

by the CTC in view of the significance to the economy and to the inflationary expectations in the country?

Mr. Trudeau: I have just answered the question, Mr. Speaker.

M. McGrath: In view of the very serious problem of the high cost of living faced in Canada today by all Canadians, may I ask the Prime Minister if the government is prepared to set an example by enforcing guidelines on areas within the government's jurisdiction?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I believe we indicated as long as four years ago that to combat inflation we were indeed prepared to recommend guidelines and apply them ourselves.

BELL CANADA RATE INCREASES—REQUEST FOR
SUSPENSION OF IMPLEMENTATION UNTIL GOVERNMENT
STUDY COMPLETED

Mr. David Lewis (York South): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I wish to direct it to the Minister of Communications. Arising out of the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission of last Friday, I ask the minister whether he has had a chance to study the decision and whether he will take steps to suspend the operation of that decision until the government has had time to study it and take action on it.

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, as just stated by the Prime Minister, the matter is under consideration. The hon. member knows that parliament has deemed it advisable to entrust control to an independent body, the Canadian Transport Commission. He also knows that the government, that is the governor in council, cannot decide to alter, suspend or annul a decision unless there is an extremely serious reason to do so—for example, if the decision is based on a false assumption—or on serious factual mistakes.

When I learned that decision, as did all hon. members on Friday last, I acted as is normally done in the Department of Communications when such decisions are made; I asked my officials to determine as soon as possible whether government intervention is warranted. Once I have on hand the conclusions of that study and the consideration by the government, I will be in a position to answer the hon. member's question in the House.

[English]

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, I fully appreciate what the minister has said, but in view of the fact that the decision of the Canadian Transport Commission states toward the end that the change in tariffs will come into effect one week after the tariffs are tabled with the commission, in view of the fact that this may happen very soon, and finally in view of the fact that once those tariffs are imposed changing them or rolling them back would present the government with great difficulty, may I ask the minister whether he is now studying—I hope favourably—the possibility of suspending the operation of the decision so that he and his colleagues may have time to decide what they may do about it?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, in order to recommend to the government if only to suspend that decision, what I have just said must be ascertained. There must certainly be an extremely important reason. There are very few precedents in this field. In view of the philosophy of the government, and even of parliament quasi judicial bodies are independent from the executive power, as much as possible, and this government endeavours to respect this autonomy. However, as I said, I for one have asked senior officials of the department to review this question as soon as possible and I certainly do not propose to delay the decision making process regarding this.

[English]

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): A supplementary—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for York South on his second or third supplementary and then the hon. member for Egmont. If there are further supplementaries, hon. members will be recognized after I give an opportunity to an hon. member of the other party to my right to ask a question. For the moment, the hon. member for York South has the floor.

• (1430)

Mr. Lewis: May I ask the minister whether, in view of the fact that the law has not only set up the Canadian Transport Commission and given it certain authority but has also given the Governor in Council authority to vary or rescind any decision made by the commission, in view of the fact that parliament must have given that authority to the government so that the government could use that authority when the appropriate circumstances are present, and because of the other facts I stated in my last question, could he guarantee to present an answer to the House within a week from this day before the new tariffs are likely to come into operation?

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Hochelaga): I can promise, Mr. Speaker, to do everything I can to that end, but I think that it would be presumptuous of me to promise that, within the next five days, the department's review would be concluded. I could not promise him that. I can only assure him that I will hurry.

[English]

BELL CANADA RATE INCREASES—SUGGESTED
APPOINTMENT OF DEFENDER OF INTERESTS OF
GENERAL PUBLIC IN SUCH APPLICATIONS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that these recent rate increases and other actions taken by the Canadian Transport Commission indicate there is an obvious lack in the workings of the commission in that there is little opportunity for the public to be represented with the same degree of effectiveness that large corporations such as Bell Telephone and others have in presenting their cases, are the Prime Minister and his colleagues giving some thought to introducing legisla-