

Government Orders

after participant put forth ideas and suggestions for new job opportunities in tourism, health, education and real estate. The opportunities are enormous.

I felt a similar level of enthusiasm recently in Pinawa, Manitoba. I know a number of my constituents are moving forward in developing new initiatives for the information highway. Late last week at a Manitoba Trucking Association meeting to which I was invited there was talk of what happens where the freight highway meets the information highway.

[Translation]

Late last week, we discussed with members of the Société franco-manitobaine the incredible potential of a Trans Canada French language information network, in which Quebec would have a key role, of course, and which would link all francophone communities across Canada.

In my own riding, I could feel the enthusiasm of people who would love to belong to such a network, when I mentioned it in Saint-Claude, Saint-Laurent, Saint-Eustache, Fannystelle and La Salle. These communities will finally have access to the tools they need to deal in French with the problems they face regarding learning, health care and business, as well as to other opportunities which otherwise would not have been available to them.

[English]

We shall shortly be setting up an advisory council to provide advice on our Canadian strategy for the information highway. We are still open to suggestions for names for this council and those suggestions can be imaginative.

I have even made one suggestion myself, remembering the words of our Prime Minister when campaigning in Shawinigan. Il a dit: "Je vais faire mon possible". I will do my best. I have suggested that perhaps the council could be called the council of the possible, le conseil du possible, transforming the world of dreams into the realm of the achievable, for that is what our government is about: helping Canadians to start dreaming of the possibilities of the information age and then working in partnership with other Canadians from coast to coast to turn these dreams into reality.

Finally let me reiterate my government's commitment as laid out consistently in our election platform, the throne speech, the budget and the estimates. We will work with Canadians to develop a more innovative economy. We will use and harness the benefits of science and technology to create new job opportunities, to help Canadians develop the skills to find meaningful work, and to enrich the lives of all Canadians whatever riding they may live in. Whether in Burin—St. George's, Madawaska—Victoria, Hochelaga—Maisonneuve or my own community

of Portage—Interlake, we are about transforming Canada through science, technology, innovation and creating jobs. That is what our goal is and we are well on the way.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague and, at a time when the deficit and the debt are so much talked about, I am shocked and puzzled that all they are talking about is consultation. At various times, we were told that Canadians would be consulted on this or that.

• (1555)

As far as I am concerned, and especially with regard to the budget and its preparation, there was too much consultation; and yet, unions, senior citizens, the unemployed complained that indeed they were consulted but that the Liberals only took what they liked.

My question to my colleague has to do with the fact that every year the Auditor General makes a series of recommendations and as he said himself, as a general conclusion to his report, that there are no controls and that his recommendations are not followed. Would it not be better to stop travelling from coast to coast, given the cost of such an exercise, and instead focus on implementing the Auditor General's recommendations?

[English]

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and concern. We are going to proceed in two fashions. On one hand it is important to consult Canadians from coast to coast. On the other hand it is important to listen to people like the Auditor General and to take a look at how the federal government works and spends at the moment.

We have a global science and technology expenditure in the federal government at the moment of about \$6 billion which when including tax expenditures reaches a total of about \$7 billion. It is important even as we proceed to look at how we can develop an innovative economy, how we can use the principles of leverage, and how we can look at outcomes of government programs. It is also important to review how we are making our current expenditures to make sure they are up to date and are the most effective they can be.

Even though we have committed very substantially in the budget to research and to new dollars for research, for innovation, for a Canadian technology network, for a Canadian investment fund, for dollars to put together an engineers' program and a variety of other contributions and initiatives, we intend to review how we are currently spending those dollars that go toward science and technology across the broad framework of departments.