

Oral Questions

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Our NATO allies do not share the very gloomy view which the Hon. Member puts forward. As a matter of fact defence expenditures, with respect to this Government's activities, are the one area that is rapidly growing.

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CANADIAN JOBS STRATEGY

ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER'S MEMORANDUM—COMMUNITY FUTURES PROGRAM

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and deals with her explanation of the memo from her Associate Deputy Minister. The Minister admitted in her statement today that the Community Futures Program was needed in the Acadian community of New Brunswick. How does she explain the twisted logic which suggests that program would only go into Acadian New Brunswick if the province would speed up its negotiations with her Department for the training program?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): The convoluted logic comes from that Hon. Member, Mr. Speaker. I have already indicated that the agreement to go ahead with the planning stage of the Community Futures Program was signed in February of this year. It is already under way. The fact that in negotiations the provincial Government might state, as the Associate Deputy Minister said, that its priority interest was in more job creation in the Acadian peninsula, and the federal Government might state that the priority interest was in getting job training for the whole of the province, is not a conflict. We are going ahead with both these measures for the benefit of the people of New Brunswick. Indeed, we have already put \$1.3 million into the Acadian peninsula this year because that area has 24 per cent unemployment, and we will not stop helping people there.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

JOB TRAINING AGREEMENTS

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has admitted she has training agreements with only three provinces. Will you not admit that what happened in this particular instance with New Brunswick is that you are playing poker with all the other provinces and holding up needed employment funds so you can get a training agreement with the provinces? Why are you holding the unemployed up to ransom?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member knows that questions go through the Chair.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we are presently spending some \$450 million in job training and employment programs. We are not holding them up. They are not frozen. They are going ahead.

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INCOME TAX

MEDICAL EXPENSE DEDUCTIONS—REQUEST THAT TAX FORM BE AMENDED

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. Revenue Canada's shorter and less complicated tax form, the T1 Special, does not include an area for the deduction of medical expenses. Given the possibility that this might leave some people, particularly low-income seniors who tend to have high medical expenses, with the idea that the deduction is no longer available, would the Minister consider adding a line to the form to deal with this possible problem?

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the interest of the Hon. Member in improving the tax form. I will certainly take his representation very seriously. If it is feasible to change this particular type of tax form, we will look into it.

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ENVIRONMENT CANADA

STUDY OF DEPARTMENT

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. At a time when Canadians are expecting more action from, and more responsibility to be exercised by, the Department of the Environment, why did the Deputy Prime Minister order the Desfosses study on ways to reduce or even dismantle the Department of the Environment? This initiative has had a devastating effect on the morale of the fine officials in the Department and has profoundly preoccupied the public across the country.

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): What the hon. gentleman says is simply not true. There was a need for a follow-on study as a result of several other study teams coming forward with options affecting that Department. However, it is totally untrue to say that the follow-on study made any recommendations with respect to expenditure reductions. That is false. So are most of the other conclusions I have seen in the press and which obviously have been picked up by the Hon. Member and now asserted here as fact. They are simply not true.