

Oral Questions

Alsands project are not now necessary in order to achieve oil self-sufficiency by 1990?

• (1140)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I said in the House yesterday that there does not appear to be justification for that conclusion that it would take two years to start the project, certainly not from the discussions I have had with the president of Imperial Oil. What Mr. Arden Haynes said this morning is, indeed, along the same lines.

Mr. Wilson: He said a year and a half to two years.

Mr. Lalonde: That is a minimum—not two years for sure. Maybe another official will come along next week and say maybe it will be nine or 12 months. I have seen this happen before. My statement stands.

As far as “the casual attitude” of the government is concerned, Madam Speaker, I remind the opposition that this government has placed \$40 million in this deal in order to ensure that the work would reach a stage where it could be started again as soon as we reach an agreement. This is a contribution which has been made by this government, one which has been greater than anyone else.

As far as the importance of those projects is concerned, we want to pursue all options. We want to make sure as far as possible that every project will contribute to self-sufficiency in this country. That has been our policy. We think that the completion of those tar sands projects will be very helpful in achieving self-sufficiency. But again, I do not think we should be ready to ask the people of Canada to pay any costs which the companies may ask us to pay in order to achieve that end. That is what we are fighting for at the present time. I think the people of Canada support this position rather than the position being put forward by the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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SMALL BUSINESS**REQUEST FOR EXPANSION OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BOND PROGRAM**

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of State for Finance, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Minister of National Revenue, you would think the economy was booming, Madam Speaker. I therefore address my question to the Minister of State for Small Business.

On Monday of this week the Minister of Finance announced a commitment made by the chartered banks to increase their lending under the Small Business Development Bond program by \$800 million. This, of course, was a commitment already made by the Canadian Banker's Association some weeks ago,

along with other proposals which the government has refused to consider. Would the minister now make a more meaningful commitment and expand the Small Business Development Bond program to include provisions to finance inventory and receivables for all small businesses, incorporated and unincorporated, keeping in mind the increase to \$1.6 billion by the banks, and the banking community's obvious co-operation?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, it is easy to make such suggestions, but I would like to say to the hon. member that an amount of \$1.6 billion, such as announced by the Canadian Bankers' Association, is not an insignificant amount which you can dismiss offhandedly by saying that it is not enough. It is certain that there is never enough money to satisfy all the needs which occur at the same time. However, if we add to the \$1.6 billion which the banks will make available to small businesses the financial commitments which other financial institutions have already made within the Small Business Development Bond Program, we come to a figure of over \$2 billion, Madam Speaker, which will be injected in the Canadian economy for the development of small businesses.

Yesterday morning, during a press conference held by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Bankers Association, Mr. McIntosh indicated that as a result of a survey of the banks in the Association, about \$250 million would be allotted specifically to small businesses in financial straits. I believe that these are extremely important measures for small businesses; if well used, these funds will be of great service to this important sector of our economy.

[*English*]

REMITTANCE OF TAXES BY SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Madam Speaker, not only is the minister and his government unwilling to reduce the burden of high interest rates on the small business community but the problems of that community have been further compounded by their refusing to deal with the postal strike. Therefore, at this time, will the minister at least take steps to allow small businesses to suspend remittance of employee income tax deductions, pension contributions and UIC premiums until full postal service has been restored? Surely the government cannot stop cash flows on the one hand by allowing the post office strike to continue, while on the other hand continuing to insist on the remittance of funds to the federal treasury by the already hard hit small business sector of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, has already indicated in the House that he would do everything in his power to have