

Oral Questions

to the goals of self-sufficiency and Canadianization, and that economic activity and job creation would be magnified more than a hundredfold? Would the Minister be prepared to admit or entertain that concept?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear the position of the Hon. Member's Party on this matter. If the Hon. Member is telling us that we should stop drilling in the North and off the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, that is a position that he can take. However, if he looks at the facts he will realize that at this time there are probably billions of barrels of oil in the Hibernia field, and there have been some major discoveries off the coast of Sable Island and in northern Canada. If we do not drill in those Canadian Lands, we will not know what we have. In the business of oil and gas, one must drill to find out what is there.

The program of grants was established in lieu of tax incentives because we wanted to Canadianize the industry. If we had taken the road of tax incentives only, the big multinational corporations would be able to take advantage of the tax incentives, and not the small Canadian companies.

REQUEST FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, the question that is before the Minister really deals with the effectiveness of that entire program. It would appear that we are facing 180 degrees in the wrong direction and that there is no effective cost control. Rather than attempting to cover up this mess, would the Minister be prepared to allow a motion in the House to refer the entire question to the Standing Committee on National Resources, for examination and evaluation? Would the Minister be prepared to let the light shine on this mess and free us all from this stigma?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is in a very bad position to raise this problem because, not long ago, a supplementary estimate for \$600 million was before the House and the Hon. Member had the opportunity to question me on those estimates at that time. He did not even invite me to appear before the committee to debate that matter. This was voted on by the House of Commons less than two weeks ago. If the Hon. Member had been on the job two weeks ago, he would have had me before the committee. When the estimates are before the committee, I will be willing to appear at any time.

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ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING

PAYMENT OF FEDERAL MONEYS

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. She has had 24 hours to study the amounts of money that were

mentioned in the Throne Speech regarding the EPF transfers for post-secondary education, and specifically for medicare. Will the Minister now acknowledge that the calculations of the Minister of Finance and of her own Department indicate that the moneys we are speaking of are moneys that the federal Government was legally obligated to pay under agreements it had signed with the Provinces?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, once again, I can inform the Hon. Member that as was said yesterday by the Minister of Finance, EPF payments for health services and university education will exceed the level forecast in last April's budget by \$700 million, which will increase the base for subsequent years. To answer the Hon. Member's question, this amount was not part of any funding planned either by the Minister of Finance or by the Provinces, and has been paid under the terms of the legislation for financing these programs.

[English]

TIMING OF PAYMENTS TO PROVINCES

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister. Again, the Minister has not answered the question clearly.

The Minister knows that the money was tied directly to the formula, and she also knows that that money was the direct responsibility of the federal Government under terms to which it legally bound itself. As well, she should know that the point I am trying to make to her is this—if she knew that this money was going to go to the Provinces, and the Provinces knew months ago that that money was legally theirs, why did she withhold the money from the Provinces and go around the country saying that she was holding up her end of the deal?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, no one has ever denied what the Hon. Member said in the first part of his question. What he said in the second part of his question is totally erroneous. I would like to repeat to the Hon. Member, who does not seem to understand the mechanics of EPF, that that sum of money was readjusted. That was clearly explained yesterday by the Minister of Finance. That readjustment was based on an average of the last three years once the final statistics had been received by the Department of Finance.

Mr. Epp: You are legally obligated to pay.

Miss Bégin: It was paid. It is already being paid. I could give the Hon. Member the exact timetable of payment. Nobody denied that that \$700 million was an additional sum of money that, by the way, increases the deficit. If it is not additional money, what is it? Why did the Provinces not even put that money on their books? That is what the Hon. Member does not seem to understand.

Mr. Epp: You called it new money.