

Oral Questions

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when I was here at the beginning of the last Parliament, the Tories were high in the polls too. This first year is over.

When the president of CN was asked about possibly ending a few of his lavish perks, he responded: "Are you saying that as a result of downsizing all of us in the executive ranks should reduce our compensation by 10, 15 or 20 per cent?" You bet, that is exactly what we are saying and we proposed that this morning to the finance committee.

When will this government start to lead by example and not lead by the nose?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the example could be set by her leader. He might want to cut out the clothing allowance and save some money over there.

This government is reviewing the programs and the services that are offered to Canadians because we know that we have to make our programs efficient and effective to be able to reach the 3 per cent of GDP target which is our target to bring down the deficit and to make sure that we have affordable and responsive programs and services to the people of this country.

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REFUGEES

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Hong Kong government has admitted that 142 Vietnamese refugees were injured in a forced repatriation operation at the end of September. There is also a proven risk to the safety of these refugees returning to Vietnam.

Could the minister inform us of what actions the Canadian government is taking to ensure the fair treatment and safety of Vietnamese refugees in southeast Asia?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

The House should know that in 1989 with respect to the Indo-Chinese refugee crisis, the international community came together and signed a comprehensive plan of action to which Canada was a signatory and continues to be a member of the steering committee.

There were two obligations under the United Nations for that comprehensive action plan. One was to repatriate those found not to be convention refugees back to Vietnam and, second, for those who were found to be convention refugees to resettle them abroad.

On the latter, since 1989 Canada has accepted some 20,000 individuals. All screening and all repatriation is done under the auspices of the United Nations. Generally it could be said to have been a very worth while and very successful international comprehensive plan that has repatriated safely from 60,000 Indo-Chinese refugees back to Vietnam.

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[Translation]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Indian Affairs. The price of food in remote areas of Northern Quebec and the Northwest Territories is so high that it is practically impossible for residents, most of whom are Inuit, to eat properly. Today, an Inuit in the far north pays twice as much for the same basket of groceries as we do here in the south, while his average income is much lower.

Could the Minister of Indian Affairs explain why, despite the fact that \$14 million is spent annually on subsidizing the distribution of food in the far north, a person who lives in that area always has to pay twice as much for his food as people in the south?

[English]

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I totally agree with my friend. He has a perception of my portfolio that I sometimes find lacking in other members of this House.

He has pointed out the cost of food mail. A gallon of milk in Nunavut is \$12. There is nutrition that does not exist. We have \$14 million in food mail. I do not think it is enough and I for one will fight within my ministry and other ministries to improve that.

Mr. Solberg: Increase spending.

Mr. Thompson: That's right, spend more.

Mr. Irwin: Go and see for yourselves instead of sitting here making smart remarks. The issue is not so much self-government in Nunavut. It is bringing education, it is handling 14-year old children who have children, it is bringing nutrition, it is bringing the future and that is what we are committed to.

• (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one wonders whether the minister saw my question beforehand, because he used exactly the same example I will give you now.