

Oral Questions

important issues which we have passed on to him but have seen no results?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the director of investigations is taking steps to hasten the completion of the investigation and I think that we will be obtaining his report during the next few weeks.

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[English]

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

LATE DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY ALLOWANCE CHEQUES

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, it is estimated that approximately one and one-quarter million family allowance cheques were not distributed on time toward the end of last week, therefore causing severe hardship to the many needy families involved.

My question is for the Minister of Supply and Services. In view of the fact that Mr. Joung, a Post Office spokesman, has publicly stated the cheques were delivered to the Post Office two days late by Supply and Services, will the minister confirm whether this indeed did happen, was his department late in delivering the cheques and, in any event, will he give an explanation on exactly what happened?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, first of all permit me to congratulate my friend, the hon. member for Leeds-Grenville, on his appointment as official critic for the Department of Supply and Services. This is the first opportunity I have had to offer him that congratulation.

I would also like to point out, Madam Speaker, that indeed the number of cheques which were delivered late was in the vicinity of 4,000 to 5,000. I want to assure the hon. gentleman that it was not in any way due to any error on the part of the Department of Supply and Services. The cheques were delivered to the Post Office in accordance with the predetermined schedule.

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his complimentary remarks at the start, but I cannot agree with him when he refers to 4,000 to 5,000 cheques, when it is reported that 45,000 alone were in the city of Ottawa. Therefore, my supplementary is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General.

An official of Supply and Services, head of the Supply and Services office in the city of Toronto, has blamed the Post Office, and I would like to ask him whether he is prepared to blame Supply and Services, or accept the blame for his department? In any event, will he tell us what he knows about the situation?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to tell the hon. member that in fact the Post Office Department, as it does every month, delivered over 1,270,000 cheques. Unfortunately, of those 1,270,000 cheques, about 7,500 were late in being delivered. My department assumes full responsibility for that delay. We apologize for the fact that those 7,500 cheques were not delivered on time. I am advised, however, that there was only a one-day delay so that, considering the fact that out of a total 1,270,000 cheques delivered only 7,500 were late, the average is still quite good.

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[English]

INDUSTRY

APPLICATION TO FIRA BY FINNISH TIRE COMPANY—REASON FOR GOVERNMENT APPROVAL

Mr. Walter McLean (Waterloo): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Will he advise the House why the government has approved the application to FIRA by a tire company from Finland, which will import and subsequently produce tires in this country, at a time when the government has authorized a \$50 million DREE grant to the Michelin Tire Company?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, the law in the form it was passed by Parliament does not permit me to provide the kind of information sought by my hon. friend.

I hope the House will be supporting me before too long in legislation which, among other things, will enable the act to operate with more openness. I am afraid that is about all the information I can provide, except to add that if the application was approved, as he says, it was because the test of significant benefit in the terms of the act was met.

Mr. McLean: Madam Speaker, in light of the serious effect on the tire companies that are now producing, and in light of the financial implications on the part of the people of Canada involved in recent negotiations, will the minister make the commitment that no government grants will be made to assist this Finnish company while the existing industry is operating so far below its capacity?

Mr. Gray: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to speak for each and every department on each and every one of the range of programs of the government, but I am sure if applications are received—and I have no indication or reason to believe they will be—they will not be accepted unless the conditions are met which were set originally in respect of benefits to Canada.