

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

INQUIRY WHETHER COMMITTEE WILL STUDY EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS LEGISLATION RESPECTING PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of Privy Council.

A few days ago the minister indicated in the House that the D'Avignon report had been referred to a cabinet committee on the public service. Could the minister advise the House whether a special study group or committee or task force has been set up within his department to review the Public Service Employment Act and the Public Service Staff Relations Act? If he can confirm that such a committee exists, would he be prepared to table the guidelines which this committee will follow, and name the members of this committee?

[English]

Hon. Walter Baker (President of Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, there is no task force set up within my department to study the D'Avignon report, although I must say I am looking at the recommendations myself and there are officials within the government who are looking at them as well.

It is my intention to take the matter to the cabinet committee on the public service as soon as I am in a position to do so. I should inform the hon. member that later this week I shall be sending to each of the public service unions a letter indicating my interest in getting some feedback from them with respect to the report. I am doing the same in the case of the Public Service Commission, and if the hon. member or any hon. member has any helpful suggestions to make, I would certainly welcome them as well.

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question will be addressed to the President of the Treasury Board. This morning, the Comptroller General appeared as a witness in one of our committees. One theme which I think is common to both the D'Avignon report and the Lambert commission report is that training and development for both employees and managers in the public service should be increased in order to help these people create a more productive, efficient and effective public service.

How does the President of the Treasury Board reconcile these recommendations, which are made in both reports as well as by the Comptroller General, with the fact that departments in government right now have been forced by Treasury Board to cut back by 50 per cent funds allocated for training and development; and how, in the hon. gentleman's own department, has he coped with these cuts on the financial managers, the people we most need today with new techniques in management? How will he keep training these people so that they can effectively enforce the methods proposed by the Comptroller General?

Oral Questions

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of the Treasury Board): I should like to assure the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier that we have no intention of cutting back on the training process which is available within the public service to assist people in being re-employed within the public service.

As to the suggestion that there have been cutbacks in some departments to the extent of 50 per cent, I would appreciate it if the hon. member would inform me in specific detail what he is referring to, whereupon I will look into it.

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CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

ACTION TO PREVENT FURTHER MORTGAGE DEFAULTS

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for CMHC. In view of the fact that today's interest rates will mean an increase in mortgage rates from the current 14 per cent level to 15 per cent, an increase of some 3 per cent since this government came to power, can the minister tell the House what action he is taking to prevent additional thousands of mortgage defaults under CMHC, the number of which, I understand, totals around 31,000 and which are taking place in Canada today due to the government's high interest policy?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked a very interesting question. I think that if he studies the matter, he will understand that the people who are defaulting on mortgages at the present time are defaulting on money borrowed at much lower rates of interest in previous years, not because of today's interest rates.

CAMPAIGN PLANK TO REDUCE COST OF HOMES

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): My supplementary is to the Prime Minister. During the election campaign, on April 11, the right hon. gentleman promised to cut the cost of buying homes by some 20 per cent, yet we have seen mortgage rates increase from 11 per cent to 14 per cent; in fact, they have increased some 25 per cent to 30 per cent annually.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the House why he has reversed his promise to the Canadian people, making it almost impossible for the ordinary person to own and purchase a house?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat alarmed that so many of those fellows over there have been reading so many of my speeches. They may well end up crossing the floor.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: My undertaking during the election campaign was to introduce a program which would reduce the effective cost of housing to Canadians. We shall be doing that with the tabling in this House of the tax credit proposal.