

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CONSUMER AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, Mr. Dodge said that the unions do not believe companies will reduce their prices after the sales tax is abolished. According to today's *La Presse*, Hydro-Quebec ignored these tax reductions when it applied for rate increases for next year. Isn't that an indication that the unions are right?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, I also read that article and found it very interesting. I can't go into any detail about the facts mentioned in the article or the accuracy of its information. As I said in my answer to a previous question, I can give Canadians and especially Quebecers the assurance that this particular point is a matter of concern for the government. Our objective, and this is very important, is to ensure that when there are benefits to be passed on with respect to the goods and services tax, when the hidden tax of 13.5 per cent is replaced by a 7 per cent tax, that companies, in fact, that everyone passes the benefits on to the consumer. We and the companies have that responsibility. I can assure the hon. member that we will be most vigilant, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this happens.

• (1500)

[English]

I mentioned earlier that some big businesses such as Sears, GM and Ford have already stated that they are going to pass the benefits on to consumers.

What we want are commitments from other companies and businesses that they will pass the benefits on to consumers.

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister that here he has an example of not a promise, but a reality that Hydro Quebec, and the same is true for Ontario Hydro, have not taken into account in their requests for increases in the rates for next year the fact that there will be reductions in the sales tax.

Let me ask this government not for empty promises, but what precisely will it do in the face of these problems that actually exist?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, we must be accurate. I do not think that Ontario Hydro has set its rates for next year.

On the other hand, I want to emphasize that Hydro Quebec is under provincial jurisdiction. I do not think the hon. member is asking us to intervene on provincial jurisdiction.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I already said that we would look into the facts that were brought to our attention this morning. It is quite obvious that we will urge all Canadians at all levels so that all consumers can benefit from the reduction from 13.5 to 7 per cent.

However, my colleague should raise specific questions, as I just said, and he did not in the case of Ontario. We will wait and see whether the Government of Ontario will at least mention these matters and we are not going to anticipate what will be said in the coming weeks.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES

TABLING OF ANNUAL REPORT OF COLUMBIA RIVER
TREATY PERMANENT ENGINEERING BOARD

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table in both official languages the annual report of a project which I know you had a lot of intimate dealings with, namely, the Columbia River Treaty Permanent Engineering Board to the Government of the United States and Canada for the period October 1, 1988, to September 30, 1989.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will be pleased to note that the objectives of the treaty are being fully met by the board's reports.