

Oral Questions

behind the rate of inflation in one year. In Ontario wages fell behind by \$350; in Saskatchewan, \$400; and in British Columbia, \$119. The average shortfall in Canada was some \$245.

In light of the fact that in this last year wages have fallen well behind the rate of inflation, I would like to ask the minister whether he can now make a commitment that the government will stop its consideration of wage and price controls, which would have the effect only of further reducing the standard of living of the average Canadian faced with inflation, and will the government make a commitment to introduce a cost of living tax credit, which would have the effect of providing some assistance to those Canadians hardest hit by the inflation we are presently going through?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, no economy in the world today of which I am aware is in a perfect situation. If my hon. friend wants to choose statistics to offer, of course he can find some which are not particularly agreeable to contemplate, but there are others which are extremely good. The extent of growth in Canada at this time is substantial. The number of jobs being created is exceptionally good. It all depends what statistics one wants to use, but we all agree that no perfect set is available at this time in Canada, or elsewhere in the world for that matter.

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HEALTH**SITUATION OF JAMES BAY CREE—REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES**

Mr. Keith Penner (Cochrane-Superior): Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As the minister knows, a great many members of Parliament, especially those who serve on the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, have been deeply concerned, and still are, about the situation facing the people who live in the James Bay area, following the signing of that historic agreement.

On May 26 a motion was passed in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs asking the minister to set up a meeting with the province of Quebec, with the Cree people and with officials from the Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the minister's own department. I would like to know from the minister whether she followed up on that motion. Was such a meeting held and, if in fact it was held, what if any progress is the minister able at this time to report to the House of Commons?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, further to the standing committee meeting on the James Bay Cree health situation, I did speak with the hon. Pierre-Marc Johnson, the minister of health in Quebec, the same afternoon. One or two days later I con-

firmed by letter the problem, and made a request for a joint meeting.

My colleague, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and I had a meeting last week of officials of the three federal departments involved, in preparation for the meeting we are trying to set up with Quebec and the Cree to review the situation locality by locality, community by community, in terms of help, infrastructure, and every aspect of sanitation relating to health, which I think is the thrust of the committee's recommendation. Now that all of us are prepared for it, I am of course hoping to have the meeting of all the players, as was recommended. I will report of course to the House and make it public as soon as we have the chance.

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● (1430)

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF HON. M'HAMED CHAKER, MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF TUNISIA

Madam Speaker: It is my pleasure to draw the attention of the members of the House to the presence in our gallery of the hon. M'hamed Chaker, the Minister of Justice of Tunisia.

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[English]

HEALTH**DANGERS OF USE OF CANNABIS**

Mr. Robert Wenman (Fraser Valley West): My question is directed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the sobering scientific research that supports earlier evidence that cannabis can cause devastating and irreparable damage to brain cells, as well as genetic damage to first and second generations, and recognizing that this new research is not part of the material being studied and circulated by the government, will the minister assure the House that she will update departmental research and refer the subject matter to a select standing committee of the House before introducing any legislation changing the status or penalties relating to cannabis?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, with regard to the introduction of legislation by the government to provide a more equitable treatment of Canadians, especially young Canadians, who have a criminal record because they have smoked marijuana, I would like to tell the hon. member that, in my opinion, what he recommends in his question would not exactly be the best solution.