

Oral Questions

● (1130)

What will the minister do to introduce a policy on stable mortgage interest rates? What will he do to stimulate jobs to have more construction for workers like Tony Brown?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that it is quite impossible to examine individual cases during question period. It is impossible to do that. I had an experience earlier this week when a particular member raised a question and provided what appeared to be the details of a particular case, and when asked to provide the facts later was unable to do so in a way that would venture or provide a basis for an investigation.

I want to tell the hon. member that we did provide in the budget, first of all, for a program of assistance that will ensure that no family will lose their home as a result of high interest rates. That is the absolute fact.

The hon. member now adds a further question with respect to rental construction. We have provided in the budget very substantial sums of money to encourage rental construction in this country.

During last session and in this session the hon. member poured scorn on the existence of MURBs in the housing field. I was surprised that the hon. member, upon learning that we intend to drop MURBs at the beginning of next year, did not stand up and say, "Bravo".

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HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**UREA FORMALDEHYDE FOAM INSULATION—COMPENSATION SOUGHT FOR HOME OWNERS**

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, it has been more than eleven months since the government officially banned urea formaldehyde foam insulation. In the meantime 100,000 home owners are worrying and wondering about what the government will do, and in many cases there is a sense of desperation about what has happened to their property values. Many of them are also facing serious health situations. About six different ministers in the government are handling this UFFI problem.

I want to ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, who is responsible for CHIP, whether the Minister of State, the hon. member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, was announcing government policy recently when he said that the Treasury Board had accepted the principle of evaluating dangers and compensating victims of UFFI? Since he made that statement, has he been able to convince his cabinet colleagues on the need for compensation for UFFI victims?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the minister responsible for this matter, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, was

present in the House all week and would have been able to answer this question, which, in fact, he already answered last week. I therefore have nothing to add to the reply given last week on the subject by my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

[English]

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT ADVICE

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, I repeat that there are six government ministers who are looking into the question of UFFI. There is nothing contained in the budget in the way of contingency plans for emergency compensation.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs says in a letter to my colleagues:

—action required will be decided upon, once the results of the national testing survey, the recommendations of the Board of Review, and the findings of the Co-ordination Centre are available.

The nation-wide testing, Madam Speaker, was completed at the end of October. The Board of Review recommendations on UFFI will not be known until sometime in mid-winter.

I will direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister. What are people supposed to do until the government gets its act together with regard to this UFFI matter? What advice does the government have for people who are getting sick? Are they supposed to take it upon themselves to remove this dangerous foam insulation?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, once more, I may refer my colleague to what has already been said on the subject by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The Minister has informed the House that complaints were being investigated at the homes of people who had been particularly affected. These investigations have been or are being finalized, and whatever evidence we have gathered so far is now under scrutiny and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has indicated that he would publish this information as soon as possible and would then be in a position to indicate whether any other steps could be taken.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS**PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF HIS EXCELLENCY JOSÉ CARLOS GANÇALVES VIANA, MINISTER OF FISHERIES OF PORTUGAL**

Madam Speaker: I should like to draw the attention of the House to the distinguished presence in our gallery of His Excellency José Carlos Gançalves Viana, the Portuguese Secretary of State for Fisheries.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!