

Oral Questions

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA ATTORNEY
GENERAL

Mr. Speaker: May I interrupt the proceedings for just a minute to advise Hon. Members of the presence in our gallery of Hon. Brian Smith, Attorney General of British Columbia.

Some Hon. Members: Hear,hear!

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

ADVANCE PAYMENT OF RENTS

Mr. Tom Hockin (London West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Public Works. It is a question which could save the Government of Canada millions of dollars. Will the Minister continue the wasteful practice of past years of paying many days in advance, each month, for properties it is renting in Ottawa and across the country?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. de Cotret: If Hon. Members would like to know the answer to the question, I would be very pleased to give it to them. In recent months we have undertaken a very thorough review of the whole issue of cash management within the Public Service, our agencies, and our Crown corporations. I am happy to announce that measures that been taken to ensure that new directives will be applied to maximize the usefulness of the cash we have at our disposal to the Treasury, which will amount to several hundred millions of dollars per year in savings to the CRF.

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ENERGY

NEGOTIATIONS WITH WESTERN PROVINCES

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the fact that the deadline for an agreement with the western energy producing provinces is March 31—and the Minister will acknowledge the importance of maintaining that deadline for the economy of the country—could the Minister assure the House that an agreement with these provinces will be reached by March 31?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that talks are proceeding very amiably. As I have said before, we are into the most difficult part of the negotiations. I think it should be clearly understood in the House that all the parties to this negotiation—the provinces and the federal Government—are breaking new ground because we are attempting to

go to a process of deregulation from a highly administered system. The impacts of that have to be very carefully studied. That work is continuing regularly. I am certain the deadline will be met.

PETROLEUM AND GAS REVENUE TAX

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, we have heard conflicting positions from various members of the Government on the fate of the petroleum and gas revenue tax. What position is the Government taking with respect to the petroleum and gas revenue tax in negotiations with the western energy producing provinces?

Hon. Pat Carney (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Hon. Member that he could not have heard conflicting positions on energy policy from members of this Government, because there is only one energy policy of this Government, and it is supported by all of us.

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FOOD AND DRUGS

CANADA-UNITED STATES DISCUSSIONS—GENERIC DRUGS ISSUE

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. According to press reports, President Reagan has joined with multinational drug companies to seek changes in Canada's generic drug laws and will be discussing this question with the Prime Minister on Sunday. Could the Minister give the House guarantees that Canada will sign no agreement on generic drugs, or give no undertaking to the United States to change our patent laws in advance of public or parliamentary participation in the process?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to give my hon. friend the assurance, as I did last week in answer to a previous question, that we shall protect consumer interests at all times and that all groups will be consulted before any agreement is signed.

[English]

REQUEST FOR PARLIAMENTARY PARTICIPATION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister. Given the fact that the Minister and his Department have permitted or encouraged discussions between the two types of drug manufacturing organizations, without participation by consumers' organizations or other interested parties, will he give assurances that there will be no agreement made, or no changes in law, without full participation by Members of Parliament and by interested groups such as the Consumers Association?