

Oral Questions

plus \$40 a barrel in tax, greater than the price of crude is today. What is he really for, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

The government has a duty to ensure that Canadians are not being taken advantage of by price gouging as a result of companies using the Persian Gulf crisis as an avenue to boost their profits.

Is he prepared, along with the Minister of Energy, to request immediately oil companies to provide the government with a detailed report to justify the gasoline price increases that have occurred across Canada?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House before in a statement on September 27, I expect the oil companies to act responsibly.

We went through the various pricing mechanisms today with the ministers of energy. The hon. member will note that the increase in the price of energy relative to crude price increase as against increases in the price at the pumps is roughly half at the pumps as against crude prices.

He will also have to take note that there are some provinces which, through the public utility boards that they have set up, are looking at the type of monitoring for their provincial pricing.

The third point I make to him is that we are monitoring the pricing through the Petroleum Monitoring Agency on a weekly basis. If there is any evidence of gouging, I, along with my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, would under the legislation take the proper action.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

[*Translation*]

The Consumers Association of Canada wants an investigation of the petroleum industry in connection with unacceptable increases in the price of gas. Will the

minister order an investigation today, one that is crucial for Canadian consumers?

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Energy, has answered that question quite clearly. I think the hon. member—

Some hon. members: No, no!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, if I were given a chance to reply—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: The hon. member is aware that we have a Bureau of Competition Policy that is able to check what is happening in the oil industry. The director told me he is following developments very closely. I believe that this morning, he attended the federal-provincial meeting to find out what is happening in the oil sector.

We are concerned, and I am as concerned as anybody else about the increasing price of gas. On behalf of consumers—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I am as concerned as the next person, as all Canadian consumers are, about the increase in the price of gas. However, we must find out what the reasons are, and what we can do to intervene.

In fact, that is what we have done. The director of the Bureau of Competition Policy is doing his job, and my colleague, the Minister of Energy, is doing his. We will watch very closely what happens during the next few weeks. I believe that together with the provinces, we have a responsibility to keep a close eye on developments in the price of gas in this country, Mr. Speaker.

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[*English*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—St. Clair): Mr. Speaker, this is National Students' Day and I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board on behalf of Canadian students. Many of these students have incurred quite huge and onerous debts as a result of the Student Loan Program, some quite a good deal more