

Mr. Paproski: Why not?

Mr. Nielsen: So much for home owners.

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NATIONAL ENERGY PROGRAM

INQUIRY RESPECTING AMENDMENT OF PRICING PROVISIONS—
ACTION TO STIMULATE DEVELOPMENT AND CREATE JOBS

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Madam Speaker, I would like to direct the attention of the House to a policy which is completely within the control of the government, and that is energy policy. At the weekend the chairman of the Economic Council of Canada said that Canada will not reach the goal of self-sufficiency in oil and gas by 1990 without a bigger effort in cutting down oil demand or expanding supply. He also pointed out that we would be in a better position to achieve that goal if Alberta and the producers received a little more revenue than provided in the National Energy Program.

My question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. In view of the increase in the price of oil imposed by Saudi Arabia this morning of some \$2 per barrel, and in view of the proposal by the Economic Council of Canada of providing 50 cents to \$1.50 more per barrel in price—that little bit more the chairman talked about—is the minister considering amending the price provisions of the National Energy Program in order to break the deadlock between Alberta and Ottawa and to help get the economy on the rails again?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, we have indicated our willingness to undertake negotiations with the government of Alberta. These negotiations have started at the officials level. We have indicated that we are willing and ready to meet with the government of Alberta at any time and anywhere.

With respect to the proposal made by the hon. member, if he can give me some indication that the government of Alberta is ready to consider an increase of 50 cents to \$1.50 per barrel and would be satisfied with it, obviously this is a matter we will have to discuss. However, as far as we are concerned we are available for negotiations.

Mr. Wilson: Madam Speaker, I had understood that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was the one responsible for negotiations with Alberta. I would be very happy to take over his responsibilities if he wishes to give them to me.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1440)

Mr. Wilson: Last Thursday the Minister of Finance stated that the National Energy Program did provide a comprehensive framework to get the major energy projects in Canada under way. At the same time, however, the chairman of the Economic Council said that the National Energy Program is a severe inhibition to our economic performance, particularly in

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the area of energy development. In view of that and in view of the action which has been announced by the industry of cutting back their exploration budgets by some 50 per cent, the cancellation of major projects such as Cold Lake, Alsands and Judy Creek, plus the Calgary *Herald's* estimate that some 350 oil rigs will be moving to the United States next year, does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources feel that the statement made by the Minister of Finance indicates a woeful misunderstanding of the chaos which has been caused by the National Energy Program? If so, what action is the minister proposing to take to get energy development going again and to create jobs, not just in Alberta but in Welland, Ontario, Hamilton, Stratford, Orillia, Mississauga, Ste. Thérèse, and in many parts of eastern Canada?

An hon. Member: Nothing.

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I welcome the indication from the hon. member that he is ready to cross the floor, and I understand him.

An hon. Member: Answer the question.

Mr. Lalonde: I am sure that if he wants to make special representations to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister will listen to him attentively.

An hon. Member: You are unbelievable.

An hon. Member: He is Wilson, not Horner.

An hon. Member: We are all crossing together.

Mr. Lalonde: I understand that some others would like to apply also, but they will have to come after the hon. member.

Mr. Crosbie: You are a bunch of shipwrecks.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am glad that the Christmas spirit has invaded the House and this is very good for us, but we must have a question period.

Mr. Lalonde: I would invite the hon. member to quote the president of the Economic Council of Canada accurately. The president of the Economic Council has indicated that the lack of an agreement was creating serious difficulty. We share that view and we said that we would prefer to have an agreement with the government of Alberta. We have indicated our willingness to negotiate. I deplore the fact that we have been able to have only one meeting to date with the government of Alberta in spite of our indication that we are available to discuss the agreement. We are still available and I hope that we will be able to reach an agreement which will be satisfactory to all parties concerned.