

Adjournment Debate

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Petro-Canada Public Participation Act which received Royal Assent on February 1, 1991, permits the government to sell of its shareholding in Petro-Canada and allows the company to issue and sell treasury shares. This gives Petro-Canada the financial flexibility it needs to fully participate in the development of Canada's significant reserves alongside its private sector counterparts.

Not only does this government hold the view that state ownership and state control are not necessary in the Canadian oil and gas industry, but we also believe that it is in the public interest for Petro-Canada to raise the new equity it needs directly from investors rather than continuing to rely on the Canadian taxpayer. In short, the privatization of Petro-Canada is a matter of simple common sense and sound economic management.

I am happy to report that Petro-Canada has completed the first crucial step in moving into private sector hands. On July 3, Petro-Canada's initial public offering of treasury shares closed, netting the company over \$520 million. As promised, Petro-Canada has used these proceeds to pay off some of its debt, thereby improving the company's financial position. As evidence of the success of this offering, over 100,000 Canadians purchased shares, including many small investors. Petro-Canada's employees were also eager to participate directly in the company's future, as over 80 per cent bought shares through the employee share purchase plan.

While the government continues to hold a substantial majority of the outstanding common shares, it has promised not to interfere in the operations of the company.

The government is also committed to selling all of its shares in Petro-Canada, subject to market conditions and other relevant factors. As the minister explained to the hon. member for Edmonton East last June, it is premature to speculate on the amount the government can expect to receive from the sale of these shares.

Given the size of Petro-Canada, it is conceivable that it will take a number of years for the government to significantly reduce its holdings in the company. The value that we receive for our shares when we go to market will depend on a number of factors, including the outlook for the oil and gas industry, Petro-Canada's

financial and operational performance and the prospects for growth, competitive forces and the overall market condition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): Order please. Your time is over.

I apologize. There are no questions of privilege on adjournment motions.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, last week, and previously in May and June of this year, I raised questions in this House on an issue of great concern to the Canadian public.

The issue I raised had to do with the quick entry of Mr. Al-Mashat and his family into this country as landed immigrants. Mr. Al-Mashat was the previous Iraqi ambassador to the United States.

There were really two issues at stake at the time this issue was before the House in the spring of this year. There was the issue of how it was possible for this gentleman and his family to gain such quick entry into this country ahead of a long list of very eligible people. That was one issue.

The second issue which arose was the way that our government ministers handled this particular issue. Instead of taking responsibility for the mistaken quick entry of this gentleman and his family into this country, our ministers in this House blamed their bureaucracy for the quick entry of Mr. Al-Mashat. They not only blamed their bureaucracy, but they named particular members of the bureaucracy who were to blame.

In absolving themselves of responsibility for the quick admission of the Al-Mashats into this country, the government very selectively quoted from the McGrath report, quoting verbiage from that report which would support their statement that they were not responsible, leaving out other items whereby it was clear that the ministers in this case were ultimately responsible for the quick entry of this family into Canada.

To quote from that report, specifically it said: "Where ministers do involve themselves directly in administration, it follows that they will be accountable for their specific decisions. Moreover, they will continue to be held accountable in Parliament by traditional means."