

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ENERGY

WESTERN ACCORD—GASOLINE RETAIL TAXES

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. He must have recognized that the recent oil deal certainly does not benefit the consumers who will be the real victims of that deal. The Prime Minister certainly did not reassure the people of Ontario yesterday when he refused to give a commitment that there would be no increase in taxes at the pump.

Will the Minister assure this House that there will be no taxes imposed at the pump? Will he give us his undertaking that that will not be part of his Budget? Will he at the same time explain to the House why he made that commitment initially and spontaneously to reporters, and then withdrew it?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very clear that the Western Accord does benefit consumers, particularly those who are out of a job today. There will be 250,000 or 300,000 of those people who will get work as a result of the Accord.

As to the other questions that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition has put to me, he knows that those are matters which would be addressed in a Budget. I remind him that we will be addressing a very wide range of issues in the Budget which affect both the revenue and expenditures of the Government. He will have to wait until then, as will others, for those answers.

EMPLOYMENT FORECAST

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether that is the advice that his Deputy Minister is giving him, because it is certainly not the advice of the Deputy Minister of Energy of Ontario, Duncan Allan, who is reported today's *Toronto Star* as saying he is skeptical about whether the industry can create 250,000 jobs. He says if Ottawa imposes a gasoline tax to help pay for the energy deal, it will throw Canadians out of work. That is the official Ontario position.

Therefore, would the Minister be good enough to table the list of alleged jobs that would be created, and which was cited by his colleague, the Minister of Energy, and which seemed to be as full of holes as a piece of Swiss cheese, and show us where those jobs are coming from?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am really quite taken aback by the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition. On the one hand he tells me that we should be addressing the problems of the deficit, and on the other hand he says we should not be doing certain things to address those problems. I do not have the list that the Minister of Energy is referring to, and I suggest he put that question to her when she returns to the House.

ONTARIO AND QUEBEC PREMIERS

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): I posed that question because the Minister was boasting about jobs flowing from the deal. Would the Minister tell the House whether, before that deal was signed, he had consultations with his counterparts in Ontario and Quebec to assure them that his officials were not actively exploring ways of levying a huge tax at the retail level on gasoline to compensate for revenues lost to the oil industry as a result of this deal? Did the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec agree in advance with the oil deal, knowing that in view of this potential tax increase, and, I suggest, forthcoming tax increase, their consumers would be footing a bill of somewhere in the range of five to ten cents a litre?

• (1420)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is using scare tactics which are inappropriate for the House. He has written, in his own words, that the national energy policy was a disaster. For that reason we have moved quickly to make the changes in that policy that will create jobs, not only in western Canada but in the consuming provinces of Ontario and Quebec. I would think that the Premiers of both those provinces will be very pleased when those jobs are created.

NOTIFICATION OF ONTARIO PREMIER

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. It is with regard to the oil deal as well. Last Thursday I asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources if the Premier of Ontario had been consulted on the details of the oil deal and its relative negative impacts on Ontario. In her reply the Minister said that she would be addressing that in her remarks the same afternoon, which of course was not the case. Can the Deputy Prime Minister now tell the House when the Premier of Ontario was notified of the details of the deal? What input, if any, did he have in the process of the signing of that agreement?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when she made her statement. I recall her saying that she consulted with the Minister of Energy of the Province of Ontario all through the process. She assured the House that there were no negative impacts on the Province of Ontario.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It has a positive impact.

Mr. Nielsen: As my hon. friend points out, it has quite a positive effect on the Province of Ontario, including jobs and industrial spin-offs. I wish the Hon. Member would accept the explanation rather than running around, as the Minister of Finance has said, like his Leader and, through scare tactics, creating fear in the hearts of Ontarians.