

*The Address*

combination. Let me talk instead about what these numbers mean.

In the election campaign my colleagues and I in the Reform Party argued strongly about the need to understand the long-term link between fiscal mismanagement and economic recession and decline. We argued against the view that we should create jobs rather than fix the financial problem, not because we oppose creating jobs but because these are not conflicting objectives. They are the same objective.

• (1050)

Countries like companies or households that mismanage their financial affairs do not create jobs. They destroy them. Households, businesses, families and governments that mismanage their affairs do not fulfil dreams. Those who mismanage their affairs watch their dreams slowly slip away.

Many of my generation, young professionals, the backbone of the future of Canada, have left Canada, are leaving Canada or are thinking of leaving Canada because they fear the high taxes and the declining services that this mismanagement has brought about and may worsen in the future.

Let me not preach from the Reform Party policy manual. Let me quote the government itself. For members who have not read it, Canada's Economic Challenges contains a very good summary of our economic and financial situation. It lays out better than I could all the relevant numbers on the deficit and debt and the impact on our economy, such as the fact that it absorbs our domestic savings, increases our foreign indebtedness, worsening our current account, lowering national income, our potential growth, reducing our fiscal flexibility, threatening our social programs, increasing our tax burden, raising real interest costs and decreasing our competitiveness. It is all there.

Those are not short-term problems. They are not caused by the recession. A short spurt in growth or activity will not resolve them. The chapter is illustrated with dozens of statistics.

Why then would the same government that released this book also release the throne speech this week and turn its attention instead to spending priorities and in particular to the much ballyhooed infrastructure program. That is a \$6 billion commitment, \$2 billion sought from this Parliament to kick start the Canadian economy, as if it is possible to do such a thing as kick-start an economy.

On reading the briefing notes for the program it will be noticed there are no fewer than four program objectives and nine related criteria. There are in fact lots of objectives. There are no clear priorities. None of these objectives is new to the program spending that parliaments have passed before. We are therefore led to ask why the government believes that another \$2 billion

would kick start an economy in a way the first \$160 billion of spending this year has been unable to do.

Let us be clear about the magnitudes involved. In the case of Alberta we are talking about \$88 million against an economy of \$70 billion and an infrastructure investment of at least \$1 billion a year. These are hardly kick start kinds of numbers. That is the magnitude and context of the program.

I do not want to quarrel with infrastructure as a priority or even a higher priority than it has been in the past. What I want to do is simply suggest that it will not fulfil the objectives stated by the government and the raised expectations of consumers, taxpayers and investors. It is short-term thinking about jobs and activities that has long-term consequences in terms of employment and output and that has been the past generation as we have seen it.

I ask members, especially government members, to give strong consideration to this before they cast their votes on this matter and on the legislative program that will flow from the throne speech. Members opposite will be held responsible by the public for the performance of the Canadian economy in the next four years.

Possibly the infrastructure program will deliver some short-term benefits and some short-term visibility. But in the long term, by the next election—that at least we will talk about as our long term—the infrastructure program will long be passed and we will be stuck with the bills for it.

I suggest that until the government has contemplated a way to credibly finance these things and to fit these within the \$153 billion spending cap that we suggest it should re-examine these priorities.

I ask government members to give strong consideration to this aspect of fiscal discipline, the subamendment we propose, to support and vote for it and to include it in the speech from the throne. On that basis we would be building a more successful government program, not just from our standpoint but also for the potential of their own re-election in four years.

• (1055)

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Calgary West on his maiden speech in the House of Commons. I know it will be a constructive experience over the next four or five years.

I would like to get right to my question because I know this member by reputation and I know he cares about small and medium sized businesses in this country, especially in his own community and in his own province. I noted that he did not seem