

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, everyone condemns this government's policies. According to Statistics Canada, small businesses in Quebec are those most severely affected by the recession caused by this government. My question to the minister is this: How long will the government let this recession go on and when will it introduce policies to help small businesses create more jobs in Quebec and across the country?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that things are wonderful in the economy, as my friend has just said that I did. I am saying that we are going through a difficult period now.

It is important to look at the broad timeframe. The economy has improved considerably since 1984 when we came into office. We have seen 1.5 million jobs created since that time.

I think it is also important for us to look at the position of Canada in relation to the rest of the world. Just the other day, we saw where Montreal and Toronto are right at the top of the statistics of cities in which it is good to live in the world.

We have seen where Canada has one of the highest standards of living when you take into account medical care, life expectancy, and standard of living in terms of income. These are things that are good about Canada. We are committed to improving these. But we also know that we cannot just snap our fingers and wish them to happen. We do know that we have to go through this period to get inflation under control so we can get interest rates down and see a return to strong non-inflationary growth in the future.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment and deals with Rafferty-Alameda.

On January 26, the government signed an agreement with Saskatchewan, but forgot to have cabinet endorse it. On September 5 the minister met with Grant Devine, but forgot what they talked about. On October 12, the

review panel resigned. The government sought an injunction. It was refused because the government forgot to appoint a new panel. This morning the minister met with his officials trying to figure out what comes next.

What brilliant moves does the minister have to lay before the House now, or can he remember?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first of all, before all this history happened, I would like to tell my hon. colleague that there was an environmental process conducted. It was challenged in court. The court at that point requested the federal government to appoint a public panel to have public reviews, which we did.

We followed the judicial process. We appointed the panel. We began a full environmental review of the project and we have attempted to date to protect that process. The process is very important. I can tell my hon. colleague that we intend to appeal the decision of last Thursday, to clarify the situation and to make sure that the due process of environmental assessment is conducted on this project as it should be on any major Crown project.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to be guessing his way along on the environment.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, we are not dealing with a failure of law, we are dealing with a failure of political will.

As Mr. Justice Muldoon said in talking about this particular government, it should stop seeking ways to evade the guidelines. It should warmly embrace them. It should not try to circumvent the law.

The minister has said that he cannot revoke the licence. Well, he can suspend it. If he has any doubt about it, there is not a law student in this country who is not prepared to show him how.

Mr. Speaker, this government is the laughing stock of the environmental community. Will the minister suspend the licence and will he suspend the licence now? He has the power to do so and, if not, will he submit himself and his government's actions to a parliamentary inquiry so we can get to the truth of this matter?