

Good afternoon. Bonjour. My name is Michael Roschlau, and I am President and CEO of the Canadian Urban Transit Association, l'Association canadienne du transport urbain.

I am here today, in the context of the Finance Committee pre-budget consultations, to talk about the vital role that public transit plays in our economy, for the health of our communities, and how it will help lead Canada out of deficit and recession in the months and years to come.

Il est plutôt rare que les gouvernements se targuent de dépenser de l'argent. L'argent n'est pas dépensé, il est investi. Par investissements, nous entendons des retombés positives, quantifiables et à long terme. Bien entendu, tous les investissements gouvernementaux n'ont pas le même potentiel de rentabilité pour les contribuables.

Voilà l'essentiel de notre message aujourd'hui: les investissements gouvernementaux dans le transport en commun génèrent d'importantes retombés économiques en augmentant notre compétitivité économique, en créant de la richesse et en améliorant la santé et la qualité de vie de nos concitoyens.

Every year, governments and the private sector invest billions of dollars to build, operate, maintain and improve transit systems across Canada. But what is the return on that investment, economically speaking? What is the value of the benefits reaped by Canadians?

In a word, it is enormous.

The economic benefit of Canada's existing transit systems is at least \$10 billion annually, or almost 1 per cent of our entire gross domestic product.

The transit industry directly employs over 45,000 Canadians and indirectly creates an additional 24,000 jobs.

Transit reduces vehicle operating costs for Canadian households by about \$5 billion annually, or close to one thousand after tax dollars per household per year.

Canadians, therefore, have more disposable income to drive demand in other parts of the economy because of the increased availability of transit.

Transit reduces the economic costs of traffic collisions by almost \$2.5 billion annually and reduces annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2.4 million tonnes.

Transit saves 115 million dollars in annual health care costs related to respiratory illness.

The Canadian transit industry generates jobs, income and wealth for the country's economy. Transit systems generate employment in construction, professional services, research and development, and many other areas of the economy.

Le Canada est un important producteur et exportateur dans le domaine du transport en commun. Ainsi, les retombées des investissements dans ce secteur d'activité profitent à l'économie canadienne en créant des emplois dans le secteur manufacturier et les industries connexes. De plus, l'industrie du transport collectif investit continuellement en recherche et en développement afin d'offrir aux canadiens des modes de transport toujours plus écologiques et efficaces.

Le transport en commun mène la productivité et l'efficacité économique des villes en maximisant leur potentiel et en favorisant un développement compact,

permettant une meilleure utilisation des rares ressources telles que le territoire, l'énergie et le capital financier.

As Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently mentioned, and I quote: "'improvements to public transit have a real long-term positive economic impact.'" Indeed, according to the Prime Minister, "of all the solutions, public transit is the best. It is one area where smart infrastructure investments can make a big difference."

Transit helps communities reduce the wasteful and economically damaging impacts of traffic congestion, effects which grow exponentially as congestion levels continue to increase.

Transit passengers save money by not having to operate a car. Transit is also safer than automobile use and reduces death, injury and property damage suffered due to traffic collisions.

We are keenly aware of the fiscal situation facing all governments today.

Au plus fort de la crise financière et économique que nous venons de traverser, un consensus a émergé voulant que les gouvernements adoptent des budgets déficitaires afin de réduire les effets nocifs de la crise sur l'économie.

Maintenant que la reprise économique est amorcée, aussi fragile soit elle, les décideurs se tournent de nouveau vers des mesures d'austérité budgétaire afin de réduire leurs déficits.

Tout en appuyant ces mesures, l'ACTU met en garde le gouvernement contre une approche théorique qui opposerait simplement investissements et austérité.

There are public allocations that yield real returns for the economy and for the taxpayer.

Sound public transit is one of the very pillars upon which an economy is built.

Tackling the deficit being today's priority, tomorrow's main concern must be the renewal of aging infrastructure and a revitalized approach to long term, sustainable transit funding – something which today this country sorely lacks.

The consensus that emerged in the face of a financial meltdown in the past 24 months was that money invested today would avert collapse tomorrow.

That is, that publicly allocated funds yield a real and quantifiable return for taxpayers and the economy.

The recession, thankfully, is almost behind us. But its lessons remain.

Now is the time to be bold. Now is the time to be leaders. Now is the time to take action. Now is the time for the Government of Canada to demonstrate transit leadership, and in so doing to reap the rewards of a more sustainable, competitive, and dynamic economy.

Je vous remercie de votre attention. Il me fera plaisir de répondre à vos questions.