

Oral Questions

December, we know that the Prime Minister has failed totally on the GATT issue. Can he tell us today how he will change his negotiating policy to give back some hope to farmers across Canada who now believe that they will lose their livelihood?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the hon. member is referring to when she makes that outrageous statement.

What the Prime Minister has done on a consistent basis, whether it is in meeting with the farm leaders and expressing his solid commitment behind their position or in statements he has made in meetings with President Delors of the European Community, President Bush, President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Lubbers at the time when he was the head of the European commission, is stated the position of the Government of Canada, that we are in support of the strengthening and the clarification of article XI because that is the best way that we can support the supply managed system that is so important to our producing farmers.

That is the position of the government and that is the position the Prime Minister has consistently stated.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of state.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities again today, as it has for the past four years, called on this government to invest in this competitive Canadian infrastructure. I might add that not one province, not one municipality, has refused to participate in the shared-cost infrastructure program.

The projects are ready and they can be implemented in 30 days. It is not going to have an effect on the deficit; it is deficit neutral. It will save on the unemployment insurance. It will save on welfare costs. It will rejuvenate the economy and create thousands of jobs.

When will this government stop making excuses and start investing in Canadians?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Liberals come up with this revolution, this great new policy.

I believe back in 1981 or 1982, or maybe a little earlier, the federal government under the Liberals participated in municipal infrastructure programs. They were the ones who cancelled them because they said they did not serve a useful purpose.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): Mr. Speaker, isn't it interesting that this minister thinks creating jobs is revolutionary?

This program has the backing of economists, provinces, municipalities and the private sector, including the chairman of the Bank of Montreal who said that helping Canadians without work made good business sense. John Redfern, chairman of Lafarge Canada Inc., said: "An efficient infrastructure is necessary in order to maintain a strong economy".

I ask the minister again: Why won't this government act now and introduce a program that will strengthen the Canadian economy?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of debate. I would say to the hon. member that in bringing in a program like this we are not creating jobs. We are making work. They are not meaningful jobs. They are not long-lasting jobs. They are not jobs that will contribute to the economy in the long run.

That is our goal. That is what we want to do and I think that is what people want. They want full-time meaningful work, not a handout for a few months' work.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister.

Indicators continue to show that Canadians have a lack of confidence in the Canadian economy. This week 70 per cent of Canadians polled show that they did not even have the confidence to make a major purchase. No confidence means no jobs. No jobs mean over three million Canadians unemployed and a \$30 billion expenditure by taxpayers to support unemployment.