FINANCE

HOUSING TAX DEDUCTION APPLICABLE TO ISOLATED POSTS

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of State for Finance. It concerns the criteria for designation of isolated posts which qualify for the new tax deduction in respect of housing.

The Minister will know that there are some problems with the present list which includes some prairie towns but excludes other towns some six miles down the highway.

Since it is clear that the existing, old Treasury Board guidelines are inappropriate, will the Minister re-examine the criteria for determining exactly what is an isolated post, and make an announcement of clarification at an early date?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to tell the Hon. Member that the criteria are being re-examined. I thank him for his interest, because there are problems with the criteria and the way in which they are being applied. I am very glad that he has brought the matter before the House.

Mr. Speaker: I must advise Hon. Members that the time for Question Period has expired.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government.

Mr. Speaker: When the House rose at one o'clock, the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner) had the floor.

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, at one o'clock I was reminding the House that in his budget address the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) stressed that all regions in the country were important to national prosperity, and I agree. He said that those regions which depended upon the resource sector were in some difficulty. The words he used were that "some regions are hurting". Then the Minister of Finance added that action must be taken to cushion the blow.

I was telling the House at one o'clock that we in northern Ontario, particularly northeastern Ontario where the unemployment rate is approaching 15 per cent—and across northern Ontario the youth unemployment rate is 22 per cent—were still awaiting some cushion against the economic blows we have been receiving. So far there have been no cushions at all. In fact, the Government has been introducing some additional blows. I was reminding the House about the 15 per cent export tax on softwood lumber and about CNRs 3 per cent hike on the shipment of lumber into the American market. All these things were blows, not to mention additional sales and excise taxes. We are still awaiting the cushion, as promised by the Minister of Finance, for the economic blows we have been receiving.

There are regions which are hurting, and those regions are still awaiting some good news from the Minister. In his Budget address the Minister bragged about the number of new jobs which have been created. It is true that new jobs are always being created, but the Minister failed to tell us about the number of jobs which have been lost, which no longer exist.

For example, in a vigorous endeavour to remain competitive we in northern Ontario in the forest products industry have had to introduce major and very expensive new technology. However, we have lost jobs in the process.

Also, the Minister did not tell the House what kind of jobs were being created. He did not tell the House that a very large percentage of jobs, especially those for women, are now simply part-time jobs at the lowest possible wages and without all the usual benefits.

We in northern Ontario have long depended upon government assistance for job creation. We had the program under the previous administration called Canada Works. Under this Government it has been renamed the Canadian Jobs Strategy Program.

Mr. Blenkarn: That is a good program.

Mr. Penner: Yes, Canada Works and the Canadian Jobs Strategy are good. They help the region. However, we are noticing that the number of dollars which the Government is allocating for the program is regularly declining and decreasing, so that fewer and fewer dollars are available while unemployment remains unacceptably high and well above the national average.

I should like to remind the House once again about a program for native people, an area of the economy where unemployment is particularly high. In 1984 the Native Economic Development Program was announced. It was to spend $345 million over four years in order to assist native people to cease being the recipients of social assistance and be able to have economic development programs which would make them self-sufficient.

Since that time only a fraction of the amount of money approved by Parliament has been consistently spent year by year. For example, in 1984-85, the first year of the present administration, Parliament approved $110 million for that program. Out of that $110 million, $102 million was allowed to lapse and only $8 million was spent. Obviously the Government is not even carrying out the will of the House in respect of where unemployment is highest, where people are suffering the most, where people are relying upon social assistance, hand-outs, and welfare, and where there is an opportunity for economic development. The Government allows a substantial