

Mr. Gray: When I refer to front end loaders, I am not talking about the way my hon. friend phrases his questions. We have put a number of programs in place in recent months, and there will be others to add to employment opportunities for young Canadians and all Canadians.

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ENERGY

SUGGESTED REPLACEMENT OF WELLHEAD TAX

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Canadian people, including young people, are about to be the victims in the escalating conflict between the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the government of Alberta. In view of reports that the Canadian government is about to increase oil prices to motorists and to home owners to raise \$1 billion to pay the costs of more imported oil, will the minister indicate publicly that he is prepared to reconsider his 8 per cent wellhead tax and replace it with a profits tax, which would be more acceptable to Alberta and also raise money for the federal government?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, this is obviously a matter for the Minister of Finance because he is responsible for the budget. However, I can indicate to the hon. member that we have sent a letter to the government of Alberta indicating that we are ready to start negotiations and that we feel it is unnecessary to resort to cutbacks at this present time.

I hope the government of Alberta will reconsider its decision, but up until now I must say that the possibility of a change of mind by the government of Alberta does not appear to be very great.

Mr. Waddell: Madam Speaker, I read the minister's letter. I asked him to table it yesterday. It is very weak; there are no proposals in it. The Canadian people will not stand by and permit this thing to happen between Canada and Alberta.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Waddell: I ask hon. members just to listen and let me put my question to the minister.

Is the minister prepared to reconsider the tax on provincial Crown corporations? Would the minister put that as a new proposal to Alberta and thereby remove another aspect which disturbs the producing provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia? Is the minister prepared to reconsider that tax on provincial Crown corporations, which is a new tax the provinces oppose in principle?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I have listened to the hon. member's suggestion with interest, and I will be happy to raise it with the Minister of Finance.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INQUIRY WHETHER GASOLINE EQUALIZATION FUND WILL BE CONTINUED

Mr. Gilles Marceau (Jonquière): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The biggest French language daily newspaper in America, not to call it by its name, stated recently that the province of Quebec, which in the last few years has been dependent upon western Canada for half its oil requirements, will stop receiving a single drop of western oil in no more than two years from now, and will then depend exclusively on oil imported from OPEC countries. Can the minister tell the House whether his view of the future is that pessimistic and could he also state whether the equalization fund which allows all Canadians to pay the same price for their oil will be maintained whatever happens in the future?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I am certainly not as pessimistic about the future. As for the oil supplies for Quebec, it is clear that conventional oil from Alberta will be on the decrease during the next decade, but at the same time, the supplies of non-conventional oil from the tar sands and heavy oil deposits in Alberta and Saskatchewan should increase significantly.

While there might be a decrease in western oil supplies early in the next decade, we can expect a substantial increase in these supplies in the latter part of the decade. Moreover, if there are major finds off the coast of Newfoundland and the Beaufort Sea, Canada will obviously have no difficulty in becoming self-sufficient during this decade and Quebec will be assured of steady Canadian supplies to meet its requirements.

Finally, I would like to give the hon. member assurances that, whatever happens, the oil pricing regime all across Canada for basic oil supplies will be maintained by this government and Quebecers will continue to benefit from this policy as in the past.

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● (1440)

[English]

TRANSPORT

DEVELOPMENT OF OFF-TRACK ELEVATOR PROGRAM

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. As the average age of Canadian farmers is rising rapidly, there is a very serious need to encourage new young farmers. These young farmers, unless they are very wealthy, must go into frontier agricultural areas to obtain land. Upon arriving in these areas they will find that grain transportation is extremely inequitable and that they will have to transport their grain up to 100 miles at their own very high costs. In light of this, will the minister now implement a program for off-track elevators?