

[English]

My question is for the Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker.

On March 16 the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories unanimously passed a motion condemning this government for cutting programs and services important to the Northwest Territories and for disregarding the effects of these cuts on the people of the NWT, a majority of whom are aboriginal people.

Why has this government chosen to celebrate 1993, the United Nations International Year of Indigenous People, by inflicting additional hardships on the aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories?

Mrs. Barbara Sparrow (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague is referring to the 1988 health transfer program with regard to the federal government's transfer to the Government of the Northwest Territories to fulfil our obligations with regard to their autonomy of looking after their health care and welfare issues.

That particular case is before the courts. It would be quite inappropriate for me to make any further comment until the case is resolved.

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Finance, in the absence of the Secretary of State who I might add moved the United Nations motion to recognize 1993 as the year of the indigenous people.

Among the cuts condemned by the NWT legislative assembly in its motion is the cut to the Canada-NWT language co-operation agreement. Under this agreement the federal government is obliged to fully fund the provision of services in French and to preserve, develop and enhance aboriginal languages.

Why has the minister disregarded his obligation under the terms of this agreement? Will he agree today to revoke these cuts?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in this House on many occasions, the increase in transfers to the provinces and the territories has been growing at the rate of 5.2 per cent per year or 60 per cent since the time we came into office. In the area of the Canada Assistance Program, for example, that rate of growth has been 8 per cent per year.

I should say as well in terms of our expenditures for the aboriginal community that the expenditures have

Oral Questions

doubled since we have come into office from about \$1.4 billion or \$1.5 billion to \$3 billion.

• (1455)

That hardly strikes me as a signal that the government is not concerned about the welfare of the aboriginal people. I think that kind of growth, which is something in the area of 8 per cent per year, is quite substantial. At a time when we are under very severe fiscal restraint and fiscal pressures we still continue to increase that budget substantially.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance.

Despite the claims of his government that the recession is over, Canadians know a very different story and those same Canadians have no faith in this government's management of the national economy.

In fact in a recent survey over 81 per cent of Canadians felt that they were still in an economic recession and that there was not any hope for an immediate withdrawal from that.

I ask the minister who is in the process of preparing a budget for next month: Has the government heard the voices of Canadians? Is it finally prepared to commit itself to a job creation budget that would not only produce some much needed job opportunities but instil some much needed confidence in both the marketplace and consumers?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate what the hon. member is saying. We have said all along that the recovery was going to be a slow and painful process because there is substantial restructuring and adjustment that still have to take place. I think he would agree with me that the fourth quarter of 1992 experienced growth of 3.5 per cent. That seems to be continuing into the first quarter.

I can tell my hon. friend that in the course of consultations I have been engaged in, in preparation of a budget, the indicator I have been getting from Canadians far and wide right across the board—and we have consulted with all sectors of Canadian society—is that we have to address the difficulties of the deficit and the debt; that we have to do it in a co-ordinated fashion, both at the federal and the provincial levels; and that we have to do it through cost cutting measures and not through increases in taxation.