

Oral Questions

In so far as the other question about budgetary measures is concerned, I would just ask the Leader of the Opposition to wait for a few minutes. The Minister of Finance will be making a statement this afternoon bearing on the economy and he may find some way of addressing some of the problems about which the Hon. Leader of the Opposition is concerned.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

HOLDING OF CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC MATTERS WITH PREMIERS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a question that is very clearly in the Prime Minister's field, and he cannot leave it up to someone else to answer for him. He will have to take his responsibilities as leader of the government in this House.

The Prime Minister has mentioned the need for Canadians to work together, and I would like to know whether he is still opposed to the unanimous request by the provinces to have a first ministers' conference on the economy.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): No, Madam Speaker, I am not opposed to such a conference being held, but I must say that this request by the provinces has not been repeated lately, on the contrary. For instance, the Premier of Ontario, if I understood correctly the tenor of yesterday's telegram, is proposing bilateral meetings with his ministers and members of his government. Some of these meetings have already taken place. The House is aware that the Minister of Employment and Immigration has also scheduled several meetings with his provincial counterparts, so that together we can deal with the problem of job creation, especially in sectors where unemployment is very high. The House is aware of this, and a number of provincial ministers have already commented that they were pleased with the co-operation that had already begun to materialize.

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● (1430)

[English]

MINES AND MINING

ADAMS MINE LAY-OFFS

Mr. John MacDougall (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, my first question in the House is directed to the Minister of State for Mines. I would ask the Minister what hope or encouragement she could hold out for the 390 miners at the Adams Mine in Kirkland Lake who will be laid off for the second time this year on Friday, and can look forward to only two paycheques between now and what promises to be not a very Merry Christmas.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, while I sympathize with the plight of the miners, I would remind the Hon. Member that this is a temporary lay-off and that they will be off work, as I understand it, for just that short period before Christmas. There are a great many miners in Canada who are facing much longer lay-offs than the ones at Adams Mine.

Some Hon. Members: Shame.

PROCESSING OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMS

Mr. John MacDougall (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, perhaps I could ask the Minister if she will talk to her colleague, the "Minister of Unemployment", to ensure that these victims of Government policy can rely on prompt and effective handling of their unemployment insurance claims rather than just being more numbers in the computer.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that there is a special team in place to handle all these claims and that the claims are being handled faster than they ever have been before. We intend to speed up that process.

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INCOME TAX

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT INTRODUCE SURTAX

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the new Minister of Finance and I express the hope, I am sure of Hon. Members on all sides of the House, that we will get better answers than we got from his predecessor.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Since the House last met in August, we have lost no fewer than 100,000 jobs from the Canadian economy. Considering that the Government in last fall's budget cut the taxes of upper income Canadians by some 9 per cent, and considering that the Prime Minister went on television recently and talked to Canadians about the need for sharing and caring, my question to the Minister of Finance is this: will the Government now practise what the Prime Minister preaches, by bringing in a surtax on Canadians who can afford to pay it, in order to obtain millions of dollars to put back to work thousands of Canadians who would like jobs?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, my first wish would be to provide the Hon. Member with as good and as competent answers as my predecessor gave him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lalonde: In reply to his question I would answer that I have read his proposals in that regard in a speech which he made recently in Hamilton; I have examined them. I will take