

the problem totally, by working together we can improve the situation.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is again directed to the Minister of Finance.

Another crumbling indicator was that in March the number of Torontonians utilizing food banks established a new record from the previous month to over 143,000 people. In fact, in one week six food banks closed because their shelves were suddenly empty.

How can the government refuse to budge from its economic ideology? This is where the problem is. It is not necessarily in transfers, but in putting Canadians back to work. How can it refuse to budge from its economic hard line when the result of a do nothing, stay the course, do not worry approach is institutionalizing poverty in Canada? It not only constitutes an attack on the poor in this country, but also on the working and the middle class families of Canada.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member feels very deeply about the serious situation in the city of Toronto and indeed the situation that is faced by many Canadians throughout the land.

I ask him to consider the fact that if he thinks for one minute that governments can borrow their way out of this difficulty, he would want to reconsider that. All that will do is increase and impose an increasingly heavier tax burden upon the productive sectors of our society and with it the prospect of continuing to add to the national debt and the cost of servicing that debt.

We are trying to address this in a balanced way. The budget that I brought down had a number of initiatives which we believe will help in providing a better environment for job creation, restructuring and modernizing, so that jobs can be created. We expect that over the next five years 1.5 million new jobs will be created.

I realize that that is very little comfort for those on welfare today. But the fact of the matter is, as my colleague has indicated, over \$6.5 billion has been paid to the provinces under the Canada Assistance Plan. For this fiscal year it will be in excess of \$7 billion. The expenditures and the transfers from the federal government are not declining. They are increasing. We are going to do the very best we can in maintaining that

balance, while at the same time keeping our eye on bringing the deficit down as well.

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MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, talking about jobs to the Minister of Finance he will note today that the municipal leaders from across the country are here again to discuss national infrastructure programs.

The provinces and municipalities support a plan to split the cost three ways with the federal government. The long-term deterioration of roads, bridges, waterworks, sewer systems and sewage treatment plants constitutes a threat to the environment, public health, public safety and economic development. This is not irresponsible spending. This is an investment in Canada's competitiveness.

Will this government give the Canadian economy a boost and create the thousands of jobs that were just talked about and invest in Canada's crumbling infrastructure?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the items that has been discussed quite thoroughly at the first ministers' conference.

We have indicated from the federal government's point of view our intention to explore ways and means of improving the national highway system. We have indicated as well that in the area of airport development through the private sector we are going to encourage that kind of development.

We have also indicated that projects like the Prince Edward Island fixed link is certainly something we are promoting and want to encourage. As the hon. member suggested, that will improve our competitiveness and also provide jobs and economic activity. All of these things are being considered I can assure the hon. member.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the small step taken by this government, but we need a much more giant leap with respect to solving these problems.

At the recent first ministers' conference there was an agreement to study. The last thing we need in this country is more study of this problem. There is no need for further delays. These projects are ready to proceed now. Infrastructure expenditures represent costs that