

Oral Questions

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): The problem is that in some sectors, such as with scrap refrigerators, 100 per cent of the CFCs are being vented and are leaking into the atmosphere.

Part of the NDP plan I am talking about to protect the ozone layer would require the implementation of full cycle national recovery. You need laws to do that. This is a plan that would create thousands of jobs in the private sector. It would create a private sector industry of over \$100 million in value. It would protect the ozone and it would not require one new dollar of federal taxes, not one new dollar of federal expenditure.

That sounds like a pretty good plan to help protect the planet. Will the minister implement it?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in fact we are a bit ahead of the game. Not only a bit, but very much ahead of the game in this area.

Last August the federal government announced through the green plan a \$25 million initiative which has as a specific objective the acceleration of regulatory programs in this area. We are working very closely with the provinces to determine whether or not a regulatory regime would be necessary, given the fact that we will be reducing by 85 per cent the amount of CFCs we put in the atmosphere by 1995. We are away ahead of schedule.

That being said and the seriousness of the problem, given the leadership role that this government has always played on this issue and the seriousness of the issue, I will undertake to communicate directly with my provincial colleagues on the suggestion made by my hon. colleague to see whether or not the Canadian Council of the Ministers of the Environment would want to undertake some specific action, given the new scientific information we have.

Furthermore, at the next meeting of the countries that signed the Montreal protocol in November 1992, Canada will ask that we accelerate the schedule for phasing out CFCs.

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BANKRUPTCY

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The 1991 bankruptcy statistics are in and they are truly devastating. Over 75,000 Canadian men, women and businesses

have gone belly up, the true victims of this government's insane high interest, high dollar, high tax policy.

How much economic devastation will we have to endure before the government abandons the destructive economic policies which have directly resulted in the highest level of bankruptcies in the history of this country?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that last conclusion is absolutely false because the incidence of bankruptcies was much higher in the 1981-82 recession.

While I share the hon. member's concern, I have to tell him that what is encouraging is that month over month there has been a decline in bankruptcies. Business bankruptcies have declined by roughly 100 and personal bankruptcies have declined by over 1,100 for a total of 1,133 fewer bankruptcies in December than in November.

I realize that does not provide a whole lot of comfort, but I think we should take some encouragement in the fact that the incidence of bankruptcies is on the decline. With some of the initiatives that have been announced and an increase and improvement in confidence, that will be reduced further still.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister. We seem to have heard this song before.

Last February the then Minister of Finance said the recession would be over by June. In August of last year the current Minister of Finance said that we were well on the road to recovery.

The 62,000 Canadian consumers who were forced into bankruptcy in 1991 have completely lost faith in this government's ability to either predict or manage the Canadian economy.

Given these cold, hard facts, is the Prime Minister now prepared to endorse and fully accept the five-point recovery program put forward by the Leader of the Opposition?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, what the member chooses to overlook in the substance of his question is the fact that when we compare 1981 to 1991 we see that the number of businesses in Canada almost doubled. In 1981 there were 780,000 businesses. Today there are 1,730,000. The aggregate numbers are up but indeed the percentages are down.