

*Supply**[Translation]*

**Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi):** Madam Speaker, again, in his speech the hon. member referred to this famous infrastructure program. Let me tell you that this program which, according to government members, should solve the unemployment problem in Canada, is in my opinion simply a way to shift the deficit burden to the provinces.

• (1550)

The deficit burden is and will continue to be off loaded on the municipalities since—and I have the figure to prove it—several municipalities in my riding, before they can participate in this infrastructure program, will have to invest an amount about equal to their federal subsidies.

Let me also point out that municipalities willing to participate in this infrastructure program but unable to afford it will have to increase their debt load. Who will pay for this? It is always the same taxpayer who must pay, whether the money comes from the federal, provincial, or municipal government.

I would like to hear his opinion on the money that Canadian taxpayers will have to spend on the infrastructure program, without solving the unemployment problem in Canada and Quebec.

*[English]*

**Mr. Shepherd:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Basically he is quite right. There is only one taxpayer in Canada. The question is how to best utilize our economic resources so that we create employment. The infrastructure spending program, as I just mentioned, has an expansionary effect. In other words as people go back to work they start paying taxes and reducing the deficit. Clearly we cannot continue with such high levels of unemployment. The real way to reduce our debt is to get a lot of people back to work.

I am always amazed hon. members to my left invariably talk about the federal deficit as if it were some kind of unusual phenomenon of the Canadian federalist system. The province of Quebec has a debt. The province of Ontario has a debt. France has a debt. The United Kingdom has a debt. There is nothing unique about the federal government deficit. They all have debt. The problem is that we have to deal with it.

Trying to turn this whole system on its head and blaming the federal government for the fact that we have to pay interest on our federal debt is not a realistic argument.

**Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke):** Madam Speaker, with regard to the debt and the infrastructure program, has the hon. member considered the whole concept of the amount of our debt and what we should do with regard to it?

Unemployment is a direct result of overtaxation. Canadian consumers have less disposable income and consequently companies have more expensive products with fewer people trying to buy them. The infrastructure program should be dealt with as an infrastructure program and nothing else. It does not create any permanent jobs. It increases government debt.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Madam Speaker, I will give the hon. member a brief example. The erection of a building will create technological innovation for my riding. I do not believe once the building goes up the function that goes on there will suddenly not have an ongoing factor. It is just the reverse. I believe infrastructure spending will continue.

By the way, why do we not talk about Japan? Japan has a surplus and it still has unemployment.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides):** Madam Speaker, I am always keenly interested in taking part in a debate when the subject is job creation. The subject becomes all the more stimulating when we tack on the words “concrete measure” and the mandatory “urgent”. Concrete and urgent action. That is what hundreds of thousands of unemployed people are expecting. It is absolutely essential that these words be reflected in the government’s day-to-day initiatives. The ministers who have the means to improve the horrendous job situation quickly and efficiently have to realize that when the will to introduce concrete and urgent measures is lacking, the government is condemning hundreds of thousands of unemployed people to harsh, intolerable living conditions.

• (1555)

The extent of the unemployment situation has harmful consequences and deeply affects our social fabric. Unemployed persons, along with their families and children, quickly find themselves living in hellish conditions, without adequate financial resources. Day-to-day survival becomes a problem. Tensions mount and the pressure increases as the unemployed scramble to meet basic needs. Many households experience crises, dramas and break-ups.

Intolerable living conditions brought on by unemployment affect the mental and physical health of those involved. In the long term, significant social costs are incurred and it is we who ultimately must pick up the tab. These things are happening in every one of our ridings and the situation is deteriorating. Our social fabric is unravelling and the public’s anger is simmering. The Prime Minister can say what he likes but the way he was welcomed last week is proof that the public is fed up with pious wishes and nice speeches.

The people no longer believe in promises. They want action to get them back into the labour force quickly. If the members opposite fail to understand the message and to respond quickly