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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

ORAL QUESTIONS

Forestry Industry

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, what will it take for the Conservatives to see that Canada's forestry sector is in crisis? Jobs are being lost. Businesses are closing and communities are suffering. Instead of action, we get idle boasting about recycled community adjustment funds.

Could the minister explain why the industry is telling a Commons committee it has no access to credit, research and development or other federal programs? Could the minister explain why the Conservatives sat on their hands while 20,000 forestry jobs disappeared?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, let me tell members what was actually said at the industry subcommittee yesterday by Mr. Rick Jeffrey. He said, "The future of this industry is great...For you, as the federal government, that means the Canada wood export program, the wood first program, the value to wood program, and the forest innovation programs that were in the last budget. Those are all great programs. They help drive innovation, they help keep markets open, they help us produce new products, develop new markets, and they also allow us to promote our products in those markets".

Even the member for Halifax West has to admit that we are getting the job done.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the loss of 20,000 jobs. That is not exactly getting the job done.

Again yesterday, we asked the government to protect the 12,000 jobs at AbitibiBowater in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Ontario. Perhaps the Prime Minister was in the washroom when we did that, because the Conservatives are still silent on this.

Why are the Conservatives not reassuring workers who are still waiting?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the problems in the forestry industry. That is why we asked this Parliament to pass Canada's economic action plan as quickly as possible, as it will help industries across the board, including the forestry industry.