

Oral Questions

therapy. Why not oblige husbands to leave home instead of putting the onus on battered wives?

Mrs. Monique B. Tardif (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, in the budget announced yesterday, certain funds will be allocated to the Department of Justice, to the Solicitor General's Department, in an attempt to respond to certain other needs.

I would like to mention a few statistics, Mr. Speaker. The average number of days for shelter stays in this country is fourteen days. All things considered, we can say that with the number of housing units available at the present time, 57,000 individuals can be assisted annually. With the housing bank, we expect 25,000 additional spaces will be available and perhaps better services for all concerned.

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[English]

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES OMBUDSMAN POSITION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the absence of the Minister of State for Finance since the Minister has a direct responsibility and a legislative one for the benefit and welfare of consumers.

It is reported that the Minister of State for Finance is ready to embrace the NDP proposal in the bank service charges report—

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodriguez:—for a financial services ombudsman who will be accessible to all consumers through a toll free number from coast to coast.

The Minister for Consumer Affairs has responsibility for consumers and he talks to the Minister of State for Finance. Is the Minister also prepared to support, in his discussions with the Minister of State for Finance, the NDP's further proposal that a financial services ombudsman ought to be independent and autonomous, someone who would combine the functions of referee and advocate? Is he prepared to support that proposal?

● (1450)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not recall ever seeing this Government embracing the NDP. I don't know what the Member was thinking about, and I do not think my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, did. Let's keep our distance.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, Oh!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I think the Hon. Member is referring to the report in *The Toronto Star* today about an interdepartmental committee review. That interdepartmental committee review covered a number of things. It covered disclosure of fees in respect of opening accounts, the issue of pre-notification and a number of options like that, not what the Hon. Member has just referred to.

I commented on this in the House on Monday. We are in the course of looking at this committee report. We have indicated we welcome the report, but when we are ready to make announcements as to precisely what elements of the report we will be accepting, we will be advising the House.

FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the Minister of Finance does not want to claim paternity for this recommendation of the NDP. He has embraced our minimum tax recommendation, and he has been known to embrace certain NDPers personally.

Some Hon. Members: Explain!

Mr. Rodriguez: Politically speaking.

It is also recorded that bureaucrats in the Minister of Finance's office are objecting to many of the good ideas, proposals and recommendations of the Finance Committee. I might point out to the Minister of Finance that those are supported by Members from all sides of the House. Will the Minister support the concept of a free vote on the Private Member's Bill put forward by the Hon. Member for York—Scarborough which incorporates the recommendations of the Finance Committee's report? I can assure him that we on this side of the House will support that kind of an initiative.

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow night is my nomination meeting and I would appreciate it if the Hon. Member would not talk about me personally embracing any New Democrats.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I think the important thing about this committee report is that the report has been done in a non-partisan way and there are some good elements in the report which we want to study carefully before we accept or reject them. I know the Hon. Member is anxious that we move on this, but it has been only two days since the report was tabled, and I think that if he exercises his normal patience and forbearance we will be able to have a response to this report and we will advise him through the House in the ordinary course when that happens.