

Oral Questions

all small communities in Canada, the post office is the pillar or nerve centre for all kinds of activities.

Will the minister confirm whether Canada Post's policy is to keep post offices open only in a few urban centres? And will he table in the House the number of post offices that will still be open in Nova Scotia and Canada, once this policy has been implemented?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): I would be glad to provide that detail for the hon. member, but I would say that part of this policy is to increase the service to the public.

It was anticipated when this policy was implemented, I think three years ago, that in the following 10 years the number of postal outlets would increase from 12,000 to about 18,000. So there would be 6,000 new postal outlets to serve the customers of the post office. I am sure an appropriate proportion of those will be located in Nova Scotia.

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CANADA-U.S. WATER AGREEMENT

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of the Environment. An agreement that was signed between this government and the United States in October 1989 allows the state of North Dakota to call for 50 per cent of the natural flow into the Souris River any time that it is to the benefit of the State of North Dakota.

In other words, in the middle of a hot, dry summer, North Dakota can phone up and say it wants their 50 per cent of the water. This will of course necessitate diverting water from other river basins, like the Qu'Appelle system which is in the middle of my riding.

My question to the Minister of the Environment is this: why did this government allow the province of Saskatchewan to divert water in the licence it granted to it under the international treaty. Second, can the minister assure me that water from the Qu'Appelle River will not be diverted into the Souris and into the United States?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague would be well advised to read the Canada—U.S. agreement. He would immediately find that it does not commit any additional water to the U.S.

The United States has a right to 50 per cent of the natural flow from the Souris River under a 1959 interim apportionment agreement which is being administered by the International Joint Commission.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, today we heard that the Government of Quebec intends to freeze the salaries of its employees.

Last week, the Government of Newfoundland cut 3,200 jobs in the public sector.

These vicious attacks on employees who pay income tax and GST and are faced with increases in the cost of living reflect the present lack of compassion of our leaders for Canadian families.

The federal government was the first to ignore the collective rights of its employees.

My question is directed to the Minister of Labour, but in his absence I will direct it to the Prime Minister. Will the minister ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw the unfair restrictions he has put on the bargaining process?

Hon. Gilles Loiselle (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, to the credit of the last Budget, the government has taken a certain number of measures that will launch economic recovery in the long run. These measures include a number of major constraints on the government's expenditures.

Mr. Samson: It's illegal.

Mr. Loiselle: After wide-ranging consultations during the pre-budget period, we decided that we would ask our employees, who have been reasonable in the past, to be reasonable once again during the bargaining process and, together with all Canadians, to help us reduce the deficit, so that interest rates can go down and we will all benefit from the ensuing prosperity.