

tries. Our capacity to create jobs will keep eroding, and the government is very much aware of the situation.

Recently, when questioned by my colleague, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, the Minister of Industry was rather smug and cynical. He said that the federal government already has all the tools needed to promote conversion and that the existing programs were enough to help them fill their mandate. Is this the new tactic the Liberals are going to use?

The Minister of Industry probably confused the support provided to military production within the DIPP program with a conversion program that the government has yet to develop.

The Minister of Industry should, as soon as possible, review the existing programs. He would notice a difference between what he thinks is out there and the conversion program we are proposing.

By the way, I urge my colleagues opposite to read the statement released, on March 26, 1993, by the office of the then leader of the opposition, now the Prime Minister of Canada.

With the help of the current Minister of Human Resources Development and others, they came up with these proposals, while they were sitting in the opposition. People say life is easier when you are in the opposition, but still, if you are serious, when you are in office you try to do what you said you would do. At the time, the government promised Canadians jobs and now all it is talking about is the deficit. It was the Conservatives who talked about the deficit during the election campaign, not the Liberals. The Liberals promised us jobs. What happened?

The Liberal government has fallen into the trap. Caught without any conversion policy, the government must, once again, trust the market forces. Can you imagine? They keep telling us: "Wait and see. Wait and see." That is exactly what we are doing. We are waiting.

For its part, the Bloc Quebecois firmly believes that the government must take initiatives that can provide jobs for our fellow citizens.

A plan to encourage manufacturers of military equipment to move away from this type of production and export and onto other fields. A well-defined strategy is the key to success for the conversion of high-technology defence industries to civilian production.

Defence industries are a pillar of the high-technology, research and development sector, and our competitiveness and our future depend in part on high technology. That is very important.

A strong industrial fabric is essential to economic prosperity and job creation. High technology offers high-paying jobs and,

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furthermore, it uses our natural resources as well as products and services from our enterprises.

I want to enunciate the three main recommendations of the strategy we advocate. First, the government should create a conversion fund as part of its comprehensive industrial conversion strategy.

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The main mission of this fund would be to improve and add to the assistance provided within existing programs, with the objective of ensuring defence facilities and businesses an adequate and long-term support in their conversion and diversification undertakings.

Second, the government will have to create conversion advisory committees at local and regional levels. Finally, the government will have to form an independent committee to examine the different existing programs that could be used.

Needless to say that this strategy must be aimed first and foremost at completely reforming the DIPP.

The federal government must assume a part of the responsibilities. When you are elected, you must assume responsibility for these businesses' dependency towards arms production.

My intervention today indicates well that we will continue our representations, and I hope that the federal government will respond as soon as possible to the legitimate expectations of businesses from Quebec and Canada.

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to know that the member opposite has read our red book and is now aware of this government's priority which is job creation.

It is what we have been trying to achieve over the last six months, since we came to power. I think we have been quite successful.

Not to mention all the programs we have created, the infrastructure program has been implemented to help the small and medium-sized businesses that need our support.

I also want to stress that the Minister of National Defence has stated that the whole defence policy is now under review, including the industries that need to diversify their activities and produce other goods than nuclear equipment. We all agree that Canadians do not want any more production in that area.

The member mentioned that between 1990 and 1994 there has been a great number of layoffs. Why have we been elected? Because the previous government did not have a job creation program. Nor did it have a Canadian vision for this country. There has been a problem in the area of job creation. We have been elected on that platform. Job creation is in the red book.