

on Greater Montreal, namely, to publish the cost-benefit studies on solution 6 and all other studies relevant to this subject, before announcing his decision next May?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, I fully intend to publish these studies—my hon. friend is referring more specifically to the second study, since the first has already been published. I think I will do so, after consultation with my cabinet colleagues, as soon as I will be in a position to announce general guidelines with respect to Mirabel.

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[English]

PIPELINES

DELAY IN CONSTRUCTION OF TQM NATURAL GAS PIPELINE

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Given the delays and significant cost increase affecting construction of the TQM natural gas pipelines from Quebec to the maritimes, will the minister indicate the expected date of completion, and will he confirm that the price of gas delivered to the maritimes will not exceed the citygate price in Toronto?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there has been some delay in the completion of the pipeline in Quebec. As far as I am aware, the plan is still for the pipeline to reach the maritimes some time in 1984. With regard to the guarantee to which the hon. member referred, I want to assure him that this is part of the National Energy Program. It has been announced. It is the firm intention of the government, in order to ensure gas consumption in the maritimes, that the price to the maritime consumer will be maintained at the same level as the price in Toronto.

PRICE GUARANTEE

Hon. J. Robert Howie (York-Sunbury): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. If the distributor cannot deliver gas to maritime consumers at the Toronto citygate price, is the minister in effect saying that his government is prepared to subsidize the difference?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, we have taken steps to ensure that this will be the case, that the price of natural gas delivered in the maritimes will be maintained at the same level as the price in Toronto.

Oral Questions

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

DELAYS IN PROCESSING CLAIMS

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. It deals with the dramatic increase in lay-offs in the labour force, which in turn has resulted in a comparable increase in applications for unemployment insurance benefits. I am reliably informed that many Unemployment Insurance Commission offices across the country are laying off casual help while the workload in these offices is increasing, resulting in long delays in the processing of benefit claims. In view of the fact that this is imposing an undue hardship on people with no other source of income, will the minister assure the House that he will look into this situation and take steps to expedite the processing of unemployment insurance claims by providing additional staff positions where needed?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I believe I answered a similar question in the House a few weeks ago. I indicated that we have been adding officers by inviting former officers of the Unemployment Insurance Commission to come back and work on a temporary basis. In addition, we have been moving staff from areas where the demand is reasonably stable to areas where there is a very high demand. We have been shifting unemployment insurance officers across the country, as well as establishing centralized processing units in each of the areas where demand is high. We have taken a number of steps. We have succeeded in reducing the backlog substantially. From all reports, there are very few areas in which the pressure is extreme. If the hon. member can give me a specific case, I will be glad to look into it.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

CANADA-FRANCE BOUNDARY DISPUTE

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. During the course of his meetings with President Mitterrand, did the question arise of the stalemated discussions between France and Canada over the boundary dispute, and the 200-mile limit, with the Island of St. Pierre, which is causing considerable fishery difficulties? I ask the question in view of increased French militancy in enforcing their territorial demands.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, the question did not arise. The French President came to Canada in the context of his travels to visit other participants in the Versailles summit in June. It was agreed that we would discuss merely summit-related matters. Bilateral matters, including that one, will be raised when the French Prime Minister visits us the day after tomorrow.