

The Economy

[English]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

TABLING OF ORDER IN COUNCIL RESPECTING ACTING
MINISTERS

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, in accordance with recent practice, I am tabling in both official languages copies of Order in Council P.C. 1982-3255 designating Acting Ministers, as well as a list of the Members of the Committees of Cabinet.

Also, in accordance with recent practice, I ask that these documents be appended to today's *Debates*.

Madam Speaker: Shall they be appended to today's *Debates*?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: It is so ordered.

[Editor's Note: For documents referred to above, see Appendix "A".]

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ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

TABLING OF ANNUAL REPORT, 1981-82

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 41, I am tabling the Annual Report, 1981-82, of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, in both official languages.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, we have had consultations with representatives of the various parties who are responsible for the business of the House, and it would seem that if you are patient and are flexible in applying the provisions of Standing Order 15(3), there will be no complaints. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) is expected to speak for about 45 minutes, perhaps for as long as an hour, in making his statement, and we on this side of the House will certainly have no objection to members being given at least equal time to reply and ask questions as they feel appropriate. However, there is also an agreement and we would certainly not want this practice to be considered as a precedent. There is an agreement, Madam Speaker, that before the statement by the Minister of Finance, the latter will be authorized to introduce today, for first reading, the bill intitled: An Act to provide supplementary borrowing authority (No. 2), which will enable the House to proceed with second reading tomorrow. And since the following will be at the request of the Conservative Party House Leader, I would

like to specify right away that tomorrow, we intend to proceed with the debate on second reading of the bill which will be introduced in a few moments by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde); Friday will be the second and Tuesday the third day of this great debate on the economy. Monday will be an opposition day, and tomorrow I intend to be more specific as to the business of the House for the remainder of next week.

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, Madam Speaker, that substantially reflects the agreement reached with respect to the borrowing bill, which will be called on Thursday and debated on Thursday, Friday, and the following Tuesday. With respect to today's statement, as long as the Opposition is given equal time to the minister in proportion to the number of seats held by the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party, we are happy with that arrangement.

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, I wonder if I might for clarification ask the Hon. House Leader for the Conservative Party just exactly what he means by that.

Mr. Nielsen: No problem, Madam Speaker; it means that normal, equitable practices prevail in this House.

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, that is, of course, the agreement that we came to, that normal, equitable practices would be maintained.

Madam Speaker: The House then agrees unanimously that the Hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) will have leave of the House to introduce a bill?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY BORROWING AUTHORITY ACT,
1982-83 (NO. 2)

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-128, An Act to provide supplementary borrowing authority (No. 2).

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF FINANCE

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, my purpose this afternoon is threefold. First, I want to report on Canada's economic performance this year and on our

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prospects for 1983. Second, I wish to inform Parliament and the people of Canada of the fundamental principles that will govern me and my actions as Minister of Finance. Third, I will indicate some additional and immediate actions the Government is proposing to ease further the hardship inflicted on Canadians by the recession, speed economic recovery and enable Canada to take full advantage of the development opportunities that will materialize as the world economy recovers.

Last week the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) reviewed with the people of Canada the extraordinarily difficult situation in which we find ourselves. He did not promise a quick and easy solution because none exists, but he charted a course we must follow to restore our country's capacity to survive economically, in a world where the survival of the fittest has become a rule of life.

The world-wide recession has cut our economy to the bone. We have lost half a million jobs during the past year. Almost a million and a half among us are looking for work. Many others have temporarily given up the search for gainful employment. Virtually no Canadian has been untouched by the recession. In every region of the country, those who have been spared the worst have relatives, friends or neighbours who are struggling to cope with hardship and insecurity—be they unemployed textile workers in Quebec, grounded fishermen in the Atlantic Provinces, idle lumbermen in British Columbia, laid off miners or auto workers in Ontario.

[Translation]

Throughout the country, in union halls and boardrooms, in factories, shops and offices, Canadians are struggling to protect their livelihood, to preserve the basic comforts of their families, and to keep alive their hopes for a better future. All too few will have any respite from this struggle during this coming winter. But Canadians know that recovery is possible and that the next few months will be decisive ones in our effort to turn the economy around. They know that adversity has caused us to set aside our differences and to approach the management of our economy with a growing sense of realism and national purpose, and a renewed spirit of cooperation.

The people of this country recognize that the recession is a global problem. They are all too aware that Canada, as a major trading nation, has been hit more heavily than many other countries. But people also know that we are not simply drifting on the tide of world events. They are also aware that we can mobilize our energies to make Canada a tougher, more resilient country, that we can emerge from the recession in a position to compete, prosper and fully develop our considerable economic potential.

We have made remarkable progress since last June in implementing the 6 and 5 program introduced by my predecessor, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen), to break inflation and lay a solid foundation for a durable recovery. The response of provincial governments and the private sector to federal leadership in this regard has been

effective and broadly based. Inflation, interest rates and mortgage rates are coming down. Our prospects are by no means as bleak as they were at the beginning of the summer.

• (1520)

[English]

Last week Canadians were given by the Prime Minister the strongest assurance that the Government of Canada will not kick the social props from under them and abandon them to struggle alone. This government will not tighten the screws on the economy, cut billions from Government spending, or seek to eradicate inflation by brute force. The Government will continue to act decisively to ensure that the strong and the more affluent among us help the weak and the more vulnerable through these difficult times. As my predecessor said last June:

Solidarity and sharing built Canada. That sharing is what the unemployed, the many firms in trouble, and the thousands threatened by lay-offs now need. I count on the willingness of all Canadians to bear their share of the collective effort to bring down inflation.

I subscribe without reservation to this basic principle of Liberal Government. That is why I am proposing today the reallocation of over \$1 billion from existing spending programs to finance a new employment program, provide more stimulus for the housing industry, and speed up the expansion and modernization of rail capacity in the west. That is why I am announcing arrangements designed to relieve the workers and employers of this country from the full burden of mounting unemployment insurance costs. And that is why I am proposing to Parliament a series of tax adjustments to ease the financial and administrative burden on individuals and on businesses.

I have been Minister of Finance for 48 days now. I must say I have received ten times that many suggestions and proposals. I want to reflect on these and to pursue a good many of them in further consultations. There may be some who believe that an immediate budget is imperative, indeed, who would demand a new budget every three months if the last one has not resolved all of our economic ills. But I can say that in all of the consultations I have had, no one has urged me to bring in an immediate budget, and some have even suggested that I should wait until spring.

I will not be rushed into action for the sake of appearing to act. Many urgent bills from previous budgets are still before the House and must be dealt with. To be sure, other critical issues need to be addressed and decided upon. But I intend to arrive at decisions that are sensible, constructive and durable, and I will take the time that is required to do so.

Since my appointment to this portfolio I have had extensive consultations with business, labour, co-operatives, women's organizations, economists, professionals, provincial Ministers and many others. I am grateful for their views. I have also received helpful advice from Members of Parliament from all parties. I wish to express my particular appreciation for the work of the House committee that has examined the detailed ways and means motions resulting from the last two budgets.

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I also want to thank the officials of my Department who have worked beyond the call of duty in the past few weeks to assist me and the Government in our deliberations. I express particular gratitude to my Deputy Minister, Mr. Ian Stewart, who is in all respects an outstanding public servant and an outstanding Canadian.

These consultations have been most valuable and I intend to pursue them in a spirit of openness, candour and co-operation. Over the next few months, as I work towards my budget, I will be seeking advice on how we can build on the six and five program to develop a full-fledged strategy for national recovery. Throughout this process, indeed throughout my tenure as Minister of Finance, I will be guided by the following principles.

First, we must continue to practise fiscal responsibility. We must persist in restraining spending. We must strive to contain the rise of the deficit even while the recession cuts into Government revenues and raises public expenditures. This means that we must rigorously review our priorities to ensure that existing programs continue to serve valid objectives. It also means that we must not hesitate to trim existing programs to fund new initiatives.

Second, we must not abandon the victims of the recession in the mistaken belief that such callous action might speed our recovery. This Government has worked consistently over several decades to develop a social security system that effectively supports Canadians in need of help. We will not put the axe to that system at the very time when Canadians need it most. More constructively, we will continue to look for ways to improve our social programs and to make them more effective for those who need help.

Third, we must continue to rely primarily on the dynamism and creativity of the private sector as the engine of growth in Canada. The government will be seeking areas where it can act in close co-operation with business and labour to improve the financial health of the private sector as well as its ability to expand and prosper. I intend to foster the certainty and stability that are basic preconditions for a favourable economic climate.

Fourth, we must remain outward-looking as a nation and recognize that our future well-being depends critically on order and stability in international economic arrangements. The depressed level of economic activity throughout the world has increased the risk of financial disorder and growing reliance on protectionist measures. It has also dealt a heavy blow to the aspirations of developing countries. Not only must we not turn inwards ourselves, but we must use our counsel and influence in world affairs to assist in the process of repair.

• (1530)

Fifth, we must continue to develop effective mechanisms for consultation so that the broadest range of organizations and institutions, as well as provincial governments, may participate in the continuing revision and improvement of our economic policies. We have made significant progress in this direction over the past year, but it is imperative that we persist in our

efforts. It is my fervent hope that we will find ways to involve labour organizations more productively in this process of consultation.

In this connection, it is my intention to appoint a panel of economic advisers made up of outstanding Canadian economists to advise me on the broad and complex range of economic policy issues that we must face as a nation. I will announce the membership and terms of reference of this panel in the next few days.

Sixth, and most importantly, we must build on the spirit of the six and five program to devise and implement an effective strategy for national recovery and economic development. As the Prime Minister emphasized last week, six and five is not an end but a beginning. It is not a solution to all our programs but a standard, a goal that we can all accept and, by doing so, make it possible to find together workable solutions to the many other challenges we face.

We all know what these are. Our productivity performance continues to lag. New production techniques must be developed and implemented. This requires development of our technological base, increased investment, and new and innovative approaches to organizing work and labour-management relations.

Infrastructure development is required across the country. Our railway system in particular desperately needs to be upgraded. There is little point in cutting our production costs and increasing our productivity if we cannot deliver our goods to the markets where they are sought.

We have an abundance of resources that need to be developed. Markets for our energy may not be very buoyant today. But the lead times of development are long, our energy will be needed in the 1980s and 1990s, and planning ahead can give us an important advantage in an increasingly energy-reliant world. Likewise, our forests need replenishing and our fisheries careful husbanding if we are to sustain our resource base over the longer run.

These are some of the things we need to do. There are many others. We must undertake them together, as Canadians, if we are to succeed. Just as governments cannot break inflation by themselves, so they cannot bring about economic recovery by themselves. But just as the public and the private sectors are now implementing jointly a national program to break inflation, so we can join together to strengthen our economic system, sustain our recovery and enhance our future growth prospects. And just as the Government has shown its willingness to lead in the fight against inflation, so it is prepared to lead wherever necessary and to co-operate with business, labour and the Provinces to promote economic growth.

I would like now to comment on the economic and financial outlook. The recession has been deeper and longer lasting in Canada than the Government anticipated when the June budget was presented. We are going through the most severe period of recession since the 1930s. The publication of the National Accounts in late August confirmed that the gross national product declined by 2.1 per cent in the second quarter

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of this year, bringing it 6.2 per cent below the level it has reached in the second quarter of 1981. Subsequent monthly information suggests that the economy continued to be weak through the third quarter and may have declined by a further 1 per cent, although national accounts data will not be available for several weeks.

Nevertheless, there are signs that economic recovery will begin in the current quarter. Inflation is abating. This has accelerated since the introduction of the six and five program. On a year-over-year basis, the consumer price index increased by 10.4 per cent in September compared to 11.2 per cent in June and 12.5 per cent on average in 1981. And over the three months ending in September, the average monthly increase, seasonally adjusted, was under six-tenths of 1 per cent. This contrasts with an average monthly increase of nine-tenths of 1 per cent in the first six months of 1982.

The moderation in inflation we have had, together with prospects of continuing improvement, has made it possible for Canadian interest rates to decline as U.S. interest rates have fallen. The bank rate has come down for ten consecutive weeks. It is now more than five percentage points lower than it was at the end of June, and almost ten percentage points lower than the peak level reached in August of 1981. Other interest rates have followed the bank rate down. Mortgage rates have also fallen by five percentage points since last June. What this means is that the monthly payment on a \$50,000 mortgage amortized over 25 years, to take one example, has declined by \$200 a month during the same period. These lower interest rates are also easing the difficulties faced by businesses and helping to stimulate economic recovery.

For 1982 as a whole, real gross national product is now expected to fall by 4.4 per cent and the unemployment rate to average about 10.9 per cent. Given the high rates of inflation recorded in the first half of the year, the consumer price index for the whole of 1982 will likely rise by 10.9 per cent. Nevertheless, the trend is clearly downward, and I expect inflation to be running at less than 10 per cent by early next year.

Looking forward to 1983, the recovery should gradually gather momentum. Real growth of about 3 per cent may be expected next year. Broad adherence to the six and five program should bring the increase in the CPI down to an average of about 7.5 per cent in 1983 and to about 6 per cent by the end of 1982. Our trade balance with other countries, which has already attained record highs this year, should be even stronger in 1983. Continued strength in our trade position, together with the prospect of continuing decline in U.S. interest rates, will make possible further lowering of interest rates in Canada as our inflation gains are consolidated.

● (1540)

[Translation]

The area of greatest concern in 1983 will be the labour market. I expect employment growth to resume soon. The number of Canadians at work should increase by 2.5 to 3 per

cent from the fourth quarter of 1982 to the fourth quarter of 1983. However, as economic and employment growth resume, many people who have temporarily left the labour force over the past year will once again begin to look for work. As a result, the labour force will also grow strongly through 1983, and the unemployment rate will decline only gradually. Unemployment is expected to decline, reaching a level slightly above 11 per cent of the labour force by the end of the year; but for 1983 as a whole, the unemployment rate will likely be slightly above 12 per cent.

The unemployment outlook therefore remains distressing and demands continuing efforts to improve employment prospects and help those most in need. That is why I am announcing today a number of measures that go beyond the additional \$1.4 billion the government has already allocated for these purposes over the past year.

I now report to the House on the government's fiscal position for the past and the current fiscal year. The Public Accounts for fiscal year 1981-82 have just been tabled. I am tabling with this statement the standard summary statement of transactions for fiscal years 1981-82 and 1982-83. Financial requirements excluding foreign exchange transactions were \$8.3 billion in 1981-82, virtually identical to the estimate made at the time of the June budget. This is almost \$2 billion lower than in 1980-81. The budgetary deficit in 1981-82 was \$13.6 billion, about \$1 billion higher than in the previous fiscal year. Total outlays were \$68.9 billion, up 17.6 per cent from 1980-81. The major factor accounting for this large increase was interest on the public debt, which grew by 42 per cent. Outlays other than public debt charges were \$53.7 billion, reflecting an increase of 12.2 per cent over the previous fiscal year. Budgetary revenues stood at \$54.1 billion, 19.1 per cent higher than in 1980-81.

In 1975, the government pledged to hold federal spending to the trend rate of growth of GNP. From 1975-76, the fiscal year in which this commitment was made, to 1980-81, total outlays declined from 22.9 per cent of GNP to 20.1 per cent of GNP. The Public Accounts show that total outlays in 1981-82 increased slightly as a share of GNP to 20.8 per cent. But I emphasize that this increase was more than totally accounted for by an extraordinary and unavoidable increase in interest charges. Exclusive of interest charges, total outlays on government programs have fallen continuously from 20.5 per cent of GNP in 1975-76 to 16.4 per cent of GNP in 1980-81 and, further, to 16.2 per cent of GNP in 1981-82. Those who assert that federal expenditures are "out of control" should check the record of the past seven years.

My predecessor reported in June that the fiscal position of the government in 1982-83 had deteriorated significantly from what was anticipated in November of 1981, essentially because of the onslaught of the recession. I must report today that further weakening of the economy in the intervening months has aggravated this deterioration. The budgetary deficit was

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then projected to be \$19.6 billion. I am now estimating it at \$23.6 billion. About 70 per cent of this slide is directly attributable to the impact of the recession on anticipated revenues.

Total outlays are now expected to be almost \$80 billion, about \$1.1 billion higher than projected in June. Interest charges are now forecast to be more than \$900 million lower than in June. This has been more than offset, however, by major increases in the costs of statutory programs, such as the government share of unemployment insurance, the Canada Assistance Program, Equalization, and Railway Act payments, which are related in substantial part to the depressed levels of economic activity. The net increases in statutory program costs total some \$1.5 billion. We have also faced increases in costs due to other government undertakings. These include the just announced decision to provide \$400 million to strengthen the equity bases of Canadair and de Havilland and an increase in payments to Via Rail. In many cases such increases also reflect the state of the economy and the desire to minimize further adjustments which are imposed on labour and other markets under current conditions. In planning its expenditures, the government does, of course, provide reserves which, in more normal times, should be adequate to cover such contingencies. However, they have been substantially exceeded this year. The new outlays projection does contain an allowance against further possible upward revisions in existing program costs.

Outlays as a share of GNP will rise this year, reflecting both the low rate of GNP growth and the pressures of the weak economy on government expenditures. This is primarily a cyclical phenomenon, however, and the government remains committed to containing spending growth to rates below the trend rate of GNP growth over the medium term.

While outlays have increased by slightly more than \$1 billion since June, revenue estimates have fallen by almost \$3 billion. This is almost entirely due to the weakness of the economy, and reflects the operation of "automatic stabilizers". Our tax and expenditure systems have been deliberately designed so that spending for major social programs rises more rapidly and government revenue more slowly when the economy falters. This is precisely what is now happening. Indeed, total budget revenues are expected this year to grow by less than 3 per cent. The net effect of these adjustments is to support economic activity in times of recession.

The government's financial requirements, which were estimated in June to be \$17.1 billion, are now expected to be closer to \$22.2 billion. Some \$4 billion of the increase is attributable to the increase in the budgetary deficit, the reasons for which I have just spelled out. Most of the remainder—about \$700 million—is due to increases in the deficit in the Unemployment Insurance Account, partly in response to much higher than anticipated unemployment rates, and partly as a result of the government's decision on unemployment insurance premiums for 1983 to which I will return in a few moments.

Personal savings are at an historically high level and private borrowings have been very weak through the first half of the fiscal year. Consequently I do not anticipate problems in meeting the government's borrowing requirements. Moreover the government is of the view that in current circumstances the federal deficit provides appropriate support to economic activity and individual Canadians suffering from the recession.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government is presently seeking a \$4 billion increase in its borrowing authority under the provisions of Standing Order 72A. I have outlined the factors leading to this request. I have also made it clear by the estimates I have presented that further borrowing authority will be required before the end of this fiscal year. In the budget I intend to present early in 1983, I will review again the fiscal situation for the current fiscal year, set out estimates for 1983-84 and future fiscal years, and then seek additional borrowing authority as required.

[*English*]

I have heard it said, Mr. Speaker, that statistics make good soporifics. I fully realize that the figures I have recited probably mean very little to the average Canadian. After all, numbers do not pay the rent or buy the groceries. The man in the street wants to know, quite rightly, what the Government will do for him, so I now turn to the additional actions the Government is proposing to protect Canadians from the worst effects of recession, enhance our prospect for recovery and position ourselves to take advantage of future growth opportunities.

The fiscal position I have just described clearly shows that the Government's room for manoeuvre is very limited. While I am prepared to accept the larger deficits resulting from our weak economic performance, the principle of fiscal responsibility prevents consideration of massive new spending programs.

• (1550)

Some have argued that the measures introduced to bring down inflation have extracted a heavy toll from Canadians. However, it is now recognized by virtually every responsible government in the world, whatever may be its political stripe or ideological bent, that failure to check inflation and the pernicious expectations to which it gives rise would leave national economics in an even more devastated state.

To change course now would be foolish and irresponsible. It would break the trust we have sought to build with Canadians. It would perpetuate the cynicism that inflation breeds. The people of Canada would feel betrayed because their Government, when it came to the crunch, lacked the resolve to persevere. I am confident that Canadians will continue to support and adhere to the Government's six and five program and that we will move into the 6 per cent world by the end of next year. I am determined to avoid any initiative that might compromise this achievement. The additional measures I am

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announcing today to meet pressing needs will accordingly be financed by spending reallocations.

To help those Canadians who have been directly hit by the recession, the Government is introducing a new Employment Expansion and Development Program.

[Translation]

The June budget recognized the need to take action to reduce unemployment and provide support to those hardest hit by the recession. My predecessor announced measures to expand employment programs, stimulate housing and other employment-intensive construction, and promote economic development. More than \$1.4 billion is allocated for these purposes in the current fiscal year.

These programs are now in place and, along with unemployment insurance and other employment initiatives, provide an important line of defence against the hardship of unemployment. Through the Canada Community Development and special youth programs, close to \$300 million dollars will be spent for job creation programs this winter, providing employment for over 60,000 Canadians. Most hirings will occur during November, December, January and February. These jobs will be targetted as much as possible on our most vulnerable communities.

However, it has become apparent since last June that additional help is required for those who face severe financial difficulty because of prolonged unemployment. The duration and depth of the recession have led to a significant increase in the number of people who will no longer have access to unemployment insurance benefits. Lacking employment and other sources of income, many people will be forced to seek social assistance, often for the first time in their lives. We cannot, as a nation, ignore their plight. It is to help these people that the New Employment Expansion and Development Program is being put in place.

[English]

Through this Program the Government will draw upon the abilities of all employers in Canada whether they be in the public, non-profit or private sectors to generate employment. We face a national problem requiring a national solution. The Federal Government cannot solve it alone. By working together we can find productive and socially useful jobs for those who are in greatest need of gainful employment.

The Federal Government is prepared to commit \$500 million to this new Program. It is expected to provide jobs for 60,000 individuals over a period of 18 months. I am calling upon Provincial Governments to facilitate its implementation. I am also inviting them, wherever possible, to supplement the federal contribution. Joint action can bring about a significant reduction in the number of people who would otherwise be forced to seek social assistance. My colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), will contact his provincial counterparts in the next few days, and he will announce very shortly the details of the new Program.

Because of the importance of the construction industry in stimulating economic activity, I am announcing that an

additional \$150 million is being allocated to two existing housing Programs—the Canadian Home Renovation Plan and the Canadian Homeownership Stimulation Plan.

Under the Canadian Home Renovation Plan, eligible home owners can receive a grant equivalent to a third of their costs for home repairs up to a maximum of \$3,000. Indeed the Program has been very successful, and the \$65 million allocated to date has been almost completely committed. I am announcing a further allocation of \$50 million to the Program, and this should provide an additional 13,000 jobs.

The Canadian Homeownership Stimulation Plan introduced in the June budget provides relief from high interest rates for prospective home buyers. Grants of \$3,000 are available to all purchasers of new homes on which construction started before December 31, 1982, and to first-time buyers of existing houses before that date. The Program has been very well received and close to 65,000 grant applications have already been approved. In addition, seven Provinces have home ownership assistance programs which complement the federal plan.

Since June mortgage interest rates have fallen considerably and home buyers are under less pressure. In addition, housing prices have come down. Statistics Canada's new house price index showed a year-over-year decline of 3 per cent in September, but the construction industry has still not recovered from its slump and this continues to be a matter of concern to the Government. I am therefore announcing that the \$3,000 home ownership stimulation grant will be extended to the end of April, 1983 at a maximum cost of \$100 million. There will be, however, one important modification. Starting on January 1, 1983 assistance will be extended to purchasers of new housing only to generate the maximum amount of activity and employment.

To better position Canada to benefit from world recovery, the Government is earmarking an additional amount of up to \$400 million to speed up the expansion and modernization of rail capacity in the west and to facilitate an early, fair and balanced resolution of the Crow rate issue. The commitment of these funds will be contingent upon detailed proposals recommended by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin).

The Government is determined to implement swiftly its comprehensive approach to expand the western rail transportation system and modernize the freight rate regime for grain. Early action will ensure that the railways will be in a position to increase rail capacity as required to move the substantially higher volumes of export commodities projected from the middle of the decade onward. This expansion is critical to Canada's economic development in the 1980s. It will pave the way for the exploitation of additional coal, potash and sulphur resources as well as increased exports of grain. The over-all plan will also stimulate western agricultural development and facilitate economic diversification.

Railway investments amounting to \$11.8 billion in 1982 dollars are planned over the period to 1991 and will generate substantial economic activity, not only in the west but in

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virtually every region of the country. In addition to major construction activity and sourcing of materials in the western provinces, the railways' requirements for steel rail, locomotives, rolling stock and electronic equipment will provide major stimulus over the period to the manufacturing sector, particularly in central and eastern Canada. As a result of the direct railway expenditures, it is estimated that some 400,000 jobs will ultimately be generated.

● (1600)

But to get the full benefits from the plan and to speed national recovery it is imperative that we get an early start. The Government will therefore seek firm and specific undertakings from the railways to commit funds for the expansion and modernization of their facilities in the west. If I receive assurance from the Minister of Transport that these undertakings are satisfactory, I will be prepared to extend the special additional capital cost allowances on railway track and other rail assets provided under the Income Tax Act beyond December 31.

While I am addressing the issue of transportation, I would like to say a word about the current situation in the west coast ports. The Government of Canada and the people of Canada cannot pour hundreds of millions of dollars into the modernization of our transportation system and see that system close down for extended periods of time by labour-management disputes. Such a situation is even more outrageous at a time when the country is in its worst recession since the 1930s and when such an interruption paralyses one of our most active and dynamic sectors. The Government in its anti-inflation battle has relied on voluntary participation and called upon the sense of responsibility and of solidarity of both management and labour. Unfortunately, this does not seem to have worked yet in the west coast ports dispute.

I am pleased to note that talks are now planned to resume between the parties today in Vancouver. However, I am giving notice on behalf of the Government that it would be in the interests of both parties to resolve their dispute in the next few days. If the dispute is not settled by Monday at the latest, the Government will carry out its responsibilities on behalf of the Canadian people and take decisive action.

The measures I have announced are being financed by reallocations of existing expenditures amounting to \$1.1 billion. Consequently, they will not add to the deficit over the current and coming two fiscal years. I am pleased to confirm that this has been achieved without weakening in any way the social security system that is currently sheltering millions of Canadians from the full brunt of the recession.

From now through 1984-1985 some \$660 million will be freed up in the energy area by scaling back funds allocated to a number of programs. The existing allocations for the Petroleum Incentives Program will nevertheless be maintained.

Outlays in the areas of defence and official development assistance will be reduced by \$230 million and \$245 million respectively from the dollar levels previously allocated. These reductions, which have been made possible by lower rates of inflation and GNP growth, will take place without prejudice to

our ability to maintain our commitment to 3 per cent real annual growth in defence expenditures, or to achieve our aid commitment level of 0.5 per cent of GNP by 1985-1986. They will, however, require some adjustments in the nature of the programs we had planned to undertake.

Not only is the government freeing up funds for immediate new initiatives, but it is seeking to ensure that it will have the capacity to respond to contingencies likely to arise. Some reductions in other programs are therefore being made to provide for such contingencies and contribute to the financing of the new initiatives I have just announced.

This reallocation exercise has been very difficult. I want to thank all my colleagues for their co-operation in this regard. One billion dollars may not seem like very much in the context of total outlays of \$80 billion. But roughly 75 per cent of total Government outlays is made up of transfers to persons, Provinces and other countries, grants or capital assistance to industry, subsidies, loans and interest on the public debt. Of the 25 per cent or \$20 billion remaining, which accounts for the operating expenditures of the Federal Government inclusive of defence, some \$11 billion is made up of wages, salaries and other personnel costs, which have already been restrained by the six and five program.

It has not been easy to make deep cuts in Government spending without hurting some group of Canadians already reeling from the impact of recession. But the Government, having urged Canadians to restrain their incomes, had no choice but to revise and pare down federal expenditures. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) has introduced over the past few months stringent restrictions on spending in the Public Service. The Government has asked him to look again at departmental expenditures to ensure that no fat is left in the system and, even beyond this, that outlays are being pared down to the lowest level compatible with maintenance of adequate service to the public. He will soon report to the House on this issue.

I am also announcing today the Government's decision to set employee and employer unemployment insurance premium rates for 1983 at levels significantly lower than would be required to prevent the deficit of the unemployment insurance account from rising further next year. In effect, the Government will limit the increase in premiums to about half what would be required to balance the operations of the account in 1983.

In so doing, the Government is accepting the recommendation of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, which includes representation from both business and labour, and a similar recommendation made by the Economic Council of Canada. Effective January 1, 1983 premium rates will be set at \$2.30 per \$100 of insurable earnings for employees, and at \$3.22 for employers.

[Translation]

Unemployment Insurance is the first line of defence of Canadians against temporary loss of income resulting from

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unemployment. Honourable Members are well aware that over the past year it has been drawn upon more heavily and extensively than ever before to meet the objectives for which it was designed. The program is financed through premiums paid by workers and their employers, and through contributions from the federal government. Over the years, premiums have moved up and down in response to general economic conditions and the consequential demands made on the Unemployment Insurance Account. Premiums were in fact reduced last year from the 1980 level of \$1.80 for employees to \$1.65 per \$100 of insurable earnings—the same premium level as in 1976.

Unfortunately, we now face a very different situation. The severity of the recession has resulted in a very high number of claims on the Unemployment Insurance Account. It is estimated that by the end of 1983, in the absence of any increase in premium rates, the cumulative deficit could rise to more than \$6.5 billion. Some increase in premium rates is therefore unavoidable. However, balancing the Account at this time would have imposed an intolerable burden on the private sector, requiring an employee premium rate as high as \$3.75 in 1983.

To have raised premiums to such levels would have amounted to a massive tax increase on Canadian workers and businesses, an increase that would have jeopardized economic recovery. At the same time, keeping rates at their current levels could have added more than \$3 billion to the government's cash requirements in 1983. It would also have required even higher rates in the future since the deficit of the Account would continue to mount.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration and I have both consulted with business and labour as to the fairest way to resolve this dilemma. There is a strong desire on the part of the private sector not to tamper with the basic insurance principle of the program. The government supports this principle. Yet a strong case can be made for sharing more widely the burden of unemployment insurance in current circumstances, thereby enhancing the stabilizing properties of the program and demonstrating the willingness of Canadians to help those among us who are most in need. Setting premium rates at the levels I have just indicated will require the government to advance more than \$1 billion to the Unemployment Insurance Account in 1983, over and beyond its normal contribution as an employer. The government's borrowing requirements will increase by an equivalent amount. The government's decision will lead to an increase in the cumulative deficit in the Account in 1983—a matter of serious concern to all of us. Over the coming months, my colleagues and I will continue to assess closely the extent of the deficit and its implications, and to pursue the matter in further consultations with business, labour and other interested parties.

● (1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to go into a number of taxation issues, particularly bearing in mind the decision I have just announced relating to unemployment insurance. Taxation policy has been hotly debated over the past year. Our tax system must balance the need for fairness, the need for incentives, the need to avoid distorting private sector decisions, and the need to raise revenues. Many commentators have emphasized the importance of tax simplicity. I agree. However, some degree of complexity is unavoidable if the tax rules are to reflect the real and very complex world in which we live, and if tax incentives are to apply only to those for whom they are intended.

The government has welcomed consultations and constructive suggestions on tax policy. A committee of this House has examined the tax proposals from the November 1981 budget. Several groups of outside tax experts and private sector representatives have been appointed to examine important tax proposals. I have personally held many consultations on taxation issues since becoming Minister of Finance and I plan to continue this process.

I have a number of announcements to make concerning certain measures from the November budget. Many of these respond to representations made by individuals and associations either directly to me or my predecessor, or before the House Committee.

In reviewing these representations I have been guided by three considerations. First, it is important to ensure that incentives extended to some taxpayers are fair, that they do not unnecessarily distort economic activity, or result in higher tax rates for others.

Second, I do not believe that the Government can continually pile incentive upon incentive without looking at the revenue loss involved, the overall government deficit, and the capacity of the country to afford these incentives. The November changes were in the right direction and I am not prepared to abandon that approach, as some have suggested.

Third, since last November the Canadian economy has been hard hit by the world recession and, for this reason, some adjustments in the government's tax proposals are warranted. Now is the time to remove uncertainty, to end the debate over the merits of this or that proposal, to reduce tax complexity, and to move on to the many pressing economic problems that confront us.

Working Canadians are faced with uncertainty in employment and restraint in their living standards. The government is asking them to share with other Canadians the burden of mounting unemployment insurance costs. I am therefore making two tax adjustments that will directly benefit working Canadians.

I will not proceed with the proposal to tax the health and dental plan benefits of employees.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

