

Oral Questions

merit principle are well-established when it comes to hiring federal employees. We do our utmost so that the principle be respected. But the Public Service Commission is a body totally independent of my administration and directly answerable to the House of Commons.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**POLLUTION OF ATMOSPHERE BY FREON GAS—SUGGESTED INVESTIGATION OF UNITED STATES STUDY**

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. As the minister's department is studying whether the manufacture of aerosol cans should be prohibited in Canada, and as the proposed Anglo-French Concorde jet is to be flown into Canada, will the minister also investigate the United States study which claims that these supersonic jets could also pollute the atmosphere and cause increased skin cancer like the freon gas from aerosol cans?

[Translation]

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the danger referred to by the hon. member has been signalled. We are not yet certain whether this danger is real. We are just making studies on the use of this gas in spray containers to see whether they change in the atmosphere or not. This summer, in August, the department will make an experiment in the Arctic, because it is the area with the thinnest ozone layer, to measure this gas which can be suspended in the atmosphere. As for Concorde flights, the hon. member knows that Concorde has not yet been cleared to fly above Canadian territory. Therefore, although this problem is important, neither I nor the Department of Transport have promulgated rules about this.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**PROPOSED USE OF SKIFFS BY MARINE PATROL—REQUEST FOR REVERSAL OF DECISION AND NAMES OF THOSE RECOMMENDING CHANGE**

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General. In late March I posed questions in respect of rumours regarding the elimination of the RCMP marine patrol service of Canada. The minister seemed to be unaware of such a retrograde step at that time. Following this, in a letter to me the minister confirmed that the present vessels would be replaced by 20 foot skiffs. In light of the many objections which have been received concerning this matter, would the minister consider having this decision reversed?

Hon. Warren Allmand (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out to the hon. member in the letter I sent to him, this change was made as a result of a study carried out by the RCMP. The study indicated that better service could be given by smaller boats which were more mobile and which could be supported by aircraft. This was an

[Mr. Chrétien.]

administrative decision taken by the RCMP and not a policy decision of mine as minister. In response to the question by the hon. member, I have not received very many complaints. I have received a few, but a very small number.

Mr. Muir: In view of statements by former senior marine personnel that skiffs are simply not the answer to marine police and rescue work in Canada's coastal and great lakes environments, and that the use of skiffs would be like sending a boy out on a man's errand, would the minister investigate and report to the House who the marine and seafaring people are within the force who recommended this move to the government? In view of the fact that the minister said this was to save money, would he not consider the saving of lives to be more important than saving a few dollars?

Mr. Allmand: I do not think the purpose of the change was to save money. It was to bring about a more effective policing system within the RCMP. The larger boats could not be used on inland lakes and waterways, whereas the smaller boats could. They can be transported, so they can be used both on the sea and on inland waters. I might say that these suggestions were made after a long study of the subject by people who are supposed to be experts. I do not have the names, but I will try to find out who they were.

I must point out as well that there are other services within the federal government which provide help at sea, such as the coastguard, the Fisheries Department, and so on. They have vessels which are working in this area as well.

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FINANCE**EXCISE TAX ON PRIVATE AIRCRAFT AND PLEASURE BOATS—REQUEST FOR REPORT ON EFFECTIVENESS IN LIMITING CONSUMPTION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS**

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. With respect to the 10 per cent excise tax on privately owned aircraft and motor driven pleasure boats, which was part of the November budget, will the minister now advise as to what degree this tax has limited oil consumption in Canada?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will have to consult with my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but I would hope it had some result.

Mr. Fraser: In view of the fact that small boat consumption of petroleum fuel in Canada is less than one half of one per cent of the total Canadian petroleum consumption, can the minister advise whether it is the view of the government that it is necessary and practical to persist with this tax and whether it will result in any significant conservation of Canadian oil? The tax does appear to be illogical and discriminatory.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Every tax has a certain arbitrary feature to it, as the hon. gentleman knows. In terms of the policy of conservation, the government is