

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The debate between the hon. Parliamentary Secretary and the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is a very interesting one, but other members should be given an opportunity to speak.

[English]

In the time remaining, approximately five minutes to the parliamentary secretary, I would like to recognize two members who are seeking the floor. I will first recognize the member for Lisgar—Marquette and we will come back to the member for York—Simcoe.

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the remarks of the hon. member from the Liberal government. I would like to give some constructive criticism.

When the infrastructure program was announced I thought right away it was becoming too political. It was not really for job creation. When I saw a \$27 million grant being made to Quebec City for a convention centre even before the guidelines were laid out I was frustrated with the program.

This is my concern right now. I was just informed by some constituents in Manitoba who talk to me quite regularly on this issue that the provincial government now seems to have control of about 40 per cent of that money designated to Manitoba. It is not really going to go to the communities where these projects are desperately needed. It is becoming a political issue in Manitoba because of the provincial election due there in the next year.

I would like the government to look at this and maybe change some of the guidelines if that is the problem. It will not be infrastructure for the benefit of the taxpayers; it will be infrastructure for the benefit of provincial governments. That worries me a bit. Could the member comment on that, please?

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I would be quite happy to comment on that. As I said, one of the strengths of this program is that it is all three levels of government working together. When projects come forward such as the one in Quebec City that he mentioned it is because that is seen as the priority of the local community for its long term economic development and health.

Similarly, while we have worked out agreements with all the provinces and territories based on exactly the same principles I enunciated, there is flexibility within each province and territory to meet the requirements of that community. That respects the diversity of this country and the different needs across Canada, the different needs of different kinds of communities.

• (1250)

The minister has made it quite clear that members of Parliament have a role to play in this. Not just government members of

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Parliament but all members of Parliament will be consulted about the program and its use in their own communities. All members' views will be sought and taken seriously. I can assure the member of that.

If the member feels there is a problem I urge him to speak to me or the minister responsible for the infrastructure program. If it is truly a problem we will try and do something about it.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I have just a few comments.

I want to congratulate the parliamentary secretary for her very articulate and comprehensive outline of the infrastructure program. I want to reiterate some of the points that she made in her speech to the members in the House.

It is important to note that infrastructure is very important to the economic well-being of this country as well as to the health and the environmental sustainability of our communities. As vice-chair of the parliamentary committee on environment and sustainable development I am very concerned about those issues. The parliamentary secretary was very good in her explanation of how new sewers and things like that can enhance the health and well-being of our communities.

When one takes a look at it in the long term, when one can get rid of some of the problems that may cause illness and problems associated with health as well as environmental pollution, that can make a substantial saving in our deficit.

Mrs. Catterall: Mr. Speaker, the member has just emphasized the point that this is an investment in the long term health, economic and otherwise, of our communities. She is absolutely right. If we allow untreated sewage to be put into our lakes and rivers and to be dumped on our landfill sites we simply end up leaving our children and grandchildren much bigger and much more expensive problems than we have now.

Any member of this House can look around their own community and find perfect examples of where, had problems of contamination been prevented, it would have been far cheaper than trying to clean up those problems after they occurred. I thank her for raising the point.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to participate in this crucial debate, given the current social and economic situation in Canada and Quebec.

First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the hon. member for Mercier who has introduced on behalf of the Official Opposition this motion denouncing the lack of innovation, imagination and vision of this government in terms of job creation, because we must realize the magnitude of this problem in this country.