

Oral Questions

has decided to kill the Metro Council property tax reform package.

In my riding of York West the majority of working middle class households have been paying too much in property taxes for too long. The new tax reform would have given these families a legitimate and long overdue tax break. Just when it looked like Metro Council was going to throw out the old system the NDP provincial government has said: "No way".

Working middle class families are facing an already heavy federal and provincial tax burden and they deserve a break on their municipal bill.

Residents also deserve better from an NDP provincial government that says one thing but does another. I call on the premier to reverse his regressive, unfair and misguided decision and deliver on the promises of reform and honesty to working class families.

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LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

Mr. J. W. Bud Bird (Fredericton—York—Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, the resolution which has come to Parliament from New Brunswick affirming the equality of its English and French linguistic communities presents the reality of tolerance and mutual respect which has developed among the people of that province over many years.

These principles of linguistic equality were first established in legislation more than a decade ago by a unanimous vote of the legislature of New Brunswick, in which I had the honour at that time to participate. They are principles which have become a way of life in our province and have become increasingly well established through at least three provincial elections. I continue to support them fully.

I am deeply convinced that the equality of New Brunswick's linguistic communities will never be in danger because I have an abiding confidence in the commitment of our people to these principles.

However, the request from the province of New Brunswick to entrench these principles within the Canadian Constitution specifically for that province is both a timely and symbolic measure. It will not only reinforce official language commitments within New Brunswick, it will also strengthen the example of that province as a beneficial influence for all of Canada.

ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Finance tabled the government's economic statement in which he complained about how broke the government is. The minister needed every penny of revenue. He raided the UI fund, cut programs and operations and froze civil service salaries.

Yesterday, finance department officials admitted that for the past 20 years corporate investors have used offshore tax havens to shelter hundreds of millions of dollars in profits at the expense of the poor, the middle class and our social programs. Importing and exporting capital at taxpayers' expense and importing losses and dividends at taxpayers' expense is becoming standard business practice in Canada.

What escaped the treasury of Canada in 1990 and still escapes the treasury includes the \$4.2 billion in tax-free dividends that the corporations have received from their non-arms' length "investments" offshore.

That, Mr. Speaker, ain't hay and it is only the tip of the iceberg.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

MONTREAL'S ECONOMY

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Prime Minister a question.

According to today's newspapers, it is clear that the situation in Montreal is absolutely untenable. The number of jobs has been dropping steadily for three years and Montreal now has 18 per cent unemployment. Quebec government officials say that, according to the OECD, the unemployment rate in several African cities is the same as in Montreal, 18 per cent. We all know that Montreal is a great city and must remain a great city.

Does the government have any special plans to restore prosperity soon to this city which is the engine of Quebec's economy?