

Oral Questions

Finance must reverse his absurd decision and announce that the program will continue as soon as possible.

[English]

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IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, pursuing a little further what our colleague from Ottawa said a little earlier about children and the preoccupation of this government, there could be a deportation order in my case as well. Five children have been accepted; the parents have not.

The minister of immigration has not even seen fit to respond to me. I think this government had better make a decision to get rid of these immigration boards if it cannot do a better job and have more humanitarianism.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Finance.

Today, Statistics Canada reported that the gross domestic product, a measure of the over-all size of the economy, dropped .4 per cent this past December. This means the economy started shrinking again. How could the Minister of Finance say in his budget speech that there were "good reasons to look forward to an early resumption of solid economic growth"? Do these measures not show that the budget will not do enough to get the economy moving and create jobs and opportunities for Canadians?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, first of all I must point out to the hon. member that the Minister of Finance in his budget acknowledged the possibility of a decline in output in the fourth quarter. This is consistent with the forecast the minister made.

The budget measures which came out just this week are designed to bolster the economy. We are seeing some very, very positive signs. As a matter of fact, just

this morning I note that residential construction increased by 96 per cent in January over January 1991. That is a very strong signal that we are on the road to recovery.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, only a Conservative could say that the shrinking of the economy is a positive sign. The government's budget papers also confirm that real interest rates will be much higher than usual through 1997, meaning that full recovery could be as much as five years away.

I ask the Minister of State, do the government's own budget papers not confirm that the government's policies will not do enough to get the economy moving again and will not create enough jobs and economic opportunity for the hundreds of thousands of people who have been the hapless victims of this government's misguided economic policies?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, let us compare this particular recession with the last one when the hon. member was on the treasury benches. The GDP fell by 5.5 per cent over that period of time. In the recession that we have come through, it has fallen 3.1 per cent. The hon. member should not be up in the House lecturing the government on financial matters because his record is suspect.

I want to remind the hon. member that during the last recession in 1981-82, we had a one-quarter dip in growth again after recovery had started.

• (1120)

This is not unusual during a recovery period. Now we are into 1992 and we are looking forward, not back, like the hon. member would want to do.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to look back, let him look back in the government's budget papers tabled this week which say that "annual growth this year and next will still remain well below the 4.7 per cent average of growth in the 1983 and 1984 recovery period". Why does he hide that statistic?

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the minister responsible for housing, who said in this House that despite the budget, everything would be done to create social housing and not less. CMHC has said that