

Oral Questions

and I quote, "I am not aware of any deal like this." I should like to ask the minister if there is a deal and, if so, why have the financial institutions not been told? Or is this another one of his secrets?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): The best way to respond to the question of the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party is to offer him a document signed by the President of the Canadian Bankers' Association. It is a response to an individual person's request for help, and indicates that the association has set up senior executives who are charged to interview each individual branch operation to respond to people's individual needs in order to avoid the problem the hon. member refers to. I would be happy to provide the document to the hon. member.

REQUEST FOR MINISTERIAL GUARANTEE AGAINST LOSS OF HOME OWNERSHIP

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): I have listened with care to the minister's answer. He said a spokesperson for the Canadian Bankers' Association offered such a promise, even though the secretary of that association in yesterday's press said that no such deal existed. Considering there are families across Canada losing their homes every day and thousands more caught in this housing crisis, is the minister prepared to guarantee to those families that no family will lose their home before the budget is brought down?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): I share the concern of the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party. After the meeting between the Minister of Finance and representatives of the financial institutions I requested they accept that responsibility, which I view to be, in large part, their responsibility toward their clients. We have seen the results of this, Madam Speaker, in the Royal Bank's press release yesterday. We saw a statement that said, "We want a situation where no Royal Bank's client risks losing his or her home because high interest payments temporarily make monthly payments too heavy to bear."

Our objective—and I am sure it is shared because of the question of the hon. leader—is to see that all mortgage holders adopt that as an objective until budget time, and until the government indicates what its response is in concert with the mortgage holders.

● (1430)

REQUEST FOR PRE-BUDGET ACTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, everyone will have noted that the minister did not offer the guarantee I requested so that people would not lose their homes. In all that verbiage no guarantee was offered. This crisis is of immense concern not only to the families who are losing their homes but to those who are having to change their family budgets, or having to put another person out to work to maintain their homes because of mortgage levels. Will the minister take concrete action before the budget comes down to

help those families avoid this crisis? I ask that in the context that I have accumulated today more than 15,000 signatures of people who are concerned about the interest crisis, many of whom are from the minister's riding.

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, the answer to that question is yes. At a public meeting last evening in my riding I met with a number of my constituents. In response to that question, my office accepted a number of complaints and requests for help which were made. I will attempt to respond to those cases which are brought to my attention, those cases where there is genuine concern that homes would be in jeopardy before the other financial institutions respond to the Royal Bank initiative or the budget. I would be happy to receive any case from any individual Member of Parliament who is genuinely concerned there is a hazard that the home will be lost.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

QUERY RESPECTING ACTION BY MINISTER OF FINANCE

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The minister demanded in the past that the chartered banks take the first step in aiding home owners victimized by high interest rates. Also he demanded that the banks, "be fair, be compassionate and bleed a little". The minister will be aware of the five-point plan announced by the Royal Bank to which the minister responsible for housing referred. It will cost the Royal Bank about \$2 million.

Now that the chartered banks have taken the initiative, is the minister prepared to bleed a little himself by introducing measures to aid hard-pressed home owners, or is he continuing to avoid the issue, which is the political equivalent of cutting his wrists?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, all I can say is to express my acknowledgement that the Royal Bank has taken a proper step in announcing an additional program of five points to assist home owners facing renewals. I believe it will be of assistance in certain cases. It will offer renewal at 16 per cent where conditions warrant, which will be quite helpful. I have stated to the financial institutions, in my several meetings with them, that I expected them to take some responsibility, and once they had demonstrated what the private sector could do it would be easier for the government to add, if necessary. I am moving in that sequence, and I am very pleased that the Royal Bank has moved in the correct direction.

TASK FORCE REPORT

Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Minister of Finance who is clearly leaving the responsibility on the shoulders of the banks. I should like to point out how he moved 3,000 petitions complaining about high interest rates from his