

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the same minister. Regarding the government's future proposals on constitutional matters, I would like to ask the Prime Minister, considering that this week the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology decided to put aside his usual restraint and suggest ways in which there could be a *rapprochement* with English Canada, that the Minister of State (Federal-provincial Relations) says that nothing will happen it's business as usual—and that the Prime Minister has promised constitutional change, my question for the Deputy Prime Minister is this: will it be real constitutional change or just a rabbit out of hat, in other words, a Charest Report Phase II, concocted with Jean Chrétien?

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think I can advise the hon. member that this is something that is under active consideration and there will indeed be a constitutional national unity initiative outlined by the federal government in due course.

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[Translation]

ENERGY

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture). Yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources stated that the price of gas in Canada might go up another 10 cents a litre. Will the minister immediately take steps to establish a task force that will investigate whether Canadian consumers are being gouged by excessively high prices?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may be aware of what happened yesterday and of what my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said, at a meeting with the provincial ministers, and it is quite

clear— if the hon. member would care to listen, it is quite clear that..

Mr. Young (Acadie—Bathurst): We're listening.

Mr. Blais: I apologize.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. members: Go for it!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, my colleague met the provincial ministers and explained the situation. All the governments know their respective responsibilities. The provinces have the power to intervene. It is up to the federal government to keep a close watch on the situation and ensure there are no shortages in this country and that Canadian consumers will be able to buy gas when they need it.

Second, I have a duty to ensure there is no collusion between the parties involved to cause excessively high price increases beyond the free market price. That is what we are watching, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, I also have a duty to keep track of this, and I am not very happy about these high prices. However, I am aware of the situation. The minister met his counterparts, and we will continue to watch the situation very closely.

[English]

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary to the same minister. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources also stated that a gas rationing plan is being looked at. The Consumers Association of Canada view this as a red herring. What we are really witnessing is a classic case of price gouging. Canadians want protection now. They do not want to be told two years down the road that they were taken at the pumps. What is the minister going to do to protect consumers from price gouging today?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs) and Minister of State (Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised to hear this. If the hon. member has any indication that the legislation has been broken, he has a responsibility to go to the Competition Bureau and advise the director. I am a little surprised at the member. If we had followed his party's position some years ago when it was in office, the cost would be over \$100 a barrel in Canada. He should be ashamed about what his party did in those days.