

When I attended the job summit last week in Detroit where the seven major industrial countries were brought together, we talked about the fact that in those seven countries alone there were over 30 million people unemployed and the number is growing.

In Europe there has not been any job creation or any growth at all for the past year or two. In the United States there is job creation but it is low level jobs, part time jobs, insecure jobs at a wage that is not reasonable to live on.

The Canadian answer is to find a balance somewhere between the two. We must make sure there is growth and job creation, that we stimulate the economy, that we provide a boost in the private sector to give a new sense of momentum to the broad base of job creation that the private sector must provide. At the same time we must recognize that there are fundamental changes going on in the labour market, that it is not simply good enough to have a job at a minimum wage if that minimum wage is below the poverty line. It is not good enough to say to workers that they can have a 20-hour part time job if there are no benefits attached.

Those are the kinds of questions we are wrestling with. Unfortunately members, particularly those in the Bloc Quebecois, do not want to face those issues. Their representative on the parliamentary committee refuses to deal with the fact that there must be some change. Instead they go out, organize a demonstration and say to keep things the way they are. If we stay with the status quo then the jobs will not be there, the income will not be there, and the opportunity will not be there.

When this government is asked where is our vision, our vision is to undertake one of the largest, most comprehensive attacks on the question of unemployment ever seen in this country. We have initiated on a number of fronts a broad based employment strategy.

We have already heard some of the measures that have been brought forward today. There is the infrastructure program which by estimates could create 60,000 to 70,000 jobs. This is a way of providing a catalyst to get a spark into the economy. Now that we are beginning to grow at a level of 3 per cent a year there has to be a little bit of an electric shock treatment to get people hiring again. The infrastructure program should not be measured simply in the numbers of jobs directly created but also what it does to send a signal that begins to say to Canadians that we can start doing things again.

I must say when I listen to members of the Reform Party or the member for Mercier say it is a waste of money it seems to me those members do not really quite understand what it is all about. It is not a waste of money if you invest in better roads, better transportation and better infrastructure because that

Supply

creates productivity. It creates the ability to generate more wealth.

If you allow your infrastructure to deteriorate, if you have too many potholes in the roads, if you cannot move information along an electronic highway or if you cannot begin to rebuild your schools and universities, then you will not grow.

We may argue about spending the money. It may be asked who is going to invest in a new road system. Is an oil company going to invest in new roads? Is the bank going to invest in a new training college? Are they likely? That is the responsibility of the public sector. It is the responsibility of government. That is why we have taken on that responsibility.

• (1330)

I hear members opposite say that it is a waste of money. That simply indicates to me they are not serious about the issue. They are not really looking at a growth strategy or an employment strategy. They are caught up as the apostles of rigidity or demagoguery, as the editorialist in *La Presse* said.

We introduced a number of measures in the budget. The infrastructure program was one. There is significant support for small businesses because the records show that is where jobs will come from. They will become the engine of job creation if we give them the right incentive or the right signal.

I find incredible the ignorance of members opposite who have criticized our efforts to relieve small business of the payroll burden in order to create jobs.

[Translation]

I find the Bloc Quebecois' position incredible. They are against efforts to reduce UI premium rates which will have a positive impact on small business.

Here is a good example to illustrate my point. Take a small business with 100 workers. As a result of this initiative or plan to reduce UI premium rates, this business will save \$30,000. That is enough to hire another worker, one more employee.

[English]

How can we argue against a measure clearly designed to say to small businesses that by bringing down their cost structure, by giving them better cash flow and by reducing some of the burden placed upon them they will be given the incentive to go out and hire people?

I met a week or so ago with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business which represents hundreds of thousands of small businesses across the country. They said that was one of the best things any government had done because it began to say to them that we would rely upon them. They said that their membership would now take up the challenge because we have taken the initiative to show we care.