

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

ATLANTIC ECONOMY—\$1 BILLION SALVAGE PLAN

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we want to do: protect the interests of the people of the Atlantic provinces. All sectors in the fisheries industry are stagnating. There is no more cod, no more lobster, there are no more markets for our herring, and fishermen and plant workers will not even be eligible for unemployment insurance. When a situation as serious as this occurs in any other sector of our economy, a rescue plan is brought in immediately. My question is: Where is the billion-dollar rescue plan mentioned by certain ministers last spring? How much longer do we have to wait for the billion dollars?

[*English*]

Where is the billion dollar program for the fisheries of Atlantic Canada. Where is it?

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is a crisis, perhaps an unprecedented crisis, in the industry in the Atlantic Region. That is why the Canadian Government supports the initiatives, the steps that were not taken by any previous government to cooperate with the industry, to cooperate with the provinces, to negotiate with the European Community, to seek a long-term solution to what is really a crisis. It is not a partisan issue; it is a matter of policy. It is a major crisis. It affects the lives of Canadian citizens in the Atlantic Region. It is an issue that we are taking seriously and I hope that the Hon. Members will offer us the same sort of cooperation that we received from the governments of the Atlantic Provinces.

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[*English*]

FINANCE

PROPOSED GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jack Whittaker (Okanagan—Similkameen—Meritt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Small Businesses.

In discussions with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Canadian Organization of Small

Business and other business persons throughout Canada it has become clear that small business is diametrically opposed to this goods and services tax. Why is that? Because it will be disastrous for them. Will the Minister of State for Small Business tell his government colleagues that this tax will be devastating for small business and will he tell them to withdraw and go back to the drawing board?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): No, Mr. Speaker, I will not tell my hon. colleagues this. I have been working with the small business community and the various organizations that speak for small business. I have been working with them from day one on this and they have asked for the following things: They have asked for help with the compliance costs. They have received that. They have got a capital cost allowance which gives them 100 per cent write-off in the first year. That is the first thing.

They have also asked for an exemption for small businesses and small traders. They have got that exemption for those who earn under \$30,000 a year. Five hundred thousand small businesses will not have to participate in this tax. Small business organizations have also asked for streamlined accounting that is simple and straightforward. We should continue discussions on this. We have brought in two proposals in the technical paper for streamlined accounting. There are many other things that I could mention. Small business organizations have asked for these things. They have received it. The Hon. Member opposes everything and proposes nothing. We have got constructive proposals and we have acted on them.

Mr. Whittaker: Mr. Speaker, what this tax does is effectively turn every small business into a tax collector for Revenue Canada. It is forcing the small business community to carry the enormous burden of the financial administration and implementation. When is the minister going to listen to the community he is supposed to represent? When is he going to speak up for small business in Canada and demand his cabinet colleagues withdraw this tax?

Mr. Hockin: Well, Mr. Speaker, the first thing the small community understands is that if they ever elect an NDP government centuries from now the taxes will be so high there will be no small business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!