

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 23, 1994

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BIODIVERSITY

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, biodiversity means a richness of life as it surrounds us in nature. We must preserve biodiversity because it is nature's protection against catastrophes. The loss of biodiversity has serious implications for life on earth.

We have been told that since the beginning of the century 75 per cent of crop diversity has been lost. This leaves us vulnerable. For example uniformity in corn crops could have resulted in disaster when a severe blight threatened corn crops in the 1970s. By maintaining biodiversity we also help sustain ourselves.

As a responsible society we in Canada must preserve our still rich biodiversity. From our forests and fields to our wetlands, lakeshores, parks and lawns our biodiversity is our most precious asset.

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[Translation]

AVERAGE INCOME OF FRANCOPHONES

Mr. Réjean Lefebvre (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, this morning's *Globe and Mail* reported on a Statistics Canada study which found that the median income of francophone Canadians was more than 10 per cent lower in 1992 than that of anglophones. The gap has more than doubled since 1977 and it is growing wider every year.

Considering that the aim of the Official Languages Act passed by the Liberal Party was to give francophones their rightful place in the Canadian economy, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the legislation has been a failure.

The study also found that Quebec francophones had made up some ground during the same period. The income gap between

anglophone and francophone families in Quebec has narrowed from 8.2 per cent to 1.9 per cent.

The income gap can be closed, Mr. Speaker, but one has to conclude that federal policies are not a contributing factor.

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[English]

CREDIT RATING

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, yesterday after the announcement of the downgrading of Canada's rating for foreign currency debt, the Minister of Finance stated it only affected a small portion of our total debt so it was no big deal.

Now the Bank of Canada has increased its key lending rate which undoubtedly will result in increased borrowing costs for Canadian consumers and businesses. It is also having an impact on the cost of government borrowing.

The budget did not address the deficit or debt. Now all Canadians are starting to pay for this short-sightedness.

When will the government realize it is on a course to financial disaster and revise the budget to deal with the problems it has created? Could it be that the government believes that all problems faced by Canadians are no big deal?

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THE ECONOMY

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville—Milton): Mr. Speaker, last week I listened to an hon. member of the opposition speak with sadness about the unfavourable conditions in his riding. There was a lack of hope in his voice. Let me assure the House that all the news is not bad and the economic recovery is beginning.

In Oakville—Milton more than 1,500 jobs have arrived since election day. Ford has increased its workforce by 1,100 and Lear Seating has hired 455 persons. Polywheels has expanded into a larger facility, thus expressing confidence in its future. Derlan Aerospace has secured the contract to retrofit the Lynx helicopters made in Britain, thus ensuring the employment of 300 workers in Milton.

This good news is being highlighted by the media and is reinforcing the climate of confidence which underpins new investment and economic growth.