

Oral Questions

ber. These 14,000 people are either not looking for work or are now on welfare or have left Toronto all together.

Given that the Toronto economy is crucial to any national economic recovery and given that it is now both sputtering and shrinking, when will this government introduce measures to stimulate and kick-start an indispensable component of Canada's economic machinery?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, all the advice that the government has received from groups across this country has been that the best way to get the economy going is to get our basics in place and that is low inflation rate and low interest rates.

I recently had discussions with a number of individuals in the real estate industry in Toronto and the metropolitan area. The type of house selling that is going on now is first time home buyers that are getting into the market. That is a good sign. That is a good sign that the economy is picking up, that people are purchasing their homes in the Toronto area.

As a matter of fact, in my area of Brampton in the last very short period of time there have been hundreds of new homes sold primarily to first time home buyers. He looks surprised but I can take him out to the new Springdale development and show him where they have sold 500 homes in one week.

Things are beginning to happen in the metropolitan Toronto area. Of course the training programs that we provide through the community colleges are helping to train and retrain. We see some great signs of the economy recovering in early 1992.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

The chronic unemployment crisis of metro Toronto not only paints a dismal economic picture but it also paints a very troubling social picture. Over 50,000 people are homeless in metro Toronto; 250,000 on welfare and 160,000 collecting unemployment insurance. There are 150,000 relying on food banks and the story goes on and on and on.

I ask the hon. minister when the government will recognize that metropolitan Toronto is really suffering from a tale of two cities and that it is in need of a serious economic blueprint in order to revitalize what is essentially a stagnating economy when it was once a very

dynamic and bursting economy for Toronto and for the nation.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I come from that area and am very proud of that community and its role in the Canadian economy.

The hon. member stands up here with a doom and gloom scenario which does nothing to further the economic benefits of the metropolitan Toronto area. It is a vibrant city. The economy is starting to come back. We are seeing some very good signs and Toronto will be the beneficiary of the growth that is estimated by those outside groups—not by the government—of some 3.5 per cent to 4 per cent growth in 1992.

Toronto naturally will benefit. It is a very vibrant city. I am extremely proud of it and I am sure that these people will find meaningful jobs in the not too distant future and the city will be back operating again as a city that we all know and love.

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INTEREST RATES

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or the acting minister, and it is about the other interest rates, credit card interest rates.

At a time when consumers are being gouged by credit card rates the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has no help for Canadians except telling them to shop around. Here is the shopping list, Madam Speaker: Bank of Montreal MasterCard, 19.25 per cent; Toronto-Dominion Visa, 19.75 per cent; National Bank, 19.75 per cent; Scotia Visa, 19.25 per cent.

I want to ask the government if this is Tory fairness.

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, what is Tory fairness is our efforts to bring interest rates down. All Canadians, whether they are borrowers on credit cards or mortgage loans, should be delighted with the fact that the prime rate yesterday dropped to 8 per cent, the lowest level it has been in 18 years.

This, Madam Speaker, is good for everybody. As a result, interest rates on credit cards are going down and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has very rightly said that now is the time to start shopping for