

Oral Questions

the question of aboriginal rights, and concerns for aboriginal people.

It is not up to me to institute a royal commission. It should be a decision of the Prime Minister and the government. I think it is important to point out that many of the departments of this government are working now on the issues that have been identified by the Human Rights Commission; the Ministry of the Solicitor General, the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and my own ministry.

I think it is important that these policy initiatives be developed and acted upon, and that we choose the mechanisms that are most effective and will bring changes forward.

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IMMIGRATION

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration.

In January 1990, 11 per cent of all immigrants to Canada came through Gander, Newfoundland. In February 1990, 56 per cent of all immigrants to Canada came through Gander, Newfoundland. It is costing the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador \$2.5 million per month. It is clear that this is an extraordinary situation. It is also clear that it is a national responsibility.

Why does the minister allow the cost of a national responsibility to rest on the shoulders of the province with the least capacity to pay? Why is she doing that?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, we are very well aware of the situation and are following it very closely. As minister responsible for immigration, I must say that we have asked for a staff increase and we are working in close co-operation with Newfoundland officials to strike a fair balance and to ensure that the people are processed as quickly as possible. We have speeded up the process and we are aware that, under an agreement with the Government of Newfoundland, we assume some of the responsibilities. Our department pays all the costs of the services of an adviser for refugee claimants. The federal government shares equally with the provinces the cost of housing and

the cost of keeping the applicants for refugee status while their claims are being considered. In short, we always try to abide by our first criterion, which is to deal with the applicants fairly and equitably and in close co-operation with the province.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is paying 50 per cent of this cost but it is equally clear that this is an extraordinary situation placed on the shoulders of the province which has the least capacity to bear that burden. Eighty per cent of all hotel rooms on the island of Newfoundland are full right now. We want tourists but we did not expect them to come this way.

Is the minister prepared to recognize that this is an extraordinary situation, accept her responsibilities and take extraordinary measures in the form of cash now?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, we have been sharing some of the responsibilities and are continuing to do so while taking into account the economic benefits this situation could bring to the province.

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INTEREST RATES

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The discount rate increase announced yesterday by the Bank of Canada will be another blow to Canadian consumers. The new 13.51 per cent rate is the highest since the 1982 recession and will surely lead to a general increase in mortgage rates. I would like to ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs what he intends to do to protect Canadian consumers from the ravages caused by his colleague, the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me this opportunity to report on the meeting I had this week. Contrary to what my hon. colleague said on interest rates, in the case of credit cards for instance, the Consumers Associ-