

Oral Questions

FUNDING OF COURT CHALLENGES

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, during the last federal election campaign the Prime Minister gave a solemn undertaking to provide financial assistance to groups such as the disabled, women's groups, and others, to pursue Charter challenges on important questions of national concern. In view of the fact that April 17 has come and gone and the promise is unfulfilled, when is the Government finally going to stop stalling on this important promise and ensure the Charter of Rights is available to all Canadians, including those citizens in British Columbia whose school boards were undemocratically wiped out, and make the promise a reality so that the Charter will have teeth and there will be funding in place?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, there is a Charter of Rights here in Canada. It is alive and doing well. Any citizen or any group can apply to the courts if they believe they have a case under the Charter. They do not require financing by the Government. If they believe they have a good cause, they can find the money for that cause. That, Mr. Speaker, is the way it is and always has been in our country.

In the meantime the Government is considering whether or not to expand the present policy, which deals with assistance regarding bilingualism policy, to cases of national significance which affect the equality rights in the Charter, or otherwise. When that review is completed an announcement will be made. In the meantime I do not believe there are any pressing cases at the moment which have to be dealt with, but the principle will be announced as soon as we are finished our consideration of it.

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[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

QUEBEC PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. The Minister knows that, during the election campaign, his leader made a personal commitment to save Quebec's petrochemical industry. The Minister himself authorized a \$15 million payment to Petromont to keep the company afloat until March 31. March 31, that was a month and a half ago, closer to two months. I would like to know whether the Minister can tell us what measures he has in mind in the case of Petromont and the Quebec petrochemical industry so as to find the long-term solution promised by his Government during the election campaign.

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member undoubtedly knows, it is not a question of finding a long-term solution for the petrochemical industry in Quebec; the problem is to find a

long-term solution for the petrochemical industry in Canada. Perhaps the Hon. Member will be pleased to know that we have been meeting with representatives of that industry. We have, of course, included in our discussions representations from the industry in Quebec, in particular from the Quebec Government. I want to assure the Hon. Member that in our view it is a Canadian petrochemical industry long-term solution that we are seeking and we believe we can achieve.

[Translation]

FUTURE OF QUEBEC PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the Minister's arguments, but what I want to know is how many months or how many years will the Minister need to find a solution? I would like to know whether the Minister has received the Bechtel report on the petrochemical industry and whether he has heard concrete proposals from the Quebec Government concerning the future of the provincial petrochemical industry?

[English]

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's party led us into this problem in the past decade; surely they will give us a few months to lead the country out of the problem.

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DECENTRALIZATION

PROPOSAL TO PLACE MAPPING INSTITUTE IN SHERBROOKE, P.Q.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for Mines.

[Translation]

As we recall, the Right Hon. the Prime Minister made an election promise to the people of the Eastern Townships last July 24. He promised the establishment of a cartographic institute in Sherbrooke.

Here is my question. Can the Minister, as Minister of State (Mines), now assure the House and particularly the residents of the Eastern Townships that his Government will live up to its election promise and free the funds required for Sherbrooke's cartographic institute?

[English]

Mr. Della Noce: Have you ever been in Sherbrooke? Do you know where it is?

Hon. Bob Layton (Minister of State (Mines)): Mr. Speaker, this has been raised on a number of occasions over these past months. There was a discussion yesterday in the adjournment debate, and it is on record in *Hansard*. The Government has not taken a decision on this project, and it becomes one of