

Oral Questions

the livelihood of these fishermen, will he consult fully with them?

Mr. LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I have never in my life spoken to a chamber of commerce, except in my riding where there were only 13 people present at that meeting!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. LeBlanc: The hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria reminds me that I spoke at Grand Falls, a town in his riding. In that regard I apologize for misleading the House. The hon. member continues to talk about decisions having been made. I referred to discussions which took place as the fishing season approached. The predictions were made by scientists from a biological point of view. We have identified the areas in which there may be closures.

Miss Jewett: Talk to the fishermen.

Mr. LeBlanc: I cannot meet with every group of fishermen on every management decision which must be taken. I discussed this particular issue for an hour and a half yesterday morning with the assistant deputy minister from the Pacific coast. We went through the entire scheme, and I will do so again when firm recommendations come forward.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

INQUIRY RESPECTING ALLEVIATION OF HIGH COST OF LIVING

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It follows on a previous question with regard to the adverse effect of inflation on the consumer. Specifically with regard to the high cost of rent and the high cost of foodstuffs, would the minister share with the House exactly what approach he and his colleagues, including the Minister of Agriculture and others, will be taking in order to alleviate the high cost of living for citizens in Canada?

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Postmaster General): Madam Speaker, we are obviously concerned with the constant increase in prices, especially food prices. However, a recent study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that of all industrialized countries, Canada is the one where food prices are lowest. It is also important to keep in mind that Canadians are the ones who have to work fewer hours for the weekly food basket. So I think that despite his just concern over price increases, the hon. member must find some kind of comfort in this, because, after all, Canada does fare quite well compared to all other industrialized countries.

[*English*]

ENERGY

PROPOSAL RESPECTING ESTABLISHMENT OF HYDROGEN CENTRE

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It relates to an announcement made last week by Premier William Davis of Ontario with regard to an industrial strategy which included a number of energy and other technical innovations. Within the package was the concept of a Canadian hydrogen centre. Has the minister had an opportunity to assess the proposal to the federal government included in that document which asks for federal government assistance and co-operation to make this hydrogen centre a lead agency to co-operate with the efforts in Quebec to rationalize the situation at Mirabel airport with regard to hydrogen and to help in western Canada with hydrogenation processes?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, I have examined this proposal which is consistent with several other proposals put forward on this matter in the past few months. I am supposed to meet my Ontario counterpart within the next few days for a general discussion on energy matters. I am sure this question will be on the agenda at that meeting.

[*English*]

Mr. Gurbin: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. The minister will know of the special efforts being made in the field of energy conservation in Canada through government agencies and other agencies. Organizations such as Canartech, the Biomass Institute and a number of others are carrying on work on alternative energy forms. In view of the fact that the minister's main concerns are now centred around the negotiations or impasse in those negotiations with western Canada with regard to conventional oil supplies, and in view of the importance of alternative energy forms to conservation and to Canada's future, particularly with regard to energy self-sufficiency and warding off rationing, would the minister consider the concept of extending his department to include a minister of state for alternative energy and conservation?

Mr. Lalonde: Madam Speaker, the decision on such a proposal would be made by the Prime Minister, not me. Government organization comes under the responsibility of the Prime Minister.