

Privilege

There are also other signals that the economy is turning around in terms of new investment that was in *The Globe and Mail* last week, and so on. That shows that our policies are working.

Mr. Joe Fontana (London East): A hundred and six thousand housing starts this year is 56 per cent less than last year—56 per cent less—and 100,000 jobs have been lost in the construction industry in this country.

I want to ask the minister, or whoever speaks for housing in this government, when will the government put affordable housing in the neighbourhoods for this country and for the people who want to buy them, and put construction workers back to work?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, this government has been working on affordable housing. It will continue to work on affordable housing.

The housing market is starting to turn around. Multiple bids are now being made on houses that are on the market. The real estate people see a turn-around, and that turn-around will come. If the member will be patient, he will see that the statistics will continue to improve over the next few months.

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• (1500)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the members' attention the presence in the gallery of Mr. Frank Stock, Solicitor General of Hong Kong.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I have a question of privilege from the hon. member for Verdun—Saint-Paul. I just might advise that there is another question of privilege and I will get to that hon. member in a few minutes.

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[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR VERDUN—SAINT-PAUL—CHANGE OF AFFILIATION

Mr. Gilbert Chartrand (Verdun—Saint-Paul): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a short statement. On May 22, 1990, I rose in this House to announce my decision to

leave the Conservative caucus. My action was motivated by my deep frustration with the process to ratify the Meech Lake Accord. A month later, Clyde Wells confirmed my apprehensions. He let Quebec down and endangered Canada's very existence. Such a dastardly act deeply disgusted me.

I have worked with the Bloc Québécois for a year and I note that its parliamentary motivations are basically negative and aimed only at destroying the country.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: Mr. Speaker, being an essentially positive individual, I do not want to work with a group that has such a motivation. Furthermore, I am convinced that the Bloc Québécois's strategy will ultimately divide the votes of Quebecers and make Jean Chrétien Prime Minister of Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chartrand: Now one of the reasons I entered politics was and still is to fight everything that Mr. Chrétien represents.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: The forceful unilateral repatriation of 1982 and the desire to put Quebec in its place.

Mr. Speaker, as a member from Quebec, I cannot go along with such a strategy and I can no longer allow myself to remain in the Bloc. Last May 22, I told the House: "I still consider the Prime Minister to be reliable and honest, because he made every possible effort to have the Meech Lake Accord respected in full."

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand: On this point, I have not changed my mind. Despite everything, the Prime Minister has always behaved with dignity and has always been the only leader to seek new ways for a positive resolution of the Constitutional impasse.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Chartrand:—an editorial of March 30, and I quote: "We unreservedly support the leader of the government of Canada who so far has been—".

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is rising on a question of privilege, but is getting very much into debate. I would ask the hon. member to come to his point and close off his remarks.