

Oral Questions

this fall but would start construction in 1980, can the President of the Treasury Board or the Minister of Public Works give us the assurance, now, that they will review the situation in light of the very serious economic situation presently in that area vis-à-vis unemployment?

● (1142)

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, that particular program has to be examined in light of the funds available. The hon. member has had some indication of the possibility of delay. In co-operation with my colleagues, the Minister of Public Works and the Minister of National Revenue, I will take a look at it; but I am not too hopeful that we will accelerate it. I will look at it in full knowledge of the circumstances outlined by the hon. member and prevailing in the area which he and another hon. member very prominent in this House represent.

Mr. Rodriguez: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for that semi-positive answer. Coming from northwestern Ontario, the minister well knows the difficulty in the construction trade in northern Ontario. Can he assure us that, in reviewing the situation, he will consult the regional office of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in order to learn the facts about this serious unemployment situation in the Sudbury basin and make a decision on what is essential now, rather than show a carefree attitude toward a very serious unemployment problem in that part of northern Ontario?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, no Minister in the government takes a carefree attitude toward unemployment anywhere, in that part of the country or anywhere else. By adding that to the end of his question, I think the hon. member somewhat destroys the validity of his comment. Nevertheless, we will take those matters into serious consideration when we make our decision.

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PUBLIC SERVICE

INDEXING OF PENSIONS

Mr. Paul McCrossan (York-Scarborough): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board. On October 19, in answer to a question put by the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier, the minister stated that he hoped to be in a position to make an announcement in October on the amount of indexing which would be possible for public service pensions for the next three-year period.

Since it is now November, and Bill C-12 is before the House, will the minister tell us when he will make a statement on this important matter, in order to aid consideration of the bill and to reassure worried public servants that their pensions will reasonably reflect changes in the consumer price index in the future as a result of the bill?

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

Will the minister also undertake to provide actuarial estimates by the chief actuary of the amount of indexing available for subsequent three-year periods if the actuarial assumptions used by the Tomenson-Alexander firm in their report to him are realized in the future?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped to be able to make this information public by the end of October. The process by which we arrive at the amount of supplementation, quite properly, involves reference from the chief actuary to me, and from me to the advisory committee on superannuation matters which consists of representatives of the bargaining groups as well as officials of the government. That process is almost complete.

The only indication I can give to the hon. member is that I am optimistic about the degree of supplementation that will be possible for the next three years. I intend to place the detailed information before the House when we bring Bill C-12 in for second reading. I anticipate this will happen very shortly.

Mr. McCrossan: Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board did not answer the second part of my question about the providing of estimates by the chief actuary as to what will happen in subsequent three-year periods. I know it is inconceivable that he would introduce the legislation without some idea of what will happen.

In view of the fact that the bill is now before the House, that it provides significant changes to public service pensions, and in view of the fact that the Tomenson-Alexander report to the President of the Treasury Board recommended that the valuation of the combined pension programs be made whenever significant changes were made to the program, will the minister assure the House that the valuation of the Public Service Superannuation Act prepared in accordance with generally accepted actuarial principles as of the end of last year and which is now due, will be tabled in time for consideration of the bill?

Will the minister also assure the House that an actuarial valuation of the supplementary retirement benefit program reflecting the proposed changes will also be made available for the consideration of this bill?

Mr. Andras: Mr. Speaker, I did not spell out all the voluminous detail: I wrapped it up by saying those details would be provided to the House when I made my statement on second reading.

I think the hon. member's second comment indicated a different kind of actuarial review. The every five-year actuarial review required by law of the basic plan is a question of a different order. That detail will also be made available, but not necessarily related to second reading of Bill C-12.