

*Oral Questions***ENERGY**

NEW BRUNSWICK OIL SHALES DEVELOPMENT

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I draw the minister's attention, as I attempted to do a week or so ago, to the large deposit of oil shales in the province of New Brunswick. As the minister is aware, only one square mile of the 2,500 square mile deposit has been investigated, but this square mile leads New Brunswick authorities to believe there could be as much as 15 billion barrels of oil in the shales. These shales are not part of our national energy inventory.

Has the minister received any representations from New Brunswick, has he discussed this with his colleagues or his counterparts there, and will the minister give serious consideration to having a detailed exploration to define and evaluate the oil shales in New Brunswick?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have not received any representations from my New Brunswick colleague or from the government of New Brunswick. Perhaps a letter has been sent to my officials which I have not yet received, but nothing has been brought to my attention. I will certainly consider the representation made by the hon. member, with interest and sympathy.

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THE DISABLED AND THE HANDICAPPED

EFFECT OF CRTC DECISION ON HARD OF HEARING TELEPHONE USERS

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the minister is aware, hearing impairment is the largest handicap in Canada. It affects one million disabled persons. Access to telephones is more important to them than it is to the general public and affects their ability to hold jobs or to live independently.

Instead of removing obstacles for these people, the effect of a recent CRTC decision will be to allow the installation of new telephone equipment which is incompatible with hearing aids and further isolates these Canadians from the mainstream of Canadian life.

Considering the minister's obvious concern about the disabled and handicapped community in Canada, what action is the minister prepared to take to remove this obstacle which was not there before the CRTC made this decision?

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State (Multiculturalism)): Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to bring the detailed question of the hon. member to the attention of the Minister of Communications as soon as he returns to Ottawa.

ESTABLISHMENT OF TELEPHONE EQUIPMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Since the minister is responsible to Canadian consumers generally and since disabled and handicapped people are also Canadian consumers, will the minister agree to establish a standard which would require that compatibility with hearing aids be mandatory for all telephones used in Canada so that all Canadians would have the right of universal access to telephone communications?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, I shall be happy to look into the proposal made by the hon. member and to discuss it with my colleagues.

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[English]

NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

EXPANSION OF SERVICES OF NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the urgency of implementing the government's plan for oil substitution and the importance that natural gas will play in this program, can the minister say how soon financial assistance, as promised in the National Energy Program, will be made available to natural gas distribution companies to enable them to expand their services to areas in eastern Canada such as the communities along the north shore of Lake Huron not now served by a natural gas pipeline?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a point of clarification with respect to the previous question by the hon. member from New Brunswick. I would like to advise him that I have been—

Mr. Nielsen: Order.**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: Then I will answer the question of the hon. member for Algoma if the House does not want me to clarify the previous question.

Under the National Energy Program, large amounts of money have been provided and set aside for the expansion of the distribution systems for natural gas, and also electricity, in cases where it would not be economic to do so purely on a financial basis because of lack of clientele. However, there may be instances where it would be very important to have that expansion of the system in order to achieve our goal of reducing oil consumption in this country.

The decision as to the expansion of the systems will be made by provincial government authorities, and we will be working