

Oral Questions

My question to the minister is this. Will the minister and the government reconsider the decision of the Minister of Finance to allow the forest agreements to expire?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend is right; these agreement did all of the things that the hon. member mentioned.

The fact of the matter is that our needs change, society's needs change, and new arrangements need to be made to satisfy both Canada's public need and the obligations that we have internationally.

• (1150)

The ministers of forestry and the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers are not surprised at this decision because we have been working over the last few years and have designed a more legitimate role for the federal government in forestry, one through which we can make much longer term commitments.

The model forest program for instance is an indication of what the future role of the federal government will be in this area, with increased research and science related activities and it is in these areas that the public demands our activities.

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister.

The minister and other members of the government will know that the former President of the Treasury Board has conducted, as we understand it from news reports, a detailed internal review of the make-up of the Government of Canada. Some of the leadership contenders from the government side are talking about scaling back the federal cabinet.

I wonder if the minister would have any advice for us as to whether there will be a Minister of Forestry in the future. Does he support keeping the job he has now at least for a short period of time and will there be a cabinet post to protect one of Canada's most important resources in the future?

Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of Forestry): Madam Speaker, obviously I cannot predict what a future Prime Minister will do in terms of responding to the clear demands of society to streamline, modernize, and rationalize the operations of government in the same way

that the private sector and other institutions need to be adjusted to meet modern demands.

The hon. member ought to look at the record of this government over the last eight years in terms of what it has accomplished in forestry, the new national forest strategy, the Canada forest accord, the model forests program, all of these great institutions that have made this department indispensable in terms of how the federal government discharges its obligations. That would give him an indication of where we might be moving in the future.

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DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Transport.

This being National Access Awareness Week it is important we note that one of the greatest obstacles disabled Canadians face is the availability of accessible transportation whether for employment or for recreational activities. It has been a major concern of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons.

I would like to ask the minister whether she or the government have had any success in providing assistance to our struggling transportation industries in trying to make accessible transportation more available to disabled Canadians.

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member and the members of all parties who served on this committee for the outstanding work they have done to make life easier for disabled people in Canada.

Certainly within the transportation industry we have made big strides in the last year under the national strategy that was announced by the Prime Minister in 1991.

Just yesterday at Ottawa airport I was able to announce the contribution of \$120,000 to Air Canada to provide loading bridges not only at Ottawa but at Moncton, Vancouver and Calgary along with the regional airlines to allow a dignified access to small aircraft.

At the same time there was another \$98,000 given to Thrifty Car Rental and to Hertz Rent A Car in Ottawa to provide hand controls and accessible vehicles for wheelchairs.