

Oral Questions

withdrew its funding for social housing and is now thinking, it seems, of reducing the \$2.1 billion budget of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Would the government commit itself to using the savings the minister claims to be realizing, exclusively for the construction of social housing, that is to say low-cost rental housing, co-operative housing and non-profit housing?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, clearly the minister is aware of his responsibilities regarding the funds available for social housing. I can tell my colleague that, today, the minister responsible is in the beautiful city of Bathurst, New Brunswick, negotiating with his provincial counterparts.

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Deputy Prime Minister. Given that the Liberal government is not very kindly disposed towards the people most in need, would the Deputy Prime Minister, at the very least, promise that there will be no rent increase for the thousands of social housing tenants in Quebec and Canada, since these people are already in a very difficult situation?

[English]

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all members of the House recognize just how difficult it is for individuals and families with very limited means to be able to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families.

That is why, although we made a commitment to retain some \$120 million in expenditures in the social housing program, ministers of all provinces including the minister responsible for the Government of Canada are meeting in Bathurst, New Brunswick today trying to find solutions to these very difficult problems facing Canadians at a time when we have very restricted resources.

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WRITING THRU RACE CONFERENCE

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The "Writing Thru Race" conference sponsored by the Writer's Union of Canada has made no changes to its exclusionary policy. Racism is racism and you cannot hide it behind a banner of intellectual rationalization.

The minister stated last Friday that he would get the facts on the "Writing Through Race" conference.

• (1450)

The facts of this discriminatory conference are quite simple. Parts of the conference exclude white writers from participating and the Canada Council has committed \$10,000 to support it.

Now that the minister has the facts will he issue a ministerial directive to the Canada Council to immediately withdraw its funding for this conference?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not issue directives to the Canada Council, an arm's length institution.

However, the writer's union did apply for financial support from programs from the ministry of heritage, which is under my jurisdiction, and I am not going to proceed with this request.

The reason why I am not doing it is that, as I said in this House, I am profoundly against discrimination as a principle.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so profoundly disturbed by discriminatory practices as evidenced by this conference I find that funding it is a very strange way of addressing what he has just stated.

Further to this, two departments in the ministry have been approached for funding but neither of those departments has made a decision at this point regarding its financial support.

Expecting that the minister will do the right thing, will he also direct the organizations in his ministry not to fund the racist and discriminatory conference that will take place in Vancouver at the end of this month?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I conclude that as I am not funding from departmental resources I am doing the right thing.

As I tried to explain, the Canada Council is an arm's length institution and the meaning of arm's length is precisely that the minister does not issue instructions concerning specific decisions taken by the board of directors.

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CHINA

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific.

This weekend marks the fifth anniversary of the events at Tiananmen Square. Can the secretary of state assure the House and all Canadians that the government remains committed to human rights in China and, in particular, that the pursuit of our expanding trade links with China will be used as a way to advance human rights in that country?

Hon. Raymond Chan (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific)): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosedale, the vice-chair of the foreign affairs committee, for the question and for his concern about an issue that is so dear to my heart.