

## Oral Questions

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

## REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF GROWTH IN GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT IN 1976

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Finance. In light of the disturbing figures on unemployment today, which I am sure disturbs the Minister of Finance as well as the rest of us, can the minister give us a reassuring forecast of growth in the gross national product for 1976, or at least for the first quarter of 1976? I am sure his department must have such a figure. Would the minister give it to us?

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman says, I share his concern about the level of unemployment in Canada. While there has been some indication in the results for the last quarters of 1975 that there has been a pickup in the economy, I think it is very difficult at the moment to make any accurate prediction with regard to the first quarter of 1976.

● (1410)

## PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC FORECASTING UNIT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question for the right hon. Prime Minister who will recall that a number of years ago the Economic Council of Canada recommended the establishment of an independent short-term economic forecasting unit, a suggestion to which I frequently lent my moral support. In view of the secrecy of the Department of Finance about providing the public with such forecasting information and the importance of the public having this, will the Prime Minister now consider somewhat more sympathetically than in the past the establishment of such independent short-term forecasting to serve Canadians as well as the Canadian government?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I must disagree with the hon. member when he suggests secrecy beyond that which exists around the budget. Of course, when the minister presents the budget he indicates the economic basis on which he is making certain financial decisions but the hon. member knows budgets are periodic; they are not made from month to month. On the hon. members's suggestion for a new forecasting unit, I must point out that several units exist across the country in the private sector or in the universities. I hesitate at this time to engage increased expenditures to carry out the purpose intended by the hon. member.

## ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—POSSIBILITY OF MEETING WITH PROVINCIAL PREMIERS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR GUIDELINES

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, and I think the Prime Minister might effect some economy if he would take some initiative to bring these forecasting units together. They

[Mr. Speaker.]

could be strengthened and money could be saved at the same time. In view of the economic uncertainty and the indication from several polls that a large number of Canadians question the effectiveness of the government's economic controls program although supporting its purpose, and in view of the fact that the Minister of Finance indicated yesterday that some of the provinces at least are not prepared to support the anti-inflation program put to the provinces in general terms by the Prime Minister on October 13, is the Prime Minister considering inviting the provincial premiers to come to Ottawa before the end of the year in order to make a very determined effort to achieve national backing for the government's program which would reinforce public support and public confidence in the program?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, it is possible that in the future we will have to have such a meeting of first ministers but I do not contemplate having one before Christmas. I certainly do not draw the same conclusion as the hon. member from the statement made by the Minister of Finance. We are going toward a consensus and there is general agreement in the provinces to support the federal program. Some provinces are availing themselves of the provisions under the act which allow them to go ahead on their own—through section 4(4) I believe—but the very fact that they are discussing it shows there is a strong desire to support the general federal approach to inflation.

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## MANPOWER

## STEPS TO MATCH UNEMPLOYED WITH JOB VACANCIES—LENGTH OF ATTACHMENT TO LABOUR FORCE BEFORE BECOMING UNEMPLOYED

**Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In order to assist the Minister of Finance with respect to the unemployment rate for 1976, I would point out that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration indicated that his personal estimate was something like 7 per cent. Be that as it may, and keeping in mind the unacceptable rates of unemployment we are faced with today and considering that the help wanted index shows there are some 75,000 employment vacancies, may I ask what steps the minister has taken to match those out of work and seeking work to employment vacancies, particularly amongst the 14 to 24 age group? Can the minister report any progress in this regard?

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows the myriad programs directed to solving the prevailing problem, not the least of which are mobility, training, manpower counselling, job information centres, direct employment and many others which we have discussed at some length at various meetings.

**Mr. Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, we must keep in mind that what the minister has just stated has not been effective for our use. Keeping in mind that the unemployment rate for those between the ages of 14 and 24 has increased some 13.3