

Oral Questions

That approach is serving us well because we have got inflation down. We have got interest rates down. Unemployment is starting to come down. Employment has increased, I believe, in eight or nine of the last consecutive months. The composite indicators are looking good. We have the small business sector with a new Small Businesses Loans Act. The Bank of Nova Scotia just announced a 6 per cent prime rate of interest for small business loans. We think that is a very positive effect.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

As a result of this government's 37 tax increases including the dreaded GST both small and medium sized business, as well as working and middle class families, have never ever been squeezed as much as they have. This has obviously put the lid on economic activity.

Given that this is a reality why did the minister refuse yesterday to rule out further individual tax increases? Rather than try to further shrink the pocketbooks of individual Canadians with additional taxes, why does he not try to make the economy grow and provide opportunities, confidence and hope?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, under tax reform we took 850,000 low income Canadians off the tax rolls. Two hundred and fifty thousand of them were senior citizens, and nine out of ten Canadians aged 65 and over are paying reduced taxation.

We now have growth in the economy. The unemployment rate is down. The help wanted index is up. Department store sales are up. Retail sales are up. The prime rate is at 6 per cent, the lowest in 20 years. We have mortgage rates, the lowest in 35 years. We have housing prices down. Retail—

Mr. Speaker: We should press on. The hon. member for Simcoe Centre.

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YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs. Edna Anderson (Simcoe Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. It is time to stop

protecting young offenders who commit violent crimes. When the charter protects individual rights at the expense of public good then the charter has gone beyond the limit of the initial intent of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To be just, we must balance the rights of the victim, the rights of society and the rights of the offender. I cannot accept that our laws cannot reflect more closely the values of our society. If there is political will it can be done.

• (1500)

Could the Solicitor General tell the House what is being done to address this issue of great concern to my constituents of Simcoe Centre?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, the recent amendments to the Young Offenders Act which balanced the protection of the public with the interests of the young person have made it easier to transfer young people to adult court.

The House will know that the Court of Appeal recently upheld them as being within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I know the Minister of Justice is looking at further amendments to the Young Offenders Act and anticipates bringing them in as soon as possible.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to the attention of members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency, Dr. Egon Klepsch, President of the European Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I also wish to draw to the attention of members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Necmettin Cevheri, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for Turkey.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Also in the gallery today is Senator Zofia Kuratowska from Poland.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.