

Why will the minister not announce immediately that he is eliminating the 8.5 cents a litre federal tax on gasoline to reduce the number of day trips by Canadians to the U.S.?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question which covers a number of different portfolios. May I just say to him that the difference on diesel on the federal excise tax in Canada now is lower than that of the United States. That was done by our government and that should be kept in mind.

Second, we have done a survey of taking the federal excise tax on gasoline, as compared to the American, and we are higher on gasoline, but if you take a look at a comparison as well of a province, say my own province of Manitoba and the neighbouring state of North Dakota and compare those two figures in every province and every state, you will find that if there is room and if there would be any change at all, there would have to be very close provincial co-operation.

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville): I appreciate that answer, but most of the trips that are made in my community are not made by diesel operated vehicles. I think that is a bit of a myth.

In any event, will the minister conduct a study to compare the amount of revenue generated by the federal tax on gasoline as opposed to the cumulative loss caused by cross-border shopping through unemployment, bankruptcies, a lowered municipal tax base and all the other negative effects that one day cross-border shopping trips are having on border towns across this nation?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I was making the case of diesel where, if you look at some of the diesel sales even where we are lower, some of the very arguments that he uses still apply.

I only say to the hon. member that we have used our tax structure, both at the national level and at the provincial level, in a different manner than the Americans have. If there is to be a review, that would be up to our government.

I say to him that there are other factors as well. If you take a look at the over-all tax structure in the United States as compared to Canada, there are for example areas relating to the cost of university fees—I give you

that—health care fees, or estate taxes which we have eliminated. Those are all differences as well.

One cannot simply look at the one area, though I know he raises it from a very specific perspective. All of those areas have to be looked at as well.

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TERRORISM

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Over the past three weeks we have watched tragically five separate terrorist attacks taking place against Israeli nationals. There were three in Israel itself, one in Turkey and the tragic bombing in Argentine yesterday. The result is over 15 deaths, 125 wounded and many of them schoolchildren, which is something that I think we all abhor.

What action is the Government of Canada taking to protest against these terrorist actions and trying to mobilize international opposition in an effort to stop them while the peace process is going on?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a point of view that all of us in this House share.

Yesterday the Prime Minister sent the following message to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel: "Canadians were shocked and outraged today at the news of the bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. We join with civilized people everywhere in condemning this further brutal violence against the state of Israel".

There are a number of steps that we are taking. One is our activity in the multilateral round of the Middle East peace talks where we are chairing the working group on the very sensitive issue of refugees.

We have urged all sides to take confidence building measures while these negotiations are going on and to cease acts of violence that lead to the kind of things that we saw yesterday. We do not want to see any repetition on any side at all.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, we certainly support sending a letter of condolence to the Prime Minister of Israel.

We are really asking if the Government of Canada is taking action with other countries in the Middle East to ask them to also raise their voice of condemnation especially at a time when the Middle East peace process is so important?