

Oral Questions

House at this time, perhaps Your Honour could see me at a later time or later date.

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● (1430)

NATIONAL RESOURCES**ZINC—STATUS OF PROPOSED REFINERY**

Mr. Maurice Harquail (Restigouche): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. It is with regard to the proposed new zinc refinery in Belledune, Restigouche county, New Brunswick. Could the parliamentary secretary inform the House as to the status of this proposed new refinery, in light of excellent world markets for zinc? Can he inform the House as to the anticipated construction date of this important refinery, which will bring many permanent and much-needed jobs to the area?

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, no money yet has been requested of the department for that operation. However, the Department of Regional Economic Expansion has committed over \$1,600,000 to preliminary engineering and design work for the facility. Because it has put that amount of money into the design work and preliminary engineering, the department feels the project is a very positive possibility.

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EMPLOYMENT**PROGRAM FOR THE DISABLED—ASSURANCE OF FULL PARTICIPATION**

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The minister called a hurried press conference together this morning to announce \$59 million for the disabled and the chronically unemployed. I regret the announcement was not made in the House, where we could have made a suitable response. In the absence of that opportunity, I would like to ask the minister how much of the \$59 million is allocated to the disabled. Over what period of time will it be available, what assistance and what assurances will be given for permanent employment at fair wages?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, in my response to the hon. member I would like to elaborate on the press release, which was based upon the program announced in this House previously, when we announced our general employment strategy last summer. The program is a two-year experimental program. It is designed to provide employment opportunities in the private sector for the disabled, the mentally and physically handicapped and those who have disadvantages in the workplace.

The program is designed to give grants to the employers. It is our assessment that once that takes place, once the disabled are able to overcome that first barrier of obtaining a private sector job, they will then be able to stay in that job and demonstrate their worth and therefore obtain a high degree of commitment to continuity over a period of time. Our commitment is to take a look at this experimental program, at the sum which was paid, and if it seems to be a good program and provides for the incentive we need, obviously the government would be prepared to examine whether or not the program should be expanded.

Mr. Dinsdale: Madam Speaker, I have already had feedback from the disabled community pointing out that employment in sheltered workshops and temporary employment at low wages has been the chief deterrent in the past for permanent employment of the handicapped. Will the minister give us assurances that qualified disabled people will be able to participate in all government programs? They want to be integrated. They want to be part of the community and not earmarked in this special way. They want the assurance that they will be provided assistance from all government programs, including assistance for the setting up of small businesses and, particularly, the provision of technical aids designed to overcome motor and sensory disabilities which make full employment possible. This is the only way in which they can become fully employed.

Mr. Axworthy: Madam Speaker, the hon. member will recall that we have introduced affirmative action programs in the public service. One of the groups included in that program is the disabled or the handicapped. We have also introduced the affirmative action principle as part of our over-all job-creation program. Again, they are one of the identified target groups which will receive special assistance. As part of the announcement today with respect to the program for the disabled we are offering grants of up to \$5,000 to any employer who takes the physically or mentally handicapped as part of the employment package to renovate facilities or provide special equipment where necessary.

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OLYMPIC GAMES**1988 WINTER OLYMPICS**

Mr. John Kushner (Calgary East): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for fitness and amateur sport. As the minister knows, the city of Calgary is bidding to host the 1988 Winter Olympic Games which will be awarded in October of this year. What is the minister doing to help the city of Calgary in its bid for the 1988 Winter Olympic Games?

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Calgary East for his question. His interest in the Olympics bid by Calgary is well known. I want to assure him that my department is totally supportive of the