

Oral Questions

How can the Prime Minister argue his case on the fact that the resolution now before the House is hypothetical when in fact the government refused in committee to accept any amendments on the process or any amendments on the amending formula? The government has placed a closure motion before this House to get the resolution through as it is—

An hon. Member: With the support of Ed Broadbent.

Mr. McGrath:—with the passive support of the Leader of the NDP, who has gone into some kind of metamorphosis and turned into a powder-puff.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's East should ask his question right now. I plead with him to conform with what I am asking him to do.

Mr. McGrath: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I find it very difficult to restrain myself. The unanimous judgment of the Appeal Court of Newfoundland, as opposed to the statement of one judge in Manitoba, had this to say—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. McGrath: The Prime Minister was allowed to quote.

The division of powers prescribed by the Constitution excludes federal jurisdiction over provincial autonomy within their legislative competence, and thus a proper request to Her Majesty's Parliament in Great Britain to change such fundamental aspects of the Constitution can only be made after the provinces have agreed to such change.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the hon. member really think I can allow him to continue with such a preamble? I just have to cut him off and not allow him now to ask his question. I have to recognize members of the NDP because they must have the time allotted to them.

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops-Shuswap.

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ENERGY CONSERVATION**ABUSE OF CANADIAN HOME INSULATION PROGRAM**

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, my question is not about the Constitution. It is directed to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It deals with CHIP. I would be surprised if there is not a member of this House who has not been approached by his or her constituents about CHIP and the fact that it is being seriously abused by a number of unscrupulous companies operating across Canada which are defrauding not only the Government of Canada but also individual citizens, as well as the Canadian taxpayer indirectly.

What steps is the minister taking to bring to a close these fraudulent methods and techniques presently being employed from one end of Canada to another?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I must tell the hon. member that this indeed is a question about which I have had great concern over the last year. The overwhelming majority of contractors in this field are doing an honest job and a fair job for the citizens of this country and for the government of this country. Unfortunately, it appears there have been individuals who have abused the system, and in every instance where this has been reported there have been investigations. If necessary, prosecutions will be undertaken.

However, with respect to the general question raised by the hon. member, we have nonetheless decided to introduce a certification system for the contractors in this field. This certification system will ensure that the people who work in this field are properly qualified and meet the standards required. Already a high percentage of contractors have agreed and have received this certification. All the others will have to comply with this requirement by sometime next fall. This is in progress. We are monitoring the situation very carefully because it is a source of concern, and I thank my hon. friend for having brought this matter to the attention of the House.

INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the steps being indicated by the minister. However, unfortunately this plan will not come into effect until well into the summer and perhaps into the fall. In the meantime these fraudulent activities continue.

Would the minister look into improving the inspection system by taking advantage of the existing municipal infrastructure, or perhaps even by inviting community organizations to participate in this program in the place of many small businesses so that the labour is local labour, so that abuse is minimized, and so that funds stay in communities? My concern is that this is putting a black mark on many small businesses across Canada, and essentially on the small business community.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, if you will permit me to answer, the program which was described by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is undertaken in co-operation with the Canadian General Standards Board, which reports to me. We have signed a contract with the Royal Canadian Legion in order to accomplish exactly what the hon. member had identified. The Royal Canadian Legion will be involved in the process of the verification and certification of individual contractors at the local level.