

Oral Questions

apparent plan to appoint a wholly unqualified Liberal supporter as chairman of the board.

The minister assured me that if I provided details of the problem he would respond quickly. The same day I supplied the minister with a list of the number of calls made to his office and the persons who called. I also supplied the names of three highly qualified people recommended by community leaders to fill these positions. To date I have received no reply.

● (1145)

When will we get action to re-establish this very important board in the riding?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can rest assured that this government will only appoint people who are qualified to do their jobs. It is extremely important that we keep the confidence of the Canadian people. Every single appointment this government has made to date speaks to the fact that this government will only appoint people who are highly competent for the job at hand.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, the board of referees normally has two chairs but now is shut down because the government chose not to renew the term of the only current chair.

Will the minister agree to extend the term of Rocco Mastrobuono so that the board can continue to function, given the length of time the government seems to need to deal with this problem?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement. We will report to the member as soon as possible.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Public Works a question. On February 24, the Minister of Public Works said in this House that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation intended to save \$120 million over four years and that this amount would be used for social housing.

Since the minister promised to use this \$120 million to help the poorly housed, can he tell us how many social, co-operative and non-profit housing units will be built this year with these savings?

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her excellent question.

I apprise her that we are attempting to achieve greater savings than \$120 million over the next four years in view of the co-operation which is taking place between the Government of Canada and the different provinces. Until such time as we can identify for this fiscal year the amount of those savings it would be premature for me to announce on the floor of the House of Commons the exact way in which those expenditures are to be made.

I do want to assure the hon. member that we are consulting with the provinces. We will be consulting with various stakeholders across the country in order to try to achieve better value for the taxpayer's dollar.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East): Mr. Speaker, in view of the information which the minister wishes to give us, even though we still lack quite a few details on this subject, I would like to know if he could also confirm that he intends to offer shelter assistance, that is, direct aid for tenants, instead of investing in collective housing projects like low-income housing and housing co-ops, in case he should change his mind.

[English]

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of changing one's mind. It is a matter of getting the best value for the taxpayer's dollar.

All options will certainly be examined. There will be meaningful consultations with the provinces and various stakeholders. I want to assure the hon. member the suggestion she has made which seems to be coming not only from members of her party but also from other individuals in the province of Quebec and elsewhere is something my government and hopefully other governments will seriously consider.

I do not wish to raise false expectations that large sums of money will be readily available for that sector. However it is on the table. It is an option and we are considering it.

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FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Last Friday we complimented the Minister of the Environment on the proposed action on the *Irving Whale*.

We also suggested that a problem existed in the adjacent waters of Northumberland Strait. People who harvest lobster and other fish in these waters have expressed fears that the government appears prepared to agree to a proposal to discharge effluent from the Scott Maritimes mill via a two kilometre pipeline into spawning beds for lobster, scallops and other fish.