

Oral Questions

oil companies which have, in the final analysis, increased the price of their product at the pump for all Canadians?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the question of retail prices of oil and gas is one that goes beyond the premise of that question. I cannot agree with the premise of the question. In fact, the market is shaped by a host of different factors and not just the ones pointed to by the Hon. Member.

[Translation]

IMPACT OF PAYMENT OF GASOLINE TAX BY INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTORS

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, it is widely acknowledged that independent distributors do stir up market competition to a certain extent, and the fact that they can no longer collect the tax and are forced to pay it themselves even before selling a drop of gasoline creates a cash flow problem for them. This is why again I am asking the Minister why the Government has decided to end the tax collection arrangement and why, even before making a sale, independent distributors have to pay the gasoline tax which has just been increased by the Government? This cuts down their opportunities to be more competitive. Why did the Government do that?

[English]

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows why the Government made that change. It was to ensure that we did not have any more problems with the collection of revenues when there was a clear leakage in revenue collections. It had nothing to do with the premise he is alleging.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES

PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES FOR PUBLIC

Mr. David Daubney (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I have a question supplementary to those asked earlier this afternoon of the President of the Treasury Board. Does the Minister not recognize that there are certain services in any self-respecting sovereign and developed nation that are properly performed by the Public Service and not by the private sector, including those three branches under discussion in this case?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, once again I only have to respond—

Mr. Gauthier: Tory split. Get your act together, guys.

Mr. Allmand: I thought they were all united over there.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. de Cotret: Mr. Speaker, following extensive studies of the Task Force on Program Review, we are trying to pursue all the avenues suggested to see if there are efficient and productive ways to spend taxpayers' money better. That is what we did in this case. There have been discussions in a number of instances with private enterprise. That is the sum total of what we are doing. We are trying to spend taxpayers' money better than the previous Government did for over 20 years.

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[Translation]

PENSIONS

REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN RETIRED PEOPLE— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration and has to do with Government action with respect to the inclusion of pensions as earned income.

Last December 5 the Minister said that changes would be made to the regulations concerning retirees. Mr. Speaker, three months have slipped by and those people still do not know where they stand. How much longer will these retirees have to wait before the Minister clears up this confusion and introduces legislation to reimburse them?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, in December I announced two specific measures, including one concerning beneficiaries retiring after 1986. We said at the time that we would take requalification into account. As to others who retired before 1986 we set up guidelines for employment centres but we had to reconsider them because they were extremely complicated and difficult to apply. We are now reviewing these guidelines and a Bill will be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

● (1450)

[English]

REQUEST FOR RETURN TO PREVIOUS SITUATION

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, confusion reigns supreme at local unemployment insurance offices where thousands of early retirees have gone to collect what was rightfully theirs. The Minister has created more confusion with his announcement. Will the Minister cut out all the flimflammy and jiggery-pokery, stand up in this House, and clear up the confusion right now? Why does he not simply say we are going to go back to the situation as it was before January 5, 1986?

[Translation]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, if the Hon. Member expects me to say that we will go back to the pre-1986 situation, it is quite out of the question. I have been very clear about that. People