

## Oral Questions

[English]

## THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM—EFFECT OF GUIDELINES ON  
DIVIDEND PAYMENTS

**Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I asked the Minister of Finance a question about the application of the guidelines to dividend payments. I wanted to know if there was to be an actual freeze or a rollback to levels actually paid in 1974. The minister indicated he would look into this. Is he now in a position to tell the House just what the government's policy is in this regard?

**Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance):** Yes, Mr. Speaker. The concept was that it should be on a cash rather than an accrual basis. This is the sense in which it was considered in the white paper. I should say, as I am sure the hon. member has noted since then, that there have been some representations suggesting that a basis other than the cash basis would be equitable. I have not had an opportunity to discuss this further, because of the federal-provincial meeting, but will give early attention to it and consider the relative merits of the two proposals.

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## TRANSPORT

INTERCITY RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE—NATURE OF REPLY TO  
PROPOSAL BY RAILWAYS

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Last Tuesday I asked him a question concerning the submission in the letter of December 20, 1974, by the presidents of the two national railroads for an integrated, intercity rail passenger service. The proposal was for the entire nation. Has the minister considered the correspondence; can he advise the House if the letter was replied to, or even acknowledged and, if so, can he tell us what was the nature of the reply?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the letter was replied to and, basically, was followed up with further discussions with our railways. Obviously, there will need to be intensive discussions about any possible proposal and, indeed, consideration of a variety of legislative and other changes in our law and policy before a particular program can be put forward.

INTERCITY RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE—SUGGESTED HIGHER  
PRIORITY FOR PROGRAM AND ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO  
REPLACE EQUIPMENT

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Actually, may I incorporate two questions in one supplementary question? May I ask the minister if the proposal of the railways means that there is to be an improvement in the low priority which the government in its policy paper proposals and the Ministry of Transport has given to rail transportation. Is there to be higher priority for rail transportation? Also, in view of the cancellation of Pickering airport, will the

[Mr. Trudeau.]

minister allocate funds which would otherwise have been spent on Pickering airport to the purchase and refurbishing of passenger train equipment, as two years lead time is required and in view of the amount of existing railway equipment which must be scrapped?

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, of course, I do not agree with the hon. member's view of the priority this government puts on rail passenger traffic. Indeed, that has formed an important part of our policy. It is, however, a complex matter and should not be related to whether or not a particular airport is to be constructed, as the hon. member suggests. But it is a complex matter, requiring a sound foundation for restructuring. We are treating it seriously in that light and will come forward in due course with proposals.

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## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

POSSIBILITY OF PRICE INCREASE RESULTING FROM  
ADOPTION OF METRIC SYSTEM—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (York South):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Today's *Globe and Mail* cites an example of how the consumer can face a hidden price increase of 20 per cent as a result of new metric packaging. Can the minister tell the House what steps his department is taking to avoid such errors, be they "human" or otherwise?

**Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I made inquiries about this particular matter before the question period today and was advised that Dominion stores, the company concerned in this case I believe, has taken steps to ensure that adequate information is provided. We are also looking for techniques by which either the Metric Commission or some emanation of it would be empowered to deal with this kind of situation on an ongoing basis, if it should occur again.

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## AUDITOR GENERAL

DATE OF INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENT  
WILSON REPORT

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board—if he would kindly divert his attention from what he is doing. He may be getting the answer now, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

**Mr. Baldwin:** Following the Prime Minister's suggestion to be persistent, may I ask the minister the following question? Now that the report on the Auditor General has existed for some months and in light of the over-riding need for this government to demonstrate its determination to eliminate the waste and extravagance which have persisted in its spending for some time, will the hon. gentle-