

The minister knows that \$10,000 would not be enough for a down payment on a home today. Has he made any representations to the Minister of Finance to increase the maximum ceiling in this plan?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, the point made by the hon. member is one that has been brought to my attention by a number of people in the last couple of months. It is one of many, many representations that have been made to me and to the government.

On the point that the program would not help people at all and would not even provide a downpayment, I would draw the attention of the hon. member that there are some parts of Canada where real estate can be acquired, freehold, at modest prices.

For example, when I visited London last Sunday, I was told that under a community services program there was a large community where the price of homes now for sale is somewhere between \$30,000 and \$40,000. I would argue that the \$10,000 would make a very good start toward a down payment on those types of homes.

REQUEST THAT MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE LEVEL OF SAVINGS BE
RAISED

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. The points raised by the minister do not answer my question. Secondly, they are certainly the exceptions in Canada. The people who are saving for homes today are costing the government very, very little. I am again asking the minister will he urge the Minister of Finance at least to double the present maximums, which would be more realistic in the light of today's prices for homes, and to provide for a catchup? Let us give the young people a chance to have homes in the future.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, in response to the question I indicated that I could not, of course, go into the specifics of the advice that I have given to the Minister of Finance. I do not want to deal with specifics. Of course one of the difficulties, or one of the objectives, when giving any particular advice, is that we attempt to respond equitably to all people. For example, I have had questions of difficulties, prospective difficulties, and difficulties now faced by renters; and in all of the advice that we give we have to attempt to provide equity not only in the housing sector but also equity as between people facing problems with housing and those who are facing difficulties with employment, and so on, about whom we have heard.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

THE CONSTITUTION

CHARTER PROPOSALS ON LANGUAGE RIGHTS

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice. I was shocked to read this morning that the government might amend and weaken the charter proposals on language rights by making them compatible with Quebec's Bill 101. Would the minister tell the House whether the government intends to back off its proposal with respect to language rights and, if so, what is the justification for such an about face?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Social Development): Madam Speaker, what the Prime Minister said was that if there is any suggestion to improve on the charter, it will be welcome. What we are trying to do is very simple. We want to make sure that Canadians who speak English and move to Quebec have the right to go to English schools. In return, we want to have the constitutional right, for the first time in the history of Canada, for francophones in the nine other provinces to have their schools. If the words in the charter can be improved, that is fine. The goals are well known. We think it is about time that we had equality in schooling across the land for Canadians who speak English in Quebec and for Canadians who speak French in the rest of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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● (1140)

LABOUR CONDITIONS

EFFECT OF INTEREST RATES ON UNEMPLOYED WOODWORKERS

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. For thousands of unemployed forest industry workers, yesterday's "stand pat" interest rate announced by the Bank of Canada, and predictions of 19.75 per cent stable interest rates for the rest of the year, equal the stability of the grave as Canadian woodworkers face a two-front attack by the Government of Canada. Many of those workers, like tens of thousands of other Canadians, cannot afford to renew their mortgages or build homes because of the government's carbon copy of United States policy, and now they, in their thousands, find themselves thrown out of work as dozens of mills close down, some permanently, again because of government policy and the decline in housing starts.

When is the government going to stop this two-front assault on Canadian woodworkers who now face over 37 per cent unemployment in the western plywood sector, a sector which is 85 per cent dependent upon the Canadian housing market? When is the minister going to recognize the state of emergency which exists in our hundreds of lumber and plywood-based communities, and what is he going to do about it now?