

Oral Questions

women in Canada are watching this matter very carefully. That is why I said, and I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that today, no silicone breast implants are available on the market, and until I have had information to the effect that there is no risk involved, I will no longer allow this type of breast implant on the Canadian market.

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[English]

JOB TRAINING

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, on January 15 the employment minister chaired a meeting of his OECD counterparts and a discussion of employment and labour market policies. At that meeting the minister recognized that we needed to develop a co-operative strategy to address unemployment created by the major restructuring of the international economy. He also said that we needed to develop training and re-employment programs.

I ask the Minister of Finance, in the absence of the minister of employment: Considering that training programs are indispensable to Canada's global competitiveness, is he still committed to the goals the minister outlined in January?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, I must repeat that we have put in place several strategies in various departments and programs.

We are maintaining our programs and we offer programs that give workers seeking employment an opportunity to learn more, acquire new skills and become better able to compete in a world of globalized markets.

We are respecting the measures that were announced and we are on schedule.

[English]

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (York North): Mr. Speaker, an internal memo in my possession from Employment and Immigration Canada reveals that the government is in the process of dismantling existing training programs in metro Toronto. The memo calls for budget cuts of 20

to 50 per cent, which will effectively kill many of the programs.

The programs in question help those most in need. They have a 100 per cent subscription rate. They have huge waiting lists. Eighty-five per cent of the graduates find work.

In an age when training is so vital to our nation, why would this government even consider or give any thought to having cuts in this most devastating economic recession? We need to train this nation. Can the minister guarantee us that these programs, and more important these people, will be protected?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, I really find my learned colleague opposite to be exaggerating.

We are continuing to dialogue with the provinces and trying to see how we can work with the provinces in Canada to be able to attain our common objective of ensuring a higher standard of living and respecting workers who are in search of employment.

I do not want to hear it said that we are not following our budget, because over the year, further to our decision in the wake of Bill C-21, which unfortunately was passed too late, we invested large amounts. We are working together with the provinces—Ontario, Quebec and the rest—to make it easier for every person who is out of work to get back into society and the economy.

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[English]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

This government was warned of the devastating effects the GST could have on the economy. Since the GST has come in we have seen those devastating effects: thousands of bankruptcies, some 52,000 retail jobs lost, and a loss of \$1 billion to the Canadian economy.

I want to say to the Minister of Finance that it must be devastating to Canadians, to retailers and to consumers to hear that the government's answer to cross-border shopping is to have Canadians pay more tax. The