

TIMING OF GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, I was quoting the Hon. Member for St. John's East. Does the Minister agree with the comment attributed to the Hon. Member for St. John's West last week who told the Mayor of Bishop's Falls that a definitive decision within two weeks would be announced on the future of the Newfoundland Railway? Could the Minister tell us whether or not in the next 14 days the people of my province can expect an answer in respect of the Government's intentions regarding the Newfoundland Railway and its thousands of employees?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that my colleague indicated that a decision may be coming down within a matter of weeks, not within a matter of two weeks. That is what the Hon. Member informs me. I can assure the House, and indeed the Hon. Member, that if a decision is made he will certainly be notified amply, and I will expect him to respond in kind.

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FISHERIES

ISSUANCE OF CLAM FISHING LICENCES

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It concerns the Nova Scotia clam scam. Is the Prime Minister aware that the Minister of National Revenue lobbied the Minister of Fisheries on behalf of Mother Snow's Fine Foods and Dennis Snow to obtain fishing licences, and that Dennis Snow owes thousands of dollars in outstanding judgments to the Ministry of National Revenue? Does the Prime Minister condone this activity on the part of the Minister of National Revenue, or would he ask the Minister to resign for such a blatant conflict of interest?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the implications contained in the allegations in the preamble to that question are not only wrong but are right next door to being scurrilous. The fact of the matter is that the regional director in Halifax invited applications for an experimental clam fishery to last for four months. Four such applications were received for six licences, two of which were granted by the regional director in a perfectly proper fashion.

APPLICATION FOR DREE GRANT—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, would the Prime Minister undertake to investigate an application by Mother Snow's Fine Foods for a \$900,000-odd DREE grant to fund an interim processing operation in relation to these ill-gotten clam licences? Would he undertake to investigate the grant and cancel it on the basis that the principals are not entitled to that particular licence?

Oral Questions

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, as the Acting Minister of Fisheries I will take into consideration the almost contemptuous remarks of the hon. gentleman. I know nothing of his allegations, but if they should in any way be even close to the truth, then they will be acted upon. I would not, if I were the Hon. Member and having regard to all of the other allegations which he has made in the past, hold my breath on this one.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

SALARY INCREASES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. It is a fact that collective bargaining in the Public Service has been dragging on for months. Last week we heard that a number of senior executives of Crown corporations and other senior public officials have obtained from the Government salary increases of 3, 5 and 8 per cent and, in some cases, even as much as 40 per cent.

How can the Prime Minister find \$475,000 to pay the president of a Crown corporation, when during the last sixteen months the Government has laid off 3,000 public servants, when the Government has a privatization policy that takes jobs from low-income Canadians, and when its human resources management system is a disaster, how can he justify spending this kind of money on the top brass and giving so little to those earning an average wage?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I would like to react to some of the premises of my hon. friend's question. Recently, it was announced that senior executives in the Public Service would receive a 2.3 per cent raise, compared with the average 3.5 per cent negotiated through collective bargaining with our employees. I think that on this level, the principle of equity is being observed, and that the premises of the question are absolutely false.

[English]

REQUEST THAT PRIVATIZATION COST BENEFIT STUDIES BE TABLED

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, given that there is very little information forthcoming from the Government on questions concerning the negotiations on the salaries of public servants, and given that I take it the Government has made cost studies on the benefits of privatization, for example, will the Minister table in the House those studies on cost benefits which he has? Does he have studies on the social costs to public servants who lose their jobs because of the policies of the Government?