

This government has the gall to describe as interference the Liberal policy to devalue the Canadian dollar. Maintaining our currency at an artificially high level as the Conservatives have been doing fits the definition of interference to a T. The only difference between the two is that the Conservative policy has cost us \$1.08 billion in a single month on top of having a disastrous effect on our economy.

This government would be well advised to stand up for the Canadian exporters instead of defending such a harmful policy.

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[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Dave Worthy (Cariboo—Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express the outrage felt by all Canadians, and in particular British Columbians, over the recent U.S. decision to place a tariff on Canadian softwood lumber imports.

Unfortunately the decision has little to do with facts and reality, but has everything to do with the politics based on greed and hypocrisy of a few large U.S. lumber companies and the politicians acting on their behalf.

Our case in Canada is strong. We do not subsidize our forest industry. There may be some differences on how we regulate our industry, but that is our right. It is outrageous for the U.S. to try and bully a neighbour which has been its largest trading partner and closest ally since our two nations were founded.

So far we in Canada have acted properly, and we must continue to act strongly. We will win because we are in the right and because we have the free trade agreement. But we will not soon forget the shabby treatment we have received.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean): Mr. Speaker, this weekend women in all parts of the world gathered together to celebrate the beginning of International Women's Week.

This past December, for the first time, Canadians commemorated a national day for action on violence against women. At the Winter Olympics we celebrated as Kerrin Lee-Gartner won Canada's first-ever women's downhill gold medal.

International Women's Week is also a time to reflect on what needs to be done and examine our direction for the future. Bill C-26, the Public Service Act, will absolve the government of its employment equity obligations. The budget will deprive some of child benefits and others of justly-earned retroactive pay equity payments. Dissolving the Court Challenges Program infringes on the basic rights and freedoms of women.

Today we celebrate, but we must also continue to work to ensure equality for women across Canada and in all parts of the world.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Steve Butland (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, there is a strong allegation in my community and many others across the country that a tight money policy by our bankers is stifling economic recovery. A survey of small businesses in my community revealed that 50 per cent feel they are being dealt with unfairly. A more disturbing fact is that they are fearful of communicating with their banker for fear of repercussions. At my request, the vice-president of the Canadian Banker's Association was in Sault Ste. Marie. He stated that banks were low risk lenders, that financial policies are consistent across the country and that similar tight money complaints were heard in Fredericton, Saskatoon and Victoria. That does not rationalize the excess of profits, exorbitant credit card rates and outlandish service charge increases.

Is it acceptable that small business in Canada is fearful of the banking community?

I encourage all MPs to solicit feedback from the small businesses in their communities and report these findings to the local and national financial community.

Bank presidents are quick to advise governments. Perhaps our advice to them should be: "Loosen the purse strings or purse your lips."