I have noted the work, enthusiasm and optimism of the Minister of State for Small Businesses about the changes to the SBLA. I will be watching with great interest to see whether the members of our financial community can emulate that enthusiasm and support.

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[*Translation*]

TAXATION OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): Mr. Speaker, a number of retailers and distributors in the food business in my riding phoned me last week about the financial problems they are facing as a result of widespread cigarette smuggling.

The Tory government's decision to raise taxes on tobacco products has not only harmed Quebec's economy but has actually created an underground distribution network. What was intended as an incentive to cut back on cigarette consumption, which would reduce the harmful effects on health, has become a nightmare for retailers and many workers in the retail sector. Since January 1991, Quebec has lost 5,900 jobs, and distributors and retailers lost more than $150 million in revenue in 1992. This means that federal and provincial governments have lost about $500 million in revenue and taxes, while there has been an increase in cigarette-related thefts and more money has been spent on helping the unemployed as a result of plant closings.

Considering this disastrous ripple effect, I want to ask the government to review excessive taxation of tobacco products in the next federal budget.

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● (1410)

[*English*]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, last month I had the pleasure of participating in a forum on the Young Offenders Act in my riding. Also participating was a young offender, a youth court judge, a defence attorney, a crown attorney, a police officer and two individuals who work with young offenders in the detention facilities.

This forum was very informative and provided the almost 100 participants with a good opportunity to have a dialogue on the problems and strengths of the Young Offenders Act. We also heard about the resources available to rehabilitate young offenders.

Suggested changes to the Young Offenders Act include: the release of more information about young offenders, reducing the age for which it applies, and adding the option of conditional discharges and suspended sentences.

I want to thank Pat Fowler of Ajax for organizing this very informative forum, Archbishop Dennis O'Connor High School for its facilities, and the many citizens of Ajax for their participation.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): Mr. Speaker, in 1988 Du Pont of Canada established a policy to phase out CFC production as soon as possible. Alternative technologies have now been developed and adequate supplies of alternatives to CFCs are available. The CFC phase out and transition to alternatives is well under way around the world. We support all activities that accelerate this transition.

Du Pont of Canada announced last week that it has ceased production of CFCs at its Maitland site in my riding. As the ozone layer over Canada shrunk last week to the lowest levels ever, Canadians everywhere will applaud last week's announcement by Du Pont of Canada to cease production of CFCs at its Maitland site and further concentrate on producing alternative products.

I commend Du Pont of Canada for not only meeting but exceeding the Montreal protocol as it relates to the production of CFCs. The thinning of the ozone layer is one of the major causes of skin cancer. Du Pont of Canada has responded with its latest announcement and I am sure all Canadians wish Du Pont well as it develops alternatives to CFCs.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Greg Thompson (Carleton—Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, the encouraging news about the economy just keeps rolling in.

Last week I reported 1992's record-breaking exports, totalling over $150 billion. This week the good news is in the retail sales sector with an increase of 3.4 per cent over last year for the month of January. The statistics also indicate a rise in the help wanted index, up 4.5 per cent in February. This is an early indicator of labour demand.