

Inquiries of the Ministry

for that applause. In all seriousness, is there to be such a meeting and, if so, when?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): However competent he may be, the Acting Prime Minister cannot know everything that is going on. The minister seemed to imply the other day that such a meeting had not taken place. In fact, a meeting did take place between representatives of the federal government and of the government of Ontario at which the situation of the automobile agreement was received quite fully. The views of the Ontario government are well known to myself and to my department.

Mr. Alexander: Can the minister assure us that the safeguards which are so essential will be maintained and that the auto pact will not be weakened as a result of this forthcoming meeting?

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, the minister of trade and development of Ontario showed a much more sophisticated approach than the hon. gentleman does, at least in his present question. He said he was interested in the maintenance of the advantages of the automotive agreement for Canada, and we agree with him entirely in that respect.

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MANPOWER

LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR
RECONSIDERATION OF EXCLUSION OF HOSPITALS AND
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. William Knight (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration. In view of the announcement by the minister's parliamentary secretary on November 24 that the local initiatives program would exclude hospitals and educational institutions, is the minister prepared to make a statement on motions in explanation of this policy?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): The reasoning is rather simple. It was thought that the likely demands for assistance under the local initiative program would be so great that some narrowing of the criteria would be desirable in order to avoid too great a flood of submissions. The objective is to provide as many jobs as possible with as little administrative delay as possible.

Mr. Knight: In view of the fact that some hospitals, such as the Weyburn Union Hospital, went to the expense of hiring architects to draw up plans in an effort to qualify under the local initiative program, is the minister prepared to reconsider the policy of excluding hospitals from the ambit of this program?

Mr. Lang: We are presently considering whether changing the criteria would improve the program. I cannot say that anything will be excluded under the terms of this review, but I must tell the House that the flood of applications at the moment is such as to justify the approach we have taken.

[Mr. Alexander.]

LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM—POSSIBLE CHANGE IN
CRITERIA—REQUEST FOR PROGRESS REPORT ON
PROJECTS APPROVED

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Since only a few projects have so far been approved, though we have now entered the month of December, and since it has not been possible to accept many projects under the criteria initially enunciated, can the minister tell us whether these criteria are to be further considered?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): First, I should correct the hon. member. He suggests there have been changes in the criteria governing programs. There have been no changes up to this point. I expect a great number of applications to be approved in the very near future.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I did not say the criteria had been changed as yet. In view of the fact that all of the projects will not be acceptable under the original criteria, might there not be some further elaboration or restriction of the criteria? Can the minister say whether this is under consideration. Secondly, could the minister indicate when he might be able to make a further progress report, particularly on those projects that are ready to begin on the say so of the minister's department?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I will be able, I believe, to give further information about the decisions taken very shortly. I do not expect any narrowing of the criteria in connection with the programs since within the initial criteria I believe the department can select those applications that produce the best result in terms of number of jobs created.

LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAM—SASKATCHEWAN
PROTEST WITH REGARD TO EXCLUSION OF SCHOOL
PROJECTS

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. May I ask the minister whether he has received a telegram from the minister of municipal affairs for Saskatchewan protesting the exclusion of school projects, regardless of whether they are construction projects or renovation projects, from the scope of the local initiatives program? If so, would the minister indicate his response to this representation?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I have received the telegram. It came to hand today but I have not replied to it yet.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NATO MEETING IN BRUSSELS—GOVERNMENT POSITION
RESPECTING REDUCTION OF FORCES

Mr. Henry Latulippe (Compton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Could he say to the House whether Canada will attend the Brussels meeting next week and what position it