

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the Province of Quebec has made it very clear—

Mr. Lapierre: He wasn't there. You were there.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I will continue my answer if the Hon. Member will permit me. The Premier of the Province of Quebec has made it very clear that he supports this agreement in every way. He thinks it is going to be very good for both Quebec and Canada.

With regard to the specific question, there is nothing which will prohibit Hydro Quebec or any other hydro company from offering rates in their province which are conducive to development in that particular province. They can sell at whatever the market will bear in the United States. If they are short-term sales, they may sell at low prices or high prices.

Mr. Axworthy: You had better reread the agreement.

[Translation]

FREE TRADE ACCORD—ENERGY—CUSTOMS BARRIERS—
GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance stated that this agreement would change nothing to the regulatory practices in the energy area. I just do not understand how he could have said that yesterday, after having signed an agreement which in part reads: "Both sides have agreed to prohibit restrictions on imports or exports, including quantitative restrictions, taxes, minimum import or export price requirements or any other equivalent measure". Could the Minister repeat what he said yesterday, that is, that the agreement would only mean a removal of the trade barriers? Does he not feel that regulatory practices will be affected?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): No, Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with that. Hydro Quebec, which is the subject of the Hon. Member's question, can set rates for the Province of Quebec. If it wants to enter into a contract with New Hampshire or New York State it can enter into a long-term contract with electric power commissions in—

Mr. Ouellet: At what price?

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): At whatever price they can negotiate with the purchaser on the other side.

Mr. Axworthy: But it can't be discriminatory.

Mr. Speaker: I must advise that the time for Question Period has ended. I notice that the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood (Ms. McDonald) is rising. I will try to ensure that she is heard tomorrow.

The Hon. Member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke (Mr. Hopkins) on a question of privilege.

Question of Privilege—Mr. Hopkins

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

STATEMENT BY MINISTER—FREE TRADE BRIEFING

Mr. Len Hopkins (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege arising out of remarks made today by the Deputy Prime Minister. He has led the House and the people of Canada to believe that the Government has done its best to offer briefings to inform the Opposition about the details of the free trade agreement.

It was my job to line up some briefers for the Ontario Liberal caucus last night. We approached two officials who were involved in the trade talks to brief the Ontario Liberal caucus on the details. Late yesterday afternoon we received word that they were unable to do so because they did not have Privy Council permission to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Shame, shame!

Mr. Hopkins: The Cabinet did not want officials to appear before the Ontario Liberal caucus to brief Liberal opposition Members.

Therefore, the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) misled the House this afternoon when he said that the Government is trying to keep the Opposition informed. He knows full well that the briefing he offered to the Leader of the Opposition previous to the agreement was on the condition that it be confidential to the Leader of the Opposition. That does nothing for the public view. It does nothing for the members of the caucus of the Official Opposition. The Cabinet is refusing to give information to members of the Opposition and the Parliament of Canada about the free trade agreement and the Deputy Prime Minister should not be standing in his place misleading the people of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that is a point of order. It is a rather unusual outburst from a gentleman for whom I have a great deal of regard. I hope he would want to reconsider the statements he has made.

Ms. Copps: It's true.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, if there is a point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps), then let us hear it too and I will deal with it at the same time.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Are you the Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can assist Hon. Members. This is not a point of order. It comes to the Chair and the House as a question of privilege. I am having some difficulty finding a question of privilege. It is a complaint; it is an argument. There may very well be other places to which the Hon. Member could take the argument. I will hear the Hon. Deputy