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In the past five years Canada's over-all unemployment rate has dropped from 12 per cent to about 7.4 per cent. This is solid evidence that real progress is being made toward the goal of strengthening our economy.

In spite of recent successes, however, more work has to be done. Canadians from sea to sea have pointed to the federal deficit as a major economic concern. The upcoming federal budget must reflect Canada's concern for the deficit. Responsible and reasonable expenditure restraint must continue. Taxation systems must be reasonable and fair. We must all work toward deficit reduction to ensure that the next generation of Canadians can work and live in a better Canada with a stronger economy.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, events of this week have proven once and for all something I have long suspected. The New Democrats are the only party opposing the GST. We are the only party that Canadians can depend upon to stand up and fight for what Canadians really want.

Eighty per cent of Canadians do not want a goods and services tax. At the same time, the Conservative government seems determined to ram this goods and services tax down the throats of Canadians and we learned this week that the Liberal Party is not going to do very much to stop it.

Why is this? Now we know. Mr. Chrétien, one of the leadership hopefuls, has said on national television this week he really does not know what he would do about the GST. What are the 30 Liberal MPs who support Chrétien supposed to say? The Liberals are not helping us in our campaign to stop the GST because the Liberals do not know what they believe, and they do not know what they will do if they were ever elected.

Let me say again that 80 per cent of Canadians do not want the GST. The Conservatives are not going to listen to them. The Liberals do not know who to listen to. We in the New Democratic Party are going to do everything in this House of Commons that we can legitimately do to fight the GST. We are going to do it in the regions, the communities and the constituencies of Canada and we welcome all the help we can get.

[*Translation*]**THE MINISTRY**

Mr. Gilbert Chartrand (Verdun—Saint-Paul): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely shocked and disappointed by the resignation of the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport because for once we had a minister with a fresh outlook and a challenging year 2000 action plan for Canadian athletes and all Canadians actively engaged in sports activities. I think it is quite discouraging.

But why was he so badly advised? I for one believe the blame rests primarily with the unelected leaders of amateur sports who gave very misleading advice to the minister because this time around they were concerned they would lose control over amateur sports in Canada. They had to deal with a minister who was not afraid to voice his opinion, to work closely with the Canadian people and, on behalf of amateur sports and especially the athletes, to express challenging ideas likely to propel Canada on the international scene.

I would suggest that criticism be aimed, not at the minister for his technical mistake, but indeed at his advisers, those people who preside over amateur sports in Canada. We serve them notice that for once the government is monitoring their performance and will assume full responsibility for amateur sports with a view to providing proper guidance to our athletes and help them to achieve and to carry Canada's colours on the international scene.

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[*English*]**AGRICULTURE**

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Prince Edward—Hastings): Mr. Speaker, Canadian dairy farmers take pride in maintaining the safest products in the world and yet the United States is using sanitary regulations to restrict the entry of Canadian yogurt into the United States.

The Minister of Agriculture told dairy producers in Moncton that Canada was going to start actions against the United States, after the dairy farmers did their homework.

It is now time for the minister and his government to begin their homework by taking inventory of these American non-tariff barriers that are harassing Cana-