

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, of course all of us are saddened by the tragedy that is occurring.

It has to be recognized that we have taken a number of very serious steps arising out of the economic plan I outlined last week to generate growth, to invest in people and to invest in business, particularly the small business sector; things such as the freeze on UI premiums for the employer, the 10 per cent investment tax credit, improved access to capital, improved treatment with respect to capital cost allowance on high-tech equipment, improved funding for IRAP, the extension of the home buyers' plan, assistance for the oil and gas sector, and assistance for the mining sector.

All these things are designed to generate growth through investment, to generate renewed economic activity, to bolster confidence and economic growth and to create jobs.

**Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East):** Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister about children.

In Saskatoon 2,500 food baskets are going to provide sustenance for kids and their families in the next two weeks. A Christmas dinner will feed 2,200 people in Saskatoon alone.

[Translation]

In Quebec City, 4,000 families will depend on Christmas baskets for food during the Christmas season. In Montreal, 18,000 children will receive Christmas baskets from Sun Youth.

I would therefore put the following question to the Minister of Finance: Why did he forget the children in his so-called mini-budget? Why did he not directly address the problem of one million children in Canada living below the poverty line?

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we have not forgotten about children. As a matter of fact the child benefit package which will take effect on January 1 will unleash another \$2 billion over the next five years to children, particularly working families that are in the poor and middle income categories. What could be more responsive than that?

In addition, the reduction in personal income tax that took effect on July 1, 1992 and an additional 1 per cent that will take effect on January 1, 1993 will unleash another \$2 billion worth of disposable income into the economy.

Clearly the best social safety net is a job. What we announced last week were steps to encourage growth, to encourage economic activity and to create jobs.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister's photo-op of a year ago when he signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child cost Canadian taxpayers over \$50,000. Canada committed itself then to reducing child poverty, yet every report indicates that this year more children are living in poverty than there were last December.

Even though the children are not here today for another photo-op, their problems continue to haunt the government. Will the Prime Minister now acknowledge to the House that Canadian children have taken a giant step backward in the last year?

**Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to children the Minister of Finance outlined quite clearly the child benefit package that will come into effect on January 1, which puts another \$2.1 billion into the hands of lower income people.

Another matter I would like to mention has to do with *Brighter Futures* that the Minister of National Health and Welfare announced some months ago in which we are assisting those people who really need the help with another \$500 million over five years.

We do acknowledge there are problems. I want the member to know that we have looked at the needs of children very specifically, not necessarily in the economic statement but we took action long before that.

**Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, in listening closely to the parliamentary secretary's response, will note that she does not deny the fact that children are worse off this December than they were last December. It does not matter where