

Petitions

knows that the budget has had a very negative impact on that industry to date, and with the announced shutdown of the Alsands project and the delay in the Arctic gas pipeline project we are likely to see substantial increases in the number of lay-offs. The minister knows there are over 2,000 lay-offs in the northern Ontario area scheduled for this summer alone, and I want to ask her what she is going to do when these thousands of mine and steel workers are faced with permanent unemployment as a consequence of the Alsands and Arctic gas pipeline decisions.

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, the hon. member knows quite well that the reduction in the consumption of iron ore is not due to termination of these projects, but to a worldwide decline in the use of iron ore. He knows very well that this government has a number of projects under way to accommodate those men who are unemployed. As a matter of fact the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the minister in Ontario, and I are working very closely to ensure that there is work for these unemployed miners by invoking Section 38. A great deal is being done.

• (1500)

QUERY RESPECTING PLANS FOR UNEMPLOYED MINE WORKERS

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, Algoma Steel, Dofasco and Stelco all draw their iron ore supplies almost exclusively from northern Ontario and the United States. I might point out that the steel orders for the northern gas pipeline were already placed and were to be filled this summer, 55 per cent by Stelco's mill in Welland, Ontario, and 45 per cent from IPSCO using Canadian-mined iron ore. With the shutdowns and lay-offs that are already prevalent in the iron ore industry, what does the minister propose to do now when thousands more mine workers are likely to be faced with permanent unemployment this winter because of the termination of these two very important projects?

Hon. Judy Erola (Minister of State (Mines)): Madam Speaker, as I indicated to the hon. member earlier, the iron ore industry across the world is in great trouble. To attribute all these problems to the cancellation of these projects is totally unfair. I suggest the hon. member examine those programs that we have in place to ensure that we have work for the unemployed miners.

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PETITIONS

MR. FRETZ—EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTIONS TO HEALTH CARE PLANS

Mr. Girve Fretz (Erie): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the petition of the undersigned citizens of Canada and the Niagara Peninsula, including the riding of Erie, Ontario, who now avail themselves of their ancient and undoubted right thus

to present a grievance common to your petitioners in the certain assurance that your honourable House will therefore provide a remedy.

We the undersigned, a group of 77 concerned Canadian citizens, declare our opposition to the proposed budgetary legislation that would make employer contributions to health, dental and vision care plans taxable income to the plan participants. Wherefore we the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon Parliament to instruct the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) to withdraw this proposed legislation which would deny organized labour the benefit and indeed a right to which they are justly entitled.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must remind hon. members that a statement concerning the petition has to be extremely short, just sufficient to tell the House the substance of the petition. The petition itself may not be read.

Mr. Fretz: And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

MR. HALLIDAY—POLAND—CALL FOR FREE ELECTIONS

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege today to present a petition to the House of Commons signed by a large number of citizens of the constituency of Oxford together with other Canadians from the surrounding area. These Canadians have endorsed the petition sponsored by The Canadian-Polish Mutual Benefit Society which laments the forcible rule of Poland by the Soviet Union and supports the call for free elections in Poland to be supervised by the United Nations. The petitioners urge the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) to bring their views to the attention of the appropriate officials.

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[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

(Questions answered orally are indicated by an asterisk.)

Mr. David Smith (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 3,727 and 4,225.

[Text]

Question No. 3,727—**Mr. Herbert:**

What percentage of public servants working in the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in Quebec indicate English as their first official language?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): The reply for the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is as follows: On a total of 616 employees working in Quebec, 213 (35 per cent) indicated English as their first official language. The distribution is as follows: Hull, 198 of 397, regional and provincial offices, 15 of 219.