

Oral Questions

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in detail last week. I am surprised that the Hon. Member persists in levelling those false allegations across the floor of the House after last week's explanation to him. I am as much surprised by that as I am by journalists who make that kind of accusation against a Minister and yet refuse to apologize when the facts they base their allegations on are proven to be utterly false.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

BENEFITS RECEIVED BY COMPANY

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister in view of the fact that the Prime Minister does not want to answer. Could he tell us which of those things we have said today are false when they have all been admitted? Could he also tell us why it is this company has received benefits twice since this Government has been in office and at least once before under a previous Conservative Government—three times in the two short periods of time the Tories were in office? Is it only a coincidence that Tories are giving other Tories these kinds of grants?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence): The Hon. Member almost made a mistake and used the word "Liberal" instead of "Tory" in the utter garbage which constitutes the preamble and the question. However, that is in keeping with the reputation he has in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nielsen: The question has been answered and answered fully.

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CONSUMER AFFAIRS

TAX REBATE DISCOUNTING—REPORTED CASE OF SASKATOON DISCOUNTER

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In the discussions he had before he brought forward his proposals to deal with tax discounting was he made aware by officials of his Department of the tax discounter in Saskatoon who sought to borrow \$1 million from a bank, at 12 per cent interest, in order to relend the money at real interest rates of up to 180 per cent to people who wanted their tax refunds? If he was, what can he do to ensure that low-income Canadians can borrow at commercial interest rates using their income tax returns as collateral?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, I think that last week we announced a policy that contains a number of provisions that should be encouraging for Canadians, and especially for Canadians on low incomes.

[English]

REQUEST THAT TAXPAYERS HAVE ACCESS TO BANK INTEREST RATE CHARGES

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, as far as I can tell, the only people who are made happy by the Minister's announcement are the tax discounters. Would he not agree that consumers would welcome a meaningful choice, which the Minister talks about so frequently, between paying a tax discounter a 100 per cent interest rate and getting a legitimate financial institution to lend them money at 12 per cent?

[Translation]

Hon. Michel Côté (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, with this policy we ensured that the discounting service would remain available to Canadians while at the same time introducing measures to discourage abuse, thereby protecting consumers, and again, consumers on low incomes who need this kind of service.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

ST. CLAIR RIVER—RELEASE OF WATER TEST RESULTS

Mr. Ken James (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. The entire community of Sarnia-Lambton would like to set the record straight. All municipalities, industries, and citizens totally support the ongoing scientific tests and evaluations of the St. Clair River bed. Can the Minister assure the citizens of Sarnia-Lambton that he will make every effort to ensure that the progress reports of these scientific evaluations will be communicated in a scientific manner, which will avoid the possibility that this information can be misconstrued or inaccurately reported by others?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, that is pretty well the policy my Department and I have adopted and followed. Indeed, on seven separate occasions we provided technical briefings to the media and through them to the public, and we released detailed information, both scientific and general. That is in addition to numerous informal efforts toward the end identified by the Hon. Member. The rest, of course, is up to the media and the public. However, I think in general there has been fairness and balance in the response by the public and the media to a very difficult and complex scientific issue.