

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees in principle with the infrastructure program, but we do not agree with the calculations done for the years 1991 and 1992. We support the rest of the infrastructure program and we agree that municipalities should have this kind of program.

[English]

Hon. Jon Gerrard (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development)): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak today on Bill C-14, the borrowing authority bill to implement the budgetary measures.

In this, my first speech in this Chamber, I would like to begin by thanking the people of my riding of Portage—Interlake for their support and their confidence in me.

From Long Point, a finger-like extension which juts out into the north end of Lake Winnipeg, jusqu'à l'usine de beurre de St. Claude; from Denbeigh Point on Lake Winnipegosis past Fairford, Ashern, St. Laurent to Winnipeg Beach, Stony Mountain on to La Salle and Domain, this is my constituency of Portage—Interlake, Manitoba.

● (1540)

In some ways it is a microcosm of the problems and of the opportunities that exist today in our country. There are large commercial fisheries on Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba. The fisheries, like those on the east coast, are having difficulty at the moment.

Last year we had a very wet summer and our farmers experienced serious difficulties, many of them with fusarium head blight infection. In spite of these difficulties there are many positives such as beautiful scenic spots, some high quality soils, good pasture for cattle, the creative imaginations of local leaders who have produced the Interlake interactive television network, perhaps the most advanced distance interactive network for high schools in Canada.

Let us face facts. For 60 years for much of this region large numbers of young people have been moving away because we have not done enough to create job opportunities and we have not done enough to develop an environment which allows the local entrepreneurial spirit to develop new and diversified businesses.

For those who live in the 11 First Nations communities there are staggeringly high effective levels of unemployment; 60 per cent to 90 per cent plus in most of the communities.

It is time for change. The budget and the estimates have started that change, a change from the reliance on the old economy to the development of the new.

Today I want to speak specifically about the role of science, technology, research and development in the promotion of the new economy. As outlined in the budget and the estimates, our government has put considerable emphasis on this area. Because of considerable fiscal restrictions we have had to do less than we might otherwise have wanted to do in supporting some specific projects, the space station or KAON, for example.

In our approach to science, technology, research and development we have laid out our plans within the context of the philosophy embodied in the Liberal election platform, "Creating Opportunities", our red book:

"First, by stressing the notion of partnership with all sectors of society we think we can re-organize our total national resources, public and private, not only to be more efficient but to take advantage of strategic economic and social opportunities that can only be realized when all of us are working together.

Second, we wish to focus our efforts on leverage points to enable the impact of federal efforts to be as large as possible, particularly in times of tight fiscal resources.

Third, if we want to have a country that works we have to measure whether specific government programs actually deliver results over time. Whether it is in health care or regional development, it is important to measure the long term outcomes and consequences of our policies and our programs. That is why we have placed so much emphasis on evaluation, innovation and finding best practices".

Over the course of the next several months our government will be undertaking a series of new federal initiatives in science, technology, research and development. We will be consulting with Canadians over the course of this period as we develop these initiatives, as we review the current federal spending in science and technology.

A primary aim of our research and development approach will be to lay the foundation for the generation of both short term and long term wealth.

[Translation]

One of the main objectives of our approach to research and development is to do the necessary groundwork to attract more research to Canada, both in the long and short term.

[English]

We have an urgent need to find solutions to present high unemployment. We need to emphasize research and develop-