

Supply

For this government, jobs are the priority. Since its very first day in office, the new government began to keep its promises and implement policy initiatives designed to create jobs, to revive the economy, to spur economic growth, all things that Canadians had been deprived of during the last years of the Conservative government.

The February 24 budget we presented to the Canadian public was a continuation of the initiatives the government had begun to put implement. There was the infrastructure program that will create jobs directly, renew the infrastructure across Canada and kick-start the much needed economic growth. In the last budget, the government put the emphasis on small and medium-sized businesses as the engine of the economy, with several initiatives designed to sustain them across Canada, so that they can create jobs.

We also put the emphasis on the electronic and high tech sectors, which in our opinion are other engines of the Canadian economy. We have started to examine several areas of government policy and activity through in-depth reviews of foreign policy, defence and social security, a field I am involved in as chairman of a House committee.

We have taken measures to build up the confidence of Canadians in political and governmental institutions. Canadians have responded, as can be seen in the polls and in the decreased contempt they feel for politicians and the government. These measures have been taken under the guidance of a Prime Minister who is a man of experience, who feels a strong and sincere passion for Canada and the future of Canada, and who sees how this country can become one of the guiding lights of the 21st century.

• (1715)

Quebecers have benefitted from federal programs and initiatives. The recent budget included measures to promote job creation in Quebec. That province was largely spared when severe cuts were made in Atlantic Canada, for whom defence spending is very important. It is not easy for those provinces.

The federal government took part in many joint programs with the Quebec government and Quebec firms to create jobs, particularly in the defence and high technology industries in Montreal, Quebec City and elsewhere.

It seems strange that the official opposition, which wants to take Quebec out of Canada, should always be saying, through this motion and its remarks today, that the federal government does not give enough money to Quebec and does not give enough contracts to Quebec firms. This is ironic and even inconsistent for a party dedicated to Quebec separation.

When the official opposition talks that way, it should think about the benefits for Quebecers of the presence of Quebec in

the Canadian federation, and it should try to co-operate with the government in order to create jobs that will keep the economy going. It should strive to build a better Canada instead of breaking up this great country.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis): Madam Speaker, the member for Cape Breton Highlands—Canso, whom I know well since he is chairman of the human resources committee, of which I am a member, today criticizes the role of the Official Opposition and links it to sovereignty. Before doing that, however, he talked about a few things, and I would like to refresh his memory on certain facts. He said that Quebec was spared by the Budget in terms of cuts.

I would like to ask him, after the many demonstrations made not only by the Official Opposition, but the Government of Quebec as well, if he really believes that the federal government spared Quebec when it closed the Collège militaire royal in Saint-Jean, the only francophone military college.

I will not restart the debate held earlier, but I am still anxiously waiting for the government to take action in the MIL Davie case. There was no response, as we said a little earlier. I do not want to restart the debate, but we had no answer whatever on this subject.

As for the helicopters, the government speedily cancelled the contracts that the Conservatives had made. However, unlike Bill C-22 on Toronto's Pearson Airport, which we are now discussing, there was no compensation.

Formerly, when the federal government withdrew from certain projects, it created a regional development fund, as in the case of Laprade. But in this case, there was nothing of the sort. Yet, the jobs on the line were very high-tech ones.

In this respect, you know, the member should share his concerns with us because his region is having problems with unemployment and fishing. He should himself be worried about the situation. I understand that this afternoon, he is on the other side, he is a member of the government, he does not dare to express his concerns. According to what I heard, I do not think a lot of progress was made in his province, Nova Scotia, since the Liberal Party's election, because unemployment is still very high. Quebecers are preoccupied because they lost 11,000 high-tech jobs. It is up to the government to respond.

• (1720)

We, in the opposition, proposed this debate today because we feel that the conversion from military to civilian use is extremely important. Maybe it is not the most important issue, but it is one of the most important. Therefore, instead of accusing us of debating on the Constitution, the member should stick to today's issue, which is the problem of defence industry conversion.