

Oral Questions

informed the House of my conversation with Secretary Edwards on this issue and about the reaction of the Reagan administration, which is extremely supportive of the Alaska gas pipeline. I am advised that today my colleague in the other place, Senator Olson, as the minister responsible for the Northern Pipeline Agency, has released an exchange of correspondence between himself and Secretary Edwards in which Secretary Edwards reaffirms the very, very firm commitment of the Reagan administration to the completion of the Alaska gas pipeline and assures us that the American government is fully behind this great project.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO BIGSTONE BAND**

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. During a visit last fall to the Bigstone Band in Wabasca the minister promised financial assistance to Chief William Beaver of the Bigstone Band so that that band could continue with its sawmill operation and so it could continue with its band programs. This has not been forthcoming. Could the minister inform the House whether this will be forthcoming and whether he will be providing this assistance?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member indicated, I did convey to my department my concern about assistance to this particular band because of the very real need. I thought progress was being made in terms of offering assistance to this particular band. If that is not the case, I will check and let the hon. member know.

Mr. Shields: Madam Speaker, these promises were made five months ago, and at the present time the Bigstone Band is facing cancellation of its timber quota. Logs will be left in the bush to rot over the summer. All the employees of the sawmill have been laid off. The band office has been shut down and all employees laid off. Is this just an empty promise? Can the minister do something about it, or is this just a continuing public relations campaign being waged through statements like this by all ministers of the Crown in northeastern Alberta?

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): No, Madam Speaker. As the hon. member knows, there is real concern with respect to the dire financial circumstances of Chief William Beaver and his band. I believe the House is aware of the unfortunate situation with respect to personnel involved in the bookkeeping and auditing arrangements. This has been brought to the attention of the department. There is a strain on funds for this fiscal year. It may very well be that we will try to provide funds budgeted for the fiscal year commencing April 1. I realize the urgency of the situation. I will check to see what progress is being made.

FUNDS FOR FITNESS AND SPORT PROGRAM

Hon. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton North): Madam Speaker, I was pleased when amendments respecting aboriginal rights were passed by the constitutional committee.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: I was very impressed with "the Shawinigan Kid," the Minister of Justice, and also with the constitutional committee when they passed Sections 33(1) and 33(2) with respect to aboriginal rights. Because of this I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Why is the minister not giving the \$1.2 million to the National Indian Brotherhood which was promised in the estimates with respect to fitness and amateur sport, which is now under the minister's department?

● (1510)

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, the money for this program was allocated under the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare as a preventive health measure, and that is where the money has always been. Our budget is voted by Parliament, as stated. Parliament has not authorized any category of expenditure in this area. If we were to spend money in this direction within my department, it would simply mean that we would take it from somewhere else voted for the Indian people by Parliament. The fact of the matter is that our total funds are committed. Perhaps the hon. member would be interested to know that a good portion of the funds we have is subject to direction to recreational activities, and it always has been. The money to which the hon. member referred is directed more to the area of excellence, but we are concerned with this area, and money is being spent in this area in my department.

Mr. Paproski: That is not true, John.

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[Translation]

THE ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

February 19, 1981

Madam:

I have the honour to inform you that the Hon. W. R. McIntyre, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 19th day of February, at 5.45 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.