

Oral Questions

Madam Speaker: We heard the question. We waited to see if there was an answer and I saw a minister rise.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jim Fleming (Minister of State, Multiculturalism): Madam Speaker, I believe in the midst of all of that the question was about the spending of \$6 million and why. If that is the question, let me say that the amount in fact spent on what I call phase one is about \$4.9 million; and I have no apology to make for an attempt to inform the Canadian public of a major issue now before Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1440)

Mr. Bosley: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is to the same minister. Since the justification used in public this morning was to keep the public thinking about the fact that constitutional reform should take place, does the minister believe that the public does not think that constitutional reform should take place, and do we now have a new policy that government and public money will be used to tell people what they ought to think? Or does the minister believe that the public already supports constitutional reform, in which case what is the justification for spending the money in the first place?

Mr. Fleming: Madam Speaker, as a member of Parliament as well as a member of the cabinet—and I think this is in the hearts and minds of hon. members on all sides of this House—certainly in private conversations I have had I have found that there is a genuine concern, which is shared by a number of members of the media, that the Canadian public has a very difficult time being made aware of the various complex issues we consider on the floor of this House. I believe that the Prime Minister gave me a mandate to try to improve communications between the Government of Canada and the Canadian public, and I am trying to do that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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HEALTH CARE**TAMPON USE—MEASURES TO PREVENT HARM TO CANADIAN WOMEN**

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the fact that many women are suffering and that some have died from the illness called toxic shock syndrome, caused by tampon use, can the minister tell the House what specific measures the government is taking in terms of research standards and labelling requirements in order to stop and prevent serious harm to Canadian women?

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, we have had working meetings

with various companies marketing the product. They have begun improving the labelling and advertising used for these products. Unfortunately, I am unable to make a final answer today on this, but my department is studying right now what other form of public education would be best to use to make people aware of the weaknesses and problems so that they can make choices accordingly.

Mr. Blaikie: Madam Speaker, public education will not be enough. It seems that the faith of this government in advertising stretches to all issues.

In view of the fact that Dr. Ajit DasGupta, head of the medical devices bureau of the health protection branch of the minister's own department, has said that they do not do research on tampons and contraceptive devices for women but that they do rigorous tests on condoms because, as Dr. DasGupta says, they respond to priorities, will the minister give an unequivocal assurance that she will change the priorities of her department in order to have effective research, regulations and health protection for Canadian women?

[Translation]

Miss Bégin: Madam Speaker, one of the very first matters which I addressed when I became Minister of National Health and Welfare was precisely that of alerting the pharmaceutical industry and the others who initiate the vast majority of research resulting in concrete findings in matters of contraceptives, because I too felt that the point of view of women had been overlooked. I also asked the Medical Research Council to make it a special priority, despite the fact that the council is not involved to any extent in operational research, in order to make sure that women, who are the first ones concerned in the matter, are never disregarded. That is the answer I can give the hon. member.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**MODERNIZATION OF PULP AND PAPER FACTORIES IN QUEBEC**

Mr. Alexandre Cyr (Gaspé): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. Is the minister still pursuing his negotiations with his Quebec counterpart with a view to revising the federal-provincial agreement for the modernization of pulp and paper factories, and does the minister expect to sign that new agreement in the relatively near future?

Hon. Pierre De Bané (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Yes. Following the requests made by several provinces, including Quebec, the cabinet decided to increase the envelope by 20 per cent in the case of Ontario, 33 per cent in that of the maritimes, and 50 per cent for Quebec. Because of that sizeable increase, negotiations are now under way and I hope to be in a position very soon to tell the hon. member that an agreement will be signed with the Quebec government.