

Oral Questions

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Each year some 45,000 Canadians die of heart attacks. Everyone can help reduce that number by taking time to learn the basics of CPR because you could save a life.

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NATIONAL UNITY

Hon. John Bosley (Don Valley West): Madam Speaker, if it is true that it is always darkest before the dawn, then Jim Taylor is giving Canadians an urgent wake-up call. Mr. Taylor, who is a constituent of mine, is the driving force behind the My Country Includes Quebec Association.

Mr. Taylor has rented 15 billboards nation-wide to promote his "My Country Includes Quebec" slogan and is commencing a tour through Quebec and the maritimes to Newfoundland.

If Canadians put half as much effort into keeping our country united, we could all feel secure in knowing our future is assured. He is demonstrating the tolerance and respect that all of us need to show for those who speak the other official language. He wants us to share his vision of a Canada stronger than the sum of its parts, a Canada that includes Quebec now and forever.

[*Translation*]

Good luck, Mr. Taylor, congratulations and the very best!

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance was confronted with the cynical observation in some press reports that he was contemplating tax cuts before the next election. He refused to deny that he was contemplating just such a move.

Now is the time when the economy could use some stimulus. Now is the time when people are running out of money and running out of hope.

Will the minister provide tax relief for Canadians now rather than later on when he could use it just as some kind of cynical election ploy?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I think that contemplation was in the mind of the member alone.

He raised that question in committee yesterday. He knows very well the fiscal challenges that we face and he has been a very strong advocate and supporter of fiscal consolidation.

Is he now suggesting that we increase the deficit?

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Madam Speaker, I know that in 1988 before the last election when the deficit was very high the government opposite found room for tax cuts even when the economy was growing at 5 per cent.

[*Translation*]

Since the minister said that the recession would be worse than he expected, how does the government expect the provinces and municipalities to help Canadians who are now unemployed and who will soon run out of unemployment insurance benefits, since the federal government is cutting funds to which the provinces are entitled?

• (1120)

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows that in 1988 the implementation of tax reform was taking place. That had the effect of reducing personal and corporate income tax.

With respect to the second part of his question, the hon. member knows very well that the transfers to the provinces are continuing. It has been one of the highest growths of the program expenditures in the whole area of government spending. As a matter of fact, fiscal transfers have increased on an annualized basis of about 6 per cent per year.

We have had to restrict that increase because we have disciplined ourselves as a federal government to contain program expenditures to around 3 per cent to 3.5 per cent and we are asking everyone else to live within that target, within that particular formula. We are not asking the provinces or municipalities or anyone else to have