

Oral Questions

Interestingly enough, not too many people have wanted that problem to be dumped on their laps yet.

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AIRPORTS**TEN-YEAR PLAN FOR TORONTO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Mr. John McDermid (Brampton-Georgetown): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. On November 21 in this House I asked the minister when he planned to introduce long-range planning for Toronto international airport, a ten-year plan. On that day the minister announced it would be released in January. It is now March 5. The people in Brampton, Mississauga, Etobicoke, and Toronto are wondering where this long-awaited plan is and what is the hold up.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, unfortunately there will be a short delay. The master plan will be concluded in the coming weeks. I wrote yesterday to all members from the Toronto area asking them for suggestions as to the best way of bringing the plan to the attention of the public. The short answer is that we will be late by three or four weeks.

Mr. McDermid: Madam Speaker, I think the minister means by three or four months. He is eight weeks late now, so I think that is what he is referring to. Will the minister assure the people of Toronto that this delay will not preclude them from making proper representations to the ministry on the plans as presented?

Mr. Pepin: Madam Speaker, to make it short, I can give that solemn assurance.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**EQUAL RIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN**

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my question is to the President of the Treasury Board. In light of the fact that this Sunday is International Women's Day, and since it has been nine months since the Canadian government was found guilty by the Canadian Human Rights Commission with respect to providing equal pay for work of equal value to 3,000 members of the general services group of the PSAC, would the President of the Treasury Board not agree that it is time the government now acted? Would he also not agree that by having only Mr. John Campbell and one assistant looking into all complaints of inequality in government pay scales, the government is really just giving token recognition to equality in the public service?

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the remarks of the hon. member that we are paying token lip service, or

whatever the comment was, to this very important and fundamental principle. I indicated earlier to the House that the matter referred to by the hon. member is very complicated because of the difficulty involved in establishing a firm basis for compensation. I hope we have solved that problem. The hon. member is right that it is time the matter was settled. I want to assure him, however, Madam Speaker, that all settlements will be retroactive in any event, so ultimately no one will suffer through these delays. The important thing is to establish a firm and fair basis to give effect to the principle found in Section 11.

● (1510)

So far as the staffing of departments is concerned, I will look into the matter that has been raised. I have committed Treasury Board to moving ahead in trying to ferret out areas where there may be a contravention of this fundamental principle. I would point out that so far as the number of complaints that we have received is concerned, they are all being dealt with and they are not that numerous.

Mr. Murphy: I thank the minister for his answer. I have a supplementary question for him. As there are only 14 people involved in the three government departments that have any affirmative action programs at all, as there are only two people at present looking into equal pay for work of equal value complaints, and in view of the fact that it has been over nine years since the Treasury Board issued a directive stating that department managers are supposed to be hiring and promoting women within their departments, does the minister not think that, unlike the minister responsible for the status of women who could not care less, this is tiresome? Should the Treasury Board not make sure that all government agencies act to make sure that there is equality within the public service?

Mr. Johnston: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Treasury Board and on behalf of my colleague to whom reference was made, may I say that my colleague has been instrumental, along with the Secretary of State and my own department, in moving forward on these three pilot projects which are independent of the equal opportunities program which already exists and, I suggest, has moved forward relatively effectively.

We have been attempting, as I have said before in the House, Madam Speaker, to identify across Canada, starting with three departments, what is known as systemic discrimination, not only against women but against handicapped people and against native people. This is a form of unconscious discrimination which undoubtedly has an impact in preventing women from moving ahead in the ranks of the public service at a rate which we would find acceptable. There has been no lack of resolve and no withdrawal from that very firm commitment, and I resent any suggestion that we have in any way departed from what I think are very ambitious pilot projects which have been undertaken. When those results are known, which I expect will be very soon, the hon. member can rest assured that we will make a concerted effort to apply the principle across government. As I suggested before, we regard it as a