

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, I am not aware that we have any serious obligations in that part of the world, in Central America, which is not an area of traditional Canadian interest.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. MacGuigan: It is not an area in which we have any particular claim to knowledge of what is going on. We are prepared to say, as I have been saying all along, that we stand for a political and not a military solution in El Salvador—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacGuigan:—and that arms should be kept out. We have enunciated that position to all of those who have cared to hear us, including the opposition.

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ENERGY CONSERVATION

OIL CONVERSION PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is with regard to the oil conversion program introduced last fall. The minister will know that in the recent Income Tax Act there was a provision for a taxable grant. The minister will also know that the winter is nearly gone now, that many people are not familiar with the details of this program, and that they are about due to file their income tax returns. I wonder if the minister could tell us whether or not there are any details of this program available yet, or when we might expect further information on this?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his consistent interest in this very important program. The discussions with the provinces are almost completed; I should say that they are completed with some provinces. I would like to have them completed with all provinces before making final or comprehensive announcements. But if discussions with some provinces keep dragging on, I would proceed to make announcements concerning the provinces where we have agreements.

Our plan is to have offices operating in every province by April 1. As the hon. member knows, so far as conversion is concerned, all Canadians who converted from oil to natural gas since October 28 are eligible for the grant. As far as electricity conversion is concerned, it is still a matter to be resolved with some individual provinces. But I hope in the very next few weeks I will be able to announce final decisions in that respect.

Mr. Gurbin: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is also directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. The minister knows that many people have had an interest in this program, particularly those with wood furnaces and that type of thing. I think the department has intimated that people

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will be able to convert to a number of different alternative energy forms and still have their taxable grants in place and honoured. A lot of people have either been misled, perhaps not on purpose, or maybe have information which they felt led them into positions where they are now using wood furnaces and so on. A lot of people will be in positions where either they will qualify or not. I hope the minister will seriously consider that.

My supplementary question to him concerns electricity, which he mentioned. The minister will know that this side of the House is very concerned about self-sufficiency. The fact is that some provinces, particularly Ontario and Quebec, have a surplus of electricity. Particularly in view of the failure to arrive at some conclusions with the tar sands and other forms of conventional supply, does the minister have any programs in mind, through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, which will take us through electricity and into energy self-sufficiency, apart from the oil conversion program?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, electricity conversion is very much under the direct control of provincial authorities through their provincial hydro commissions. I can report to the hon. member that most provinces, as far as I can see, will be agreeable to allowing for conversion to electricity as well as to natural gas, wood, or other forms of fuel, away from oil. However, in Quebec the government indicated that it wanted to impose certain restrictions. As far as New Brunswick is concerned, we have indicated that as soon as there is a firm commitment for converting from oil to coke, coal or other fuel, we would be agreeable to making electricity eligible in New Brunswick. I hope these discussions will be concluded very soon.

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ENERGY

ALBERTA OIL PRODUCTION CUTBACK—MEASURES TO COVER CONSEQUENTIAL ADDITIONAL COSTS

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Because of some incredible stubbornness both in Edmonton and in Ottawa, we have a situation today where Alberta has turned down—I think for the first time in Canadian history—the oil taps to eastern Canada. This will cost Canadians almost \$1 billion. My question to the minister is one which I think is on everyone's mind today. Exactly what will the minister do to cover these extra costs? Does he propose a new tax? If so, how much would the tax be? If there is to be a tax, when will it come into effect?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the additional cost of the regrettable decision made by the government of Alberta yesterday will be certainly much less than the figure mentioned by the hon. member, at the first stage. However, it will still be in the