

Oral Questions

We cut in such a way as to deal with the surplus capacity, the excess infrastructure, so as not to prejudice the outcome of a defence review.

I regret that many installations were deemed surplus after an exhaustive review by our officials and thorough costing was done. In fact one in the hon. member's constituency has been severely hurt and I do regret that. We are trying to work with him and the other members affected to see if mitigative measures can be put in place to help those local communities replace some of the economic activity that has been lost.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

It is my understanding that the previous government and native leaders agreed not to discuss Bill C-31, a bill defining band membership as part of ongoing discussions regarding land claims and native self-government. In fact, they agreed to leave that matter to the courts for a decision so that land claims and self-government discussions could proceed more quickly.

If native leaders made this agreement with the previous government and were satisfied with it, why is the present minister dragging Bill C-31 into discussions with native leaders and bands?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, it is a different government.

We started with the premise that the inherent right of self-government exists. We look at communities, watersheds and cultural aspects. We do not say that an aboriginal person on a reserve is any different from an aboriginal person off that reserve during negotiations.

It is very sensitive. I know there is strong feeling within the bands across Canada. Part of the problem is on the return. No one knew this was coming on the return. Everybody estimated it would be about 10 per cent of those people reinstated wanting to return to the reserve. In fact, it is closer to 40 or 50 per cent and it provides tremendous pressures on the chiefs.

Notwithstanding all that, dealing with the people who legitimately belong to bands is part of the ongoing discussions. That is the policy of this government.

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if that answered my question or not. Native Canadians arrive at agreements with governments and rely on governments, no matter what party is in office, to honour those agreements.

My supplementary is this. The minister has yet to clearly deny or confirm that he told members of bands in my riding that Reformers hate Indians. Will he rise in this House today and

give an unequivocal yes or no. Did he so label Reformers as haters of Indians, yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs, if he wishes to answer the question.

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important. The Reform Party of Canada has asked me several times if I at a private meeting said that the Reform Party of Canada hates Indians. As I said yesterday in this House, I do not recall making such a statement and others do not recall me making such a statement.

• (1450)

However, if I did or even if the Reform Party thinks I did, and I think that is important, let me state categorically to all members of this House and to all Canadians that I do not think the Reform Party of Canada hates Indians.

Notwithstanding partisanship, Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons must continue to function. All of us in this House must work together to improve the quality of life for all the First Nations of Canada.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

When the Liberals were in opposition, not only did they condemn the cuts to social housing made by the Conservative government, they also pledged, if elected, to restore funding in this area.

Can the minister explain to us why the budget contains no measures to restore funding for co-operative and non-profit housing? Why is he renegeing on commitments he made during the last election campaign?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate the hon. member for keeping this issue before the House. If the hon. member has anything besides congratulations for the Minister of Finance, I think she should look at the budget and see what the Minister of Finance did.

The minister is providing \$2 billion under direct financing for the purpose of social housing, \$100 million is reaffirmed for the purpose of RRAP which is social housing, and savings which accrue to approximately \$120 million over four years are for the purpose of social housing which has yet to be defined depending upon consultations with the various stakeholders.