

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance.

According to a study by the Canadian Tax Foundation, our tax burden has increased 25 per cent since 1980. Forty cents out of every dollar earned by Canadians today goes toward paying taxes.

Is the minister prepared to get the economy back on its feet, an economy that, according to 81 per cent of Canadians, is still in a recession, without adding to a tax burden that is even harder on the 85,000 people in Montreal who depend on food banks and on 216,000 unemployed workers in that city? Will he tell the House in no uncertain terms that in his next budget he will not raise taxes?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if I can enlist the co-operation of the hon. member and other hon. members to reduce government spending then we can reduce taxes. It is as simple as that. Every single, solitary attempt that we make to bring down government spending, they oppose it. They block, they filibuster and they do everything in their power to stop it.

Under the provisions of tax reform, I remind the hon. member that the personal income tax changes removed 850,000 low-income Canadians from the tax rolls and 250,000 were senior citizens. Nine out of ten Canadians age 65 and over saw their federal tax reduced. We will continue to do that, as I did in the budget and as I reconfirmed in the December statement.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Diane Marleau (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. minister, I would like to make him an offer. Back down on the helicopters and we will support you 100 per cent.

As of last June, 17 per cent of Ontarians under the age of 60 were receiving some form of provincial or municipi-

pal welfare. This is three times the level it was during the early 1980s. Shameful figures.

Will the Minister of Finance take action in his upcoming budget to address the serious problem of joblessness in Ontario and in the rest of Canada?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we have taken a number of steps. In the budget last February and in the December statement we have taken steps to improve the tax regime, the investment climate for the small business sector, and particularly for the manufacturing and processing sector.

I am sure the hon. member just heard my quote from Mr. Stephen Van Houten of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association which indicated very clearly that since the free trade agreement has been signed, manufactured shipments have increased by some 60 per cent. He also indicates that the North American free trade agreement will provide further opportunities. This will indeed create jobs.

As I said to the House yesterday, 12,328,000 Canadians are working. That is 1,328,000 more Canadians working today than there were when we came into office in September 1984.

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PEACEKEEPERS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Yesterday, two Canadian peacekeepers were seriously injured by shell fire. I think we all admire their bravery and wish them speedy recovery.

I say to the minister that it just shows what a dangerous and untenable position we put our peacekeepers in. There is no authority or authorization to retaliate so they are defenceless. They cannot even protect the people they are there to help.

Will the minister go to the United Nations to seek a clear mandate to ensure that our troops are not left in a defenceless position so they can carry out their clear role that they want to carry out which is to protect the victims in Bosnia?