

Oral Questions

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF BADEN-WURTEMBERG MINISTER OF ECONOMY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of Members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Martin Herzog, Minister of Economy from Baden-Wurttemberg, of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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CHILD CARE

FUNDING INQUIRY

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Last year the Prime Minister thought the issue of child care was so important that at the First Ministers' Conference he made a promise that the federal Government would bring in substantial funding. Given the Prime Minister's word on this issue, why is there not a single penny in this Budget for what the Prime Minister claimed was a crisis in Canada?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question on a number of occasions. If the Hon. Member would look carefully at the early part of the Budget, we said that there are a number of initiatives that are in train where discussions are taking place, in this case with the provinces, and with the private sector, that have not reached fruition yet because those discussions are still ongoing. We will be able to make announcements on these initiatives, and child care can be one of these, at the appropriate time. The funds are available within the fiscal plan to meet those obligations.

ACCESS TO DAY CARE SERVICES

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, dare I say that there are many families in Canada who are reaching fruition and do not have time to wait for the Minister to come up with his funding proposals in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Copps: The Minister did not wait to introduce an anti-family tax on family allowances.

[Translation]

He did not wait before launching an attack against family allowances, he did not wait for more studies. The day care issue affects all Canadian families, and they are entitled to ready access to nurseries. Why does he always want to wait?

Why must Canadians be kept waiting for an answer to this very serious question?

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Hon. Member has changed the comments that were attributed by her colleague yesterday to the Prime Minister. Yesterday her colleague had said that the Prime Minister when he was in Vancouver had said that it would be in this Budget. Today the Hon. Member used the correct term where the Prime Minister indicated that there would be substantial commitment from the Government of Canada in order to take that through. That is why I have had the obligation to meet with provincial counterparts, and other people interested in child care, as well as the parliamentary committee, for the purpose of putting forward a national plan which we have said very clearly we can announce outside the Budget. In fact, in the past there has been criticism that social policy was incorporated in the Budget and that it should stand alone. That is exactly what the Finance Minister has followed, and we intend to follow that up exactly as we have outlined to the provinces and to the country.

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FINANCE

REFUNDABLE SALES TAX CREDIT—REQUEST FOR INCREASE

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. As the Minister knows, there are over four million Canadians living below the poverty line. The Budget Speech did not once mention the word "poverty". Instead, the Budget removed half of the sales tax credit from the very poor through new taxes. Why did the Government not increase the sales tax credit to compensate for this new round of taxes on snack food, granola bars, and a slew of other items? Why did the Government not increase the sales tax credit in this Budget?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is quite aware that we have been making progress. There are 263,000 fewer families—not individuals, families—that are now not below the poverty line as compared to when we came into office. The Hon. Member has asked why we have not increased the refundable sales tax credit. I have clearly indicated that that is an integral part of tax reform, and we will be clearly demonstrating to him at the time of the release of the discussion paper on tax reform how we wish to augment this very progressive initiative that we took at the time of last year's Budget as part of tax reform.

INCOME TAX RETURNS—INFORMATION SOUGHT FROM WELFARE RECIPIENTS

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): My supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. The Minister did not wait to increase taxes on the poor, yet he is asking the poor to