

Oral Questions

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, we recognize, as does the Minister, the problem of the public debt and the annual deficit and what he has contributed to it. We say to him that when he cuts both, "Don't do it on the backs of the weak, the unemployed or the weaker regions of the country or the handicapped." Don't do it that way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

JUSTIFICATION OF BUDGETARY CUT-BACKS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, more than half of Canada's single mothers raise their children on incomes that are below the poverty line.

How can the Minister of Finance justify cutbacks that are adding to the burden of families and children, and especially to that of our poorest provinces?

Why didn't he keep his promises to the neediest in this country.

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is saying that we are hurting the provinces which are the poorest. We have kept in place the equalization program which goes specifically to the poorer provinces in the country.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): There is a statute there you can't touch.

Mr. Wilson: The Hon. Member says there is a statute there, we can't touch it. This House, and as the Hon. Member, a fine Parliamentarian, knows, laws can be changed, but we are respecting the needs of the provinces. We are respecting the needs of the provinces which are in the lower income areas of the country because of the very concerns that the Hon. Member has expressed. In this Budget we are bringing in a large corporations tax which will raise \$1 billion, to be paid by large corporations. We brought in a high-income surtax, specifically to put a heavier burden on those parts of the country, those people, those companies that are best able to bear the burden.

Let me repeat, Mr. Speaker, the primary objective of this Budget is to ensure that we can retain the services important to people with lower incomes and who are in the less well off regions of the country.

[*Translation*]

REDUCTION OF SPENDING—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, Thérèse Lavoie-Roux, the Québec Liberal Government's Minister responsible for family policy, attacked the Budget of the Minister of Finance, saying it was anti-family. She quoted items that make it an anti-family budget: recovery of family allowance; deindexation of family allowance; cutbacks in spending on health and education; and the new sales tax on new homes that will affect young couples.

Could the Minister inform the House why he brought down an anti-family Budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I reject that commentary on the Budget. Family allowance cheques will be received by 100 per cent of the people who are eligible to receive them. That continues. The universal character is maintained. The Hon. Member refers to Established Programs Financing. That, as I said yesterday, will increase by \$25 billion over the course of the next five years relative to the last five years.

Finally, his comments are quite wrong as they relate to the cost of housing. We have made a commitment which is repeated in the Budget papers which states that if there is an affordability problem, we will take action to offset that affordability problem. The details will be made known in the next few months.

[*Translation*]

ALLEGED REGRESSIVE FAMILY POLICY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, the Minister refuses to understand, refuses to admit that one of the major problems in Canada is our declining birthrate.

The Minister ought to realize, considering what it costs today to raise children, that we need a generous family policy, not a regressive one.

The Minister deindexed family allowance payments, and now he has started to recover those payments, starting at a certain income level. Today, he is going after people with high incomes. Next year, when he needs extra money, he will go down to \$20,000 or \$25,000.