

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION****POSSIBLE INVESTIGATION OF ROLE AND POWERS**

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of State for Urban Affairs whether the government has made any decision with respect to the investigation of the role and powers of the National Capital Commission which was referred to and agreed to be necessary by the chairman of that commission and its general manager late last week?

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the role of the National Capital Commission is determined by the National Capital Commission Act. Since I became minister a year ago I have said that it seemed to me it would be desirable, following the recommendations of the constitutional committee, to have a parliamentary committee examine the role and operations of the National Capital Commission. That was not possible in the last session of parliament and, although I would welcome discussion amongst the House leaders, I suspect it would not be possible this spring.

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AIRPORTS**PICKERING TOWNSHIP SITE—INDEPENDENT STUDY—
DISPOSAL OF EXPROPRIATED LAND IF PROJECT NOT
PROCEEDED WITH**

Mr. Ron Atkey (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Since the minister's announcement of the Pickering airport decision almost two weeks ago, when he undertook to meet immediately with leaders of the various levels of government to set up an independent study, has he met with the Premier of Ontario and municipal government leaders to get the study under way and, if not, when does he intend to do so?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have not met the Premier of Ontario. I think that I will meet the Ontario minister responsible for transport and airports. We are now consulting at the senior official level in order to agree as to those who will be called to sit on the board that has been referred to.

[English]

Mr. Atkey: If the study to which the minister has referred indicates massive public opposition to the airport and it is cancelled, as the minister apparently suggests is possible, what does the government intend to do with the 18,000 acres of land already expropriated?

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I think I shall wait, Mr. Speaker, until we have the results of the board examination.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**RELEASE OF CANADIAN CIVILIANS HELD IN NORTH VIET
NAM—PAYMENT OF TRANSPORTATION COSTS**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I join with him in appreciation of the fact that the exchange of prisoners of war with North Viet Nam is taking place. However, nothing has been said yet concerning the two Canadians. I would ask the minister whether he has any information with respect to their possible evacuation from North Viet Nam and return to Canada?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I join with the right hon. gentleman in welcoming the beginning of the movement of prisoners of war to their homelands. We have not yet been able to get definite information about the time of the release of Mr. Cayer and Mr. Oppel. We know they are safe and we know they are about to be released but we have not been able to get information as to the exact time of their release. We have made arrangements to transport them home, which I am sure would be the wish of all members of the House, and we have been in touch with their families on a daily basis.

Mr. Diefenbaker: With particular reference to the release of Mr. Oppel, I am informed that his family was told they would have to pay the cost of transportation. That is the instruction they got within the last couple of days. I suggest that such a niggardly policy would not be approved by the minister as Mr. Oppel was actually a prisoner of war as was the other man, and they should receive the same treatment as the prisoners of war.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I should like to reassure the right hon. gentleman that my instructions are that the public should pay the expense of the return of these two Canadians.

[Later:]

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. A moment ago I asked a question. I do not ask questions without foundation.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Diefenbaker: The indication of the answer given by the minister was that I was mistaken. I have the letter here from the father of Mr. Oppel. It is dated the seventh of this month. I quote from the letter:

My son is alive and I hope will soon be home. Our External Department told us that the Americans may bring him as far as their base in the Philippines and then that the Canadians would take over but my son would have to pay his way.

He goes on to make some further observations which I would not want to read.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I wish to reiterate what I said, that I gave instructions that the expenses were to be paid. Perhaps by the time he had this information, my instructions had not been conveyed.