

*Oral Questions*

• (1500)

These escort services are non-deductible to businesses and to anybody else. I have taken it a step further. I have instructed my officials to review existing directives and interpretation bulletins to make them clear enough for even the New Democrats to understand.

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**COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM**

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, hidden in the speech of the President of the Treasury Board is the termination of the Court Challenges Program which funds equality rights test cases under the charter. This is one more blow to Canadians seeking equality and justice.

My question is for the Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship. Will he tell Canadians whether the Court Challenges Program is no longer worth while or important in continuing clarification of the charter? Why is there this attack on human rights? Has he changed his mind since he supported funding last May?

**Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship):** Mr. Speaker, this was an effective program that was available and provide financial assistance for the preparation and defence of test cases involving equality and language rights under the Canadian Constitution.

The program has been with us for some time, parts of it since 1978 and other parts since 1985. There is now a solid base of jurisprudence for future years and the remaining finer points are now those of provincial jurisdiction. I guess that is why we acted as we did.

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**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance and it refers to the budget papers where they refer to the Small Business Financing Program for businesses that are experiencing financial difficulty. It looks like a good program but I do not really understand it.

I wonder if the minister could explain, in terms that I might understand, what the program is, how the low

interest loans are permitted, what businesses qualify, and when more information will be available.

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate him for his efforts in keeping Aerovox open as a result of his own personal initiative.

The provision to which the hon. member referred is available to both incorporated and unincorporated businesses. The rules that will be applied will be the same rules as those applied under the Small Business Development Bond program which was in existence a few years ago.

The effect will be that it will treat interest payments paid to the lender as dividends and the lender can thereby qualify for a dividend tax credit. This will mean substantial reductions in interest rates to the person who is making the loan.

I agree with the hon. member. It is a good program and it will be available in the very near future.

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[Translation]

**CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING**

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In his first budget on Tuesday evening the Minister of Finance cancelled the co-operative housing programs. In so doing the minister just cancelled 500 units that were to have been built this year.

What kind of housing will the Minister of Finance suggest for the 10,000 families in Montreal alone that are on the waiting list?

[English]

**Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of the Social Housing Program, the federal government will be spending \$2 billion a year or \$10 billion over the next five years. That is a lot of money.

In terms of the social housing component, it will be increasing at the rate of 3 per cent per year which is greater than the rate of inflation.