

things are going according to plan. They want to know specifically first of all, does the government recognize that the kinds of projections that are involved in budget documents, and the kinds of assessments that are made in speeches on the state of the Canadian economy do not reflect the human suffering that is going on in the country, when bankruptcies are at very, very high levels across the country, when unemployment is increasing, when housing starts are down and people generally are discouraged. It is not just the fact that they are faced with that we are in a recession, it is the seeming inability of the government to understand the depth of the problem.

I hope, as we pursue this debate today, that we will have provided the Minister of Finance with an opportunity to discuss the interest policy, to tell us why in 1990 we should be leading the way for Americans in showing them where they can invest their money at extremely high levels of interest, why we are killing our export industry. We talk on the one hand about correcting the difficulty with the manufacturers' sales tax, when in fact the high value of the Canadian dollar is doing more damage to Canadian exports than the FST or the MST has ever done, even taking into account that the government has increased the federal sales tax from 9 to 13.5 per cent in the five and half to six years they have been in power.

I hope we will be able to hear from the Minister of Finance today. What Canadians are looking for is first, does the government and the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance accept the fact that we are in a real recession. It is not a question of technical recession. Looking at the number of jobs that we are losing across the country and the increasing rate of unemployment, can we get a clear, categorical statement from the government, through the Minister of Finance, that yes, we are in a recession. Then can we begin to deal with it in the life of that reality.

The difficulty of trying to deal with any problem in Canada as a politician today is a major challenge. We have heard a great deal of what is going on in the other place. I know that the Minister of Finance and other members of government on a regular basis discuss the bills that are before the members of the other place.

Supply

They ask Canadians to try and force the issue to make sure the goods and services tax passes.

When we went across the country with the Standing Committee on Finance of the House of Commons, we met many people who, in various ways, were very calm, logical and rational in their presentations. Others were extremely upset and very aggressive in their rejection of the goods and services tax. I am sure the same experience occurred for members of the Senate when they went across the country and met with Canadians in discussing the goods and services tax.

To put things in perspective, when people are facing a made-in-Canada recession—most of the time we like to have little stickers on things saying, made in Canada, we are proud of it, we have put the red flag on it and we have logos to indicate that particular products are made in Canada. I do not think anyone is very proud of the fact that we have a made-in-Canada recession.

People are frustrated as we enter this recession. Many sectors of the economy and parts of the country have been in a recession for some time. It is not something that happened last week when the Conference Board of Canada came out with its report. I see headlines in the press over the weekend saying: "Racket emanates at anti-GST rally" and noisemakers and so on. Although some people have had some reservations about some of the approaches taken by senators at specific times in their fight against the GST, I believe that in the context of what people have to face in the real world, they understand the frustration of the senators.

On the weekend I had the occasion to speak with literally hundreds of people. Not one person said, "Tell the senators to pass the GST." Some people had some comments about some of the goings on in the other place but no one said, "Make sure when you get back to Ottawa that you tell those people in the other place to pass the goods and services tax." One of the things we have to understand is that the members of the Liberal Party who sit in the Senate are very much aware that what they had done in that place will in fact require that Senate reform take place.

People are focusing on the Senate and need for reform in the Senate. I would hope that a lot of Canadians would focus on the need to reform the institutions of Parliament, including the House of Commons. It is nearly unfathomable that we would sit in this place and