

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have the impression the hon. member asked this question yesterday. He may say he asked it of a different minister. I wonder whether it would be in order for the hon. member to ask the same question on different days of different ministers. The hon. member having asked the question perhaps the minister might reply briefly.

Mr. Hees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance said it was impossible for him to answer the question. I have therefore directed it to the appropriate minister. Might I have a reply?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, we regularly introduce programs to increase exports. More recently, for example, we now have a new program to share in precontractual bidding efforts by Canadian exporters. The Export Development Corporation is more active now than it has ever been in history—\$200 million worth of financing up to this time. Exports are increasing by about 2 per cent on top of last year's 13 per cent.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: As the minister obviously intends to take no action whatsoever, I wish to ask him a supplementary question. Is the minister aware of the letter sent to the Minister of Finance on March 24 by the chairman of the Canadian Exporters Association outlining in detail the steps necessary to restore the former competitive position of Canadian exporters and put them on the same footing as their foreign competitors? I feel sure that the minister does not know anything about it because this cabinet does not communicate. I will send it across and let him have it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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TRANSPORT

REPLACEMENT FOR STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE FERRY

Mr. Ambrose Hubert Peddle (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): My question is for the Minister of Transport. No doubt the minister has heard the news of the burning yesterday of the replacement for the Strait of Belle Isle ferry. What plans does the minister have to find a further replacement?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the replacement vessel that had been planned for that particular service did in fact go aground and burn. We have had to start from square one to try and find a replacement. Along with the operator, we are in the process of doing that right now.

Mr. Peddle: In view of the fact that the *Fredrick Blair* which burned yesterday would have been no more suitable than the *Avalon Voyageur* which was condemned last week, will the efforts to obtain a further replacement be directed toward a larger, more suitable craft for this dangerous crossing?

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Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Jamieson: In view of the fact that the hon. member appears to be such an expert on the matter of hulls and their safety, I would be delighted to hear any recommendations he has with regard to a replacement vessel. If the hon. member knows of a vessel or can help us in the search for one that is better, I can assure him we will make use of this information.

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POWER

PROPOSED DAM ON SKAGIT RIVER—DISCUSSIONS WITH UNITED STATES IN ADDITION TO INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION REFERENCE

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): I direct my question to either the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry or the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I will let the Acting Prime Minister decide who should answer. In view of the fact that the reference to the International Joint Commission with regard to the question of the Ross dam in the Skagit Valley, with hearings starting on June 4 in Vancouver, appears to limit the question as to what may be the result of building the dam rather than including the more basic question of whether the dam should be built, can either minister inform the House whether the government has under way with the United States any other initiatives or discussions with reference to this more basic question as to the advisability of building the dam at all?

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of Fisheries and Forestry): Mr. Speaker, there are no other initiatives at the moment. This entire subject is before the International Joint Commission. We expect recommendations from that body this fall.

Mr. Barnett: After the completion of the hearings, does the government intend to follow up the question of negotiating for release from any obligation it may be considered Canada has with regard to allowing the construction of the Ross dam?

Mr. Davis: The staffs of several departments, including the staff of the Department of Fisheries and Forestry, are available to the International Joint Commission. I am sure it will be directing various studies to be made on different aspects of this development, including the legal aspect.

BAY OF FUNDY TIDES—DISCUSSIONS WITH NOVA SCOTIA PREMIER—ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPMENT IN EVENT OF SALE

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): My question is for the Acting Prime Minister in his capacity as Secretary of State for External Affairs. Were any discussions held between the federal government and the premier of Nova Scotia prior to his visit to New York today for talks with interested Americans on the possibility of financing the development of electrical energy from the Fundy tides? If so, will the minister indicate whether federal assistance will be made available for the development of