

Oral Questions

dealing with special problems and God knows there are plenty have made me proud to represent my riding, and I am sure this applies to all of us.

Our assistants work long hours and are a credit to us, both in our ridings and in Ottawa. I know my fellow members will agree they earn every penny of their modest salary, considering their responsibilities and dedication.

Today, I would like to express my gratitude and say that I am proud to be able to count on their competence and dedication. On behalf of all my colleagues, I wish them the very best during the holiday season.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[English]

NORTHERN BENEFITS

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, last week the member for Abitibi indicated to this House that he was going back to his riding with good news on the new tax benefit plan for northern and isolated areas.

I am unable to say the same thing. Thirty-six communities in my riding of Cochrane—Superior will lose the northern tax allowance in 1995 as a result of the decision of the Minister of Finance, who is also prolonging the injustice that he created in 1988.

The towns of Longlac and Geraldton are side by side. Longlac receives the benefit but Geraldton does not, yet Geraldton is as isolated as Longlac. The same situation occurs with Marathon and White River, Kapuskasing and Valrita, Hearst and Mattice.

These towns share the same lack of services, the same high transportation and fuel costs, the same inclement weather. I would have preferred, by far, seeing all of northern Ontario qualify for the tax benefit. This would have been fair for everyone.

[Translation]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Clément Couture (Saint-Jean): A little over two years ago, Mr. Speaker, our government introduced legislation on drug patents, Bill C-22. It was stalled in the Senate for several months on the pretense that the drug manufacturing industry would not feel compelled to increase its research and development budget, and that drugs prices would quadruple.

Mr. Speaker, research and development expenditures in that sector have almost doubled since 1986 and, at worst, drug prices have only kept pace with the rate of increase in the cost of living. We knew we were on the right track with Bill C-22, just as we know we are on the right track with the GST. The senators must end their charades and unwarranted efforts and pass the GST legislation.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CANADA'S GREEN PLAN

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Just about every environmentalist has attacked the government's green plan as being nothing more than empty rhetoric. Even its so-called action plans and targets are in most cases nothing more than vague generalities.

For example, if we look at goal 1, clean air, water and land, it speaks when it comes to a target of protection and enhancement of the quality of our water resources. Not one word about specific dates for action, not one word about specific legislation, not one word about specific funding.

Isn't it a fact that the minister's green plan is looking to most Canadians more and more like nothing else but a green scam, and that is all?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first of all it appears that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has recycled his question from yesterday. I commend him on that, because they were not very good yesterday.