

Oral Questions

On Friday cabinet approved regulations that are in effect today which give force to this law. Does the Prime Minister believe these measures will be effective in dealing with this problem? When does the government intend to use these powers to rid our continental shelf of these high seas pirates?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the regulations were proclaimed and are in force today.

After a quick check all ships under flags of convenience or pirate ships have left the area because they do not want to face the wrath of my excellent minister of fisheries.

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FEDERAL GRANTS

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Over the weekend, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce held its annual meeting in Red Deer. One of the proposals put forward at that meeting was that the Alberta and federal governments should refrain from making any new grants or loan guarantees to business. This proposal should really come as no surprise to anyone who has followed the pathetic tales of Gainers or NovoTel, to name just two examples of public money gone bad in Alberta.

Is the minister prepared to accept the Alberta Chamber of Commerce's suggestion to refrain from making any new grants or loan guarantees to business?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows the entire question of grants and subsidies to business is under review. We have severely cut back already. A number of the regional agencies have gone to loans and no more grants.

The member however will also recognize that the way the federal government carries its accounts a number of matters appear under grants or subsidies to business which of course involve agriculture and transportation or certain corporations having to do with access to foreign markets.

The basic concept that the government should get out of the way and let business do its job, which is to create jobs, provided this country essentially has a structure that will let them do so is one we share.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's answer.

I would suggest that the minister grab on the suggestion from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce strongly. Chamber members themselves have stated they want a level playing field and government handouts often distort competition rather than help

business. I would like the minister to guarantee that he will look at the suggestion from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce.

• (1450)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, we most certainly will look at the suggestion from the Alberta Chamber of Commerce. We have already met. As the minister for western diversification can say, he has already brought in a great deal of that philosophy for example in terms of the way he is dealing with small business.

I do share that philosophy. However I would simply ask the member to understand when he talks about a level playing field, that level playing field we have to establish is not one which simply exists within Canada but one which exists in Canada vis-à-vis the rest of the world. We want to make sure Canadian companies are not penalized when they compete with the markets in the rest of the world. We are going to make sure that happens.

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[Translation]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Health.

We have repeatedly asked the minister in the House whether she intends to act responsibly and make arrangements to inform people infected with Hepatitis C of their condition and the risk of transmitting the disease to others. The minister tends to evade the issue while the lives of thousands of Canadians are in danger.

Has the minister finally realized that her first duty is to inform people who may have been infected in order to slow down the development of the disease and stop its transmission?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I always take my responsibilities very seriously, but the government has several partners. I have to work with the Red Cross and the provincial governments, and we each have to do our share.

Regarding the hon. member's question, this issue is mainly a matter of provincial jurisdiction. Does the hon. member for the Bloc Québécois really want me to take the responsibility for telling the provinces what they should do? On all other issues, the Bloc québécois says: "Do not interfere in matters that come under provincial jurisdiction, and we even intend to leave this country to make sure that will not happen".

That being said, I will continue to work with all the parties concerned.