

mergers, can the minister tell us whether or not he has made representations on behalf of the small business community to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and what specific action is the government taking to protect certain small business sectors from extinction?

[Translation]

**Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses)):** Madam Speaker, as I recall, when the hon. member introduced his motion under Standing Order 43 yesterday, the "noes" were coming from the other side of the House. Moreover, I would like to tell him that I have had many meetings with my colleague, the hon. Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. We have jointly met with the authorities of the Canadian Association of Independent Small Businesses. I have myself met with the Clothing Manufacturers' Association as well as with the textile and shoe manufacturers to discuss this rather important problem of mergers between major distribution chains. Of course, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and myself are considering certain measures such as amendments to the Combines Investigation Act.

[English]

#### SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BOND PROGRAM

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton):** These consultations within the Liberal government have been going on for 13 years, and, in fact, last October the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs himself stated on no less than three occasions that immediate action will be taken, but still we have not heard any word. Therefore I should like to put my supplementary question to someone who perhaps will act a little faster.

My supplementary question on a related subject, Madam Speaker, is directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the fact that the Liberal government is unwilling or unable to deal with high interest rates in general, and because the major concern confronting the small business community is the availability of working capital at realistic rates, as the minister himself knows, I should like to ask the minister to consider expanding the Small Business Development Bond program to include working or venture capital, and to do it forthwith.

Before he replies that he has just extended that program until the end of the year, let me remind him that this extension was undertaken at the insistence of this House. I ask him to expand that program to include working capital. If he is unable to do that, can he tell the House and the small business sector across this country which is suffering high interest rates why he cannot do it?

**Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, the extension of the Small Business Development Bond was made on the recommendation of the Minister of State for Small Businesses—

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

#### Oral Questions

**Mr. MacEachen:**—and was supported unanimously by all members in the House. There were no amendments proposed at that time nor were suggestions made to have the bond extended or its ambit widened. It is not the intention of the government to widen the ambit of the Small Business Development Bond. We have taken a major step in extending the application of the bond until the end of this fiscal year. The hon. member asked why it is not possible to widen the scope of the bond. The reason is that extending it to the end of this year was very expensive, and to widen its scope would be even more expensive, and that is an expense which we cannot bear at the present time in the light of our interest to restrain expenditures.

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[Translation]

#### REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

##### INQUIRY RESPECTING ESTABLISHMENT OF PAPER MILL AT MATANE

**Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Small Businesses. In view of the decision to set up a paper mill at Matane in the Matapédia Valley, as promised by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion during the last election campaign and as reiterated last spring, and the fact that the local people blocked the VIA Rail track and the TransCanada highway at Amqui in the province of Quebec, I should like to ask the minister whether or not he can tell the House why the government has decided not to have that paper mill built in the Matapédia Valley where there is a 40-per cent unemployment rate?

**Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses)):** Madam Speaker, I wonder where the hon. member gets his information. No decision has yet been made with regard to the establishment of a paper mill in the Matapédia Valley. My colleague, the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, is in constant touch with his Quebec counterpart in an effort to find the best possible solution to the problem of the economic development of the Matapédia Valley.

**Mr. Clarke:** Madam Speaker, when will the government keep the promises it made to those people instead of trying to make a national park of their valley and thus forcing them to leave their homes.

**Mr. Lapointe (Charlevoix):** Once again, Madam Speaker, the information of the hon. member is rather sketchy. The government has no intention of having a national park in the Matapédia Valley. Studies have been made, however, by the departments responsible for the environment, with regard to the possibility of having a major salmon river in that valley.