

Inquiries of the Ministry

report to the House on the recent international conference on oil pollution of the high seas held in Brussels?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, this conference has concluded. The chief of our delegation, our ambassador, is now preparing a detailed report which should be in my hands in a matter of a few days; it may be available over the weekend. As soon as it is received and we have all the background to the matter, I will carry out my commitment to make a statement to the House.

[Translation]

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

VAL D'OR—OFFICE FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT

Mr. Oza Tétrault (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Can he tell us whether the Department of Public Works has reached a decision as regards the building of office space for the Department of Indian Affairs in Val d'Or?

Mr. Speaker: This question could be put on the order paper.

[English]

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

NEW INITIATIVES IN FIGHT AGAINST
INFLATION

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Minister of Finance whether, in view of the very alarming increase in the cost of living last month, the government proposes to take any new initiatives in its fight against inflation?

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that the government has this matter under continuous review. At this time may I also take the opportunity of offering the Leader of the Opposition my sincere sympathy at the loss of most of his senior staff. I wish to wish those who are leaving every success in their chosen vocations, and congratulate them on their perceptiveness in deciding there wasn't much future in their present jobs.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Stanfield: May I thank the minister for his interest and sympathy, but I am rising because I feel sympathy for the Canadian people. I think the Canadian people are entitled to an answer. Again I ask the minister whether, in view of the increase in the cost of living, the government proposes to take any new initiatives in the fight against inflation?

Mr. Benson: Mr. Speaker, I was simply hoping that the Leader of the Opposition's new staff would present him with some suggestions to assist—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Benson:—in the fight against inflation, which we are keeping under continuous review.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McGrath: Obviously the minister cannot deal with it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It seems to me that the present exchange is not likely to be very fruitful. Perhaps we should try another subject.

Mr. Stanfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the joshing from the Minister of Finance but, if the question period is to be taken seriously in this House, when the Minister of Finance is asked questions dealing with important matters, either by the Leader of the Opposition or by any other hon. member, I think it shows contempt of the House and of Parliament if the Minister of Finance gives answers of that sort. We are raising questions of grave import to the people of this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Benson: On the point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Fairweather: Try using a film strip.

Mr. Benson:—each time the Leader of the Opposition has asked this particular question, one he has asked on many occasions, I have given a serious reply, and I will continue to do so. We consider inflation a matter of prime importance to this country. We have taken serious steps to reduce government expenditures and have directed our fiscal and monetary policies to the fight against inflation. We have indicated that if the present steps we have taken are not successful, then we will proceed with further steps. If we do