

Inquiries of the Ministry

question to the Minister of National Defence but first may I congratulate him on the performance of the *Bras d'Or*. Can the minister advise the house whether the Department of National Defence or the government will enter into consultations with provincial or municipal officials prior to the announcement he intended to make concerning the base consolidation program, which he hoped to be able to do by August 1?

Hon. Léo Cadieux (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to accept in the name of the services the hon. member's congratulations concerning the *Bras d'Or*. I do not know whether I am right in saying that this is the first time we can say we have something which is either the biggest or the fastest in the world.

With reference to negotiations and consultations with municipalities or local authorities concerning possible base closures, may I say that we have a procedure whereby in such cases we consult with and inform the local authorities ahead of the announcement. In this instance, however, I believe there will be an accompanying statement on the base closures regarding a possible form of relief or assistance to the people who will be affected. This has not yet been determined, but it is a recommendation which has been presented and is being studied. This is the reason I previously said in answer to a question on this same subject that I might not meet the target date of August 1 which I announced previously.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, the point I have in mind is with regard to the question of school opening and so on. Can the minister indicate whether there may possibly be an announcement or a report prior to September 1?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): All announcements pertaining to base closures would involve in any event at least a year's notice and in some cases a little longer. I think the shortest period we have considered so far is at least a year.

[*Later:*]

Hon. J. A. MacLean (Malpeque): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence supplementary to the question asked earlier. Do I take it from the minister's remarks that no announcement on base closures will be made until there has been consultation with the area concerned and with other departments of government with a view to finding substitute government employment in the area in order to relieve

the economic dislocation caused by the closure of bases, or will that process take place only between the time of the announcement and the closure?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion will be involved in the study of each base which we plan to close. The form of the help that will be provided has not been determined yet. So far as consultation with local authorities are concerned this will be done, except that we must proceed from a firm decision to dispense with the base. The cases which can be discussed on this basis are limited. In some instances we will be able to give longer notice but in any event it will not be done in isolation. We will discuss the matter with the local authorities.

Mr. R. E. McKinley (Huron): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary for the Minister of National Defence. Would the minister agree that before any official announcement is made he will inform any member of this house who may represent a constituency in which a base might be closed?

Mr. Cadieux (Labelle): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately on previous occasions we have had to close bases and our regular procedure is first to give priority to the Member of Parliament by informing him of the impending announcement and after that the local authorities. We also have a special team which goes on the base itself to brief the people involved in the closing. The same kind of procedure will take place this time.

STUDENT LOANS**EASING OF REQUIREMENTS BECAUSE OF EMPLOYMENT SITUATION**

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Finance. In view of the difficult employment situation faced by university students this summer, has the Minister of Finance considered discussing with the provinces programs to ease the requirements for students to qualify for loans next term?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me notice of his question. In reply may I state that financial assistance is available, of course, to students under provincial programs and from private sources as well as under the Canada Student Loans Act. As I have reported to the house from time to time, federal