

AIR TRANSPORT

NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA HELICOPTER MEDICAL EVACUATION SERVICE

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. It concerns night flight medical evacuations with single-engine helicopters which have been banned in British Columbia since January by the Minister and by the Premier of British Columbia, Bill Bennett. Since the Minister offered all possible assistance in February, does this include a budget for the tasking of the Prince Rupert twin-engine Transport Canada S-61 to 24-hour-a-day emergency medivacs in northern British Columbia?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): To put this issue into perspective, what the Hon. Member is proposing and is asking me to authorize is to allow passengers to fly in single-rotorcraft helicopters at night. That is totally contrary to the air navigation order. I wish the Hon. Member would make up his mind on whether he is a supporter of stringent safety standards or whether he wants me, as Minister of Transport, to violate them.

HELICOPTER STATIONED AT PRINCE RUPERT

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to doctors about this matter and they are concerned about the negligent inaction of the Minister. I ask the Minister whether or not he is prepared to task the S-61. It is a twin-engine helicopter which is sitting in Prince Rupert. It is under the Minister's control. Will he task it, or at least deliver the twin-engine helicopter which the transport committee promised to Prince Rupert a year ago?

● (1140)

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between my departmental officials and the Emergency Health Services Commission in an attempt to resolve this matter. The fact remains that the air navigation order stands. This Minister will not compromise that air navigation order.

Furthermore, there are a number of available multi-rotorcraft helicopters which are in the business. We are trying to work the matter out. Surely in cases of emergency the Coast Guard helicopter which is available can be used, on a cost-recovery basis.

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AGRICULTURE

IMPACT OF INTEREST RATE REDUCTIONS

Mr. Geoff Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Bank of Canada rate fell another 81 points indicating growing approval of the federal Budget and, indeed, of the economic direction of the Government.

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Swift Current—Maple Creek): My question is for the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board. Has the Minister been able to measure or quantify the impact of general interest rate reductions on farm input costs?

Hon. Charles Mayer (Minister of State (Canadian Wheat Board)): Mr. Speaker, again the Hon. Member raises a very good point. One of the input costs which farmers face every year is interest costs. If we look at the total amount of borrowed money in agriculture against which interest has to be paid, then every percentage point drop in interest rates means a saving of \$200 million to the farm community. I think that tells Hon. Members something about how important the overall economic thrust and policies of the Government are, not only to agriculture but to every other economic sector in the country. We want to work and develop jobs.

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IMMIGRATION

PROPOSED VISA REQUIREMENT FOR PORTUGUESE VISITORS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Immigration. Recent reports indicate that she is considering departmental advice to slap on a visa requirement on Portugal as a response to the number of refugee applications. She should know that the problem is not with this European country—

Some Hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Marchi:—but with the backlog which the Government has refused to address. Will the Minister eliminate the growing concern and anger which are being felt in the Portuguese-Canadian community by telling the House and that community that she will not follow departmental advice to slap on a scapegoat visa requirement for all visitors and individuals from Portugal?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to take notice of the Hon. Member's question for the Minister of State for Immigration.

IMMIGRATION CONSULTANTS

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, she carries the title "Minister of Employment and Immigration". Is the Minister prepared to assure the House that no visa requirement will be placed on Portugal, and rather than using that as a scapegoat, she will bring in a refugee determination process and go after the phoney consultants who are at the root of many of these problems?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!