

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member is asking the minister to give his interpretation of a statute. In that respect the question is not in order.

RESERVE FUND HOLDINGS OF UNITED STATES  
DOLLARS—POSSIBILITY OF GUARANTEED EXCHANGE  
RATE

**Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley):** Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Finance. In view of the renewed monetary crisis, has the government contacted the United States authorities with a view to obtaining exchange guarantees for our large and increasing holdings of U.S. dollars?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, we have gone over this road before. I will be seeing the Secretary of the Treasury in Paris later this week and we will be talking about a number of things relating to reserves.

**Mr. Nowlan:** I have a short supplementary question for the minister, Mr. Speaker. When the minister goes to Paris will he take with him a very firm policy on what the position with regard to the value of the Canadian dollar will be in terms of other world currencies?

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** I will take a very firm policy on the floating dollar, Mr. Speaker.

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**FLOODS**

HIGH WATER LEVEL IN LAKE ONTARIO—RESULT OF  
MEETING WITH PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS

**Mr. Norman A. Cafik (Ontario):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. In view of the meeting today between the minister and the provincial minister responsible for resource development policy, would the minister indicate whether the provincial minister indicated what steps he would take, if any, respecting the high water levels in Lake Ontario?

**Some hon. Members:** Order!

**Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, the officials from Ontario did not come for the purpose of advancing any proposals. They did ask us what programs we had at the federal level either for building protective works or for providing funds for the compensation of those who suffered flood damage. We described those programs to them and they may take advantage of one or the other of those programs.

**Mr. Cafik:** Did the provincial minister indicate that they would be making any studies on an urgent basis to find out—

**Mr. Nielsen:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

[Mr. Beatty.]

**Mr. Nielsen:** I rise on the same point I have raised on two recent occasions. This is a flagrant abuse of the ordinary procedures in the House. These gentlemen get \$4,000 a year extra for answering questions, not asking them.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Baldwin:** He does not do either very well.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

**Mr. Cafik:** I rise in defence of the fact that I put a question. It has been a longstanding tradition, at least during my membership in the House of Commons of over five years, that parliamentary secretaries have been recognized and I expect will continue to be recognized. In addition, the constituents whom I represent are entitled to have answers to these questions which seriously affect them.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**An hon. Member:** Resign!

**An hon. Member:** Go to your caucus!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. We had a debate on this very interesting issue some time ago. I indicated that I was not prepared to make a distinction between backbenchers on the government side and members of other parties. I think there can be no question that they have the right at any time to ask questions the same as the frontbenchers or backbenchers of any other party do. I said at the time that I had some reservations—they were related perhaps more to propriety than to the procedural aspect of the problem—about parliamentary secretaries being placed in the position of both answering and asking questions to the extent where we might have a parliamentary secretary asking a question of another parliamentary secretary.

The difficulty, of course, is whether parliamentary secretaries are allowed at all to reply to questions on behalf of ministers. If we recognize that parliamentary secretaries have a right to reply to questions on behalf of ministers, I have wondered whether it was proper to allow them at the same time to ask questions. I felt that the problem was worthy of consideration.

The hon. member for Peace River suggested in order to be helpful, I believe, which he was, that this matter might be looked into along with many others that have been referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. That committee will be meeting within the next few days and perhaps it could look into this situation.

[Translation]

I know the committee will want to look with interest into a problem of such burning actuality and examine the arguments which could be brought forth in support of the right or privilege of parliamentary secretaries to ask questions and answer those which could be raised by other members.