

Can the Minister of Transport tell the constituents of Ontario riding when they will be able to buy back their farms and homes?

**Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for putting this question. As he knows, over 200 million square feet of land has to be disposed of as a result of this decision by the Government of Canada.

As he aptly said, we did consult with the people at the site a couple of weeks ago. It is part of the process in order that we can present a proper submission to Treasury Board. As soon as this is done, which should be within the next few weeks, the process will be finalized.

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[Translation]

### PROPERTY TAXES

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. When we met with the mayor of Montreal, we learned that the government had promised that no change would be made to the system of paying grants in lieu of taxes to municipalities for services provided to federal facilities.

Why did the government not keep its promise to Canadian municipalities? Why did it make this announcement when most municipalities had already adopted their budget for 1993?

[English]

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows that the grants in lieu of taxes expenditure for our government has been rising at an unacceptable level. The Minister of Finance has indicated the necessity for a little bit of restraint.

As a matter of fact, I met with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We are very sympathetic to the difficulties that they are undergoing and we intend to work with them as closely as we can.

I want to point out that with respect to the city of Montreal, last year the account that we had to pay was around \$8 million. This year it is about \$13 million. Under its new system, the present system of taxation, the mill rate has gone from about 52 cents to \$2.06. The

member can understand, I am sure, that something had to be done to bring a reconstruction and a more equitable means of assessing the federal government for some of these facilities.

[Translation]

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Public Works, then. The freeze on grants to municipalities in the Montreal region involves cuts totalling some \$15 million. How can the minister impose these cuts totalling nearly \$15 million on taxpayers in a region with over 225,000 unemployed? These Montrealers are unemployed or on welfare. Is that not enough? Why should they also have to pay higher municipal taxes?

[English]

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Public Works):** Mr. Speaker, I have tried to explain to my colleague opposite that we are prepared to do everything we can to accommodate the municipalities within the constraints that the Minister of Finance has been obliged to put on us.

To compare a reasonable assessment for grants in lieu of taxes with the unemployment rate of a city, I think he would agree, is rather like comparing apples and oranges.

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• (1500)

[Translation]

### TRADE

**Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Lac-Saint-Jean):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister for International Trade.

I understand that the government recognizes the need to negotiate supplementary agreements which would add guarantees on minimum standards, wages and the environment to the main North American free trade agreement. If that is so, I commend him for it.

The minister must have felt the need for these guarantees even more yesterday when he heard his Mexican colleague boast in Montreal, where unemployment is 14 per cent, about the merits of Mexico's plentiful labour supply.