

Oral Questions

I am prepared to ask that violations be corrected if my hon. friend would be prepared to be specific—very specific—in actually what violations he alleges are taking place.

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question, in the absence of the Prime Minister, the deputy Prime Minister, the energy minister and the environment minister, I fear I must direct to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. member could put his question.

Mr. Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, it is for the finance minister. He is here.

The government's environment discussion paper highlights the need to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, echoing previous statements by the Prime Minister. Last fall the energy minister himself noted that: "The greatest reductions in carbon dioxide can be obtained through energy efficiency and conservation"—funding for which this government has cut by 92 per cent since 84.

Will the government now preclude otherwise justifiable charges of stunning hypocrisy by restoring funding for these programs to not less than their 1984 levels, which would almost immediately prevent energy waste and ensure Canada a competitive edge in tomorrow's more sustainable world?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the leader of the New Democratic Party, the party has sunk to new lows in trying to find some quality in its questioners.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I think that the paper released yesterday by the Minister of Environment set out a number of ways that can be considered in dealing with influencing better environmental behaviour. There are some things that involve taxes, while other things involve regulation, user and polluter pay. These are a range of policy instruments that can be used that will improve the activities, actions and behaviour of Canadians, whether they are individuals or businesses, in dealing with things that relate to the cleanliness of our environment. These are all things that will be subject to

the environmental discussions that will arise out of the consultations.

I am sure that we will have a very successful result from this consultation, and arising out of that we will have a strong action plan.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. I would like to ask the minister very directly if he would respond to the previous, clear question which pointed out that over the last six years his government has cut the alternative energy budget by 93 per cent.

In a show of faith today, if he truly believes in this recycled document, will the minister order the reinstatement of the full budget which was cut 93 per cent by his government? Will he restore the full budget for alternative energy studies?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, both this questioner and the previous one have focused in on one element of environmental policy. Our environmental policy covers quite a range of elements.

The resources that we are committing to the environment have increased since 1984 and they will continue to increase. As I indicated to the hon. member's leader, there are reserves in the budget that will allow for us to respond to the consultation process and develop a strong environmental action plan but that action plan will arise after we have gone through this consultation process.

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, the minister's own document says that Canadians are the heaviest users of energy in the world. By what possible skill could he justify a 93 per cent cut in alternative energy budgets by his government?

[*Translation*]

I looked around in this garbage for a couple of hours, trying to find solutions to environmental issues. What I found, Mr. Speaker—

[*English*]

Does the minister believe that we are actually going to control waste by the creation of an office of waste management as he is proposing in this document?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in a previous answer, there are a range of ways that you can influence the behaviour of people. Taxes are one. Regulation is another. Information that is provided to consumers is the third way. Polluter pay is another way and user pay is another yet