

northeastern United States ahead of pumping gas to the maritimes—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay:—which the Prime Minister specifically promised in a speech given to the Halifax Board of Trade on January 25 of this year and which was one of seven specific commitments he announced at that time—the Minister of Labour will remember; he was there—to help the maritimes get immediate access to natural gas? I wonder if the Prime Minister could give the House a bit more information on this apparent anomaly.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I have not been made acquainted with that statement by the governor of Massachusetts, but the House will recall that a few years ago when the then minister of energy, mines and resources, Mr. Gillespie, was proposing the idea of a pipeline, the idea was that it would be built to the Atlantic provinces, and then there could be exports of gas to the United States after it had served the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. MacKay: Madam Speaker, I welcome what appears to be some sort of assurance from the Prime Minister in this respect, and I remind him and make a representation to him that until we get a natural gas pipeline to Atlantic Canada we cannot take advantage of our natural geographic position to have the terminal point for LNG in the Strait of Canso area. Would he please hurry up with his implementation of this specific commitment? I would ask him to reread his speech so that there can be no doubt as to any vagueness, as apparently there is in this commitment made to a surrogate, Gordon Gibson, on the west coast, as brought out by the hon. member for Vancouver South.

● (1450)

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Madam Speaker, the decision of the National Energy Board was made public several months ago. My hon. friend knows the reasons why the National Energy Board did not see fit to approve at that time the immediate completion of the pipeline to the maritimes. We have indicated that this was still our preferred position. There is an appeal now before the Energy Board respecting its decision, and I suggest that my hon. friend should wait a few weeks before hearing more about this.

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CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE COMMUNITY SERVICES PROGRAM
NOT BE DISCONTINUED

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for CMHC. In 1978 the Liberal government made a long-term commitment to municipalities through the community services contri-

butions program which integrated many important services, such as neighbourhood improvement, sewage treatment facilities and plants for conversion of waste into energy. This program was supposed to be the solution to a host of municipal problems. Recent statements by the minister have contributed to the fear that the program is to be discontinued. Will the minister assure the House that there is no truth to this rumour?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, as I have indicated in conversations with each of the provincial counterparts charged with responsibility in housing, yes, indeed, the government is reviewing this program to see whether it will be continued beyond this year. We are looking at the program because nationally it is a program of some \$250 million which, in essence, is transferred from the federal government through the province to the municipalities. No doubt it assists the municipalities. As a former mayor I know well the advantages of that program. However, the program is under review. Before the year end I hope to have an answer for the provincial ministers and the municipalities. My objective would be, if the program cannot be continued, that some other way be found to assist the municipalities with their objectives.

Mr. Keeper: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. Since the minister is unable to give us a clearcut commitment for the continuation of the program, and he has indicated that some substitute program will be put in its place should the other one be discontinued, can he also assure the House that the specific projects under the existing program will be fully funded to completion?

Mr. Cosgrove: Madam Speaker, on the last point, yes, the programs in place will be funded. The terms of the contract specify that and those commitments will be made. But I did not say that a substitute program would be found; I said that that will be my advice to the government and it is my hope that there will be a program.

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THE CONSTITUTION

REQUEST FOR REFERENCE TO SUPREME COURT OF CANADA TO
TEST LEGALITY OF RESOLUTION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister following the reasoning of the Prime Minister in response to my colleague, the hon. member for St. John's East. Since the Prime Minister is so sure of the legality of his government's position on the constitutional resolution now before the House of Commons, I wonder whether the Prime Minister, following the advice he gave through the hon. member for St. John's East to the government of Newfoundland, would be prepared to make a reference of that matter to the Supreme Court of Canada to see if the Supreme Court of Canada agrees with the Prime Minister that this resolution is entirely within the competence of the Government of Canada, or whether the Supreme Court