

Oral Questions

difficulty due to the deteriorating economic situation, an example of which was experienced in Pembroke with the recent closing of Homco Mobile Homes with a consequent loss of 120 jobs or layoffs at Storewall International, both firms having received over three quarters of a million dollars in RDIA grants, what action is the minister or his department taking to ensure that the reason for which the grants were made, that of job creation, will not in fact be defeated?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, it is most unfortunate that some of these industries which were granted support from our department are being faced with problems and that some of them are compelled to end their operations. However I can assure the House and the hon. member that whenever our department is informed of such situations, which is virtually always the case, it does contribute to seek solutions to the extent that the law enables it to do so. Whenever possible, we have provided technical and advisory means to get them financial assistance other than the one granted by our department.

Unfortunately, I must confess that there are limits to our possibilities and that sometimes there is no other alternative. We must accept therefore that these industries close their doors and give up their operations. But I shall remind the House that we are fully aware of those problems and that we are considering the reasons for such situations. We will attempt in the future to bring corrections when it is in our power to do so.

[English]

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON ACTION TO CREATE
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): In view of the considerable concern there is with regard to the need for long term job creation and the problems the minister and I both alluded to, and in view of the decreasing level of funding provided under RDIA for long term job creation as compared to the overall budget for DREE, will the minister make a brief statement today or, if that is not possible, make a statement shortly in this House indicating what steps are being taken to stimulate greater employment possibilities, particularly in those regions where the department has prime responsibility and where the unemployment situation is the most acute?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, we are in fact undertaking an advertizing program to promote certain activities for small and medium businesses in the designated areas. This program was launched a few weeks ago and will go on during the next weeks and months.

In addition, we are looking for other solutions and, as the hon. member said, I hope to be able, very early at the beginning of next year, to make a statement which would allow us to change our programs and thus, perhaps, meet some of the concerns expressed by the hon. member.

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

[English]

CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES ON MEASURES TO CREATE
JOBS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the minister's offer to make a statement in view of changes that may be made. In view of the fact there are a number of programs operating under federal departments as well as a number of provincial government departments, some of which are still somewhat in conflict with each other, and the need for these programs to harmonize in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in job creation, can the minister now say, before such a statement, that there will be a meeting convened of responsible ministers in the provinces in order to get maximum agreement with them and coordinate most effectively changes that will be made in order to make up the loss of jobs presently occurring in the plants I described or others that may be in jeopardy?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I am currently taking part in this series of meetings which are called for under our agreements with the provincial governments. At these annual meetings—I had one last week and shall have another one next week with another provincial government—I review the programs which are already in place, including our assistance program to the industry, trying to make the necessary improvements.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

GROUNDING OF TANKER "ARGO MERCHANT"—POSSIBILITY OF
POLLUTION OF CANADIAN SHORELINE

Mr. Bill Jarvis (Perth-Wilmot): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. It relates to the grounding last Wednesday of the oil tanker *Argo Merchant* off Cape Cod, Massachusetts, at the west end of Georges Bank, which vessel at nine o'clock this morning broke in half and which vessel has already spilled over one and a half million gallons of crude out of a total cargo of 7.6 million gallons. Will the minister advise us of the potential pollution to Canadian coastal shoreline and waters, particularly having regard to our claim to jurisdiction over the Georges Bank area?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment): Mr. Speaker, if the quantity of oil is as large as has been indicated, it is obviously a very major spill. At the moment the wind is not blowing inland, but it is impossible to predict what will happen to the oil slick because of storm conditions. Our officials are meeting this afternoon in Halifax. We have kept in very close communication with the United States officials. As far as the damage to the fishery is concerned, there would obviously be damage if the oil slick were to move into our traditional fishing grounds.