

Oral Questions

I want to ask the government again: When will it take its head out of the sand and do something for the home building industry in this country and for home buyers who are waiting to buy their first homes?

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, the mortgage rates today are at the lowest they have been in six or seven years. That is the best way we can help people to buy homes. Every time interest rates drop one percentage point, thousands of Canadians become eligible to put their down payments to buy homes.

Interest rates have dropped 5.5 per cent in the last year and that is the most important thing we can do for the home building industry.

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ATLANTIC MARINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It concerns a report from his own department which recommends a user fee be charged to all vessels visiting Atlantic Canadian ports for navigational aid use.

Quite simply, this is just yet another tax which will further cripple the competitiveness of the Atlantic marine industry.

My question is: Will the minister guarantee in this House today that he will under no circumstances implement this new tax on the marine industry in Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, a user fee policy was introduced and put to consultation by the transportation department last year. After receiving all the input of the different stakeholders in that industry, we are at the present time reconsidering the situation and will make our final proposal known pretty soon.

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HEALTH

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, I am going to surprise many colleagues in the House by directing my question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare and complimenting him

and the CBC for the tremendous review and introspection they did of his mitosis on Monday night's *The Journal* from whatever it is.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nowlan: I know the problems. Quite frankly, I used to sit in the same caucus with the hon. member. Frankly he and I have not shared some views and I thought he was very personal when I had my problem on the Meech Lake thing.

My question is on the proposals laid before the House by the Prime Minister yesterday. Quite frankly, the house of federation I find tremendously confusing. But would he give us an assurance that regardless of whatever comes out of the proposals, but especially because of the proposals, that the uniform medicare system of medical treatment to Canadians, which I think is one of our fundamental prerogatives or rights, will stay intact?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join my hon. friend in congratulating the minister not only for an excellent appearance, but also for the assurance that he has given in respect of medicare which will remain a strong and important dimension of Canadian national unity.

I would like to give him more assurances in other areas, but I will only be able to do that when the CBC does a similar flattering profile on me.

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PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

Mr. Speaker: I wish to draw to members' attention the presence in the gallery of a Tanzanian Presidential Commission and Mr. Pius Msekwa, Vice-Speaker of the Tanzania Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: I wish also to draw to members' attention the presence in the gallery of members of a subcommittee of the Defence and Security Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, Mr. Anders Sjaastad, member of the Norwegian Parliament, and Mr. Hans Haekkerup, member of the Danish Parliament.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.