

Oral Questions

Since the government has created the recession, why doesn't this Minister of Finance break from past policy and for once adopt the Liberal Party's five-point plan?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in the House and on other occasions, I have had extensive consultations with various groups from all walks of life in the preparation of the budget. The seven meetings involved representatives from labour, social groups, poverty groups, the disabled, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Bankers' Association, trust companies and insurance companies. We heard from them all and they all came through with some very clear themes. One was a very clear theme that Canadians want governments to live within their means. They want us to pay as we go. They do not want new taxes and they do not want higher deficits.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Reports on the depletion of the ozone layer right over Canadians' heads and its impact on the number of cancers are alarming. Last October, in spite of our pressure here in the House, the government refused to act more quickly, which is quite incomprehensible.

Will the minister promise immediately here today to eliminate by 1995 all chemicals that threaten the ozone layer and to put pressure on the rest of the world to do the same?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to an environmental situation, or problem, that well illustrates the challenges awaiting us in years to come. We have a problem of ozone depletion, which according to scientific studies is very serious. Canada has always taken the problem very seriously. However, Canada accounts for about 2 per cent of the ozone-depleting gases. Mr. Speaker, that illustrates the kind of problem we will have in future years.

The hon. member seems to be saying that Canada or the government has not paid attention to this problem. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you very clearly that that is absolutely not so. In fact, Canada is four years ahead of the timetable it set for reducing these substances. We

reduced them by 45 per cent from their 1986 levels and we played a leading role, since the first environmental treaty, the Montreal protocol, was signed under this government's authority in 1987.

The Canadian government, Mr. Speaker, intends to maintain its leading role in fighting ozone depletion.

[English]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): My supplementary question is for the same minister, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately we have lost that position of leadership. This is a problem which exists now about Canada. The Germans, the Swedes and the Norwegians are well ahead of us.

However, there is also another question which is of immediate urgency in dealing with the depletion of the ozone layer. The green plan states that Canadians will be provided with warnings of ultraviolet radiation, but only in 1993. That is not good enough.

Will the government undertake to provide Canadians with daily alert warnings as is done in Australia by this April, following what NASA predicts will be a 30 per cent to 40 per cent depletion in the ozone layer and a major rise in the incidence of cancer across the country?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, let me use this opportunity to update the hon. member on what Canada has been doing in this area. In fact we have been instrumental in putting together the Montreal protocol signed in 1987, the world's first environmental international treaty.

We have reduced by 45 per cent the amount of CFCs going into the atmosphere. As a result of that we are now four years ahead of schedule according to what the Montreal protocol has set as a deadline. We think that we can in fact go faster than that. At the meeting of the countries involved in the Montreal protocol next November we will be pressing other countries to accelerate the phase-out of CFCs. Canada intends to maintain that leadership position.

I recently announced, I think it was in August, a \$25 million initiative to assist us in meeting our objectives. Among the initiatives announced in August was in fact an initiative that will enable the Government of Canada to put out warnings of ultraviolet rays. I will be more than happy to look at anything we can do to accelerate that process given that financial commitment and some resources.