

Oral Questions

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, I do not recall ever having made such a statement.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: If the hon. member has such a quote, I would like to see it. But this is not part of government policy.

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&tu (1130)

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**IMPROVED FINANCIAL INFORMATION TO PARLIAMENT**

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. In view of the fact that the 1978-79 Auditor General's report indicates that the spending of the government is not under control and recommends improved information to Parliament as one part of a remedy, and since the Comptroller General was asked by the public accounts committee on March 8, 1979, to review the topic of improved information for Parliament, as suggested by the Lambert commission and several other government reports, with a mandate to report back to the committee no later than December of 1980, will the minister assure the House that the original deadline will be met and that progress reports will be issued as the report proceeds?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, the original deadline cannot be met by reason of a series of events that have taken place—changes of government, and so on—but I can assure hon. members that the improvement of financial information to Parliament is a priority item for Treasury Board.

I have had frequent discussions with the Comptroller General on this subject and we shall, I hope, be presenting experimental forms of estimates later this year for the following fiscal period. So the program is delayed, but it is moving ahead efficiently now and I think the hon. member's request will be satisfied in the current year.

Mr. Anguish: Since this is a priority item in the view of the government, and taking into consideration the fact that the public accounts committee is already overburdened with work, will the minister refer reports and recommendations aimed at improving information to Parliament to a special committee of the House which would be struck for the sole purpose of providing recommendations to Parliament for improving the efficiency and accountability of government?

Mr. Johnston: The question covers a variety of points, Madam Speaker. I think I answered the question with respect to the form of the estimates, and we shall be happy to furnish progress reports in that regard.

With respect to the over-all position, the hon. member may be aware of the IMPAC studies being conducted by the Comptroller General in nearly every major department of government. These surveys are being completed; we hope to

complete all of them this year in the 27 departments. Plans for action are being agreed upon with those departments and I would say this program is moving ahead very effectively—I believe the Comptroller General will agree with me.

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ENERGY**CONSULTATIONS ON PRICE OF SYNCRUDE OIL**

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Will the hon. gentleman advise the House whether or not he consulted with all nine partners of the Syncrude agreement prior to his unilateral announcement fixing the price of Syncrude oil, and will he provide detailed information as to the time, place and extent of that consultation?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I did not consult the nine partners in the business. This was a government decision and it has to be taken. However, I did discuss this issue with the minister of energy from Alberta on March 17, in Edmonton, and also around March 26, by telephone.

Mr. Shields: I find it difficult to believe that an agreement made by this government—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Madam Speaker: Will the hon. member please ask his question?

Mr. Shields: Recognizing the total disruption to the tar sands industry, the uncertainty that has been created with regard to their development, and the resulting economic hardship to small businesses in Fort McMurray, Cold Lake and Bonnyville.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. member please ask his question very soon.

Mr. Shields: Yes, I will.

Some hon. Members: Now.

Mr. Shields: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am asking the question. In view of the number of small businesses that have gone bankrupt, will the minister inform the House whether an analysis was carried out to determine the cost, not only to the economy of the local communities but to the Canadian economy, of a minimum of a one-year delay in the development of the Alsands project and the project at Cold Lake?

Mr. Lalonde: I am afraid the hon. member has not been well informed as to what the decision has been. The decision has been not to tie, in future, increases in the price paid for tar sands oil to international prices. I have a statement here by the president of Suncor which reads as follows; I am sure it will interest the hon. member: "Suncor will continue to receive the