

Oral Questions

may I direct a question to his able parliamentary secretary? I understand that the minister has established a 2.5 per cent apartment vacancy rate as his goal for 1976. Considering that housing officials feel this rate must be at least 3 per cent to 4 per cent in order to maintain a healthy rental market, can the minister explain to the House upon which basis he arrived at this figure and why it is so low?

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that the rate was about 4 per cent. We are aiming at a rate of about 2.5 per cent. With the hon. member's advice and good work, and with the co-operation of everybody, I hope we will reach that goal.

Mr. Darling: A supplementary question. In view of the fact that housing officials and more specifically Bernard Denault, President of HUDAC, feel that the new ten year loans system to finance apartment construction is inferior to the old one year subsidy system, and considering that apartment vacancies even under the old system approached zero per cent in major centres, how does the minister hope to realize his goal of 2.5 per cent?

Mr. Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that under the new program we have offered all builders of apartment buildings a loan of \$100 per unit. We are hoping that, as they did last year, they will reach the goal that we have set. The objective will be to the advantage of all the economy.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**SUFFIELD COMMUNITY PASTURE—REQUEST FOR PERMANENT OPERATION**

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion relating to the closing of the PFRA community pasture at Suffield near Medicine Hat. A very irresponsible and inaccurate press release from wildlife and fish and game interests that states:

The native grasslands of the Suffield military reserve, approximately 1,000 square miles of what was once one of the ecologically most valuable natural areas left in North America have been almost totally destroyed by the mismanagement of the Canada Department of Agriculture, Department of National Defence and the PFRA administration.

Will the minister give immediate consideration to the full and complete support of his PFRA staff recommendation that this community pasture, a very small part of the total Suffield area, should continue to operate but on a permanent basis instead of the present unsatisfactory arrangement?

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, there is no need to say that I do not share the sentiments expressed by the Alberta fish and game association. I am questioning their statement. Our department is still very interested in the Suffield pasture, but we will have to continue the discussion with the Department of National Defence which has been going on for some time to find out the best use to which that land

[Mr. Darling.]

can be put. I can assure the hon. gentleman and the House that it is a very important question. I am sure my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, and I will pursue the matter for some time.

* * *

● (1510)

TRADE**REASON FOR PERMITTING CHEESE IMPORTS WHEN CANADIAN DAIRY EXPORTS SELLING AT A LOSS**

Mr. A. D. Alkenbrack (Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister arises from the serious financial losses confronting Canada. According to recent press reports, one factor is the Canadian Dairy Commission's debt, which has skyrocketed from \$100 million to \$300 million during the past year, which means that Canada is exporting butter and milk at a loss. Since the Prime Minister is trying to obtain contractual agreements with the European Economic Community, my question is this: Why should we be exporting dairy products at a continuing loss, when the European Economic Community, through their common market, is shipping 50 million pounds of cheese or more to Canada, at a profit to their component producers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian policy in this regard was announced last year. It is to increase gradually the imports of cheese from the common market. Last year the quota was 50 million pounds. Discussions are presently going on to see if we will increase that quota, or hold it at the present level. I think the Minister of Agriculture will have an announcement to make soon.

* * *

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**FRASER VALLEY FLOOD CONTROL PROGRAMS—STATUS OF REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS**

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. In reply to a question asked by my colleague, the hon. member for Fraser Valley West, as reported at page 9682 of *Hansard* for December 3, 1975, and later confirmed in a conversation with me, the then Minister of the Environment stated that flood control in the Fraser Valley was of top priority for the government and suggested that the request for an additional appropriation to continue the program was before Treasury Board. Could the minister advise the House whether a request was before the board at that time or has been placed before the board since, and whether a decision has been made on the request?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I know that the request was made to Treasury Board to increase the contribution of the federal government from \$31 million. The B.C. government had paid \$31 million. I think Treasury Board approved a \$6.5 million increase with regard to the Fraser Valley. This will continue for a number of years not determined in the