

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Some Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mrs. Mitchell:—and a 6 per cent cap on pensions, will he increase pensions above the poverty line, and is the Prime Minister also concerned about older women in the pre-pension age group who are suffering extreme poverty.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, I must remind the Hon. Member as far as her first question regarding the Guaranteed Annual Income, is concerned, that the funding for all provincial and federal social programs would add up to some \$8 billion, and we would pay nearly the same amount as a supplement to cover people who are now insufficiently covered by our programs. I would like to say that first of all, the country feels that this is certainly not something that should be done now. Second, one of the priorities of this Government—and the Minister of Finance has emphasized this several times since his appointment, doing so on behalf of the Government—is that as soon as the economic situation permits, there will be an increased supplement for single people.

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[*English*]

SHIPBUILDING

DELAY IN AWARDING CONTRACTS

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby): Madam Speaker, it may please the House to know that I have no insults for anyone, but simply a very desperate plea.

● (1440)

My question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services, and I would ask the President of the Treasury Board to listen carefully. There are five shipyards in my riding of North Vancouver-Burnaby where unemployment is approaching 80 per cent for their workers. It is likely to go higher. The same situation exists on the East Coast.

The Government has announced that it will build six ships this year, a totally inadequate figure, of which two vessels have been tendered, two are to be tendered immediately, and two more in the month of March. In view of the tragedy facing shipyard workers will the Minister assure the House that he will insist that his bureaucrats work weekends and long into the night, and double their efforts not only to get the March tenders out immediately but also to cut the normal three-month time lag, from bids received to the award of contract, to a period of less than a month in order that those shipyard

workers who have hope will get their answer as rapidly as possible?

Madam Speaker: Order. Members are making speeches. It is no longer a question period.

Mr. Epp: I have a question.

Madam Speaker: Everybody wants equal time.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the Hon. Member has raised this particular question. I do not take any exception to the fact that he has taken some considerable time to put the preamble to his question. I recognize very well the difficulty that the shipbuilding industry is facing.

Indeed, the hon. gentleman has suggested that there be an acceleration in terms of procurement in order to ensure that the shipbuilding industry can be assisted as a result of Government procurement. That is why my officials are indeed working overtime in accelerating the program. That is why we are ahead of schedule in terms of the procurement of the two 1100 class icebreaking coastal ships that we are contemplating procuring.

The hon. gentleman should follow very closely the acceleration program I am putting in place. I would be very pleased to provide him with any additional information that he requests. I would like to—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Blais:—count on his support relating to future measures that I would want to introduce in that regard.

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AIRPORTS

BOUNDARY BAY, DELTA, B.C.

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. The reactivation of Boundary Bay Airport in Delta, British Columbia, was approved by the previous Minister of Transport three years ago. For almost six months Treasury Board has been sitting on a departmental recommendation to appoint a consortium to manage that airport.

Given the unprecedented 55 per cent unemployment rate among construction workers in the Vancouver region, and recognizing that approval of a management contract would lead to immediate construction of hangars, a terminal building, a restaurant, and a permanent control tower at the airport, all at no cost to the Government, why are Transport and Treasury Board officials dragging their feet and dilly-dallying while hundreds of jobs could be created immediately if the Government would only get off the pot and make a decision?