

Oral Questions

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the hon. member to remember that she should put her questions through the Chair.

Ms. Coppins: The people who need protection are the 1.4 million Canadians who are losing jobs a result of the devastating economic policies of this government. GST, a failure; free trade, a failure.

I ask the Minister of Finance what specific programs can he offer to Canadians today to put our people back to work. Never mind the Mexicans and the Americans; why don't you put Canadians back to work?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): I am sure that my hon. friend was here this morning listening to the speech and she should reflect on the fact that Mexico went through the wringer in 1982 because of the high debt, high deficit problems that they have, and they had difficulty getting out of the economic problems that developed at that time.

It is instructive to note that a country that has gone through those difficulties is following the policies that this government is also following: getting the fiscal problem under control, getting the debt problem under control, combating inflation, deregulation, encouraging greater flows of foreign capital, changing the regulations of how foreign capital is treated in this country and the sale of public enterprises.

I think the point here is quite clear. Policies that they are following and policies that we are following are designed to improve the quality of the economy and designed to improve the capacity of individuals who are out of work today who want work.

My friend opposite wants to go back in the dark ages of economic policy and look back at ways that led Mexico into problems, that led this country into problems and—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Finance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, as our leader already said, Montreal is the city with the highest unemployment rate in Canada. Montreal is also the city with the highest rate of poverty in Canada. The situation in Montreal is a national tragedy and the government has decided to forget Montreal. My question is the following: Why has the government not approached the governments of Montreal and of Quebec to initiate a special program to reverse this horrible situation in Montreal? Why not?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I think that it is absolutely wrong when the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce says that there is no agreement between the Government of Quebec and the Government of Montreal. I met the Mayor of Montreal on Friday morning. We already have two areas of Montreal where millions of dollars are being spent, in the east and the southwest. Of course, there is a problem of industrial infrastructure in Montreal. We are trying to change that. A month and a half ago, you had the announcement of \$300 million for the Space Agency in the Montreal area. Other announcements are imminent. Once again, I ask the hon. member to be honest. The situation in Montreal today is difficult, but it is not comparable to what it was in 1982.

[*English*]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the situation in employment is worse now than it was in 1981-82 and that answer will not relieve the thousands of unemployed in Montreal at the present time.

One out of four Montrealers now lives below the poverty line. There are 192,000 more poor in Montreal than in all four Atlantic provinces. The government has a special development program for Atlantic Canada and for other regions in Canada. Why not such a special program for Montreal?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I just said to the member that we have two special programs in the most hurt parts of Montreal, which are southwest Montreal and east Montreal. We will continue to work. We work with the province of Quebec. I heard that this province should