

nation-wide index is now 13 points lower compared with March 1991.

Why will the Minister of Finance not admit that Canadians need help in finding work? Why will he not do something more to help Canadians get jobs instead of just sitting back and letting this decline continue?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why we have taken steps to stimulate the housing industry. I am pleased that there has been a very positive response.

Over 12,500 households have taken advantage of the lower down payment under the CMHC program. A number of people are taking advantage of the RRSP proposal. There is some indication that the strengthening of the U.S. economy has caused the merchandise trade to improve.

We have had the first month of growth since July. The initiatives in the budget will improve the competitiveness and will help particularly the manufacturing and processing sector. Motor vehicle sales have improved somewhat.

I realize that the recovery is slow. The economy is still weak but there are positive signs. I think the hon. member should be encouraged by that.

Hon. Herb Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, the minister is contradicted by his own Department of Finance which predicted that unemployment will average 10.1 per cent this year.

Why will the minister not recognize what his own department said during the announcement of the budget, recognize that Canadians need more than his words? They need some active help from this government so they can get back to work. Is it not time he acted and did not simply repeat the same old thing?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that we have a weak economy. We are going through a major restructuring and adjustment program and the federal government is helping in that process.

Those are the adjustments that have to take place if Canada is going to compete in a globalized economy. Those are the kinds of initiatives that have to take place

if we are going to create jobs on a sustainable basis over the long term.

The duty of government is to try to create a positive environment for that action to take place, for rebuilding and modernization to take place and for new investment to occur. The budget provides the framework for that to happen.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of some of Canada's Winter Olympic athletes and their coaches.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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WAYS AND MEANS

TABLING OF NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to amend the Customs Tariff, and I ask that an Order of the Day be designated for consideration of this motion.

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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 17 petitions.

[*Editor's Notes: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

TABLING OF ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Grains and Oilseeds)): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table, in both official languages, the annual report for the 1990-91 crop year of the Canadian Wheat Board. Pursuant to Standing Order