

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Bussi eres:** Madam Speaker, I know the Leader of the Opposition has a gift for simplification. He carried his simplification to simplism, which explains why he so resoundingly lost his elections. I should like to point out to him that on the government side, whether it be the Acting Prime Minister, the Minister of Transport, a minister of state or any other minister, we are all of one mind with regard to the constitution and the economy. I should also like to remind him that, with any forecast, no matter which, and especially in the field of economy, one must be very prudent. By their very nature, forecasts are fragile. I indicated a while ago that the government is intent upon fighting inflation. I also said last week, in a reply to another hon. member, that the government does not want to do it alone but wants all other agents of the economy to join in its efforts, and in the effort to stay within the figures forecast.

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**ENERGY****ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME CANADIANS TO MEET HIGH ENERGY COSTS**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, I have noted that following the statement of opposition concerning the constitution, the hon. member for Montmorency failed to applaud, although I have not received a simple reply from the Minister of State for Finance.

[English]

In light of the fact that we have now had an increase in the cost of living which renders inapplicable the projections in the budget regarding the cost of living, and given the fact that those have occurred without feeling the full impact of energy price increases, I wonder if the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, either in his capacity as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or in his capacity as the author of the budget, will tell us whether the government is now in a position to accept the need for an energy tax credit which will help those low-income Canadians who are most severely affected by the increases in the cost of energy meet those costs. Can we have an answer from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources?

● (1120)

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources):** I am sorry, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition went into a very long expos e, and I did not know that in the middle of his expos e he switched directions from the Minister of State for Finance to myself. I ask him, please, to repeat the question.

**Mr. Clark:** Madam Speaker, there is no question that whatever length my question the minister will exceed it in his response.

I would like the minister to tell us whether the government is now prepared to consider some equivalent of an energy tax credit for low-income Canadians, given the fact that the cost

of living has already gone up beyond the levels forecast by the budget and before the full impact of the energy price increases which this minister is intending for the people of Canada is felt.

**Mr. Lalonde:** Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Finance has indicated in the House several times, the impact of the budget as far as energy costs are concerned will be very substantially lower than that which had been planned under the Conservative budget of last December. As a matter of fact, if we take the case of an average family in eastern Canada, for instance, in order to have an equivalent cost to the same family, including the tax credit proposed by the Conservatives, it would require a family with two parents and 16 children. That would reach the same level as will be provided by our budget, in the sense that budget costs in terms of families will be substantially lower than they would have been under the Conservative budget.

With respect to measures affecting low-income groups, the federal government took steps last summer, well ahead of the budget, to provide for a very significant increase of \$35 a month, which is the equivalent of about—

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Ha!

**Mr. Lalonde:** My hon. friend opposite laughs at the help being provided to senior citizens. I do not think senior citizens laugh at the situation. They have \$35 a month under the GIS provided by this government as a first step.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**PROPOSED SHARED COST PROGRAM TO MEET RISING ENERGY COSTS**

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West):** Madam Speaker, I do not think the senior citizens or any citizens of this country are laughing. They are crying over the pitiful performance which is going on here today. I will ask a question of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources in the absence of the Prime Minister, "Saudy-Trudy", in view of the silence of the Deputy Prime Minister, who will not answer questions.

Last year average family purchasing power fell 4 per cent, according to Statistics Canada, as a result of inflation, and there has just been a monthly increase of 9.2 per cent in the cost of heating oils from September to October and an increase of 24.5 per cent from October of last year to October of this year. In view of these facts and the very regressive actions of this government, is the government going to give a favourable response to the government of Ontario, which has called on the federal government to join it in a shared cost program to provide relief from rising energy costs for people on fixed and low incomes?

Will there be an affirmative response in light of these frightening facts? Never mind the nonsense about what went on in the PC budget. It was not passed. The people of Canada are interested in what is happening now under the Liberal budget and the Liberal government today.