



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT • VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 13

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## HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Unemployment Levels

Question by:

The Honourable Claudette Tardif

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

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### HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

#### UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS

**Hon. Claudette Tardif (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Today we find ourselves teetering on the edge of what may or may not be another global recession. Europe is in crisis. In the U.S., a burgeoning debt and a massive operating deficit have sent the markets haywire. Everywhere we see red flags.

Across Canada, unemployment is at unsustainable levels. In Abbotsford, it is above 8 per cent. In Windsor, Toronto and Montreal, it is the same or higher. In Saint John, they are struggling. In places like Peterborough, Ontario, they have reached a crisis point with 11 per cent unemployment.

As I mentioned, global economic indicators suggest things may get worse before they get better. To imagine that Canada would remain immune to further damage in this worldwide economic context is naive at best.

I ask the Leader of the Government this: Has her government recognized that this issue is one of the real priorities of Canadians? What is the government's plan today and in the coming weeks and months to address the impact of the degenerating global economy on Canadian jobs?

**Hon. Marjory LeBreton (Leader of the Government):** Honourable senators, if you listened to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister as recently as last Thursday, they addressed some of these issues, and the Prime Minister addressed some of these issues when we hosted the Right Honourable David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

First, no government would not be sympathetic with Canadians who have lost their jobs. There is no doubt that the focus of the government this fall will be, quite rightly, on jobs and the economy.

I do believe, Senator Tardif, that we should acknowledge the fact that Canada's economy created nearly 600,000 new jobs since July 2009, the strongest job growth in the G7. As I just acknowledged a moment ago, those are impressive figures, but still, in all, too many Canadians are still looking for work.

We are not immune to the turbulence that is facing the global economy, especially in Europe and the United States. That is why we are working to implement the budget and its job-creating measures, such as the hiring credit for small businesses. I wish to

assure honourable senators that this government is focused on what matters to Canadians, namely, creating jobs and promoting economic growth.

The IMF, as the honourable senator would know, has forecasted that Canada will have the strongest overall economic growth among the G7 over the next two years. This is yet another example of our global economic leadership, which includes the World Economic Forum ranking Canada's financial system as the soundest in the world for the fourth consecutive year, and Moody's renewing our triple-A credit rating due to our economic resiliency.

Although we are facing challenging times, I do believe that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the government clearly recognize the dangers and are working hard to bring policies to bear in Canada that will see us through this difficult time, just as we did in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

*[Translation]*

**Senator Tardif:** I have a supplementary question. I believe that Canadians expect a lot more than rhetorical answers. They expect the government to use an approach that is pragmatic, sound and, above all, sincere when it addresses the problems facing our country. Every week, the government seems to be eliminating more services and jobs. The risk that comes with these austerity measures has been documented many times. Experts the world over have issued countless warnings.

That being said, I must ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate again: what is the plan? When will we see this plan to create jobs for Canadians?

*[English]*

**Senator LeBreton:** Honourable senators, I mentioned one initiative in my last answer with regard to the hiring credit for small business. Minister Flaherty has made it clear that if Canada's economy were threatened, as it was before, we would do whatever was necessary to protect our economy, Canadian jobs and Canadian families.

The honourable senator may dismiss the reporting of major global economic forums as trivia — I do not know what her exact word was. However, the fact is that we are in a global economy and we do have a stellar record, to which these organizations point. You do not get those kinds of plaudits from these organizations for doing nothing.