

*Oral Questions*

without the resumption of inflation. That will ensure that we will have, indeed, stable growth over an extended period. I have stated this repeatedly, and I have stated it in the Budget. My friend should not be very surprised. This has been forecast and foreseen for quite a long time.

## MINISTER'S PLANS

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Even supposing that the Minister had forecast what he said he forecast, that does not help the 1,500,000 unemployed Canadians who are now being told that domestic demand remained—and I quote from Statistics Canada—“about 2 per cent below its pre-recession peak”. They are being told that growth has slowed to a pace insufficient to reduce unemployment. Unemployment cannot be reduced because of the reduction in domestic demand. They are being told that there is a deterioration of labour market conditions. They do not want to hear the Minister say he forecast this. What is the Minister going to do about the misery which he forecast? That is what the Canadian people want to know.

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I indicated in the Budget a number of measures which I invite my friend to take into account. Second, I invite the Hon. Member and his Party to support those measures when they take the form of legislation before the House, in order to ensure that this legislation is passed quickly so it will benefit the Canadian people.

I indicated, indeed, that the level of unemployment would remain too high, from our point of view, that it would take time to come down, and that we expected it to come down gradually. The economy, as I said, is still growing, and we are going to pursue a steady pace of stimulation of the economy as was contained in the Budget. I invite my friend to support the measures we have put before the House. That would be a first step on the part of the Opposition, rather than just crying at the wailing wall.

● (1420)

**Mr. Crosbie:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister has not put before the House any measures which will help this situation. In the February Budget he said he was delighted that he was not going to be affecting the economy. He has proposed no measures that this House can adopt which will help in this situation.

## REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT CALL GENERAL ELECTION

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West):** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada points out a weakening in housing starts, domestic auto sales, and exports, and that we can anticipate a slowdown in all interest rate sensitive industries. In area after area disaster stares us in the face. When will the Minister stop watching the shell game going on with the seven Liberal

contenders? When will the Government start to govern, or call an election so we can do something to stop this?

[Translation]

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I can hear my hon. friend whistling in the dark. I think that having had a taste, fortunately very short, of a Progressive Conservative administration, Canadians lost it very quickly. Since then, the Progressive Conservative Party has chosen a new leader whose record is quite clear: Schefferville is a case in point. If this is the alternative which the Progressive Conservative Party is suggesting for the economic future of Canada, I think that Canadians generally and Quebecers in particular will have no difficulty making up their minds. When the election comes, Mr. Speaker, we shall put forward for all voters to see not only what we have achieved so far, but also what we are planning to do to ensure an uninterrupted economic recovery, contrary to the “return to the past” sort of backward policy of the Progressive Conservative Party which is reflected in the Schefferville situation.

[English]

## DECLINE IN HOUSING STARTS

**Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North):** Mr. Speaker, I am tempted to ask the Minister of Finance if they are going to present 11.4 per cent unemployment to the Canadian people, but what I really want to ask him about is housing. He will know that 2.3 jobs are produced for every housing start, that is, jobs for backhoe operators, carpenters, plumbers, forest workers, and jobs in factories which produce such things as kitchen sinks. There are also jobs in building supply stores, and listings for real estate agents. Housing starts are directly linked to mortgage interest rates, and housing starts are down and mortgage interest rates are up. What prospects does the Minister of Finance see for employment in the housing industry in the next six months?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, the previous questioner said that the Budget did not contain measures, and the Hon. Member is now talking about housing starts. I remind the Official Opposition that there is before this House a Bill which provides for mortgage interest rate protection. It has been submitted to the House for consideration and early approval. It has the support of all organizations in the housing field in Canada, including the Canadian Construction Association and the Canadian Consumers' Association. But what do we see? We see the Opposition dragging its feet on a Bill supported by everyone in Canada except themselves.

**Mr. La Salle:** Not us!

**Mr. Lalonde:** They are just dragging their feet on a Bill which has the unanimous support of every organization in the country. Who is dragging it out? The Opposition.

**Mr. McDermid:** Who?

**Mr. Lalonde:** The Opposition is dragging it out.