

consulted in general with his counterparts in the Cabinet? More particularly, had he consulted with the Minister of National Health and Welfare before he announced the possibility of cutbacks in pensions and family allowance payments?

**Hon. Judd Buchanan (Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Science and Technology):** Mr. Speaker, I did not announce that this would be done. I was discussing this in the context of the budgetary deficit that this government faces and the problems we have.

**Mr. Alexander:** Scaring our senior citizens.

**Mr. Buchanan:** Basically the point that was made was that the federal government will have to look at all its programs and those were simply programs that were mentioned in the broader picture.

**Mr. Alexander:** You made a mistake. Admit it.

**Mr. Grafftey:** I should like to direct a supplementary question to the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the unfortunate statement made by the President of the Treasury Board some weeks ago which has created a great deal of uncertainty especially amongst low income Canadians, pensioners and family allowance recipients, can the minister assure the Canadian people that this government in no way, at any time, will cut back pension and family allowance payments?

**Hon. Robert K. Andras (President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, there is no intention to cut back those programs.

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### ENERGY

#### GULL ISLAND HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT—ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STUDY

**Mr. William Rompkey (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment or his parliamentary secretary? In view of the high unemployment rate in the province of Newfoundland, in view of the need to develop alternative sources of energy, in view of the high hydroelectric potential in Labrador and the proposal of the government of Newfoundland to cut timber in the proposed reservoir area, can the parliamentary secretary tell the House whether his department is studying an environmental impact assessment at this time and when we might have some news on that assessment so that we can proceed with a positive response to the government of Newfoundland with regard to the cutting in that project?

● (1130)

**Mr. Mike Landers (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Environment)):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. An assessment panel has been established. Guidelines have been prepared. These guidelines will be submitted to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and to the province of Newfoundland.

### Oral Questions

An environmental impact statement will be presented very shortly.

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### POST OFFICE

#### CLOSING OF OFFICE ON VALE ISLAND—REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION

**Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Postmaster General concerning the post office on Vale Island in Hay River. Is the Postmaster General aware that this department seems determined to close the post office there? They seem to be taking the attitude that instead of trying to solve the problem, closing the post office will end the problem. That is not a very satisfactory answer. Is the Postmaster General willing to reconsider the decision to close the Vale Island post office or is he considering any alternative arrangements?

**Hon. J.-J. Blais (Postmaster General):** As the hon. member knows, Mr. Speaker, on October 20, I wrote to him and I indicated that I would be looking into the matter. I am advised that notwithstanding my statement there may have been a decision that is imminent. I directed my officials to hold off on that decision until such time as I have had a full opportunity to review the situation.

**Mr. Firth:** Mr. Speaker, I have been led to understand that the decision to close the Vale Island post office is to be made today. The people of Hay River, Vale Island in particular, would like to know about this. Will the Postmaster General indicate what alternatives are being considered and when he will be able to give an answer in the House?

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the decision was made to close it today. As I indicated to the hon. member, I am looking into the situation. I directed my officials to hold off on that decision until I have had an opportunity to make a complete analysis of the situation and to consider if there is a necessity to close down the post office or what alternative mode there might be.

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### NATIONAL CAPITAL

#### DATE OF RECONSTITUTION OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—REASON FOR CONSTRUCTION OF EASTERN DRIVEWAY RECREATIONAL ROAD

**Mrs. Jean E. Pigott (Ottawa-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. Can the minister inform the House on what date the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Capital will be reconvened as a standing committee to provide a coordinated approach to development of the national capital region?