

were greatly delayed in the Gaspé peninsula offices. This situation has not improved and 200 claimants at the Chandler unemployment insurance office have been waiting for their benefits for eight to ten weeks. I should like to ask the minister whether he is aware of the situation and what action he intends to take so that these claimants may receive their benefits in the very near future.

Mr. Dennis Dawson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for his question and for having advised the minister's office and the department of this problem. Two specialists from headquarters have been sent to the Chandler office to help local officers solve this problem. We hope that the files of the 200 claimants involved will have been examined and the situation corrected before the end of next week. We shall also be reorganizing the office to ensure that this type of problem does not occur again.

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[English]

FINANCE

PROFITS OF BANKS—INCREASE IN BANKRUPTCIES—POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance. We are faced with bank interest rates at or near an all-time high and bank profits averaging a 14 per cent increase this year, with the profits of the Royal Bank up 21 per cent and the Bank of Nova Scotia up 22.3 per cent. At the same time bankruptcies in the farming community are up 79 per cent, business bankruptcies have increased by 16.7 per cent and consumer bankruptcies are up by 17.5 per cent. Does the minister see any relationship between high bank interest, high bank profits and high bankruptcies?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, there are many interrelationships.

Mr. Deans: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is this. What advice does the Minister of Finance have for the people of Canada—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Pray!

Mr. Deans:—who during this year will be faced with about 12 per cent inflation, food prices rising by 13 per cent to 15 per cent, energy costs increasing by almost 25 per cent and wages falling behind the rising cost of living for the fourth straight year? What advice can the minister give the people of Canada in their efforts to cope with this situation?

Mr. MacEachen: Madam Speaker, the question is too general to be answered on the orders of the day.

Oral Questions

BANKRUPTCIES

RE-MOR MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT—C & M FINANCIAL SERVICES—INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED BY COMMITTEE OF ONTARIO LEGISLATURE

Mr. Bill Kempling (Burlington): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister will be aware of a summons being issued to the Superintendent of Insurance in his department directing him to appear before a special committee of the Ontario legislature which is looking into the circumstances surrounding the bankruptcy of Re-Mor Management Investment and the receivership of C & M Financial Services. Would the minister advise the House whether or not he is aware of any other federal officials or appointees who may have been issued a summons, and will he co-operate with the committee of the legislature in its investigation?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of State (Finance)): Madam Speaker, I have heard that the Superintendent of Insurance might be called before a standing committee of the Ontario legislature as well as an officer responsible for the trust companies section of the Department of Insurance. I feel, Madam Speaker, that this situation should be fully looked into. First of all, this committee of the Ontario legislature is considering the issue of a licence by a provincial agency to a provincial corporation, the Re-Mor company, and might eventually consider the issue of a provincial licence to a federally incorporated company. I believe that, according to jurisprudence—and this is the opinion of the legal advisers of the Department of Insurance—a provincial body has no jurisdiction to call witnesses to testify in matters of federal jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Kempling: Madam Speaker, inasmuch as Astra Trust, Re-Mor Management Investment and C & M Financial Consultants are interconnected and since the winding down of C & M Financial Consultants was a condition for the granting of the Astra Trust charter, will the minister co-operate with this committee by allowing it to examine the three RCMP reports on Astra Trust which recommended that a trust licence not be issued?

[Translation]

Mr. Bussières: Madam Speaker, I find the conclusions of the hon. member very strange. I have indicated several times in the House that the incorporation application of the Astra company had been examined closely and exhaustively by the Department of Insurance. As the hon. member indicated at the time, the Superintendent of Insurance had even asked the RCMP to provide some information about the applicants. Following extensive and exhaustive investigations, the Superintendent of Insurance concluded that he could recommend to the Minister of Finance that an incorporation charter be granted.