

Oil and Gas Price Increases

could extend the period for presenting motions under Standing Order 43.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Tenth report of Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs—Mr. MacGuigan.

FISHERIES AND FORESTRIES

Fourth report of Standing Committee on Fisheries and Forestry—Mr. Anderson.

[Editor's Note: For text of above reports, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]

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[English]

ENERGY

TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN CONCERNING OIL AND GAS PRICE INCREASES

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 41(2) I wish to table in both official languages a statement setting forth the details of crude oil and natural gas price increases as agreed by the federal government and the two producing provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the letters exchanged between the minister of energy of Alberta and myself.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I want to ask Your Honour about the propriety of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Gillespie) tabling a statement and certain correspondence. No doubt under Standing Order 41(2) the minister is entitled to file copies of correspondence between himself and provincial ministers of energy, but to file also a statement is, in my opinion, not within the ambit of the provision under Standing Order 41(2).

If there is to be a statement—and that is what it is, a statement on oil and natural gas prices by the minister—that statement should be made on motions so that members can ask questions about it. The statement contains reference to a number of things and it is not clear whether they represent the government's intention to introduce measures or whether they are simply matters which were discussed between the minister and the provincial energy ministers. I think that to have a statement like this issued and going out to the press, giving the impression that these are programs which the government is about to institute without any opportunity for members to ask

[Mr. Speaker.]

questions and to ascertain what the statement means, is taking advantage of the provisions under Standing Order 41(2). I think Your Honour might take into consideration whether or not this is the proper use of that provision.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): There is no doubt at all about the point raised by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Douglas). The procedure that we established under the revised rules with respect to statements, that is something labelled as a statement or something which by its nature is a statement, is that such a statement would be made in the House of Commons orally by a minister, and members of the House particularly interested in the subject matter of the statement would have the opportunity to ask questions about it. As the hon. member said, there is nothing wrong with tabling certain documents, but to adopt the practice of tabling a statement in the House is clearly contrary to the rules.

I am sure that the minister does not want to run counter to the rules and in fact he should not be allowed to do so. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to take that matter into consideration and have the minister withdraw his request. I do not wish to inconvenience the minister but I really think that before he attempted to table the statement he should have accepted some advice from the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) because this is in clear contravention of the standing orders.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I did not get the benefit of the beginning of the hon. gentleman's remarks but, as I read Standing Order 41(2), the minister, as a minister of the Crown is completely entitled to table any documents he wishes to table and there is nothing to prevent him from doing that. Standing Order 41(2) expressly states so. The documents that are sought to be tabled are indicated as being documents and are so identified. That is the choice of the minister. If he wishes to table them, I see nothing to prevent him from doing so.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise in support of the point of order and respectfully submit to Your Honour that you should look at this very carefully because otherwise we could be setting a very dangerous precedent. What the minister seeks to do by this flagrant misuse of Standing Order 41(2) is to circumvent the provisions of Standing Order 15 which specifically makes allowance for ministers to rise and make statements in the House, on which occasion opposition members and other members of the House, are entitled to make adequate responses and ask questions. If the minister is permitted, and if you in fact allow this wide interpretation of Standing Order 41(2) which refers clearly to documents to bootleg in statements to which members of the House will not be given an opportunity to make a response, we would be setting a very dangerous precedent which will considerably weaken the provisions of Standing Order 15 which clearly makes provision for oral statements.