

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, officials of both the federal and provincial government met with company and union representatives as early as August in an attempt to sign a manpower assessment incentive agreement for that plant. In fact, the office staff signed an agreement, but the workers did not because both levels of government were endeavouring to convince Cadbury's in fact to stay where it was and did not wish to usurp the role of the unions which felt that it would just make it a little easier, shall we say, for Cadbury's to leave if it signed this particular agreement. The staff and personnel are available. The funds are available, be they for retraining, mobility grants or in whatever way they can be used to help in this unfortunate situation.

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● (1427)

URBAN AFFAIRS**HOUSING—PRACTICALITY OF MORTGAGE DEDUCTIBILITY PROVISION**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. Since the minister, quite understandably, does not want us to live in the past—because obviously the past is catching up with the minister and the government—I should like to refer to a document which is more in the present. It was given to cabinet just a few months ago.

Reference is made in the document to the fact that there are 438,000 households in Canada where over 30 per cent of income is paid for shelter, a situation which might be helped considerably by our mortgage deductibility proposal.

An hon. Member: Right on.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: Is the minister prepared, today, to release to the House and the country a study, which was commissioned by himself within the Department of Urban Affairs into the feasibility and practicability of the mortgage deductibility provision which we put forward? I understand that study shows the proposal in a most favourable light. Will the minister release that study to the House today?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the position I presented on behalf of the Canadian government at the last two federal-provincial ministers of housing conferences clearly indicates that we do not favour the proposal put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. The reasons are very simple. It would be of great advantage to the rich people who have expensive homes.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Alexander: That is baloney.

Mr. Ouellet: It would be a measure which discriminates against renters.

Mr. Alexander: That is baloney as well.

Mr. Ouellet: It would be a measure which discriminates against the elderly who have no mortgages. Also, it would be a measure which would have very serious impact on financial markets. Therefore, in the past at two specific conferences of ministers of housing I indicated the position of the Canadian government, that we reject that proposal.

I see that right behind the hon. member, the former mayor of Toronto is smiling. Not too long ago he indicated that he did not favour the position of the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Obviously, the minister is protesting too much. In the view of the minister, the program was designed for the rich. It will help to alleviate some of the terrible burden a great many people in the country have to undergo because of high mortgage and high shelter costs, as was identified by the fact that 438,000 householders are paying more than 30 per cent of their income for housing. Will the minister now lay before the House the study by the Department of Urban Affairs which shows that the mortgage interest deductibility proposal in fact favours the majority of people in the country and in fact is feasible?

Mr. Alexander: As the Minister of Finance knows.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that, indeed, a very substantial number of those who are paying more than 30 per cent of their income for rent are renters who will receive nothing from the scheme proposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, that is a misrepresentation of the facts, and the minister knows it.

Some hon. Members: Oh oh!

Mr. McGrath: The minister continues to misrepresent the situation. What action does the minister propose to take respecting the statement made by the vice-president for policy, Mr. Adamson, in Windsor last weekend, in which he literally dumped all over this proposal which the minister is now dumping all over, in view of the fact that this man is a public servant and unquestionably will be called upon to implement this proposal in a few months' time?

● (1432)

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised by the attitude of the hon. member. I hope he is not giving the official position of his party by indicating that those who might not have the same opinion as they have will be shut up and will have no right to speak out. We on this side of the House