

Oral Questions

leaded and unleaded gasoline. However, the Government has forgotten one thing. It has forgotten to give assistance to the energy sector. Without any assistance to the energy sector, why is there this tax grab against Canadian motorists?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think I said two or three times in the Budget Speech that we have acknowledged that the energy industry is going through some difficult times today. We have also acknowledged that one of the ways we can address this problem is through tax reform. We can address the problem in the energy industry in a more permanent way through tax reform. We have also said that as projects come forward in which there could be a role for the federal Government, we want to discuss them very carefully with the provinces and the elements of the industry involved to see if there is a role for the Government to play. These are things we want to do, and we will continue addressing these matters on an ongoing basis.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, honourable mention in the Minister's Budget will not help the energy sector. Why is the Minister using lower world oil prices to gouge Canadian motorists constantly?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to embarrass the Hon. Member by reminding him of what happened to gasoline prices during the period between 1980 and 1984. They went up quite significantly, and today they are down below the level of September, 1984. The Hon. Member should be quite aware of the record of the Government with which he was involved and of our record today as a Government.

SMALL OIL INDUSTRY COMPANIES

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, I wish to follow that up with the Minister of Finance. This morning I spoke to some representatives of the small petroleum exploration service companies in Alberta. They told me that they are simply dying and that the removal of the PGRT helped the big boys but did not help them at all. You raised \$450 million by hosing the consumer again for one cent a litre—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us try to concentrate.

Mr. Waddell: You are absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry. I am losing my riding so that should concentrate my mind a bit.

The one-cent-per-litre increase means \$450 million. Why does the Minister not put that into a special fund and earmark it for aid to small Canadian producers in western Canada?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think we have indicated quite clearly by our actions last year, when we quadrupled the small producer tax credit and made changes retroactively to help those people who were providing funding through royalty income to the small producers, that we have responded clearly to those concerns. As I just said in response to a previous question, there is still more that might be done. We want to address this clearly and on a permanent basis through tax reform. I would appreciate the support and recommendations of the Hon. Member as we get closer to that date.

Mr. Speaker: I will try to recognize a few more Hon. Members but—

[*Translation*]

—but I would ask Hon. Members to limit themselves to only one question. The Hon. Member for Montreal—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) has the floor.

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THE BUDGET

PROVISIONS CONCERNING THE NEEDY

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The Minister is aware that in 1985 there were in Canada some four million men and women living below the poverty line. He is also aware that in every town and village in Canada, non profit organizations have to set up clothing and food banks, better known in Montreal as "*La soupe*". He will know also that the lineups in front of these food banks are getting longer every day.

Could the Minister indicate to Hon. Members as well as these four million people on what page of his Budget they are likely to find a way out of their poverty?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think that for Canadians the best way out of poverty is through employment. We have created 675,000 jobs. In the province of Quebec, we have created eight times more jobs than the previous Government.

[*English*]

In addition to that, I have outlined clearly with the refundable sales tax credit, with the acceleration of the child tax credit and with the increase in the child tax credit, that all these are designed to help those below the low-income cut-off line. The results show that 263,000 fewer Canadian families are below the low-income cut-off line. That is progress.