

Oral Questions

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

PRICE INCREASES—GOVERNMENT CONTINGENCY
PLAN—LEVEL OF RISE NECESSARY TO JUSTIFY
IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): My question is for the Prime Minister. Some time ago the Prime Minister indicated the government would be willing to put into operation its contingency plan, which he told us has been in existence for some time, when the cost of living had reached a stage at which it seriously affected our export position and the unprotected sector of the Canadian earning community. Can he tell the House whether the cost of living has now increased to the extent that this plan will be used? If not, to what extent must the cost of living rise before the government makes such a move?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The hon. member is asking for a statement of our policy on this matter. Such a statement has repeatedly been made by the Minister of Finance and by myself. When we have further announcements to make, we shall let the House know before anyone else.

• (1150)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I realize that a number of members are seeking the floor to pose supplementary questions on this important matter, but perhaps we might try to have two, three or four questions on other subjects following the supplementary question of the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate.

I might also say that I am not sure we completed the first round of questioning. I was not able to determine whether the hon. member for York South was asking supplementaries. He called his first question a supplementary but it was perhaps more a related question than a supplementary. In fairness I think I should recognize the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate on a supplementary question at this time.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Prime Minister a very straightforward question. In view of the fact he has rejected the suggestions by our party, by the hon. member for St. John's East and the hon. member for York South, can he tell the House whether the government is willing to take any action at all toward controlling or influencing the direction of the cost of living, and will he announce to the House right now whether the government has any such plans or whether it is prepared to announce such plans, or does it intend to do nothing about this problem?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, my question is on housing and I direct it to the Minister of State for—

Mr. Lundrigan: On a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize to the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby, but the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate rises on a point of order.

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might repeat my question as the Prime Minister obviously did not hear it, and I am sure he would certainly want to answer it.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member asked his question clearly. Obviously there was quiet in the House and I am sure all hon. members heard the question. The hon. member will appreciate, I am sure, that while he has the right to ask a question he cannot insist on an answer. That is why the Chair recognized the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby.

Mr. Lundrigan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is fine for the Prime Minister to sit and sulk, but there are 22 million Canadians across this country who want to know the answers to some of these questions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member should resume his seat. He has raised a point of order that is not a point of order. He suggests that the right hon. Prime Minister should reply to his question, but he knows very well that he cannot insist on that.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, I want to know from the Prime Minister if he refuses to answer questions by hon. members in this House—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Some hon. Members: Sit down!

Mr. Lundrigan: If the Prime Minister is refusing to answer questions of members of this House, it would at least be an answer if he would get up in the House and say so. But I respectfully submit that for the leader of this country to sit and sulk—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lundrigan: —and refuse to get up and answer a question—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Lundrigan: —which was not in any way a partisan question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair has recognized the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby. I have made my ruling on the point raised by the hon. member. He is unhappy or concerned about the fact that he did not get a reply to his question. That is his right. But again the rules are clear that an hon. member cannot insist on a reply to a question. I suggest to hon. members that we could spend the whole of the question period arguing whether or not the question should be replied to, but that would not be very helpful. I doubt whether the hon. member would achieve very much except to register his protest, which he has already done.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Many members on this side of the House have