

*Oral Questions*

for the unemployed and cuts legal and social services for the disadvantaged people of this country?

**Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is somewhat off base in the statistics that he brings forward. I might point out to my hon. friend that every economic group both in Canada and throughout the world which is taking a look at the position that Canada is in today says that this country will have the best recovery of any country in the G-7. We are positioned the best. We will have the best employment growth. We will have the best economic growth in this year and in next year, the lowest inflation and low interest rates. We are in a position to recover. Some of the signs have already started. I just mentioned, for example, the housing statistics.

• (1130)

The hon. member should take that into his understanding as he poses questions like that. He said there was nothing in the budget to create employment. The RRSP for home building, which has been praised widely and which the hon. member's party asked for, was in the budget. That alone is going to create employment.

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[*Translation*]

**COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM**

**Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has told us time and time again that he sets a priority on the rights of the individual. He said repeatedly that he believed all Canadians were equal under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If he still believes in these principles, why did he abolish the Court Challenges Program?

**Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship):** Mr. Speaker, I have made it clear that this was a very effective and very beneficial program. For 10 years we have provided very substantial funding to help minority official language groups and groups seeking equality. However, I think we can say that, over the past seven years, we have built up a certain amount of jurisprudence and that this program, which is important to everyone, should now be funded by others, perhaps at

the provincial level, or by non-governmental organizations.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville):** Here we go, passing the ball back to the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the Court Challenges Program gives people a chance to claim their equality rights under the charter. How will people who really need protection be able to demand their rights when the requisite funding is no longer available?

**Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, I can inform the House that this morning I met a number of human rights groups. We discussed this particular issue and other issues as well. I told these groups that it was my duty, as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, to ensure that our legislation and policies comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So I will continue to keep an eye on—

[*English*]

Perhaps I should speak English; I am getting out of my depth here.

As I indicated to these groups this morning, as Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada it is my obligation and my duty to ensure that the laws and the policy of the Government of Canada are in conformity with the charter. I will continue to do that.

As my colleague has indicated, we are in fact the only level of government that has been willing to fund these kinds of cases. They have been administered, not by my department but the department of my colleague, the minister of multiculturalism, simply because there would otherwise be a conflict of interest since the Department of Justice defends the Government of Canada and the prerogatives of Parliament.

I will continue to observe this. In discussing this issue with the human rights groups this morning, I was also very interested in their proposal to perhaps create a task force of mutual consultation where we could in a co-operative and collegial way review legislation and look at areas that might be changed.