

COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATIONS—REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT REPORT

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The Economic Council report contains 19 very constructive recommendations aimed at improving our economic performance and also some of the safety net programs in our country. In order to give some meaning to the Economic Council's function, will the Government commit to this House to report in detail on each of those of 19 recommendations by the end of November of this year?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the Economic Council's report does, in fact, contain many recommendations. However, I can inform the hon. gentleman that the Government of Canada is already implementing many of these. For instance, the ECC recommends that the Government pursue a monetary policy that will bring down interest rates in real terms in Canada. The hon. gentleman is of course aware that during the past four months, short-term interest rates in Canada have been lower than those in the United States, despite the fact that our inflation rate is slightly higher than in the U.S.

The ECC wants to maintain universality of medicare. I can only hope that the Progressive Conservatives will support us in our struggle to maintain the universality of medicare as well as the social programs we have been able to continue despite the recession, since so many Progressive Conservative are criticizing these programs right and left. The ECC has asked us to actively pursue implementation of a direct job creation and employee training program. In fact, we have invested billions of dollars in the projects in recent years. My hon. colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, indicated a few days ago that he was looking into further alternatives in this respect, and I could say the same about the 16 other recommendations. We do not have to wait until November, since they are already being implemented, and this was being done even before the report was published.

[English]

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, that is not good enough. The Minister referred to four recommendations, and there are 15 more. Surely we can get a report from the Government on what it is going to do about the other 15 recommendations, and not have to wait another two or three years for an \$800 a day Royal Commissioner to produce a report on some of the same things.

BURDEN OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PREMIUMS ON SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, I will put a more specific question to the Minister relating to a decision the Government is going to make on Unemployment Insurance premiums, I understand on October 18.

Oral Questions

Small business today employs about two-thirds of Canadians, yet it is discouraged from creating jobs by the high level of Unemployment Insurance premiums which are directly related to the number of employees. Since this report projects aggregate benefits of \$60 billion to \$65 billion over the next five years, which is a tremendous burden for small business, would the Government defer any increase in Unemployment Insurance premiums? It is clear these premiums are taxing job creation and are a clear disincentive to the hiring of young, untrained workers, which is probably the most important unemployment problem today.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, Unemployment Insurance premiums are set after consultation with the Advisory Committee on Unemployment Insurance which is made up of representatives of management and labour.

As the Hon. Member said before, a decision is due around October 18, but we have not reached that stage yet, and as soon as the Government is able to announce a decision in this respect, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) will be happy to announce that decision to Hon. Members and the House in general.

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● (1425)

[English]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NEED FOR JOB CREATION IN GASPÉ REGION OF QUEBEC

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It concerns a specific promise that he made. As everyone in the House knows, the situation in the Gaspé region in the Province of Quebec, in Canada, is one of the most horrible in terms of unemployment, averaging around 25 per cent and, in some communities, 80 per cent. Two years ago, on May 4, 1982, the Prime Minister went to the region and promised a specific development program. Last May no fewer than three Cabinet Ministers, with considerable fanfare, went to the same region and promised to spend some \$224 million in seven different parts of the economy to create jobs.

Given his commitment, and given the fanfare created by three Cabinet Ministers last May, to spend money to create jobs, why has there not been a single new job created in the Gaspé within the framework of these programs?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member could turn to his own Members. Then he would know part of the reasons for the delay. We were hoping to reach a joint agreement with the Province of Quebec in order to help develop this region. That has not been possible. We are opening within a few days, in Rimouski, I believe, an office which will be entrusted with the beginning of