy.

As a result of this, we have through the WD, which would interest him, increased the amount of money that the federal government is going to put into stimulating both small business and tourism.

I have to say though that the NDP government in British Columbia has refused to co-operate with us on the WD money for tourism. We have put forward a tranche of funds and we have asked British Columbia to join us. To date, it is the last province to join us in having a tourism program which would also help small business.

I urge him to take his message to the provincial government in Victoria.

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The unacceptable national unemployment rate of 11.2 per cent pales in comparison to the rate in Atlantic Canada.

In eastern Canada alone there are now 10,000 more people looking for work than there were in April. In my province of Prince Edward Island the unemployment rate is over 19 per cent; in Newfoundland it is over 20 per cent.

Why does the minister refuse to understand that his government's lack of leadership in generating jobs is causing many easterners to lose hope?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): It seems to me that the hon. member is

interested only in scoring political points. Why does she not look at the programs in place in Atlantic Canada?

I was in New Brunswick and announced with Premier McKenna a \$282 million program to help welfare recipients and unemployed Canadians in New Brunswick get off welfare and into productive jobs. We are working with Newfoundland and Labrador, with P.E.I. and Nova Scotia under ACOA and under unemployment insurance programs to try to help those people acquire skills to occupy the new jobs.

We can be concerned about the fact that yes, in a recession the last thing to turn around is unemployment. Looking at the figures for this month, this is happening. It is not a negative sign that over 50,000 people have entered the labour market this month. It is a positive sign. With the proper policies and the fundamentals in place, we can look to much better days.

Ms. Catherine Callbeck (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister. This government is not only willing to leave easterners out to dry, it is also willing to accept the fact that the unemployment rate among women has risen sharply.

In fact, since January, 82,000 women lost their full-time jobs. Canadian women deserve better, Canadian youth deserve better and Canadians in general deserve better from this government.

Why will this government not come forward today with an infrastructure program that could provide hope for Canadians across this country?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in the budget, we are undertaking a number of initiatives via the private sector that will help stimulate the economy in certain key areas, for example, in the transportation sector and airport development. The hon. member is aware that we are actively pursuing the Prince Edward Island fixed-link which would be a very important transportation connection and would also create jobs.

We also indicated we would be exploring with the provinces the possibility of upgrading our national highways system which is part and parcel of a four-year study undertaken by the federal and provincial ministers of transport. These are all issues that are undergoing active consideration.