

Oral Questions

Inflation and the cost of doing business are down. We are improving the investment climate to help the restructuring process and to ensure that the companies engaged in manufacturing and processing will invest in Canada, will improve their facilities, and will make new investments that will create new jobs. That is why we are so confident that 500,000 new jobs will be created this year and a million jobs over the next four years.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, a lot of consolation that is to the unemployed Canadian today. This government has the moral responsibility to put those Canadians back to work. The minister says he is going to create half a million new jobs, yet he admits that the unemployment rate will remain as high as it is.

The government's only answer to the unemployed in this country is tough luck. The minister promised a realistic budget and unemployed Canadians are asking today what exactly is this minister's definition of reality. Is he so far out of touch with reality that he has totally ignored the pain and the suffering out there? Does he not realize that people are hurting? Why? I would like to ask the minister why he has not given some hope to the unemployed in Canada.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the hon. member, this budget does give hope.

One only has to listen to the spokesmen for the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Business Council on National Issues, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

They have indicated that with the fundamentals in place, with low inflation and with low interest rates, what we have to do is create a positive climate for investment so that new investment will take place to modernize, to upgrade, to encourage new investment, and to create new job opportunities, particularly in the processing and manufacturing sectors.

We have outlined five specific initiatives: the increase of the capital cost allowance; lower tax rates; improvements in venture capital; improvements in R and D; and reductions to withholding tax.

All of these are seen as positive moves which will create a climate of confidence and a ray of hope for those who are working today and those who are unemployed.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the minister told Canadian women that Canada cannot afford to pay them as much as men. The minister said yesterday that regardless of the Human Rights Commission's decision, the government has no intention of paying a fair salary to 70,000 women who have struggled for eight years for a basic right. Why this discrimination? Why are women the victims of this government's unfair and ill-conceived policies?

Hon. Gilles Loiseleur (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of sounding immodest, I would like to tell the hon. member that this government is very proud of what it has done for pay equity in Canada. In any event, I believe that this government is the first national government in Canada to do so, long before the Liberals and the provincial governments, and even all other governments in the world, if I am not mistaken. Not one of them acted as we did, giving pay equity as we did.

I will remind the hon. member that in recent years we gave nearly \$500 million in catch-up payments and that we pay out \$80 million a year for that.

The decision we made in the budget was to do what the provinces do and not be liable to pay for the past, for the Liberal regime. We are assuming our responsibilities for the future and that is what we are prepared to do. We believe in pay equity and that is what we will do for the future.

[*English*]

Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. The minister knows perfectly well that he is cheating Canadian women out of \$1 billion.

Equality does not begin and end when this government says it does. During the last election the Prime Minister said the money was in the bank for pay equity.