

Government Orders

The Minister of Finance, himself having been Minister of Transport on a couple of occasions as well as being the critic for his party for many years, knows how people were looking forward to the national highway program. That program would take the Trans-Canada Highway in particular and bring it up to today's standards. It would take it out of the 1950s and 1960s which a lot of the highway is particularly in New Brunswick and northern Ontario where it is still two lanes.

The ministers of transport of all the provinces and the territories and the federal government have worked hard over the last five years to develop a strategy. The Minister of Finance could have said yes to that strategy. It was not perfect but it was there. We knew what the costs were.

There was an agreed-upon standard of four lanes that could have assisted in highway safety. It could have assisted in the rebuilding of the economies of a number of areas in the country, not just by the construction jobs which would have been created. There would be economic spin-offs to communities such as Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie or Sudbury, by having much better highways for commerce to travel on. The government had that opportunity. They were ready but it failed to act.

There is another area where the government has not even touched ever since the winter works program was killed by the Liberals a number of years ago. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities, the NDP and the Liberals have been asking for a municipal infrastructure program.

Mrs. Finestone: What did we kill? We totally rebuilt them.

Mr. Angus: What you killed was the winter works program that used to provide money to cities to rebuild themselves.

The government had the opportunity to provide funds which not only would have rebuilt the cities, but more important would also have provided the assistance to municipalities to provide the needed sewage treatment facilities. Not just in Victoria, which has been in the news lately, not just in Thunder Bay, which only has primary

sewage, but in the province of Quebec where a lot of the sewage goes into the St. Lawrence River untreated.

We could have invested in the environment as well as investing in jobs. But this government failed to respond.

Where the government did respond was with cuts. At a time when for the last five or six years, we have been concerned about the viability of our farmers in western Canada what does this government do? It cuts the Western Grain Transportation Act by somewhere around \$70 to \$80 million.

That grain will still have to be moved, whether it is to Vancouver or Prince Rupert or Churchill or Thunder Bay, and through Thunder Bay down the seaway. Who is going to pick up the extra cost? The people who can least afford it, the farmers who are already hurting. It probably means that more farmers are going to go out of business. I think that is a real shame.

The other decision was to freeze the wages of public employees for the next two years, for another two years in addition to the year that we have now. While everybody loves to bash the people who work for the government, we forget that those people are consumers.

Those people do not just live here in Ottawa, although a lot of them do. They live in cities and towns and villages throughout this country. They shop at the corner store. They shop at the supermarket. They shop at the hardware store. If their consumption power is eroded because this government has frozen their wages, that means that there is going to be less money circulating back into the community.

My sense is that for every dollar we spend employing people, that much and more comes back to the treasury.

Most of these changes are self-defeating. Look at the cuts to FEDNOR, an excellent program in northern Ontario which provides assistance to existing businesses. It provides assistance to new businesses and has just been renewed after a comprehensive review. What does this government do? It cuts the funds that are available to stimulate the economy in northern Ontario, as it has done with Atlantic Canada and the Western Opportunities Agency. These cuts are counter-productive.