

Oral Questions

hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands. Since the province of Alberta has said it is willing to stage increases in natural gas prices, if an arbitration award of \$1.15 is to come into effect on November 1, has the minister been able to ascertain from the government of Alberta whether it is thinking of staging that arbitration price after November 1 or before?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, in general terms the discussions have been with regard to a price change effective November 1 and it is for a staged increase some years thereafter rather than between now and then.

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HOUSING**REQUEST FOR OUTLINE OF CONTINGENCY PLAN**

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, a question for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. I should like to direct his attention to the contingency plan he intends to present to cabinet. Having allowed four months to pass before recognizing the need for such a move to combat the housing crisis, can the minister now inform the House when this contingency plan will be presented to cabinet, how long he anticipates it will take to gain approval and when we can expect government action to deal with this critical situation?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no dramatic contingency plan.

An hon. Member: That is for sure.

Mr. Danson: This is a process to which I committed myself with the provincial housing ministers at the conference in January. Our own programs, which were instituted by my predecessor, are going extremely well. Regrettably, those which are in provincial hands are not moving as quickly as I would like, so we have to find ways to get them moving faster.

● (1140)

POSSIBILITY OF NUMBER OF STARTS THIS YEAR REACHING 230,000

Miss Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): I was hoping the minister would report as to how successful he had been in persuading his cabinet colleagues of the need for action. In light of the minister's statement in his speech yesterday that he remains optimistic that the number of housing starts this year will meet the demands of new households, and in view of the fact—

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: On a supplementary would the hon. member be good enough to put the question.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Since CMHC has predicted that 230,000 new households will be formed, I am wondering if the minister is now optimistically predicting that there will be 230,000 new housing

[Mr. Gillies.]

starts this year. Can he relate these two statements emanating from his department?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): I do not have to convince my colleagues of the importance of housing in our society. They are deeply committed to that and have shown it in many ways. With reference to the other question, I think it will be a very difficult year in which to reach the target of 210,000 starts—

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): 230,000.

Mr. Danson:—but I am convinced it can be done. With reference to the 230,000 figure, there are family non-formations as well. I am not familiar with the two statistics. My information, resulting from studies I have done, indicates that 210,000 starts meets family formations, less those family formations that do not take place.

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CRIMINAL CODE**ALLEGED STATEMENT MINISTER WOULD RESIGN IF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT REINSTATED**

Mr. John Reynolds (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Solicitor General. Can the minister advise the House whether he has ever made a statement that he would resign if capital punishment were reinstated or whether he would have to consider resigning if capital punishment were reinstated?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, when I met privately with the leaders of the Atlantic police associations on Monday in Moncton, I was asked certain questions about what parliament might do in this regard, and I said privately to some of those policemen that I could not be associated in any way with an execution, with capital punishment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Allmand: After that meeting one of the policemen from the meeting, in answering questions to the press, repeated what I had said and I was asked later to confirm this by the press. In fact, I did state publicly something to that effect to the press, but it was not put in the terms reported in the press. It was not a threat; it was just a statement of my position.

REQUEST FOR DEBATE ON ABOLITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. John Reynolds (Burnaby-Richmond-Delta): In view of the minister's personal viewpoint on this subject, would he consider bringing back a debate to this House to abolish capital punishment entirely, so that the country will know what the law will be and so that the minister and the cabinet will not have to worry about the problem in the very serious decisions they will have to make in the next two or three months?