

If the Minister wants a comprehensive list of genuine make-work projects which will really help build up the infrastructure of the nation, I would be pleased to submit it on behalf of my riding as it applies to Nova Scotia, and I am sure my colleagues would also be pleased to do likewise.

Sometimes I am asked, "What would you do if you were in Government to help solve our present economic problems?" The answer to that question can partially be found in the Minister's statement to the House wherein he pointed out that Canada's budgetary revenues stood at \$54.1 billion this year, some 19.1 per cent higher than in 1980-81. This is the figure to aim at when calculating budgetary expenditures, and in times of restraint all expenditures for projects that are not urgently required should be curtailed. For example, we must all ask ourselves whether it is urgently necessary for a Crown corporation to propose the construction of two new museums in Ottawa, an area which has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at this time.

We need sunset laws to eliminate unnecessary programs. We need strict control of the spending and activities of Crown corporations, as indicated by the Auditor General. We must re-establish parliamentary control over public spending, and I believe we should seriously consider letting private industry purchase and operate some of our Crown corporations.

There is a desperate need to eliminate some of the present duplication of Government services. We must ask ourselves whether we really need a federal Minister of Agriculture—and I am not picking on him but he is as good an example as any—and Ministers of Agriculture in each and every Province of Canada. The same question could be asked about other ministerial duplications throughout the nation for, after all, it is the individual Canadian taxpayer who pays for all governments whether they be federal, provincial or municipal. None of the recommendations I have made is a cure-all for our economic ills, but I submit that if they were implemented we would go a long way toward the goal which leads to a balanced budget in Canada.

Finally, this Government does not need to stand alone in its attempts to solve our economic problems. It has been offered much help and assistance by all of Canada's provincial Premiers—help, I might add, which unfortunately has been refused. In late August the annual Premiers' Conference was hosted in Halifax by Nova Scotia's capable Premier, the Hon. John Buchanan. At the conclusion of that Conference an invitation was extended to the Right Hon. Prime Minister to meet with all provincial Premiers in early September. The invitation was declined. They called upon Ottawa to join with the Provinces in developing the appropriate conditions and policies to restore investor and consumer confidence in Canada. They drafted an economic recovery program which called for a change in monetary policy to ensure that Canadian interest rates follow any drop in United States interest rates, for substantial changes in the National Energy Program and FIRA to restore investor confidence, and for a commitment by both the federal and provincial Governments to reduce deficits and to work toward a manageable public debt or freeze on any further federal reductions in Established Programs Financing

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to Provinces for education and hospital care. The latter one is causing untold misery throughout Canada, especially in Atlantic Canada where hospitals have been forced to seal off some of their wings and let beds sit idle, while the sick and needy are unable to get treatment because there is no money to finance the required nurses to look after them.

A request was also made for provincial participation in the GATT meetings on trade and tariffs, plus many other worthwhile proposals. These are all before the Prime Minister. I cannot understand for the life of me why he did not accept the offer. I understand the offer still stands. I urge the Right Hon. Prime Minister to reconsider his stand and to meet with all the Premiers of Canada in a joint effort to resolve our immediate problems.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. This is the first time I have had occasion to address the House in my new responsibilities as Minister responsible for Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

On Wednesday my colleague said that he had been Minister of Finance for some 48 days and that he would not be rushed into action simply for the sake of appearing to act. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) stated that he intended to arrive at decisions which were sensible, constructive and durable. I have been Minister responsible for CMHC for some 30 days, and I know exactly what the Minister of Finance meant.

I should like to say that the economic statement presented by the Minister was in fact sensible, constructive and durable. It addressed in a straightforward way the problems faced by the victims of the recession. It gave the assurance that they will not be abandoned and that the social security system which the Government has put in place will not be dismantled at the very time when it is most needed.

It contained fiscally responsible measures and recognized the private sector as the engine for economic growth, and this is surely true in the field of housing. Also it reaffirmed the need for continued efforts to reduce inflation. These are the critical elements of an effective strategy for national recovery.

In particular I should like to refer to the measures relating to housing and to say that they too are sensible, constructive and durable. On taking on my new responsibilities, my first concern is with the availability of good housing. I am worried about the rate of housing starts. I am concerned about the state of the construction industry. I am also concerned about the ability of Canadians to become home owners and that rental accommodation be made available. Most importantly, I am concerned that low-income families should have good accommodation without having to pay unreasonable proportions of their income. I am deeply concerned about the housing conditions of native Canadians and of low-income families in rural areas as well as those in cities and towns.

In facing up to these challenges I will be building upon a foundation established by my predecessor, the now Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Cosgrove). He held this portfolio at a