

Oral Questions

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will inquire as to the exact facts resulting from this particular agreement with the Government of Ontario. If I remember well, there were extensive discussions at that time between all the parties concerned, the municipality, the Government of Ontario and the federal Government. The joint conclusion was that the best site to dispose of the products was the site that was chosen. I will inquire of the Minister of Energy when he returns but, as far as I can recall, the facts of the case are that the decision was taken after extensive consultations with all concerned, and there was a joint agreement that this would be the best solution at the present time.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERMANENT STORAGE

Mr. John Gamble (York North): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that it was decided to do what is being done. The fact of the matter is that in two places in this contract the Government of Canada acknowledges that it has responsibility for the permanent storage of this radioactive waste. Having regard to the acknowledgement of that responsibility, why does the federal Government not assume that responsibility and store this radioactive waste in a permanent location, rather than in a temporary storage site in a plastic container?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I remember that at that time a site had been found for permanent disposal and there had been very strong lobbying activities by Conservatives in the area. Also, the Leader of the Opposition at that time was involved in that discussion and intervened to prevent a permanent site being found and used for that particular purpose. Because of the agitation by Conservatives in that area in particular, it was concluded, between the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada, that the best site was the one that was finally chosen. The Hon. Member might ask his friend, the former Leader of the Opposition, to inform him as to what exactly his role was at that time.

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AIRPORTS

OTTAWA AIRPORT—USE OF AREA FOR GENERAL AIRCRAFT PARKING

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to whomever is responding for the Minister of Transport. At the Ottawa airport there is an area on the tarmac just west of the Department of Transport hangar that has traditionally been used for general aircraft parking, dropping off passengers, and staying for perhaps two or three hours. We are told now, Mr. Speaker, that that area is much too important for general aircraft and that people who work for the Department of Transport will be allowed to use it for parking. That gives us some idea of how important general aircraft are in the mind of the Government.

● (1150)

I see my good friend, the former Minister of Transport making notes. I assume he is going to answer. Will whoever is answering look into the matter and give me an answer as to whether we could not reasonably use that area for general aircraft?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister for External Relations): Mr. Speaker, I consider that to be the most important thing I have to do today. I assure my hon. friend that he will have his answer, either at four o'clock today or nine o'clock sharp on Monday morning.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed the most important thing the Minister will have to do. I look forward to the answer.

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LABOUR RELATIONS

PLIGHT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA FORESTRY WORKERS

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. The Labour Adjustment Benefits Program for laid-off older workers has only designated industries in central and eastern Canada, except for a very narrow designation for forestry workers in Port Alberni, a designation which ignores the well-known mobility of forest workers.

The entire forest industry in British Columbia is going through a very difficult transition stage at the present time. Many long-term workers who have little or no hope of ever finding permanent employment again, are being laid off. Would the Minister designate the entire British Columbia forest industry for benefits under the program?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of criteria for designating, one consideration being the availability of alternative employment in the area itself or an adjacent area. I realize that the industry referred to by the Hon. Member is going through a very difficult time. The Cabinet Committee that will be considering designations of other regions or industries will certainly take the Hon. Member's representation into account but will also have to consider all the factors that come into play when deciding whether a region or industry is to be designated.

[English]

EARLY RETIREMENT BENEFITS PROGRAM

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same Minister. The Minister should be aware that the long-term outlook, or at least the medium-term outlook, for British Columbia and Alberta is not good. The forest industry is going through a very difficult time. In the Cowichan valley alone over 1,000