

Oral Questions

Madam Speaker, with respect to the principle, I believe the Prime Minister answered more than adequately the question of the Hon. Member last Friday. Obviously Canada, a major trading nation which relies on merchandise trade surpluses should not on a *quid pro quo* basis, adopt the principle as the Prime Minister responded to the Leader of the New Democratic Party on Friday. However, as the Prime Minister stated, in very specific cases, such as the trade imbalance in the automotive industry, there is some justification room to negotiate with other countries.

• (1430)

Mr. Broadbent: Madam Speaker, as with most questions recently, the Prime Minister answers one way on one question and another way on another question. In short, the Government's position is by no means clear on this issue. Since thousands of Canadian jobs are at stake I hope the Government will soon make up its mind.

PRINCIPLE OF CANADIAN PRODUCTION QUOTA

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, since the task force correctly points out that General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford, currently meeting 74 per cent production in Canada, are likely to drop to the 60 per cent minimum for competitive reasons if companies from other countries are not forced to comply, does the Minister recognize that, if they do that, we could lose some 22,000 existing jobs and, if so, will he now give us a commitment to negotiate on this principle with the Japanese so Canadians can get the jobs in this sector that they deserve?

Hon. Ed Lumley (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, I do not know what stronger commitment the Hon. Member wants, as I have already indicated that we will give serious consideration to the recommendations in the task force report. I have also stated that I will be sending a letter to the chief executive officers of the Japanese automotive manufacturing companies inviting them to Canada for discussions, as I requested on previous occasions when I was in Japan.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

INQUIRY WHETHER GRANT APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): My question is directed to the Minister responsible for Housing.

Recently, the Minister announced on the radio that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation still had 16,000 applications pending for the \$3,000 grant. The Minister also said that it was almost certain that applications made before April 30 would be accepted, and this of course would benefit

all applicants who made their requests before April 30, according to the Government's initial commitment. Within this context, could the Minister inform the House today whether Canadians who applied for the \$3,000 grant before April 30 will receive a positive reply from CMHC?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I do not remember having said 16,000, but it is quite clear that the problem whose extent we are now determining is quite considerable, and that there was a flood of requests during the last two weeks of April and in the first week of May.

Right now, we are looking at ways of meeting the needs of Canadians who applied before April 30, and if possible, of those who applied before May 5. I hope to have an answer for the Hon. Member within forty-eight hours.

Mr. La Salle: I have a supplementary. If I understood correctly, the Minister just promised that he would tell us within forty-eight hours that applications for the \$3,000 grant will be accepted up to April 30. He could also provide some clarification regarding the rash commitment made by the Minister of Finance who raised the hopes of Canadians by saying that the grant might be extended until the end of May.

In any case, is the Minister prepared to repeat that Canadians will be told once and for all about the commitment made regarding April 30, and could he also, within forty-eight hours, inform the House whether the Minister will be able to meet the commitment made by his colleague? Madam Speaker, I am not accusing the Minister but his colleague, the Minister of Finance, of raising the hopes of Canadians. The Minister has given us the assurance today that within forty-eight hours, Canadians will know whether grant applications made before April 30 will be honoured, and what is going to happen regarding the commitment for the month of May.

Mr. LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance made it quite clear that after adding \$100 million to this program in October, he was adding \$30 million in his April 19 budget, especially to assist Canadians in isolated and northern areas where construction cannot start before the end of April.

As I said before, we have received a flood of requests, far more than could be expected according to the statistics for even the best years for housing in Canada. I cannot blame the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) for having put a ceiling of \$30 million on this program, since the housing industry is doing very well at the present time and interest rates have dropped considerably thanks to his predecessor's budget and the measures taken by the present Minister of Finance.

What I would like to say to the Hon. Member, if he could perhaps refrain from taking this unusually aggressive stance, is that we shall do everything in our power to accommodate Canadians who applied before April 30, and if possible, up to May 5.