

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

## IMPROVEMENT IN CHAMBER LIGHTING

**Madam Speaker:** I am sure Hon. Members have noticed that, thanks to advice received from our experts, the Chamber is much more comfortable. The lights have been equipped with flare-control barrels, because it was the glare rather than the intensity of the lights that was causing the problem. Those who are sitting in the last rows still have a shadow on their faces, but equipment will be here and installed within a couple of weeks and they will look as nice as the rest of us in the Chamber.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## SPECIAL RECOVERY CAPITAL PROJECTS PROGRAM

## LEVEL OF SPENDING IN 1983

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta):** Madam Speaker, I hope that perhaps some of the Ministers can shed some light on the important problems facing the country. My question is addressed to the Minister of State for Economic Development who knows that the Special Recovery Fund spending for 1983 is now projected to be \$245 million less than was originally promised by the Minister of Finance in his April 19 budget. This means at least 15,000 less meaningful jobs for the balance of the coming year will be created under this program than originally promised. This cutback contradicts the Minister's undertaking to fast-track these projects in view of the unprecedented hardship facing unemployed Canadians at this time.

Why has the Minister allowed these much needed jobs to disappear into thin air? Can he not hold his own against the Minister of Finance to ensure that he meets his commitments to unemployed Canadians? How many new jobs have been created in the past six months as a consequence of this program?

**Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology):** Madam Speaker, the Special Recovery Capital Projects Program was designed to spend \$2.4 billion—

**Mr. Crosbie:** Over a hundred years.

**Mr. Johnston:**—on economic infrastructure programs in almost every part of the country; in towns, hamlets, large cities and rural areas. The projects were selected on the basis of those that had already been planned by Departments for some time in this decade. The purpose was to move them forward so as to put economic infrastructure in place during a period when obviously the investment intentions of the private sector

## Oral Questions

had been much less than one would have liked them to have been. That situation, I might add, has unfortunately continued.

At the time of the budget the Minister of Finance said that 60 per cent of the funds would be expended within the next two years and the projects would start within a six-month period if they were put on a fast track. They have been put on a fast track. There is a special board operating. There is a secretariat reporting to that board. There is a program management advisory group which is helping Departments to ensure that these projects are brought in on time and within budget. Hon. Members know that when we perceive capital projects of this kind that there is a preliminary project approval.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Answers should be short, as should questions.

## USE OF FUNDS

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta):** Madam Speaker, it is important to know to what purpose these funds are being put. Hopefully they will be used for the creation of long-term permanent jobs as an element of the Minister's economic development responsibilities. Why has the Government been so secretive about the use to which the SRF funds are being put? Will the Minister confirm that this past summer details of the SRF project applications and of the successful projects were given to all Liberal Members of Parliament in a loose-leaf binder, and that those details to date have not been shared with other Members of this House?

**Hon. Donald J. Johnston (Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology):** Madam Speaker, I am not aware that they have been given to Liberal Members of Parliament over the summer. I can assure Hon. Members that I am prepared to make all that information available to any Member of this House. I thought much of it had been made available. All of these projects have been subject to press communiques and detailed briefings. They have been available to Members on request. I can assure the Hon. Member that I will be more than pleased to supply him with any briefing material that will be of help to him in analyzing these projects. As he said, they do indeed put in place a much needed economic infrastructure and have provided a major incentive to the private sector also to get on board and invest.

● (1420)

I also think that it has been very encouraging for us to see these projects developing, and the jobs that they are creating. In the long term, Madam Speaker, each one of these projects will make a significant contribution to economic recovery by providing more jobs in future.