

Oral Questions

ment and Immigration. Last Thursday we heard that unemployment insurance premiums will be raised, people cut from the rolls and possibly benefits reduced. I remind the Minister that in Newfoundland and other parts of the Atlantic there are hundreds of fishermen who, through no fault of their own, will not even qualify for any benefits this year because of a disaster in the inshore fishery. Will the Minister now announce a special fund for those fishermen, as has been done twice in the past, so that they will be able to qualify for unemployment insurance this winter and will not have to suffer the humiliation of welfare?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, we have been monitoring this situation very closely. It is my understanding that in the last few weeks there have been sufficient fishing opportunities so as to permit fisher people to qualify for the ten weeks that would allow them to collect unemployment insurance benefits. I also want to say to the Hon. Member that if he knows of any individual cases which do not fit this particular qualification, I would appreciate it if he would bring them to my attention.

LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED CONSTITUENCIES

Hon. William Rompkey (Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sympathetic ear of the Minister. In her letter to us of October 9 the Minister said: "Should the situation turn out to be even worse in 1984, I am prepared to consider raising allocation in fishing constituencies as far up to the \$3 million maximum as may be necessary to provide required assistance". If this is necessary, would the Minister follow through so that we can begin to create the jobs that are needed so badly in those constituencies?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I certainly intend to do that as soon as we know that the season is complete and that all the figures and returns are in.

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CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE HEARINGS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Communications. He will know that the CRTC is holding hearings at the request of CN/CP Telecommunications to permit them to enter the long distance telephone business. He will also know that estimates have been made that half a million telephone users will have to give up their phone service, and that rates will go up 30 per cent to 100 per cent in the next few years, if competition takes place. Before the election the Prime Minister said very clearly that he thought no policies should be changed until there was a policy directive. Would the Minister consider suggesting to the CRTC that it should not issue any statement until they policy has been set by the Government?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, hearings of the CRTC are held in accordance with the law. The hearings were announced publicly and the parties involved will be heard. The CRTC will make its decision and the Government will take appropriate action.

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY—REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE
REVIEW

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, would the Minister mandate the House Standing Committee on Communications and Culture to undertake a national review of telecommunications policy prior to any decision by the CRTC?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, that is not the intention of the Government.

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[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERMEN—REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, my question arises out of a previous question to the Minister of Employment and Immigration. The Minister's Department has been informed by the federal Department of Fisheries and the fishermen's union in Newfoundland that there are at least 1,600 families affected by what the previous questioner was talking about, not enough stamps for unemployment insurance, and that the ridings so affected are already up to the \$3 million limit in Canada Works funds. Given this new information, will the Minister agree that a special program should be instituted like the Liberals did last year, or is she telling the people to go to the welfare office?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, what I said in answer to the previous question, and say again, is that we are waiting until the season is completed everywhere in the fishing communities and we will then make that decision. We have made a commitment that we are prepared to go to the limit of \$3 million for all constituencies so affected.

Mr. Baker: They are already up to \$3 million.

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TRANSPORT

AUTOMOBILE EMISSIONS—REQUEST FOR REDUCTION TO
UNITED STATES LEVEL

Mr. Stan Darling (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. He is well aware