

the service for the citizens of my constituency and those of eastern Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, again as answered in this House a few days ago, we are looking at this question of regional airlines, several of them, their possible use of the Dash-7 and the financial arrangements that may be required to enable them to acquire the aircraft.

* * *

HOUSING

REQUESTED WITHDRAWAL OF NEW PROGRAM

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. The minister has been repudiated by his leader, the Prime Minister, for his clumsy intrusion into constitutional questions.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: At a meeting of the Canadian Federation of Mayors, at Edmonton, he was repudiated by at least four of the provinces for his failure to consult with the provinces on his clumsy intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. Now that he has been repudiated by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities for not consulting with them on his new housing and community services program, I ask the minister—who, surely, has some logic and common sense left, although we doubt it sometimes—whether he is prepared to withdraw that program which lies shattered, in any event, since it was designed as an election gimmick, and nothing more?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, in asking the question, has bad timing because I was just reading some of my correspondence. I have here a telex which I just received from one of my provincial colleagues, who says:

I wish to acknowledge your telegram and to assure you that the province of Manitoba wishes to reach an agreement on an appropriate method of administering the proposed community services grant program as soon as possible.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ouellet: That is one of many positive responses I am receiving in relation to the proposal I have put forward to my provincial colleagues. Next week I will go to a federal-provincial conference in Toronto in a spirit of co-operation to reach agreement with all provincial governments in order to make the housing and community services proposals workable, in the interests of all Canadians, and of creating more jobs as soon as possible at the local level for the benefit of the municipalities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1432)

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, it speaks volumes for the minister's program when he can boast that only one province has agreed even to talk about it, let alone agree to it. The fact

Oral Questions

remains, sir, that over a month has gone by since the minister's telex to the provinces setting out the new program. Since that time the province of Quebec has rejected it outright, the province of Ontario has rejected it and, indeed, the very meeting which the minister refers to is being called at the initiative of the provinces.

I ask the minister, is he prepared to sit down with an open mind and discuss this program with the provinces, whose jurisdiction has been clumsily intruded upon by the minister? While the minister is on his feet, perhaps he could assure the House that when he does sit down with the provinces, he will not only recognize the constitution of this country but he will recognize his solemn obligation to low income earners to ensure that they have adequate housing, which they will not get under his program.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, this is a surprising change of mind by the hon. member. About a month and a half ago he was urging me to increase federal funds for neighbourhood improvement programs, precisely the type of community services which the federal government wishes to expand for the benefit of Canadians. I do not understand the rationale of the hon. member who on one hand is asking us to do more for community services in his own province, and today is saying I am intruding into a field of provincial jurisdiction.

Mr. Clark: The Prime Minister understood when he repudiated you.

Mr. Ouellet: There is great contradiction in the words spoken today by the hon. member and the letters he sent to me some weeks ago in relation to the neighbourhood improvement program.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ouellet: With regard to the latter part of the question by the hon. member, on whether or not I will go to Toronto with an open mind, there is no doubt that throughout the negotiations with the provinces I have kept a very open mind, which I will continue to keep despite the hope of the hon. member that there will be confrontation. I will not go there with a spirit of confrontation: on the contrary, I will go there to meet the provinces in an attempt to agree on a positive policy that will be to the best advantage of every Canadian living in any province.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the minister has been repudiated by the Prime Minister this day, just as he has been repudiated by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada which has accused him of misleading this House on Monday in the answers he gave to my colleagues on questions with respect to what will happen to co-operative housing under this program.

Can the minister tell the House how the low income earners of this country will benefit from a program which most of the main lenders of this country are saying will cost low income earners, over the life of the mortgage, \$10,000 more under the graduated mortgage program than it would cost if they were to