

Oral Questions

The Minister seems to have played the role of Simple Simon in this costly arrangement. Could he explain why he would spend \$9.4 million of taxpayers' money to get the privilege of paying the costs of maintaining this building forever, to the benefit of Rampart Enterprises?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, the question asked by the Hon. Member is one which came to my attention in the Auditor General's Report. I have asked for further information. I hope the Hon. Member will bear with me while I am waiting. In fact I am having a meeting with my officials this afternoon. I hope that this issue will be clarified then.

● (1150)

LEASING OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUILDING IN CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I.

Hon. Allan B. McKinnon (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same Minister and concerns Rampart Enterprises. In the Adjournment Debate of November 17, his Parliamentary Secretary assured me that the Department would be glad to table in the House the complete leasing agreement between the Crown and Rampart Enterprises, or to make a copy of it available to interested members. This is in the dealings which the Minister had with Rampart Enterprises on the DVA building in Charlottetown. The Minister seems to be stonewalling the honest efforts of his Parliamentary Secretary to obtain the document. Why is he loath to disclose his dealings with Rampart Enterprises in the DVA building case? Will he assure me that the Charlottetown lease and pertinent documents will be tabled in the House forthwith?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I am not stonewalling anybody. I will check why this was not done and, obviously, try to expedite the matter.

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HARBOURS AND PORTS

STATE OF WHARVES IN LUNENBURG, N.S.

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans I will direct my question to the Hon. Minister of Public Works. The government wharves in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, have become totally inadequate for present day use, and completely antiquated for future needs. Since this is one of the busiest fishing ports in Nova Scotia and his Government is seeking suggestions for make-work programs, is the Minister planning restoration, extension, or other improvements to government wharves? When does he plan to dredge the harbour adequately so that our deep sea trawlers are not scraping bottom when entering or leaving port?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, it sounds very familiar to hear the Hon. Member's scathing language on some issues on which he and I used to

exchange barbs in the old days. I act as the construction agent or, in the case of dredging, some Public Works equipment is used at the request of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. In that capacity I obviously am not as up to date as I used to be in my previous responsibility.

Certainly we have—and I have been given them by my colleagues in Cabinet—additional funds to improve our dredging capacity, with the Department of Public Works acting as an agent for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I will see whether some of these funds can improve the situation described by the Hon. Member.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY FUNDING OF NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Lloyd R. Crouse (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same Minister, because it is a very important matter. These people down there still want to work, but they cannot continue working. It is a very important issue as well for the economic viability of the port. We need a channel in Lunenburg harbour at least 100 feet wide and 24 feet deep at mean low tide, from Battery Point to the Lunenburg foundry. This is an actual fact. Will the Minister indicate whether he would set aside some of these capital funds to which he just now referred, for this type of work? If so, will he make some of these funds available on an emergency basis—and this is an emergency basis—for the benefit of the fishing industry in that area?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I do not underestimate at all the importance of Lunenburg as a fishing port and as a very important centre of fisheries operation. Because of my knowledge of the area and of the fish plant, I obviously will inquire right away. I might say that I thought upgrading the dredging fleet was a very high priority, probably because of my previous experience. When these funds come before the committee for approval, I hope I will have the support of all sides of the House.

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AGRICULTURE

EXCHANGE OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. A month ago he was at the Food and Agriculture Organization conference in Rome, where delegates adopted a resolution which provided for an undertaking on the free exchange of plant genetic resources. However, Canada chose not to take a position on the resolution and reserved its position, saying that the Government would have to review the implications of any such undertaking. In view of the tremendous importance of genetic resources to Canadian farmers and to all people of the world, is the Canadian Government now, one month later, prepared to be a signatory to this undertaking to permit the