

**Senator Roberge:** Honourable senators, I have a supplementary question on Quebec, where the figures are even more disturbing. In November 2,000 jobs were lost. Compared to one year ago, employment is up by only 2,000 jobs. Eleven per cent of the labour force is without work, and for young people, the rate is 18.7 per cent. In the last 12 months, 25,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared in Quebec. In view of those figures, is the government prepared to take new measures to deal with the continuing problem of high unemployment, both in Quebec and the rest of Canada?

**Senator Fairbairn:** The government is constantly attempting to act in one particular area of which this house is well aware, and that is our economic situation generally, including the control of our deficit, and the keeping down of our interest rates. One of the best ways of increasing jobs for Canadians, and for young Canadians in particular, is to remain very firm on the targets we have outlined.

• (1450)

The question of youth employment, and the entry of young people into the job market, is deeply disturbing. As my honourable friend is probably aware, over recent months special programs have been introduced with a view to training young people for the job market so that they can gain the kind of experience that will permit them to enter and prosper in that market. I am sure continued efforts will be made along that line.

I know when my honourable friend reads the statistics that are in his possession, any words that I could say to him would not be sufficient. However, the fundamental answer I will give him is that, yes, this situation is of incredible concern to the Canadian government. We will be working in every way we can to alleviate this situation, and give our young people the best opportunity to acquire the experience and the background to enable them to enter the job market.

[Translation]

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### GOODS AND SERVICES TAX—STATUS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard:** Honourable senators, I have two questions. The first one is easy. It is my way of sympathizing with the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I am referring to the difficulty she had in responding to the previous question. She quoted two-year-old statistics. She mentioned the job increases of two years ago. She quoted percentages. The fact is that it is very difficult for the government to explain its inaction and the results of its inaction. The measures she mentioned earlier will make it easier for her to provide answers the next time questions dealing with unemployment and employment statistics are put to her. That was my preamble.

A Liberal Party propaganda document was released last week during a Liberal fund-raising dinner. It outlines the policy achievements of the Liberal Party. It did not, however, say anything about following up on the Liberal Party of Canada's promise to eliminate the GST.

My question is this: Can the Leader of the Government report on the status of negotiations between her government and the provinces that could lead, if not to the elimination of the GST, at least to a major change in this tax?

[English]

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, as I have said before in this house, the Minister of Finance has been engaged in such negotiations over a period of time, and his discussions with the provinces on the subject of the GST and its harmonization are a continuing priority. He is still hard at it.

**Senator Simard:** Do you suppose it will take less than two years?

**Senator Fairbairn:** I would say to my honourable friend that it might take a little bit of time and a great deal of patience. The Minister of Finance is determined that he will achieve his goals on this particular and very thorny issue, and that he will take the time to get it right. That is what he is attempting to do.

### GOODS AND SERVICES TAX— TIMING OF RESIGNATION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

**Hon. Jean-Maurice Simard:** By way of supplementary, it has been 778 days since Sheila Copps, the Deputy Prime Minister, made the following statement:

I have already said personally and directly that if the GST is not abolished I'll resign. I don't know how clear you can get. I think you gotta be accountable for the things that you say you're going to do, and you have to deliver on them.

Given that the Liberal government has already broken its promise to Canadians to abolish the GST, when can we expect the Deputy Prime Minister to deliver on her personal commitment to resign? To put it another way, if she will not resign, will Mr. Chrétien undertake to fire her?

**Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, I wish to assure my honourable friend that the Minister of Finance is pursuing the question of replacing the GST. He indicates to me that there has been some progress on that issue. That is very encouraging.

I am sure that the Minister of Finance would wish me to assure my honourable friend as well that he will be acting in such a way that no thought need be given of the Deputy Prime Minister having to resign; we will all be celebrating the fulfilment of our goal.