

1981-82 which saw inflation rise to 13 and 13.5 per cent and interest rates to 22 to 23 per cent.

What is encouraging is that we have developed a plan, a program for recovery based on the reduction of interest rates in relationship to our fight against inflation. Interest rates have come down by 5 percentage points in the last year. Employment is increasing, not decreasing. Consumer and investor confidence and business confidence are improving. Housing starts have improved. Housing sales have improved. Statistics Canada reported that it believes the recession has bottomed out.

There are positive signs that the economy is turning around. It is important that it is turning around in such a way that we will have a durable, sustainable kind of economic growth with price stability, and that is what we are all after.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, the facts from Statistics Canada today clearly indicate that the number of people on unemployment insurance is up considerably in the months of February and March, so I do not know how the minister can say that we are on a clear turnaround.

What is this government going to do in terms of innovative programs to deal with the very serious unemployment problem across the country?

I would like to cite one example. Yesterday Canadian Auto Workers and Chrysler came up with an innovative agreement that encourages investment and creates jobs. This sends a clear message to people who are interested in investing in this country and to investors from within this country that these kinds of initiatives can in fact create jobs here in Canada.

My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Will the government take that positive message here in Canada and abroad and encourage other corporations to enter into the same kind of innovative job creating investments here in Canada?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very constructive nature of the question posed by the leader of the New Democratic Party.

Indeed we should all applaud the agreement that was reached between Chrysler and the Canadian Auto Work-

ers' union. That is precisely the kind of co-operation that we need in working together to deal with the competitiveness issue, to deal with the productivity issue, to deal with the issue of adjustment and restructuring.

It is not a government issue only. It is an issue that all Canadians must face. The Minister of Industry, Science and Technology is in fact on that kind of a mission. He will be introducing a discussion paper which will deal with all the issues as they relate to the competitiveness of Canadian industry both at home and abroad. I welcome the hon. member's support for that, because I think in building that kind of co-operation and that sort of togetherness, we can deal with this issue.

In so far as her earlier comment about February and March statistics is concerned, I would only remind the hon. member that the April figures show a bit of a turnaround. I think the ones that she has referred to are history.

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PORT OF HALIFAX

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Fisheries said that the crisis in the port of Halifax was due to a surplus of shipping space in the north Atlantic and not to government inaction.

Would the Minister of Transport admit that the surplus of shipping space and more competitive freight rates in the United States are what is squeezing Halifax out of business? Will he commit to a reinstatement today of subsidies to the Atlantic ports?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I fully understand the member's concern for the fate of the port of Halifax. She can rest assured that we will do all in our power to make sure that the port of Halifax handles its share of goods in and out of Canada. As a matter of fact, the Minister of State for Transport, who was going to be in Halifax today and tomorrow, has been asked to meet with the port authorities to discuss what can be done on the part of Transport Canada to help them, taking into consideration that in the past the authorities of the Port of Halifax have always been very innovative in finding ways to make sure that the port is used to its full capacity.