

Oral Questions

been successful and will see interest rates go down on a more permanent basis.

[English]

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of State for Finance wants to make some announcements, perhaps the minister would be kind enough to explain to the House, in light of questions put now by the Chamber of Commerce, by the Trust Companies Association of Canada, by the Canadian Bankers Association, by the insurance industry, if the long-awaited financial institution reform legislation will be brought before this House in the very near future? Can he give us a date on that today?

[Translation]

Hon. Gilles Loisel (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is to be commended for his interest in a sector that is indeed very important.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, he is of course aware that my department, the Department of Finance, has tabled a rather impressive number of budget bills, so that we have taken up a considerable amount of the time of the House.

These bills involve changes that are extremely important and, in some cases, will update legislation that has been left untouched for 70 years. We are determined to table these bills as soon as possible, as soon as we can get them on the agenda of the House.

* * *

[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in regard to the appointment of Mr. Nickolas Murray, the present head of the Consumers Association of Canada, as chairman of the new GST monitoring agency.

Members and former presidents of the Consumers Association have denounced this appointment. How can Mr. Murray serve two masters? On the one hand, he serves as head of an independent consumer advocacy

group, and on the other hand, he will preside over the GST information office, a powerless gimmick which will make him a lap-dog rather than a watch-dog.

What is the government trying to do, pacify the public, muzzle the Consumers Association, or both?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, that question is as nonsensical today as it was yesterday. The hon. member knows that the new consumer information office is an independent body, arm's length to the minister and to the government.

The hon. member should know, and this is what I do not understand, that Mr. Murray has served and continues to serve the interests of all consumers, as the head of the Consumers Association of Canada. He will now continue to serve the consumers of Canada as the head of the new consumer information office.

I cannot, for the life of me, see any indication of a conflict of interest when a highly qualified individual, in the person of Nickolas Murray, who has the best interest of the consumers at heart, is asked to head an agency of this nature for the benefit of all consumers in Canada.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, the minister's reply is typical of the minister and his colleagues. My second question is directed to the same minister. Does he not believe that the only decent way out is to demand that Mr. Murray resign, either from the consumers' association or from his position as head of the GST consumer information office, which in any case is just a public relations office for the government?

[English]

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if there was some potential benefit to Mr. Murray, or if there was some sort of a conflict of interest against the benefits of consumers in this country, then of course the appointment would not have taken place.

The fact is that the interests that Mr. Murray has in his heart, his soul, and in his mind are for the benefit of all consumers, whether in his capacity as head of the