

Oral Questions

problem that way. I hope to be able to bring forward positive initiatives to this House before too long.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. It deals with the shock Canadians received this weekend while reading the newspapers. In a time of restraint and serious government cutbacks of critical programs, particularly social programs, Canadians were informed that the Government of Canada is soon going to send out a 16-page, three-coloured propaganda brochure to every household in the country.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, surely this is an error. Will the Minister of Finance tell the House and the people of Canada that the government is not going to spend hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars to send out a three-colour, 16-page propaganda brochure to every single household in the country.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it may interest my hon. friend that there have been some 384,000 phone calls made to the GST information number seeking out the very information that is in this brochure, as well as in the one that we sent out in May of this year.

The hon. member talks about the cost of this. It works out to 13 cents a copy. That is a quarter of what it costs to go out and buy *The Globe and Mail* here. I think this is a very cost-effective way of responding to the concerns that people have. It responds to their questions in an open, frank and direct way, providing information to give direct answers to questions.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance obviously knows, only one-half of 16 pages are devoted to the goods and services proposal.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Riis: The rest is filled with absolute garbage. It is government propaganda. At a time when we are cutting back on women's programs, when we have tens of thousands of children lining up at food banks, when we are having serious cuts to native programs and social

housing programs, is this the way the government feels it should be spending taxpayers' money?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, what we have tried to address in this particular document is the broad range of economic policies that must be followed if we are going to be able to finance the social programs that my colleague wants to have.

That is why on page 1 we talk about the importance of this country maintaining and building its competitive position so that it can trade effectively and create the jobs here at home. We talk about the importance of having a skilled workforce as part of the major part of our economic plan, about how people who are unemployed can get training.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that it is important to get the bill on unemployment insurance reform through the Senate so that we can continue to provide these programs. Many people have asked about how taxpayers' dollars are spent. That is precisely what this document tries to do.

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. He says that the people of Canada are going to get accurate information from this particular pamphlet it is distributing.

I wonder if it is the same kind of information that has been rejected by the CBC as being ill-conceived and inappropriate. It has been rejected by the Advertising Council of Canada because it is false advertising.

Has the Minister of Finance made sure that the information in this brochure is more accurate than what he has already provided Canadians?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleague to read the document himself. He may find that it is absolutely accurate and he might also learn something by doing so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): I have a supplementary for the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the minister has had more than six months since he tabled his budget in the House, can he tell us whether he is still sticking to his forecast concerning interest rates? Does he still think that the deficit will be less than \$30 billion, or has he come to grips with