

Oral Questions

[Translation]

That is 74,000 jobs in Quebec alone. We are not satisfied. We tried to do something in the first six months. We presented the Budget, we have the infrastructure program, and we are trying to do better than that.

The good thing though, if you can look at these statistics in a positive light, is that Canadians and Quebecers are now starting to look for a job because they feel better about the economy as a whole. That is why 65,000 more people have joined the labour force this month when they realized that there was work to be had.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot): Mr. Speaker, with rising unemployment rates and the arrival, in April, of 66,000 new workers on the job market, does the Deputy Prime Minister not agree that the first six months of Liberal government are a failure, a deplorable and appalling failure when it comes to job creation?

• (1120)

[English]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, it has not been a failure. In fact since the month of February, we have created 115,000 jobs. We do not think enough has been done but we do feel that with the signing of the infrastructure programs and with the budget of the Minister of Finance, we are on the right track.

This month 65,000 Canadians thought that the job prospects were getting good enough that they decided to get back into the market. We see consumer confidence on the rise. We see the sale of houses up over 30 per cent.

We are on the right track but we are not going to solve the problems in six short months. We need more time and we need continued consumer confidence, something that we see as the bright light at the end of a very long tunnel for a lot of unemployed people.

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[Translation]

DEFENCE INDUSTRIES

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. It is said in the Liberal Party's red book that a Liberal government will implement a conversion program to transform defence industries into civilian ones. However, the Minister of Industry quite surprisingly said yesterday that the government will not invest in such a conversion. In that sector, more than 10,000 high-technology jobs have disappeared since 1988.

How can the Deputy Prime Minister, who would do me honour if she would listen to my question, how can she reconcile the commitment of her party and the amazing declaration of the Minister of Industry who said during debate yesterday that it is the responsibility of the management and shareholders of those companies to solve their own problems?

[English]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is only quoting part of what the Minister of Industry said yesterday in the debate.

He did say that we would want to look to industry to make sure all of its strategic plans were being redesigned and reinvented in light of a very tough fiscal framework. He also said that in the budget we were redesigning DIPP so there would be less giving of cheques and grants but more of a situation where there would be loans for those industries that qualified and ones that were especially sensitive to conversion to peacetime activity.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve): Mr. Speaker, before I address my supplementary to the Minister of Finance who, I can tell, is dying to participate in this debate, I would like to mention to my hon. colleague that one of the headlines in this morning's papers said: "Ottawa will not finance the conversion of defence industries".

The Speaker: Order please! Members are not to show papers or documents of any kind during question period. The member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve will put his question.

Mr. Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance how he can accept such a turnabout on the part of his colleague the Minister of Industry when he knows perfectly well that if nothing is done in a very near future, thousands of jobs will be lost in the defence industry. Does he accept the declaration, does he agree with the Minister of Industry's statement?

[English]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not seem to have understood the point I was making in my first answer.

We are working very hard to assist corporations which are in the process of conversion. It is just that the approach and the design of DIPP is going to be different from what it was in the past. Part of that has to do with the fact that we have a very tough fiscal framework within which we are dealing.

The hon. member should also know there are many examples of good solid success stories. People with their own expertise are using other resources like the Export Development Corporation and the banks which have been more progressive in the last little while as well as enhanced marketing. These are all new approaches that help bridge this period of conversion.