

suffer too, as will local breweries as their supplies become more expensive.

The elimination of the at and east program will constitute a major blow to an Atlantic economy already reeling from high unemployment, high interest rates and a high dollar. This is just one more attack on Atlantic Canada and reflects the uncaring and callous approach of this Conservative government to Atlantic Canada and to the less well off regions of Canada generally.

We have heard a great deal of the \$130 million which have been set aside for Atlantic Canada in its time of crisis. This \$130 million is merely money which was already set aside for Atlantic Canada prior to the crisis and constitutes no help for that region at all.

It is time the government stopped attacking the less well off regions and the less well off Canadians and started helping them. What Canadians need is a helping hand, not an iron fist. They need a leg up, not a kick in the teeth.

• (1520)

The government should listen to those who care about the regions of Canada, who care about Atlantic Canada and who care about Canadian families. It is well past time that this government started listening and acting on behalf of what ordinary Canadians suggest to it. It should not just follow blindly the agenda of the big business community.

For example, the government could listen to the suggestions of the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission which has already suggested that serious economic consequences for these maritime ports will take place as a result of the removal of the at and east program and will adversely affect the movement of export grain and flour through these ports. In addition, as I have suggested, the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission has indicated that grain elevator operations, port and railway employment and flour milling will all suffer as a result of the cut back in this program.

As a result, the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission proposed certain modifications to the program which would reduce the demand on the federal treasury, would lessen or eliminate distortions and inefficiencies and would maintain the movement of export

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grain and flour through the Atlantic ports. In particular, the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission was concerned to ensure the maintenance of the grain elevators as viable units at Halifax and Saint John, to ensure the maintenance of a commercially viable flour mill in Halifax and to ensure a flow of export grain and flour through the Atlantic ports.

This recommendation was presented to the government. The government did not even respond to it. The government is not listening to those in the region who are suggesting alternatives which can help that region and respond to the government's concerns.

The government should reconsider its approach. It should reconsider its bill. It should pay attention to the advice it gets and take seriously the concerns of the people of Atlantic Canada.

This bill was brought in with no consultation. Those who are affected by this bill did not have the matter discussed with them, and certainly did not suggest to the government any support for this proposal. As I said, it follows on the heels of other major attacks on the economy and social fabric of Atlantic Canada.

One last point which should be brought to bear on this point is that the CP line joining Montreal to Saint John may have to close due to reduced tonnage should this subsidy be removed. This would prevent VIA's Atlantic Limited from plying that route, a VIA Rail line which so many maritimers have fought so hard to keep.

Atlantic Canadians deserve better than this from this government. Atlantic Canadians deserve to be listened to. They deserve programs which help and assist them in their efforts to maintain a viable economy.

Mr. Crosby: Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's remarks and remarks that were previously made in the House.

I hope the member recognizes the position taken by the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission. That position does not in any way support the continuance of the at and east subsidy. Everybody associated with the port of Halifax, with the agricultural industry and all other segments of industry involved with at and east recognizes that it is a poor kind of subsidization, that it does not give assistance to those who should receive