

*Oral Questions*

If Mr. Mulroney made a personal promise to Mr. Bourassa, I will go before my Cabinet to ensure that the word of the former Prime Minister is honoured, even though he did not act prudently. If he promised something without having it approved by Treasury Board and the government then in office, I will not act illegally without the approval of cabinet, Treasury Board and my party.

\* \* \*

[English]

**SOCIAL SECURITY**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, may I divert the attention of the House to something Canadians really care about?

Canada's social programs are not sustainable at their current levels. In fact estimates by the Auditor General and the Superintendent of Financial Institutions show that within only 15 years Canada's social security system plus interest will exceed 100 per cent of all government revenues.

Is the minister going to reduce spending on social programs or raise taxes?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, the money that the federal government spends, along with funds spent by provincial governments, is the most important investment we can make because we are investing in the people of Canada.

We are helping young children to have a better life by making sure they are nurtured. We are helping young people get an education so they will have the skills for the future job market. We are providing security for older workers and we are helping our senior citizens.

As a country we have to stay strongly committed to the provision of an effective and improved social security system. This is the reason we will next week be putting forward a series of options, directions for Canadians to take a look at so they can become involved in the important debate as to the kind of social programs we want, how we will pay for it and how we make sure we improve them. That is the reason we are doing it.

I hope the hon. member will actively participate in that debate, unlike some of her colleagues who are saying let us not have a debate at all.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, seniors and those planning to retire want to know if their government pensions are safe and secure and who will pay for the programs that retiring Canadians have been counting on?

Will the minister's action plan deal with the reality that there will be a 40 per cent increase in the number of senior citizens in the next 15 years?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, the social security review that we will be launching next week deals primarily with matters of the workplace, with matters of lifelong learning and income security.

• (1430)

The hon. member should recall we made very explicit in last February's budget that programs pertaining to the question of old age security and the Canadian pension plan were not being touched as part of this review.

The Minister of Finance clearly indicated that we would be preparing and releasing a discussion paper to show what the demographic changes would be and what the long term impacts would be on some of our income security papers. That kind of analysis is now under way. It is the kind of thing that has to be shared with all Canadians to make sure we can reason together on very important issues.

Once again I invite the hon. member to participate in a constructive way in that debate.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should realize that Canadians cannot prepare an informed response to his action plan unless they understand the financial consequences.

Will the minister help all Canadians deal with this reality by providing detailed financial projections next week with all the elements of his action plan?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** Mr. Speaker, I could begin right at this moment to give Canadians one set of analyses. I heard the hon. member, in a press conference the Reform Party held, talk about a cut of \$15 billion in social programs. A \$15 billion cut would mean the total elimination of all assistance for children, all social services for seniors and all assistance for higher education from the federal level.

In other words, the Reform Party's fiscal program would wipe out assistance for children, young people and workers. We do not need that kind of fiscal program.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In its report released yesterday, the Canadian Institute of Child Health says that one child out of five lives in poverty in Canada. The Institute, which conducted a similar public study in 1989, concludes that child poverty and its harmful effects have increased.