

Oral Questions

tee, and as the Minister of Finance stated last month that a major review of cost estimates of the Bank of Canada is underway and will be completed by mid-June and that we would be informed after that time, would the parliamentary secretary now indicate the current estimated cost of this hall of mirrors, bearing in mind that it was originally estimated to cost \$36 million but at last count 17 months ago the cost had jumped to \$56 million.

Mr. Bob Kaplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we expect to have these figures before the end of June. One of the problems the Bank of Canada has in preparing estimates is that the last operation, namely the renovation of the original building has not been costed. Tenders for the cost will be made available hopefully before the end of June.

ALLEGED REFUSAL OF GOVERNOR TO HALT CONSTRUCTION OF
NEW OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, may I put my supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board in the absence of the Prime Minister. In view of the fact that construction continues on the building of this temple of finance on Wellington Street which will be the most luxurious central bank building in the world, can the minister indicate if he is aware that at the time the government was moving to slow down the rate of impact of government spending on the economy, the Minister of Finance intervened with the governor of the Bank of Canada asking that he hold up construction of the building and was refused? If the President of the Treasury Board is aware of this would he now intervene directly in the hope that this building spree that is so unnecessary can be halted as quickly as possible?

Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of that detail in the history of this transaction.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

ALLEGED EXPANSION OF AIRBORNE REGIMENT—REQUEST FOR
CLARIFICATION

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. On January 13 this year speaking to the Conference of Defence Associations General Dextraze said: "Rather than destroying the airborne regiment, I am expanding it." In view of that remark can the minister explain how he is going to disband the airborne mechanized commando, one of the three existing commandos in the regiment and still expand the regiment?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, there are two commandos at the present time. There were plans for a third. If this is adhered to both will be going

[Mr. Stevens.]

to Petawawa rather than one to Petawawa and one to Ottawa and then re-forming the third in Petawawa.

Mr. McKinnon: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If the minister is a little confused about the third commando I can tell him it has been in Germany and is no longer going to be there which leaves a net loss of one commando. The often repeated excuse for the otherwise inexplicable move east of the airborne regiment was the fallacious statement that, as a result, some 1,200 extra men were going to be deployed at the sharp end. It now appears that quite the opposite is taking place and the government is now being forced to disband one of the three existing commandos of the airborne regiment. Will the minister now reconsider the whole disastrous idea, since the last viable reason for the move seems to have disappeared?

● (1440)

Mr. Danson: Mr. Speaker, there is some confusion in the hon. member's mind about the formation of the commando force that is to be changed. No, I do not intend to reconsider it. It has already been considered seriously. The troops' reposturing is a necessary part of the structuring of the armed forces. That one part of it is in abeyance, and will be until I have had the opportunity to look into it further.

STATUS OF QUICK REACTION FORCE

Mr. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): A final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The Chief of Defence Staff, General Dextraze, went to great lengths to explain that the quick reaction force is going to be a French speaking commando unit stationed at Uplands Airport. Now that it is not going to be there can we assume we have no quick reaction forces, because we have the aircraft at Trenton, the airborne regiment will be at Petawawa, and the parachute packing will be done at Edmonton?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, certainly, for any conceivable situation in which a fast reaction is required there is a fast reaction force, for example, special units engaged in the search and rescue role. However, other types of fast reactions can still be achieved in adequate time for any foreseen eventuality. Of course, that is one of the things I am looking into and one of the reasons for not proceeding with the third matter at this time.

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HOUSING

HOME INSULATION PROGRAM—METHOD OF PROVIDING FUNDS
TO HOME OWNERS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs is with regard to the statement which he and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources issued this morning with respect to the home insulation program for conserving energy. Since I assume CMHC will administer the program, I