

Oral Questions

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance says that Canadians are being pessimistic.

It is very difficult when we see that food banks have tripled, that bankruptcies are up at record levels, when the number of jobs available through the help wanted index is down, and when in fact the government's response to 1.5 million Canadians has simply been: Wait until the economies of other countries rebound and that will make our economy get better.

The International Monetary Fund and the OECD have indicated that the world-wide recession is going to continue. That does not mean that the minister can, as he did today, say: "Well, we can't do anything about it". This government has some choices to make. Is the minister going to continue to ask 1.5 million Canadians to wait until the Japanese economy rebounds and wait until the U.S. economy rebounds, or is he going to do something here at home for Canadian workers and Canadian business?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member talked about my suggestion that Canadians were pessimistic, I was simply quoting from an article written by an economist, Tom McCormack. There are choices to be made.

• (1430)

I notice that New Democratic governments choose to tax people more. They choose to tax corporations more.

We choose to tax Canadians less. We choose to provide incentives to small business. We choose to provide incentives to the manufacturing and processing sectors because that is where the jobs will be created and maintained. That is what will help Canada improve its competitive position.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, it would be very interesting to the Canadian public to hear this minister lecture about tax increases when this government has brought in 35 tax increases since it came into power in 1984 and then, on top of that, put in the GST.

An hon. member: Talk about trying to have it both ways.

Ms. McLaughlin: Yesterday the government was told once again that there is a practical plan to begin to put at

least some Canadians back to work, a large number of Canadians, through a municipal infrastructure program. The Canadian Federation of Municipalities estimates that approximately 67,000 more taxpayers from coast to coast could be gainfully employed, through a municipal infrastructure program.

Why does the minister not consider addressing both the environmental problem that we have through decaying municipal infrastructures and the unemployment program by seriously considering participating in this co-operative program?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I find it very difficult to follow the logic of the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party.

Yesterday she was complaining about the fact that we have not taxed corporations and Canadians enough. Today she is saying we have taxed them too much. She is going to have to make up her mind.

An hon. member: The corporations.

Mr. Mazankowski: Corporations create jobs. Small businesses create jobs. Medium sized corporations create jobs. Big corporations create jobs. Why do you want to kill corporations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Yukon.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, in many foreign countries, the unemployment rate is much lower than it is in Canada. It is 5.5 per cent in Germany, 4 per cent in Holland and 2 per cent in Japan. These countries are doing something about the recession. When will this government stop depending on the economy in other countries to save our own? When will it start setting up programs for workers and businesses in this country? It is a fact that the unemployment rate in the countries I just mentioned is lower than ours. Why do we have a 10 per cent unemployment rate in Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has a short memory. For the last 30 years, and particularly the last six or seven years, Canada has led all OECD nations, that is all the industrialized nations in the world,