

Oral Questions

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I can assure the hon. member for Témiscamingue that his representation will be taken into very serious consideration, and I hope he will be satisfied.

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[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE**POSSIBLE DISCUSSION OF WAGE GUIDELINES WITH
MINISTERS OF FINANCE AND LABOUR AS BASIS FOR
NEGOTIATION**

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Darmouth-Halifax East): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board. Inasmuch as we have heard from the Minister of Labour that he has had no discussions with the Minister of Finance respecting guidelines, has the President of the Treasury Board had any discussions with the Minister of Finance respecting wage guidelines, and has he had any discussions with the Minister of Labour and, if so, were these guidelines expressed in any way to the general labour and trades group at any point during the negotiations or subsequent to them?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, if I were to reveal in the House what my position is, there would be no point in having any negotiations.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, I was not looking for details of any disclosure. Let me put the question in the simplest form. I believe the House is entitled to this information. Has the President of the Treasury Board discussed the matter of guidelines with the Minister of Finance, not necessarily with respect to the current negotiations but regarding negotiations that will be going on from time to time between the Treasury Board and employees of the federal government?

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: It is a well known fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance and I get along very well.

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[English]

INDUSTRY**AUTOMOBILES—SUGGESTED REDUCTION OF SALES TAX**

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, I should like to get back to Canada's troubled automobile industry and I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In view of the fact that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the Canadian automobile industry is directly dependent upon sales of Canadian auto products in Canada and because of the buyer resistance that is building up this year due to the price increase of Canadian automobile products, and further, because one of the factors in that increase is the 12 per cent federal sales tax levied on Canadian manufactured automobiles, not Volkswagens, not cars produced in the United States but Canadian manufactured automobiles, can the minister tell us now if the government has

[Mr. Caouette (Témiscamingue).]

any plans to reduce or abolish the federal 12 per cent sales tax as has already been done in respect of the construction industry?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): The Canadian automobile industry depends on U.S. consumers for about 80 per cent, or very close to it, of its production. Therefore, the sales tax proposal that the hon. member has put is, in my view, not an answer to the Canadian automobile industry. If indeed the sales tax reductions were to be applied, they might also have the effect of increasing the proportion of imports from third countries.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What about the Canadian consumer?

Mr. Lawrence: In view of the fact that we are talking about a sales tax on Canadian manufactured goods, not those imported into this country, and in view of the fact that the ten year old auto pact called for an equalization of price in respect of motor vehicles produced on the north American continent, can the minister tell us now what the government is doing right now in respect of the troubled Canadian auto industry?

An hon. Member: Nothing besides prayer.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS**REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF VETERANS LAND ACT UNTIL
NEW HOUSING LEGISLATION INTRODUCED**

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. In view of the fact that there are only about six weeks before the phasing out of the Veterans Land Act and that there are just under 3,000 applications which have been received by the veterans land administration because of the extension of the act, would the minister indicate whether, if no new veterans housing legislation is introduced before March 31, 1975, he will extend the act by an order in council or by legislation until the veterans housing legislation is ready.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Daniel J. MacDonald (Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it has been decided by the government that the Veterans Land Act would not be extended any further. As I have mentioned on previous occasions, a study has been conducted by my department, by the department of the Minister of State for Urban Affairs, by the Department of Finance, and others. When the findings are known to us which I hope will be very soon, I will make them available to the House of Commons.

Mr. Marshall: The minister did not answer my particular point, that is whether, if the new veterans housing legislation is not ready by March 31, 1975, the minister would consider extending the act for two or three months until that legislation is ready.