

Oral Questions

Consequently, why does the minister not give us a concrete and specific schedule regarding his conversion support strategy?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry): Mr. Speaker, I do want to assure the member that as was announced in the budget, the broadening of the terms of the DIPP is being worked on at the present time.

The member is aware of the financial limitations the government has. That is why we are also looking not only at making the DIPP contributions repayable in their entirety, but creating a revolving fund. Therefore not only do we aid projects that are directed at defence conversion presently, but we build a fund based on commercial viability that will sustain such projects and those companies that are involved in those sectors of our industry into the future.

* * *

CHALLENGER JET

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

It is with a heavy heart that I once again must ask the Prime Minister why he continues to waste tax dollars, this time on a sun and fun holiday among the palms of a Caribbean island.

It is reported the Prime Minister not only used a Challenger jet for a personal vacation, at a cost of slightly more than \$250,000 using the Auditor General's formula, he allowed his hangers on and his flight crew to enjoy 10 days in the sun as well.

When will this Prime Minister realize Canadian taxpayers will not accept his free spending ways?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have already explained they have asked me to travel on these planes for security reasons. I was already in Mexico and I stayed south for a few days. The member would have complained if the plane had travelled back and forth like it did when it was a trip for the Governor General.

• (1440)

I think they are doing a big disservice to an industry. I was talking with Canadair the other day. That type of question talks down on Canadian airplanes because you pretend it costs tons of money and that is not true. The figure you use is not the real one.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I recognize that in the heat of debate we sometimes forget the Speaker. I would ask all of you to please address your remarks to the Chair.

If the right hon. Prime Minister has not finished, I invite him to finish. If he has, I will go to the next question.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose): I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker. What did not happen was we did not address the extravagance. It sounds like a two tier system to me. Security for the Prime Minister is extremely important. We realize that.

Did the Prime Minister check the private charter prices? I did and he could have saved \$125,000. Why not save money for a change? Quit being so reckless. Will he stop being reckless?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am doing that. It is a plane that is owned by the Canadian government to be used by the Prime Minister of Canada.

I have checked too. I asked Canadair if these planes were transferred to them how much they would charge the government for travelling. They said it would be less than \$3,500 an hour. That is the real cost of using these planes.

Not only that, when you calculate the cost of the pilots, you have to understand these are national defence pilots. They have to be in the air so many hours in a month anyway to keep their licences. However you charge the cost to the government when a minister is on board and you do not complain when they use the plane for training.

Be a bit respectful. The Prime Minister of the country should be able to travel like the RCMP requests.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL PROGRAM REFORM

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Profound differences remain between Ottawa and the provinces regarding the reform of our social programs. As you know, a federal-provincial conference on the subject was cancelled at the last minute because of objections raised by several provinces.

Furthermore, the minister promised to release a policy paper early next month, setting forth the government's choices and options. Does the minister intend to proceed according to schedule and release his action plan next week, as he promised?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the hon. member alleges, all the provinces are still very much committed to participating in the process of reform.

I spoke to provincial ministers over the last several days both face to face and by telephone. All of them indicated a continued willingness to work together to find important measures to