

Oral Questions

Does the Prime Minister believe this 11 per cent saving or spending cut would be too savage for the Canadian taxpayer?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member does not understand the system. There is no payment by the federal government. It is part of the general obligations of the government.

The fact you are not contributing is not adding anything to the expenditures of the government at this time. If you want to have your cash, we will pay you back with interest.

The Speaker: I know the right hon. Prime Minister was saying "you" looking toward me.

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[Translation]

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Justice for appointing 19 new judges, including five in Ontario, in January and February. Even with these appointments, there are not enough judges able to hear cases in both official languages used in Ontario courts. In Ottawa, for example, over 1,400 civil cases are still waiting to be heard, many since 1988.

Does the minister intend to appoint more bilingual judges in Ontario, especially in Eastern Ontario, to improve access to the courts in both official languages?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that I am very aware of the government's responsibility to appoint judges able to hear cases in French. By the way, I should point out that two of the five Ontario judges appointed by this government on January 28 can work in French here in Ontario and hear cases in both official languages used in the courts.

I am committed to appointing more judges who will not only make a valid contribution to our legal system but also meet the linguistic needs and expectations of Canadians. Finally, I want to assure the hon. member that, as Minister of Justice, one of my priorities will be to ensure that the Ontario courts have the required linguistic capability.

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CIGARETTE TAXES

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, in its action plan against cigarette smuggling, the government announces that it will introduce an \$8 export tax on each carton. However, the last export tax on cigarettes was a total fiasco and had to be withdrawn in April 1992, after being applied for only two months.

Has the Prime Minister obtained assurances from tobacco manufacturers to the effect that they will not move their

operations and start exporting jobs to Puerto Rico and the United States to avoid the new tax, as they did in 1992?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, we have not heard from tobacco companies. We really do not think this is necessary. Export taxes are a rather short-term measure. We are well aware that if the other measures are successful, the federal government may not get a lot of revenue out of that tax, which is aimed at reducing exports of Canadian cigarettes intended to be smuggled back into the country later. This short-term tax will be in effect in the weeks to come; it is not a long-term measure.

● (1450)

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Prime Minister.

Has the government planned measures to stop smugglers if they go to sources other than Canadian manufacturers?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, if the measures taken by the government do not work, smuggling will continue, but if they work the problem will be solved. To ask a question on the premise that the measures will fail is really not very useful at this point.

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[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister in her capacity as Minister of the Environment.

My subject is oil spill precautions for Canada's coasts. Last September the state of Washington brought in rules requiring oil tankers transiting the Washington coast to give details of their capacity to deal with a spill, their personnel training and their vessel structure and history. They require that an English speaking officer be on the bridge and that operators must meet local alcohol, drug and work hour requirements. Violations of these requirements carry fines of up to \$100,000.

Will the minister move to institute a similar policy for Canadian coastal waters?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for advance notice of his question. Living as he does in Saanich—Gulf Islands, obviously his constituency is very concerned about this issue.

We are very concerned about it also. That is why on April 1 of this year we will be implementing legislation to include a federal contribution of \$100 million in funding to ensure that we have quick response when spills do occur. We are also looking at private sector funding of between \$80 million and \$100 million