

Finally, will the Minister establish objective criteria for determining fair exchange? We want to know what the "No net loss" policy will really mean in practice. We have seen one example in the Cowichan estuary, and we are very suspicious.

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, I would say that I agree with many of the suggestions made by the Hon. Member. I have myself expressed those suggestions in the past. All I would like to tell the Hon. Member is that it would be very easy to say that the Minister of Fisheries should be against any economic development, whether the building of roads or any other economic activity. The point I would like to stress is that every time there is an economic project which could have significant impact on the fishery, I can assure the Hon. Member that there will be a public process whereby all sectors will have the opportunity to put forward their views.

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[Translation]

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

The Minister is no doubt aware that at the present time, in the Quebec National Assembly, the Government is considering Bill 38, which will put all Quebec municipalities under trusteeship as far as receiving federal funds is concerned. Could the Minister inform the House of the status of negotiations with the Quebec Government on federal funds? Is there any hope that an agreement will be signed within the next few days or weeks with respect to funds earmarked for job creation by the federal Government?

Hon. John Roberts (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Hon. Member for his question.

Yesterday, I sent a telegram to my Quebec counterpart, Mr. Léonard, saying that I was prepared to meet him in order to reach a solution to this problem. However, I still think that if we are to have useful negotiations, the Government of Quebec must indicate its good faith by accepting the basis for negotiations previously established at meetings of our officials. I sent this telegram to Mr. Léonard yesterday. I have not yet received a reply, but I realize he may want to think it over.

Although I certainly hope to be able to reach an agreement with my Quebec counterpart, I cannot be very optimistic, considering the status of negotiations in recent weeks. Many times, when we thought an agreement was imminent, the Government of Quebec decided to withdraw an agreement that had been negotiated by our officials. I believe that for the time

being, we shall wait until we get a positive reply from the Government of Quebec before starting negotiations once more.

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● (1430)

[English]

THE SENATE

NUMBER OF VACANCIES

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister and deals with the upcoming festive season. I realize he may feel he has had his present from the Conservatives today already. As he knows, the average Senator costs the taxpayers of Canada about \$1.5 million in salary and benefits over the period of his or her employment and retirement. I was wondering if the Prime Minister intended to give any Christmas presents to future Senators in the next little while?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I believe the Tory Party has handed the NDP a Christmas present today. I am glad they are sharing it with us. I thank the Hon. Member for drawing to the attention of the House that, by leaving 20 Senate vacancies, I have saved the taxpayer a lot of money thus far.

REQUEST THAT NO APPOINTMENTS BE MADE

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, we congratulate the Prime Minister on that. What we want is an assurance that he will not spend the time between now and Christmas, or Ukrainian Christmas, to give out Senatorships to fill the 21 vacancies. I think that is a waste of money. People are hungry and looking for jobs. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap, pointed out that many kids will not have Christmas presents this year. We do not want to see a bunch of Tory bagmen and Liberal hacks getting Christmas presents at that price.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, at least I can be reassuring on part of the suggestion. I can assure him there will be no Tory bagmen in my packages.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DIOXIN HAZARD IN NIAGARA RIVER REGION

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. Last week his Department released some startling figures on the amount of dioxin leaching into the environment, particularly into the Niagara River from dump sites on the U.S. side. While the Minister tried to minimize the threat that dioxin creates in Niagara communities, the president of Operation Clean Air