

● (1450)

FARM GROUPS' DEMAND

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, seven responsible farm groups demanded action within a week. Why has the Minister failed to meet the legitimate demands and deadline which the farmers put before him at that meeting?

Hon. John Wise (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member had any memory at all he might be aware of the answer. The simple fact is that that was done on a Saturday, the four o'clock Friday deadline, and it just so happened that the House did not sit that week.

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FINANCE

GENSTAR TAX RULING—MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. He will recall moving very quickly once the research and development loophole was brought to his attention, but only after it cost the federal Government many hundreds of millions of dollars. After considering the Genstar tax ruling and recognizing that it will cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars as other companies take advantage of that ruling, does the Minister support that new loophole? If so, why? If not, what action is he taking to close it?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I read the media reports on this particular transaction and I have requested information from the Department. There is an in-depth review going on right now and I hope to make some comment in due course.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES—REQUEST FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF STANDARDS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Chemical substances are now being developed for which there are no national standards. As this is an urgent matter, will he direct his Department to establish these standards for the protection of the health of the people who take their water from the St. Clair River and the Great Lakes?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's question has perhaps been prompted by certain observations made by the Law Reform Commission in this regard. My colleague, the Minister of Health, and I have established a high-level task force which met several times in September and October and will be meeting again on December 17. We hope that very early in the new year we will have recommendations from that task force

Oral Questions

which we can bring to Cabinet for early changes to the Environmental Contaminants Act.

ST. CLAIR RIVER POLLUTION—INVESTIGATION OF INDUSTRIAL PLANTS

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, in view of the understandable preoccupation of communities which take their water from the St. Clair River, is the Minister willing to say whether he will also launch an investigation into the activities of industrial plants along that river in Sarnia which are upstream to the communities taking their water from this river?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I always welcome thoughtful observations from the Hon. Member and others on all sides. This one is no exception. However, I urge him to make it clear in all his public statements, including here in the House, that the drinking water from the St. Clair River meets all of the vigorous and rigorous international standards laid down by the World Health Organization. The responsibility for testing the quality of drinking water as opposed to the St. Clair River water in general rests with the Ontario Government. However, I am working hand in glove with my Ontario counterpart to make sure that high standard is met on an ongoing basis well into the future.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

TAX REBATE DISCOUNTERS—RATE OF INTEREST CHARGED TO TAXPAYERS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. On Friday he said, in connection with his proposals to deal with tax discounting, that they would put this form of loan sharking entirely within the limits allowed under the Criminal Code. Surely the Minister knows that the average refund is just over \$700. Tax discounters using his formula will be able to charge \$65 to process the refund. Since the Department now says that the refunds go out in a month, these people are really charging an interest rate of over 100 per cent. Is the Minister satisfied with that?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, I believe that last week we announced a decision, following consultations that were very thorough and that were also instrumental in correcting certain discrepancies in a system that was inadequate to start with, a decision that has also helped to reduce costs, if we consider the Tax Rebate Discounting Act, for all Canadians and especially those on low incomes.