

Oral Questions

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE**ADMIRAL FALLS—CRITICISM OF EXPENSIVE BRUSSELS RESIDENCE**

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, I would direct my question to the Prime Minister. It concerns the lavish arrangements made by the government for living accommodation for Admiral Falls, Canadian NATO representative in Brussels and former chief of our general staff, at a rental of \$8,200 per month—not far short of \$100,000 per year.

● (1440)

Is it government policy to permit rental of extravagant and sumptuous living accommodations for any such senior Canadian official stationed abroad, and how does the government justify the expenditure of almost \$100,000 per year in this particularly outrageous example of ripping off the taxpayer? I hope the Prime Minister himself, rather than the parliamentary secretary, will answer this question.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: No, he will not.

Mr. Crosbie: Silent behind a woman.

Mrs. Ursula Appolloni (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Appolloni: Belgium is as important a country as it is a delightful one. When it comes to Brussels in particular, I might point out to the hon. member that it does have the headquarters of the EEC and NATO, among other things. Therefore, it attracts a certain number of foreign dignitaries, as a result of which rents are rather high in Brussels.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Does it have a swimming pool?

An hon. Member: That will teach you Pierre.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Appolloni: Therefore, it is incumbent upon Canada to provide suitable accommodation.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Appolloni: I am sure even the hon. member, who is not noted for his generosity in this House, will realize that neither a shack nor a lean-to are suitable accommodation for a man who represents the finest forces in the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cossitt: Madam Speaker, I would like to preface my supplementary. With all due respect to the parliamentary secretary, I realize that question was difficult for her to answer; it was sloughed off on her by the Prime Minister.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cossitt: Therefore, I would like to ask the Prime Minister this. Will he guarantee that a full investigation will be carried out by the government with regard to the Admiral Falls' situation, and that all details will be made public as soon as possible? Particularly, will the Prime Minister also guarantee to the House whether it is now, or not now, established government policy that the office of the Minister of National Defence be staffed primarily by persons approved or recommended first by Admiral Falls?

An hon. Member: Come on, Pierre.

Mrs. Appolloni: Madam Speaker, the only guarantee I can give is, if the hon. member decides to go to Brussels, I shall personally ask Admiral Falls to entertain him in a shack or in a lean-to.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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STATUS OF WOMEN**ALLEGED DISCRIMINATORY HIRING PRACTICES OF CNR—CROWN CORPORATIONS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM**

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the status of women. Just two hours ago, three women announced at a press conference that they have filed complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Commission against CNR because of sex discrimination in hiring.

Will the minister tell the House whether he is prepared to negotiate an affirmative action agreement with CNR promoting women into skilled trades and prohibiting discriminatory exams and height requirements?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, all I can tell the hon. member is that I will be very pleased to look into the case. The fact that a complaint has been filed before the Canadian Human Rights Commission means that, very clearly, it is within the jurisdiction of that commission. The legislation sets out that the responsibility for looking at the case now rests with the Human Rights Commission, as it is proper to do. But I will certainly be glad to look at the case. We have constant communication with Mr. Fairweather, who is the head of the commission.

The affirmative action program that we are now establishing, as we have said before, will certainly come before cabinet. We are looking at questions about how it may apply to Crown corporations.