

clarification and for interest. This would in no way detract from the debate on the budget which will follow later this afternoon. It does not seem to me that the debate is in any way a substitute for questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Perhaps the House would find it acceptable if the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other parties were at liberty to pose questions on that subject while the remaining members would not—

**Some hon. Members:** No!

**Mr. Speaker:** I will see three members on the point of order, bearing in mind that the question period will end at three o'clock. The hon. member for Calgary North.

**Mr. Woolliams:** I bring it to Your Honour's attention, with the greatest respect, that asking questions and securing clarification from the minister will leave us better qualified to present proper arguments later as far as the budget is concerned. Surely, again with the greatest respect, that is the very purpose of the question period. If members of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition or other members, wish to direct questions to the minister in order to ascertain information on the basis of which they might more intelligently debate the budget, that is surely within the rules of the House.

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

**Mr. Broadbent:** On the same point of order, I respectfully draw to Your Honour's attention the pattern which was established, if not set, last fall during the budget debate. I recall, and I think I recall accurately, that immediately following presentation of the budget last fall members on both sides of the House, not restricted to the leaders of the parties, were permitted to ask the Minister of Finance and other ministers questions on the budget. It seems to me that during the proceedings last fall there was a clear example set—questions were asked to elicit information for purposes of debate or for the general purposes for which we normally have the question period. In this party, at least, we hope this practice will be followed during the question period this year; I hope that the pattern set then is not to be changed now.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière):** Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I should like to take the position of the previous speakers and say that our party is just as interested as any other in using, at least partially, the question period with a view to studying more profoundly the consequences of the new budget and obtaining pertinent and further information following its presentation. We are parliamentarians. We have to study this budget for the next six days. It is now our turn, Mr. Speaker, to comment more deeply on the subject, and I fail to see why questions regarding the budget should be limited solely to the leader of the opposition, of the New Democratic Party or of any other party. Let us allow not only these people to ask questions on the budget, but also any other member of the House who should wish to do so; then the question period may serve a useful purpose by helping us prepare our work. Too often members of the present government blame the opposition for its lack of preparation. The ques-

### Oral Questions

tion period is an excellent tool for preparing us to do our work as parliamentarians. Mr. Speaker, we join forces with all other members of the House in asking that not only the front-benchers, but equally any other member who wishes to do so, be allowed to ask questions, as they may deem fit, on the budget and its effects.

● (1420)

[English]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. There does not seem to be much opposition to that point of view. Perhaps I could allow questions on the budget today and review the practice referred to by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) in respect of the last budget. I will examine the days of the budget debate, see what took place in the question period and make a more definitive announcement tomorrow; today, I will let questions on the budget go as they arise.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Then, would the Minister of Finance answer my question?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to answer that question. One of the results of the gas tax of 10 cents a gallon by way of excise will hopefully be moderation in consumption of gas at the pump for personal use only, because the tax is only applied to personal use. The prime purpose of the tax is to pay for a national oil price of \$8 per barrel, which is about \$4 below the international price.

Because of falling exports and diminishing revenues from the export tax as against the subsidy paid to the people of eastern Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces to maintain a national oil price, we have to bring the account into balance by a gasoline tax which will make up the deficit and allow the people of Canada to pay for a national, single oil price in Canada.

**Mr. Stanfield:** Mr. Speaker, may I put a supplementary question to make certain that I was not misled by all that talking around the mulberry bush. Might I ask the Minister of Finance whether my understanding is right when I assume from his response that the minister either does not have an estimate as to the amount of gasoline that will be conserved or that he is not prepared to give an estimate?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** As I say, Mr. Speaker, the primary purpose of the tax is to pay for a single oil price in Canada. How much gas will be conserved as a result of the tax is difficult at this stage to estimate.

#### PROPOSED TAX ON GASOLINE—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF COST OF COLLECTION AND MAKING REFUNDS

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, which I am sure the Minister of Finance will be able to answer. What is his estimate of the cost of administering the collection of this tax and the refunds that are involved in a full year?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** In the ordinary course, Mr. Speaker, that question should be put to the minister who administers the tax, the Minister of