

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

YOUTH

REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PROGRAM

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister of which he has been given notice. Yesterday or today the Prime Minister received a letter, I understand, from Senator Jacques Hébert in which the Senator says in part as follows:

My action is intended to draw attention to the desperate plight of unemployed youth—

Since the Government has said it is developing new programs for youth, will the Prime Minister make an announcement of these programs today?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I indicated on March 3 and March 11 in the House and in other circumstances to the press that at an appropriate time, at or about the end of the fiscal year, and in appropriate fashion the Government would be announcing new programs, including programs that deal with the problems affecting Canada's youth.

I am honoured to be able to say we have made substantial improvements. We inherited an unemployment situation that was at 18.4 per cent when we came in, and we reduced it to 16.4 per cent. Two hundred and eighty-five thousand jobs were lost for young people in the previous four years, and we have already created a net 50,000 new jobs. This is not perfection, but this is steady, considerable progress on behalf of Canadian youth.

SENATOR'S LETTER

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I have a further question for the Prime Minister. Senator Hébert concludes his letter by saying:

I am appealing to you, Prime Minister, to consider once more the purpose of my efforts and to exercise all the political will at your command to bring back hope to the youth of Canada.

I want to ask the Prime Minister will he exercise that political will and announce the action he is talking about not at the end of the fiscal year but today.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I indicated publicly in this House on a number of occasions that it would be our intention to announce, at or about the end of the fiscal year, our intention in this regard. I will check with my colleagues and officials and see where we are in regard to that. I have not personally gone through the Senator's letter but I will be happy to do so after Question Period, and to respond as I did in the past.

TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, we understand the Prime Minister's difficulties in this kind of matter, and I note what he has said. I would ask him again to do everything possible to look at the matter of timing with respect to the programs his Ministers have said they are preparing, and make an announcement if at all possible today or very soon thereafter?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention of my hon. friend and I understand and sympathize with many of the motives. I do not think anybody in this House, irrespective of political persuasion, is happy with the youth unemployment situation, which has been improved under this Government. It is far from perfect and we have a lot to do.

I would point out to my hon. friend, and I think most fair-minded people would acknowledge, that the election, among other things, brought about a change in approach, not necessarily perfect, but a change in approach to some of these programs. On further reflection it is our belief that the private sector, under proper conditions, plays a vital job-creating role for youth as well.

I was deeply encouraged again by a drop in the CPI this morning by three-tenths of a percentage point. Yesterday the bank rate dropped more than half a point. In the last few weeks it dropped 1.75 per cent, and that is good for youth, and good for the economy and job-creation.

[Translation]

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PROGRAMS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Prime Minister.

Now that the Prime Minister has admitted he will announce a program in a matter of weeks, by the end of the fiscal year, he could perhaps, in the name of human and Christian charity, visit Senator Hébert and perhaps take him into his confidence and give him the assurance that by the end of the month a program will be announced. I assume the program is ready?

Please, Mr. Prime Minister, isn't there a way to do this? I know how seriously you are taking Senator Hébert's gesture. This is a matter that is above all political partisanship.

Would it not be possible for the Prime Minister to go and give Senator Hébert his assurance, so that he can end his hunger strike, because I think everyone in Canada would like to see—

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend mentioned the absence of a partisan dimension, but on the other hand he started his question by saying that the Prime Minister admitted something today. I did not admit anything.