

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

POSSIBILITY OF ALTERATION IN GRANT AWARDING CRITERIA AS RESULT OF NEW DEFINITION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. As the new labour force survey produces lower unemployment rates in certain areas because of the new definition of unemployment, can the minister inform the House whether his department will find it necessary to adjust the grant awarding criteria of unemployment levels to compensate for the structural alteration in the survey or whether DREE grants will be altered in any way?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I can say to the hon. member that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is of course concerned with this problem, and we are making our own findings and our own studies about it. DREE grants to businesses in various areas are awarded according to the importance of the jobs created and the products involved. It is clear, with respect to unemployment levels in the Atlantic area as well as in some areas in Quebec, that the department I run is watching very closely the development of the situation and that we will do everything possible within our jurisdiction to improve the situation as we have succeeded in doing so up to now and that we will of course continue to accomplish this task.

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[English]

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

REASON PORT OF HALIFAX NOT PERMITTED TO TENDER ON NATIONAL DEFENCE CONTAINER TRAFFIC FROM EUROPE

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister in the absence of the Minister of Supply and Services and the Minister of National Defence. Would he use his good offices to find out why instructions continue to be issued by the Department of Supply and Services directing the Department of National Defence not to permit the Port of Halifax to tender on the movement of container traffic, Department of National Defence traffic, from points in Europe to points in Canada?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I do not necessarily accept the premise of the question but I will look into the situation.

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HEALTH

ALTERNATIVES FOR TREATMENT IN VIEW OF CLOSING OF HOSPITALS—POSSIBILITY DOCTORS ALLOWED MILEAGE CHARGE

Mr. P. B. Rynard (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address the question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the proposed closing of

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several hospitals across Canada which are cost-sharing by both levels of government over the years and which will leave several thousand people unemployed, may I ask the minister, as a result of the discussions held recently, what alternatives are to be offered for the cheaper treatment of thousands of cases still requiring medical care that have nowhere to go?

An hon. Member: Ask Frank Miller.

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows well, it is a hospital insurance program whose cost is shared 50 per cent by the federal government. However, the decisions concerning that program are made by the provincial governments.

As regards the specific question of the hon. member, I would say that negotiations with the provinces were begun last year with a view to permitting the federal government to share the cost of certain services that are less costly than hospital care. The provinces suspended those negotiations for a certain time, but I am glad to tell the House that the provinces now seem ready to resume these discussions. A meeting of officials is scheduled for the month of March and will be followed, I hope, by a federal-provincial conference of the health ministers at the beginning of April.

[English]

Mr. Rynard: May I ask the minister if any proposals were made to allow mileage charges as an incentive to have doctors treat patients in their homes, particularly in rural areas?

[Translation]

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, nothing in the Medical Care Act or the Hospital Insurance Act prohibits such a practice. But again, this is a decision strictly incumbent to the provincial authorities, and none of them raised that matter with me last year.

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[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

GUATEMALA—SUGGESTED OFFER OF HELICOPTERS TO OVERCOME COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Since it seems that internal communications is one of the serious problems facing those anxious to distribute emergency aid in Guatemala, and since helicopters would appear to be the best way of overcoming this problem, may I ask the minister whether an offer of helicopters has been made to the Guatemalan authorities or fuel for helicopters and if so, with what result?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, we have a six man Canadian team in Guatemala working with the Guatemalan authorities and attempting to assess need and evaluate aid. To my knowledge, no request has come forward for heli-