

*Oral Questions*

with respect to the clear assumption that this is a federal system and that Quebec is a province like the others.

**Mr. Paproski:** What is the policy, Pierre? It is up to you.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I stand responsible for the statements I made. Those statements are made within my responsibilities as Minister of Regional Economic Expansion whereby I have to make sure that the agreements negotiated with the provinces and the amounts of money spent in each province are in line with the department's objectives. On the other hand I must never forget that the department is concerned with the regional economic development of all regions in Canada and, for this reason, I must also consider the objectives of the present provincial governments, including the government of Quebec.

[*English*]

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, in light of the seriousness of the minister's statement last night and again today I am amazed that the Prime Minister has not answered directly in respect of a very obvious contradiction in the statement of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion and that of the Prime Minister both inside and outside this House yesterday. Can the Prime Minister possibly explain in what way procedures will be different or policies will be altered in respect of this obvious statement of panic expressed by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion yesterday with no clear authorization either from a cabinet decision as expressed by the non-answer of the Prime Minister or as expressed just a moment ago by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion.

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the minister last night but I heard him in the House a moment ago. It seems to me that he did not say what the hon. member is quoting him as saying about treating Quebec differently. What he did say in the House a moment ago was that it was his duty, as a minister, when he signs agreements with provinces to make himself aware of the aims of the province in the fulfilling of those agreements. This applies to Quebec as it applies to any other province. As a matter of fact, this whole department is based on the principle that regional development cannot be the task of the federal government alone but that it must do it in co-operation with the provinces. I support the minister completely when he says he will ask Quebec, just as any other province, that they explain their purposes in order that we know whether or not co-operation is possible.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

**COMMUNICATIONS**

APPLICATION OF BELL CANADA FOR RATE INCREASE—  
SUGGESTION ANTI-INFLATION GUIDELINES BE APPLIED

**Mr. Alan Martin (Scarborough West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. In connection with the application of Bell Canada dated November 3, 1976 before the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission wherein the Bell is seeking an increase in rates for 1977 that will render the company a return on equity of 12 per cent and a return on total average capital of 9.7 per cent for its 1977 operations, will the minister request of the commission that all consideration of this application by it take into account the government's anti-inflation policies and guidelines currently in practice.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, to avoid duplication of work and comply with the philosophy of the regulatory function, the Anti-Inflation Board transferred its powers to the CRTC, particularly as regards consideration of acceptable profit margins.

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[*English*]

**CAPE BRETON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

PAYMENTS DUE PRERETIRED MINERS—GOVERNMENT ACTION

**Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Expansion. The coal miners of my constituency who were preretired between 1969 and 1971 are still waiting for an ex-gratia payment from his department or from the Treasury Board to his department which is morally due to them on the word of the previous minister of regional economic expansion as well as on many occasions by the present minister. Would the minister please present this matter immediately to the attention of the Treasury Board, as the preretired miners are running completely out of patience and we who represent them here in the House of Commons are as well.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the situation of Cape Breton miners who had an early retirement around 1967, and I also know about the regulations which were made at that time. The hon. member also knows that the situation of those retired people has been highly improved since then, but under the circumstances my representations to the President of the Treasury Board are rather to obtain additional funds for DEVCO so that conditions in the mines keep on improving for workers. Unfortunately, I am not now in a position to answer positively to the hon. member's representations. I do hope that eventually we can perhaps do so, but unfortunately the circumstances are not appropriate now.