

Oral Questions

tee that his budget will include concrete measures to help them keep their homes while at the same time promoting a recovery of the building industry.

Can the Right Hon. Prime Minister assure the House today, since thousands of Canadians are listening to us, that action will be taken to help these Canadians keep their homes and promote recovery of the housing industry?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, you will recognize that the hon. member for Joliette, whom I salute in return, has asked exactly the same question as his leader. This does not surprise me, but I wish to remind him that in this House, both languages are official, unlike the situation in that other assembly to which he tried to be elected. Here, both languages are official; we have heard the question in English and he is now repeating his question in French, which is fine. I shall point out to him as I pointed out to his leader that the budget should be tabled before the end of the month and that it is the practice that the contents of the budget be not revealed before the evening when it is brought down, and that if he is so set on contributing to the preparation of a budget, he has chosen the wrong capital and the wrong party.

Mr. La Salle: Madam Speaker, if the Right Hon. Prime Minister wanted to tell me that he speaks English better than I do, he is quite right. However, the Prime Minister has not proven to be more able than I in economic matters, for instance.

Madam Speaker, my question is this: In view of his answer, the Prime Minister shows an almost outrageous indifference for small home owners and tenants. The Prime Minister is aware that these people are worried, but I wonder if he realizes the extent of that concern among small home owners and thousands of his fellow citizens. The only thing that I want to know, Madam Speaker, is whether the Prime Minister, or else his Minister of Finance, if the Prime Minister is not able to do so, can assure these people that there will be compensation formulae, corrective action and direct financial assistance available to them so that they can keep their homes and remain good citizens?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I should point out to the hon. member that I made no comment about the way he speaks English, or French for that matter. I simply said that he was repeating in French the same question as the one his leader asked in English. If he insists on asking it a second time—

Mr. La Salle: We want an answer.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, but I have already replied to the leader, of the hon. member for Joliette. If he wants me to repeat it, I shall—

An hon. Member: Yes, or no.

Mr. Trudeau: It is either yes or no, Madam Speaker, or else it is yes and no, but in any case, the hon. member will find out on budget night.

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[English]

HOUSING

REQUEST FOR PRODUCTION OF DEPARTMENTAL DOCUMENT

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister who is allegedly responsible for housing. The government has been attempting to downplay the families who are going to be confronted right now with the housing crisis. I should like to ask the minister if he will produce the secret document that has been prepared in his department that shows how 85,000 Canadian families will lose their homes by Christmas because they cannot afford to renew their mortgages. Also, will he assure us that the government will take action to make sure that those families can maintain their homes?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question does reflect the Prime Minister's comment on conventions of the House. The Leader of the New Democratic Party, I am sure, is referring to a document which was prepared for me as the minister and which, under the new information act, would be made available when that legislation is presented to the House. Following those conventions, that will be available.

I would hasten to add, Madam Speaker, that it is commonly known how many mortgages are up for renewal in the next 12 months, and the difficulties that Canadians are facing at the present interest rates are commonly known.

Mr. Nielsen: What is the remedy facing us now?

Mr. Cosgrove: Those are facts that are known and recited by members on both sides.

Mr. Crosbie: What are you doing about it?

Mr. Cosgrove: As the Prime Minister indicated, although we await the budget, I invite you to take a look at what this government has done in the last 12 months in housing.

An hon. Member: We have!

Mr. Cosgrove: I invite you to consider, for example, that unlike the previous administration, we reintroduced support for the industry through the MURB provision in the last budget. That resulted, I am sure, Madam Speaker, in an additional 15,000 starts in the last 12 months. On top of that, to assist Canadians of modest income, we increased social housing under section 56(1). That is a good record, and I am sure that record will be continued.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!