

River. These chemical dump sites are like a time bomb and could have dire consequences for the health and safety of Canadians, either through a massive chemical leak into the Niagara River and then into Lake Ontario, or through slow seepage into the water systems, which could reduce the quality of our drinking water and lead to long-term health effects.

The Government of Canada could help in the search for suitable toxic chemical controls. Presently, there is \$2.5 million earmarked for toxic chemical control, which money has been frozen by the Treasury Board and which, therefore, might not be spent this year. Toxic chemical control and the need for additional, more frequent monitoring procedures, are crucial matters of concern, and these funds should therefore be made available.

I strongly urge the Government to recommend to the Treasury Board that these funds be released as soon as possible so that progress can be made toward the eventual resolution of chemical pollution into Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, especially in light of recent reports that the levels of possibly lethal chemicals in Lake Ontario are on the rise for the first time in several years.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

#### REQUEST FOR JOB-CREATION MEASURES

**Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre):** Madam Speaker, my first question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The figures released today by Statistics Canada indicate that Canada's inflation rate dropped in February below the rate of a year ago, but prices are still rising much faster than the incomes of Canadians. As a matter of fact, at the end of 1982 disposable income was down about 4 per cent, and prices have increased almost a full percentage point in the last two months, so that Canadians are still net losers. When is the Government going to introduce measures which will put Canadians back to work and give those who are working an even shot at keeping up with price increases?

• (1115)

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note, as the Hon. Member has, that the inflation rate has continued to decline. In effect Canada is experiencing its lowest rate of inflation in six years. This is the ninth consecutive month during which the inflation rate has moderated, so we are looking forward to a year in which the inflation rate in Canada will be still lower than what we have known in the past. Certainly the outlook for the cost of living in 1983 looks very encouraging today.

Obviously the unemployment and disposable income problems that the Hon. Member has raised are still very serious, and will remain serious for a while. I have indicated that the

### Oral Questions

Government has already taken a number of measures in the statement I made last October, and I am considering additional measures in my budget. But in the meantime the best way of helping to increase the disposable income of Canadians would be to very quickly pass the income tax amendments, which would ensure that we could shift \$6 billion worth of refunds to Canadians. Canadians are waiting for that money, and will be very happy to spend it.

#### LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT

**Miss Pat Carney (Vancouver Centre):** Madam Speaker, the rate of inflation may be the lowest in six years, but the unemployment rate is the highest in 50 years. The underlying reasons for the moderation of the inflation rate are the plants which have closed, the people who are unemployed, the people who had to take salary cuts last year, and the people who had to take part-time work. If the Minister is so anxious to take credit for the moderation in the inflation rate, when is he going to accept responsibility for the two million unemployed?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I have indicated that a number of factors indeed have played a part in the reduction of the inflation rate. Government measures which have been taken have helped in that direction. I have also indicated to the hon. lady that I have announced a number of measures, including over \$2 billion worth of direct employment funds, in order to try to alleviate the very serious unemployment problem we are facing. The hon. lady also knows that our competitors in other industrialized countries are experiencing a similar problem at the present time. As I indicated to her, let us pass the income tax amendments quickly, and that will ensure that Canadians receive \$6 billion. That would be quite a significant stimulus to the economy in the next few months.

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### FINANCE

#### REQUEST FOR REMOVAL OF EXCISE TAX AFFECTING AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer):** Madam Speaker, if the Minister of Finance is honest he will recognize the reason the consumer price index is lower than it has been for some time is simply because of the fact that it has been done on the backs of agricultural producers. At the present time grain is selling in Canada at a dollar a bushel less than the cost of production, and the loss in hothouse products is running at about \$7,000 an acre. All of these losses could be alleviated if the federal Government would remove the federal excise tax. That is my question to the Minister. Will he take away that tax which is creating this loss to agricultural producers in Canada?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I assume my hon. colleague is referring to the excise tax on