

Oral Questions

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we reach the first anniversary of the launching of the program when the Prime Minister and the premiers came together on December 21 in Ottawa, I am pleased to be able to bring more good news to members of the House.

At the halfway mark of the program over 80 per cent of the \$6 billion has been allocated to some 8,400 projects, creating over 81,000 jobs for Canadians. We are well on our way to the creation of some 100,000 direct jobs in the program.

I am pleased to tell the member for Saint-Denis that in the province of Quebec we have created over 20,000 jobs and have contributed significantly to the economy of the city of Montreal.

One more statistic, because I know the Reform Party's interest in the matter: I have received from Reform Party members some 15 letters and 10 of them have been in support of the program.

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• (1450)

PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week in the House both the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Natural Resources said they would look into the circumstances of the tragedy suffered by the Curtis family of New Brunswick at the hands of Petro-Canada and report back to the House.

Since then the Curtises have received conclusive proof from the renowned environmental health centre in Dallas that indeed exposure to gas fumes was the cause of permanent mental and physical damage to their seven-year old daughter.

My question is for the environment minister. As Petro-Canada is not only responsible for the leak but actually knew about the leak two years before it took any action, what does the government plan to do about holding this corporate criminal responsible?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will follow up on the undertaking I gave both publicly and privately to the member last week.

Not only did I receive his question in the House. I subsequently went over to discuss it with him personally. He assured me that he would provide medical information that we would use in an attempt to personally intervene with Petro-Canada. I have discussed the issue with my colleague, the Minister for Natural Resources, and we have been awaiting the medical evidence the member says is now in his possession.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. I have the documentation. We received it today. It will go to both ministers.

I have other documentation showing that the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment were both notified about the case by the Liberal member for Fredericton—York—Sunbury last January, nearly a year ago.

Since the minister knew about the tragedy a year ago, why did she not do anything about it then? Why has the minister allowed Petro-Canada, a government controlled company, to snatch this little girl's future away?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say in relation to the statement just made by the hon. member that indeed a colleague of mine informed me of this set of circumstances. I intervened at that time. I believe, in part because of that intervention, a settlement was reached in relation to part of the claim raised by the Curtises. Therefore I take exception to the fact that the member suggests I did not act upon the request of my colleague.

The other matters raised by the hon. member in relation to the health of the female child in question I understand are presently before the courts, are being pursued in the courts, and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to say anything further at this time.

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[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Laurent Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Everybody knows that the reform proposed by the minister for post-secondary education has met with strong opposition from the provinces and student associations.

Does the minister still intend to go ahead with his reform of post-secondary education funding, as proposed in his green book, when the provinces and student associations are very much opposed to this proposal?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is any broad unanimity in the country from one end to the other, I suppose it is the need for a substantial, major overhaul and reform of all social programs including those in post-secondary education. In the province of Quebec alone 95 per cent believe it is time for major reform in social programs.

As the hon. member knows, a Commons committee has been holding hearings. We have had widespread consultation through a questionnaire. We have now received 20,000 copies from Canadians. They will be analysed. There is an ongoing series of discussions and a wide variety of options.