

Oral Questions

achieved this year. What is happening in connection with that statement?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I hope to be making a comprehensive statement on this subject in the near future. I can say, however, that as a result of that program and the co-operation of departments of the federal government as well as of the House of Commons and its staff, there has been a very significant saving over this past year. It is a saving which runs into the millions of dollars which would not have been saved without the program.

INQUIRY WHETHER HOME INSULATION PROGRAM PUT BEFORE PROVINCES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources a question regarding the conference he had with provincial energy ministers on May 11. Will the minister confirm that at that conference he put forward an idea in principle for a retrofit or home insulation program which he estimated would cost in the neighbourhood of \$1.5 billion spread over seven years? According to the minister's estimate, it would save the equivalent of one and a quarter oil sand plants. Since according to the transcript several provincial ministers were enthusiastic about the proposal, at least two of them saying, "Let's get on with it", I ask the minister if he has received his colleague's authorization to put a definitive proposal for a home insulation program before the provincial governments?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well briefed on the proceedings of that energy conference. As he knows, it is true that I have long favoured such an approach and long favoured a co-ordinated, co-operative approach to energy conservation in this country. I took that position from the start. I have already talked with some provincial ministers and in the next few days will be holding further discussions with provincial ministers. I hope it will be possible to work out with them a set of undertakings which provincial governments would give if it is possible for the federal government to decide in favour of the significant program to which the hon. member referred.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since it is apparent that lack of authorization from his colleagues and not lack of co-operation from the provincial governments is the obstacle to going ahead with the program—

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): How do you know?

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): —even though when answering previous questions the minister said that the large sums of money involved are the obstacle; since according to his own figures the \$1.5 billion program would cost slightly more than \$215 million a year if spread over seven years, I ask, does he not think it worthwhile to make an

[Mr. Crosbie.]

investment of \$215 million each year, which, according to his own figures would save us some 2.5 billion gallons of oil per year, a saving of \$1.25 billion annually, save as well \$750 million on imports, plus relieve us of the necessity of building another tar sands plant. Is this not a good investment? Can the minister not persuade that hard-headed Scot who sits as the Minister of Finance that this would be the best investment the government could make?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I do not accept your description of the Scot.

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, we have heard the hon. gentleman's representations before. That he makes strong representations is well known and understood by my colleagues. We are giving the matter consideration.

LENGTH OF TIME SUBSIDIZATION OF SYNCRUDE PRODUCT WILL CONTINUE

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. At the same energy ministers conference the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that when the Syncrude plant goes on stream next year, the government will be required to subsidize that plant's production in order that it can be paid the promised international price. Does that still stand? And, though the minister indicated that the government intends to go up to the international price, he has always qualified that statement by saying we would not go above the United States price, which is below the world price. Does that mean that the government intends to continue subsidizing the product of the Syncrude plant even after we have reached the United States price, and does that not indicate the real savings we can make if the minister can persuade his colleagues to put in place the home insulation program?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the commitment to the world price stands. As for the hon. member's interpretation regarding the world price exceeding the United States price, or more particularly exceeding the present Canadian price and the requirement of a subsidy from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, that subsidy will be paid in the national interest.

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● (1430)

[Translation]

INDUSTRY

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO ASSIST FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS IN QUEBEC—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I shall direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Some time ago the minister took part—indeed we took part together—in an important meeting or seminar in Victoriaville