

Oral Questions

because, as he must recognize, he is the ultimate level of appeal within Cabinet, and both his Minister of Finance and his Minister of the Environment have said time and time again that the Government is not prepared to provide this funding.

Will the Prime Minister meet with these mayors so they can have an opportunity to appeal to him as Prime Minister to change the policy of his Government regarding a sharing of the income tax dollars with the property taxpayers so we can rebuild our very old and crumbling cities? Will he do that?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it quite clear that when I am speaking I am not speaking on behalf of myself as a single individual nor as a single Member of Parliament, I am speaking on behalf of the Government. We have considered this. We have reviewed the proposal of the FCM. Unfortunately, as I said to them and to the House on a number of occasions, this is an expense that, in a time of restraint where we are called upon to do more than we can afford to do in areas which are 100 per cent federal responsibility, we just simply cannot afford at this time.

RENEWAL OF MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURES

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and is in regard to the same matter. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities made a proposal to the federal and provincial Governments for a five-year program to renew municipal infrastructure, including sewer and water systems and roads and bridges, for which each level of government would pay one-third of the cost. This program would not only provide a foundation for expanded economic activity but it would also directly create 280,000 jobs in all parts of the country.

Since the provinces and the territories are supportive of the program, how does the Government justify its outright rejection of the proposal? Why will it not reconsider?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think I have responded to that question in my previous answers. I think the Hon. Member may find he is a little off base when he says that all the provinces are supportive of this. What I suggested to the provinces and to the municipalities is that, since this is an area which is in their jurisdiction, if they feel as keenly as they do in presenting these proposals, surely they can get a start on it. Surely they can make a start on this as two orders of government and get on with the job, if the urgency is as strong as they suggest that it is.

● (1450)

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East): Mr. Speaker, we have had similar programs by the federal Government in the past when there was a need. Does the Minister not understand that this program would be an investment in economic growth which would gradually reduce

the deficit? Does he not understand that most of the federal contribution would be recovered in increased tax revenue and reduced welfare spending? Why is the Government taking such a restrictive position on this matter?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Government of which the Hon. Member was a member terminated those programs. Possibly the Hon. Member should be looking inside rather than outside for the answer to his question.

The Hon. Member has said that, surely, we have lots of money. We do not have lots of money because the previous Government wasted money year after year. It built up the deficit from \$2 billion to \$38 billion. It left this Government and the country in a position in which the debt was growing at the rate of 23 per cent per annum. We are getting that rate down.

But if the Hon. Member wants to take out his little pocket calculator he will find out that debt was doubled—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

VICTIMS OF BRAINWASHING EXPERIMENTS FUNDED BY CIA

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Nine Canadians who were victims of brutal and unethical brainwashing experiments funded by the CIA in the late 1950s at the Allan Memorial Institute in Montreal have been seeking justice for a number of years in American courts.

In view of the commitment made over a year ago by the then Minister of Justice to consider seriously assisting these people financially, when will the Conservative Government finally move to assist the victims of these terrible experiments in their pursuit of justice against the CIA?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Hon. Member for his question. It gives me an opportunity to report to the House that I have in fact been pursuing the matter with his colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North, together with other representatives of that group who are involved in this particular litigation.

As the Hon. Member will know, the Government and my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, have been extremely helpful in facilitating their access to justice in the United States. I can only say to the Hon. Member that I am in a process of consulting and looking at this matter in conjunction with his colleague. I hope that we will be able to