

Oral Questions

may be eager to buy Maislin on the open market but do not have the political clout of the Bronfmans and other Liberal friends in Montreal.

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, I would be happy to bring to the attention of my colleagues the situation of companies that are in similar restructuring difficulties. If the hon. member has specific companies which he wants to bring to my attention, I would be happy to receive the information about them.

REASONS FOR GRANTING ASSISTANCE TO MAISLIN COMPANY

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings): Madam Speaker, finally I would like to ask the minister, if indeed it is true, that only one job out of four in the Maislin corporation is in Canada and that in fact, in giving this guarantee to Maislin, they are rewarding a company for its ineptitude, and giving it a further financial edge by forcing its unions into a six and five agreement, whereas other companies in Canada are not being forced that way.

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, my information is that half of the jobs of the company, some 2,000 of them, are in Canada.

Mr. Trudeau: Out of 4,000.

Mr. Gray: Some 2,000 out of the total 4,000 are in Canada. If the company and its employees are respecting the six and five guidelines, surely that is something my hon. friend would encourage, not just for them but for other trucking companies, in light of the support by himself and his party for the guidelines program as exemplified by their votes in the House.

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FINANCE

REQUEST GOVERNMENT LOWER INTEREST RATES BY SIX PER CENT

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Finance I would like to direct my question to the Minister of State for Finance. Despite a recent and minimal lowering of prime interest rates by Canadian chartered banks, the level of interest rates in the country is still far too high. Thousands of Canadians are still expected to lose their homes because of the astronomical cost of renewing their mortgages; thousands of businesses are still going bankrupt, causing the loss of thousands of jobs. The minister, through his June budget, asked all Canadians to get behind his 6 per cent solution. In light of the continuing damage to our economy by high interest rates, would the minister consider applying his solution to these rates and having them immediately lowered by the much touted 6 per cent?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I may remind the hon. member that one of the major objectives contained in the budget is aimed at bringing about a substantial drop in interest rates, and urging all Canadians to join their efforts in reducing inflation down to six and five per cent within the next two years.

Until this joint effort has produced tangible results, the government will implement transitional measures to help home buyers, farmers and small businesses. The purpose of these measures is to reduce interest rate levels and to provide financial assistance for those who want to buy homes. However, we must be patient and persevere in this joint effort if we are to bring down inflation and put our economy on the road to recovery. If we do, interest rates will go down as well. Meanwhile, Canadians can take advantage of the measures introduced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) in his last budget to help the people of this country get through the difficult period that lies between us and an improved economy.

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● (1120)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

REQUEST FOR JOB-CREATION PROGRAMS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Madam Speaker, the minister is well aware of the thousands of Canadians, almost half of them in Ontario alone, who have recently been told they will be laid off, or have already been laid off. Massive group lay-offs gain media attention because they involve a large number of workers employed by big businesses in major centres, but not those being laid off by smaller firms in rural areas where the unemployment situation is even more critical.

The situation in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka is a good example of the magnitude of this disaster. In a one week period this past month, 800 more people were registered for unemployment benefits than during the same time a year previously, which is an increase that has had a devastating effect on the entire nation, when considered across the country. Is the minister preparing to implement employment programs which would be of benefit to smaller communities across the country where the plight of the 1.5 million Canadians who are out of work is more deeply felt?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I think the point raised by the hon. member in which he refers to the many lay offs taking place is actually related to a much broader issue I mentioned earlier, which implies that we must fight inflation, improve our productivity,