

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, this is the government that has created the level of unemployment that we have and refuses now to help those people who want to have training so they can get a job. This government refuses to put additional funds into a program that works, one that helps sustain Canadians. That is a responsibility that this government should be undertaking.

I would like to ask the minister of revenue this. The minister of employment has said that it is a question of budgetary funds. I would like to make a suggestion to the minister of revenue as to where he might find some of those funds.

Twenty-one years ago the former Liberal government introduced measures to provide a tax-free holiday on private trusts for some of Canada's wealthier citizens. Some estimates have put the total value of \$70 billion on those private trusts.

As the minister knows, that tax-free holiday is about to end. In view of the need that we have for further training and in view of the needs we have in Canada now, will the minister tell this House that he will not allow this tax-free holiday to continue for Canada's wealthier citizens and put that money to use to train some of the unemployed and those who need the funds for their future.

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, you know I am getting a little sick and tired from the New Democrats going on and on and on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Jelinek: —about tax-free holidays which do not exist, about the fact that large corporations are not taxed, about the fact that the tax system is unfair.

This government has been bringing in tax reform, broadening the corporate tax base, bringing in more corporations to pay further taxes, closing loopholes left, right and centre that the Liberals opened up under the Leader of the Opposition when he was finance minister, and bringing in accelerated tax collections. One thing we will not do is take away the incentive for Canadian businesses to continue to expand and create jobs and opportunities for Canadians.

• (1430)

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of National Revenue.

Hospitals are closing across the country and food banks are opening across the country. I have simply suggested to the minister that he has the opportunity to close a tax loophole on the private trusts of Canada's wealthiest Canadians, where the wealthiest Canadians can put in funds that are not taxed. They have had a 21-year tax holiday.

Will the minister stand here and say that he is prepared to close this tax loophole on Canada's wealthiest citizens to provide the services needed for those many Canadians who are in need at this time?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, those loopholes were closed two years ago. Those corporations were put on a taxable basis and the hon. member knows that.

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WESTRAY COAL MINE

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada was intimately involved in seeing that the Westray coal mine received \$85 million in loan guarantees and \$8 million into interest buy-downs.

Yesterday in Washington the Prime Minister, when asked whether or not he was aware of the serious safety problems plaguing the Westray project previous to federal funding approval, stated: "Of course not, of course not."

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Who should Canadians believe, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources who informed this House that all of the cabinet was aware of the safety problems at the Westray coal mine?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague, the member of Parliament for Central Nova, back to the House. I think he would like to know that yesterday the questions on this subject were responsible and not very partisan, out of respect for what his constituents are going through.

In answer to my hon. friend's question, the Prime Minister made it clear that this particular mine is regulated as to its safety and health regimes by the