

Oral Questions

of Niagara, the City of Timmins, and the Province of Ontario. These agreements provide for the federal Government to share 50 per cent of the costs of water and sewage projects in those areas. Will the Minister enter into the same agreement with the Province of Saskatchewan and the City of Regina in order that Regina may receive the same treatment as those other municipalities?

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, the agreements the Hon. Member has just referred to were made under that special program. We have taken into consideration the elements of high priority and urgency which are the main guiding principles under which these projects are undertaken. Each case has been and will be considered on its own merits.

Mr. McKnight: Madam Speaker, the municipalities involved are of equal or larger size than the City of Regina. The matters of putting people back to work in steel mills in Regina and of supplying the citizens of Regina with drinkable water should have high priority.

REGINA WATER SUPPLY

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Madam Speaker, I would ask the Minister again if he would consider treating the Province of Saskatchewan and the City of Regina in the same way as he has treated the Province and municipalities that I mentioned previously.

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the people of Regina do have drinkable water. However, I will keep my mind open to further suggestions made by the Hon. Member.

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[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ABDOU DIOUF,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to draw the attention of the House to the distinguished presence of His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal.

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[English]

BANKS AND BANKING

PENALTIES IMPOSED FOR RENEGOTIATION OF MORTGAGES

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, I would suspect that every Member of Parliament has, on his or her desk, a stack of letters from constituents who have been trying to renegotiate their mortgages out of the 18 per cent to 22 per cent range and are quite prepared to provide the

necessary prepayment of a three-month penalty but have in some cases been asked to pay many thousands of dollars more.

My question is directed to the Minister of Finance who, in March, said that a three-month penalty would seem reasonable and that if there were such cases as those that had been mentioned, they should be brought to his attention and he would undertake to have them submitted to the institutions involved in an effort to prevent those financial institutions from being unfair to some citizens. We have received letters two and three times from those same people saying that absolutely nothing has been done. I know it would not be the intent of the Minister of Finance to mislead the people, but what on earth did he mean by that comment?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I myself have received many similar letters and have handled them personally. When Hon. Members referred the letters to me, I had them sent to the authorities concerned at the various financial institutions, asking them to give particular attention to those cases. The Hon. Member is of course aware that I sent each Member of this House a list of the names and addresses of mortgage officers in all financial institutions. From the results that were obtained, I know that in many cases it was possible to renegotiate mortgages on the basis of a three-month payment. It seems there are a number of cases that have not yet been settled, and I shall continue to put pressure on the institutions and hope my hon. colleague will do the same, as is his duty, so that only a three-month penalty will be required.

● (1440)

[English]

Mr. Riis: I want to remind the Minister that he is responsible for the banks.

PROVISIONS OF BANK ACT

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): We understand that the Minister and the Government are now prepared to open up the Bank Act for the first time in some 60 years that this has been contemplated, other than on the regular ten-year period. The Minister is prepared to do that to assist the foreign banks in this country. Is he prepared to do the same thing to assist the hard pressed Canadian home owners? Is he prepared to give them the same treatment that he is giving the foreign banks?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the problem concerns not only the banks but all lending institutions in Canada, including trust companies and all other institutions that are involved in loans.

I feel that my hon. colleague is making a very superficial analysis of the situation. The point he has raised is one that I