

Oral Questions

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

OFFSHORE RIGHTS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA—TEST CASE
CONCERNING DEFINITION OF INLAND WATERS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can the minister say whether in fact there are areas off Vancouver Island, such as inland waters, that were explicitly excluded from the test case put before the Supreme Court in 1967?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I will have to check the record on so specific a question.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I understand a new test case is to be put. I would like to know whether the federal government will be supporting the position of the province of British Columbia or opposing it.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I gather the test case would relate to the inland waters as defined by that judgment. I think we will need to have further information on the exact relief being sought, particularly if the court has defined an area of inland waters which would be under provincial jurisdiction. It would be in our interests to work out with the province the exact demarcation of the two.

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ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

LOANSHARKING—REASON FOR NOT CHARGING OFFENDERS

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Justice. According to an RCMP superintendent, there is ample evidence now in police hands about loansharking activities in southern Ontario, but because loansharking as such is not an offence under the Criminal Code, no charges are being brought. However, lending money at exorbitant rates is a breach of the federal Small Loans Act and is a punishable offence. What does the government intend to do in order to help smash these organized crime operations and, in particular, what is the minister going to do to remind the enforcement agencies of the requirements of bringing a prosecution under that act?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the government will introduce in the next few days a bill to amend the Act and deal precisely with those cases mentioned by the hon. member.

[English]

Mr. Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice in relation to offences under the act which are now taking place. Does the minister have any information and is any suggestion going out to the enforcement agencies about offences under existing legislation?

[Mr. Drury.]

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, it is of course our constant policy with regard to federal statutes and offences within them to examine the manner in which they are being obeyed and to investigate whether it seems appropriate to lay charges, whether the investigations indicate that is the proper method.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

REQUEST FOR TABLING CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR OIL SPILL
ON WEST COAST

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of the Environment. Several times in past weeks I have asked the minister whether she could table in the House a copy of the contingency plans her department has in the case of a major oil spill on the west coast. Is the minister now prepared to table such a plan?

[Translation]

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, for some time now, hon. members opposite have been pressing me to table the plans to be carried out in the event of oil spills on the west coast.

I have tried to make them understand that I do not have any specific plan but rather contingency plans suitable for all kinds of circumstances, whether they be oil spills at sea or on land, on the east or the west coast, or spills of toxic substances on land. We have a system under which all the means at our disposal are coordinated by computer and can be adapted to any circumstance. To give an example of the efficiency of this plan—because I was pretty sure that the hon. member would ask further questions—

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order; order, please.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sauvé: Mr. Speaker, I therefore made an inquiry about a hypothetical accident on the west coast. I got an answer and if I unrolled it, it would stretch from here to the hon. member's chair. I will use the usual means and send a messenger to hand it to him.

[English]

USE OF CANADA'S FRESH WATER SUPPLIES BY UNITED
STATES—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Mr. Bob Wenman (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. In view of the fact no government policy has been stated in this House regarding the use of Canada's fresh water supplies by the United States, and in view of the fact that you have and are aware of—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Wenman: —a firm policy statement on the export of Canadian water prepared and in files in your office—

Some hon. Members: Order.