

*Oral Questions*

not agree that the program is protecting the position of the poor and underprivileged, and in view of the fact that the government has found it possible without consulting the provinces to impose limits on wage increases, can it not also on a national basis raise the levels of incomes of those at the bottom?

**Mr. Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member is wrong on the two premises, I cannot answer the last part of his question.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Have you read the statement?

[Translation]

POSSIBILITY OF REDUCING ELIGIBILITY AGE FOR OLD AGE PENSION TO 60—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

As a large number of young people are unemployed, which situation may be detrimental to their planning for the future, can the minister tell the House whether he might consider, as a factor towards solving that serious problem, the possibility of reducing to 60 the age of eligibility for the old age security pension for such persons as might wish to retire then?

**Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare):** The studies made of that subject, Mr. Speaker, seem to indicate that such a step would have little impact on the level of unemployment in Canada.

**Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a supplementary question.

Can the minister inform the House if anyone prepared a survey of the number of persons in the 60-to-65 age bracket and an estimate of what it would cost to pay pensions to these persons, assuming such action were taken?

**Mr. Lalonde:** The hon. member's question is not very clear. If he wants to know whether we made a study on the cost of pensions paid to all persons aged 60 to 65 years, indeed we did and the figures are available. I already submitted them to the House several times.

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● (1150)

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

ACTION TO STRENGTHEN NATO FORCES AND IMPROVE EQUIPMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. As Joseph Luns, secretary general to NATO forces, has added to the growing concern about our commitment to NATO by stating that Canadian equipment is

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

inadequate, can the minister explain how the government intends to strengthen Canada's position in Europe without improving the quality of Canadian equipment? Further, will the minister elaborate on the position he intends to take at the NATO summit meeting in Brussels next month?

**Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that Secretary General Luns has completely underestimated the Canadian contribution to NATO. He is also very well aware that a major policy review is under way, and that many of the questions to which he addressed himself are being answered currently. I will be in Brussels in December presenting the results of this review, and those results will answer all of the points which he has raised, at what I would say is a very inappropriate time.

POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT OF VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT—DATE OF DECISION

**Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre):** Has the defence review concerned with replacing vehicles and equipment been placed before cabinet, or has the minister been informed by cabinet that no further funds are available to bring Canada's armed forces up to standard? To what extent is the government going to allow our forces to deteriorate before action is taken?

**Hon. James Richardson (Minister of National Defence):** Those questions are before cabinet. There are major proposals for re-equipping the land force, purchasing long-range patrol aircraft and other equipment, and these decisions will be announced in the very near future.

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**CUSTOMS**

RIVERPORT, NOVA SCOTIA—REQUEST FOR EARLY APPOINTMENT OF OFFICER

**Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct my question to the Minister of National Revenue, and I hope the Minister of State (Fisheries) is also listening because it concerns him as well.

In view of the fact that Riverport, Nova Scotia has been without the services of a resident customs officer since April of this year when the resident officer passed away, and since a fleet of over 20 deepsea fishing boats operate from this port, which require the clearing of bonded lube oil and other bonded stores, will the minister examine this problem and give consideration immediately to appointing a customs officer in this port in order adequately to service the deepsea fishing industry operating in this area?

**Hon. Jack Cullen (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I will certainly look into this matter. I thank the hon. member for bringing it to my attention, and I will discuss it with my officials as early as this afternoon.