

[English]

Mr. Guy H. Arseneault (Restigouche—Chaleur): Mr. Speaker, last February the Minister of Communications stated government policy as follows: "Canadian consumers need the assurance that high quality basic services will continue to be provided at affordable rates". I underline the word affordable.

[Translation]

Do the minister and his government still stand by their statements, or have they decided that a telephone is a luxury, not a necessity?

Hon. Pierre H. Vincent (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat what I just said. The CRTC is the agency that will examine Bell's application and take the appropriate steps.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. René Soetens (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has announced that it will cancel the GST and replace it with the SLH tax, the new sneaky, hidden tax that everyone will pay.

The GST presently exempts seniors, low income Canadians, the health care system, in fact all Canadians from paying the GST on prescription drugs.

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance this. If the Liberals get a chance to apply their tax to prescription drugs, how much will it cost the Canadian health care system and all Canadians?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is tens if not hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. What we have here is a flimsy proposal—

An hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mazankowski: —that the *Ottawa Sun* referred to as the Grit sneaky tax. What they really want to do is hide the tax so that they can raise it at will. It would not exempt food, it would not exempt medical supplies, it

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would not exempt ambulance service, it would not exempt—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The B.C. government has announced a public inquiry into the controversial Kemano project in northern British Columbia.

Will the federal government participate in a joint review of this project with the province? Will he allow his officials to appear at the inquiry and will he release the over 83,000 pages of evidence his department has on this project? Will the minister prove that this government has a so-called strong record on the environment?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have to prove it has a strong record on the environment. That is obvious.

With respect to the particular question, the hon. gentleman must realize that in 1987 an agreement was entered into by the province of British Columbia, the Government of Canada and the Aluminum Company of Canada in connection with this matter. This was as a result of litigation that had been taken by the province of British Columbia and by Alcan against the Government of Canada with respect to the question of whether or not the Government of Canada had the right to exercise jurisdiction over water in this particular situation.

That was settled by an agreement. That agreement is in full force and effect. The province of British Columbia is now reviewing it for some reason or other, despite the fact that it acknowledges that the agreement is to stay in effect. The province has been advised by a commissioner it appointed that it is to the economic benefit of British Columbia to allow the project to go forward and that if it did not it might be sued for \$.5 billion by Alcan as a party to the agreement which has spent that much money since the agreement was entered into.