

The hon. member points out that her party would cancel the GST, cancel the free trade agreement, cancel the deal with Mexico—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mulroney: —that they want to go back to the 19th century. They would cancel the future. But we are going to build jobs for the future as long as I am a Canadian.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Since this government deregulated the trucking industry in 1988 without any adjustment provisions whatsoever for the predictable onslaught of American competition, Canadian truckers have become the victims of endless bankruptcies, lost jobs and weakened livelihoods; in fact, they have needed blockades and parliamentary protests just to get the attention of this government.

Will the government finally take immediate action to help our Canadian trucking industry, which is literally dying while this government dithers, and respond to the crisis faced by these Canadian workers and their families who have hit absolute rock bottom?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for his questions, because there is no doubt that the trucking industry is one of the backbones of the transportation industry in this country and therefore it is necessary to build the prosperity that we are all looking for in the years ahead.

My predecessor last year met with the stakeholders in the trucking industry. As a result of that meeting, a task force was formed and that task force, composed of all the stakeholders in the industry, called for seven studies. It was understood at the time among all the partners that the studies would be available a year from that date. The studies are going to be completed. We will get the report from the task force and we will take whatever action is necessary at that time.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are absolutely tired of being studied to death. What they want is some action and some solutions to the problems. That is what they want.

Oral Questions

I will return to the minister, because Canadian truckers are being ridden off the road by unfair American competition. Given that our truckers pay the GST and theirs do not, the U.S. has favourable taxes on depreciation and we do not, they have low tax deals and prices and we do not. They engage in a legal cabotage and we look the other way.

Is the minister finally prepared to address the real root causes facing our trucking industry? Is he prepared to change the rules of the game so that our Canadian truckers and our industry can have a chance to survive? When is he going to stand up for number one?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I can see that the hon. member is dedicated to the trucking industry as much as we are. I would wish that he would be as dedicated to the truth as we are.

One of the items that he just mentioned was that truckers are paying GST. This is just not true, because the truckers are paying the GST but are getting a refund for it. Therefore, it is not the truckers who are paying the GST.

It was precisely to find out the real truth about the problems of the trucking industry that a task force was created last year. We ordered seven studies to make sure that we have the facts about all aspects of the trucking industry. We will take the necessary action when we get the results of these studies.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, Glengarry Transport, the fourth largest trucking company in Canada, and based in my riding, went insolvent. It created a loss of 1,800 jobs in 13 Canadian cities. So far, the company is not going and everything is stopped.

I want to ask the minister not for a study, but specifically: What is he going to do for my constituents and the thousands of other truckers who have lost their jobs or who are about to lose them?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, we always deplore the loss of jobs by any truckers as we do for any other people employed in this country.

The question of a bankruptcy by a private company is something that is beyond the responsibility of the government.