

Oral Questions

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification): Mr. Speaker, first let me say how pleased I am that the hon. member has finally read the red book.

Worker adjustment is a very important concern of this government. That is why we have introduced a number of training and adjustment initiatives as well as program changes and made counselling available. The purpose of job training and social security program renewal initiatives is to help Canadian workers grappling with the problem of change in the business world and with changing working conditions in Canada.

Our government is deeply committed to helping all Canadian workers, not just a small select group.

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[English]

VANCOUVER PORT CORPORATION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Transport was asked a question regarding the approval of a casino on the Vancouver waterfront by the Vancouver Port Corporation. He responded that the government has nothing to do with this decision, stating that an independent board is responsible for deciding these matters.

Could the minister explain to the House how this board is appointed and what criteria is used in determining who receives these appointments?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, just to clarify a part of the questioner's premise in respect to the decision, I want to make it clear that the definition of what will be acceptable in any province with respect to gambling or casinos is within the purview of the provincial jurisdiction and that is what I meant in answer to that question earlier from the hon. member.

With respect to the criteria used in making nominations to any boards for which the government will be responsible, the primary consideration of course is competence.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

Both the unions and the shipping companies recommended the reappointment of Patrick Reid, the past chairman of the Vancouver Port Corporation. They all agreed he was doing a great job.

Despite this unusual show of solidarity the Prime Minister and cabinet approved the appointment of Mr. Ron Longstaffe to this \$65,000 part time position.

• (1455)

The former campaign manager for the hon. member for Vancouver Centre has been quoted as saying that he has been a supporter of the Prime Minister for 10 years and that is all part of the political—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The question.

Mr. Hill (Prince George—Peace River): The question is does the minister still maintain that the decisions reached by this board are independent and not influenced by his government?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, once the hon. member is a member of a party that develops a bit of history, he also will be able to refer to people who have supported his party for a long time. It is certainly not something that any of us are looking forward to.

With respect to the decisions that are made by port authorities in various parts of the country, it is the intention of the government that local autonomy be an important part of any decision making process.

Beyond that, and I want to make it very clear, at the port of Vancouver, the port of Montreal or any other of the facilities under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada we always insist on people being appointed who have a national vision of their responsibilities.

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GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Transport.

The Grain Transportation Agency announced last week that to fill the grain sales of committed grain and the grain that we will be selling until the end of July, the railways need an additional 5,000 hopper cars.

Without these additional cars, grain sales will suffer and the ports of Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Thunder Bay will suffer serious slowdowns. We know the 5,000 cars are neither affordable nor available.

Will the minister order today that all hopper cars be used exclusively within Canada and forbid the use of hopper cars east of the port of Thunder Bay? Will he continue to order under section 17(4) of the Grain Transportation Act the use of truck transportation where feasible so that this grain can get to market?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

We have gone through this before. As the hon. member knows, it was partly in response to his request that we were able to enter into a special arrangement that allowed for trucks to convey some of the grain.