

Oral Questions

Canada and, if possible, in Quebec have availed themselves of this program, whether the minister will recommend the possible extension of this program, and whether he has discussed with the Minister of Finance the possible extension of this program which concerns small businesses?

Hon. Charles Lapointe (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. member for providing me with this opportunity to tell the House how much money the Small Business Development Bond program has managed to inject into our economy in order to prop up this important economic sector. According to our projections, some \$1.5 billion will have been paid out since this development bond program started 18 months ago to help develop small businesses in financial difficulties. As far as utilization is concerned, we believe that over 6,000 small businesses have availed themselves of this program and, according to the preliminary data that we have received, it seems that these small businesses are located mostly in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. In the province of Quebec, very few businesses outside the Montreal area have taken advantage of this program.

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● (1450)

[English]

FORESTRY**BRITISH COLUMBIA LUMBER INDUSTRY**

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. I assume the minister is aware of the seriously depressed state of the lumber and wood converting industries. I assume he and his colleagues are aware of the serious consequences, particularly to the hundreds of small communities throughout our country, with respect to unemployment, knowing one out of ten Canadians who work in that particular sector is wholly dependent on a single industry. What is the government doing in the short term, at least, to help the industry over this crisis and to help those throughout our country directly or indirectly affected by the serious difficulty that is experienced in that sector?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, we have one major program in place that is of particular importance to the British Columbia industry, and that is the Program for Co-operative Overseas Market Development that we run jointly with the British Columbia Council of Forest Industries and the British Columbia government.

Not long ago we signed a new agreement extending this program for a further period of years. The federal government is increasing its funding in support of this program by one third. The previous operation of the program has brought about an increase in exports of British Columbia forest prod-

ucts from some \$200 million to \$1 billion in markets, quite apart from those in the United States. I think this is a major effort in helping to counteract the tendencies to which my hon. friend has referred. I am happy to work and support other initiatives in this same direction.

EXPORT EARNINGS

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Has the minister received a request from the Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia not to send any further trade missions at the present time, particularly to the United States, because of the serious effects some other government programs have on our ability to market our lumber in the United States. Sixty per cent of the lumber is shipped there. Is he aware, and is the Minister of Finance aware, that this is one industry that generates more export dollars and makes a greater contribution to our balance of trade than all other industries combined? Is he aware of the serious situation in the industry? Will the government do anything about it?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Madam Speaker, we are certainly aware of the importance of the forest products industry across Canada to our entire economy. We have a range of programs to support the development of the industry and to support its domestic and overseas marketing. We will continue to add to and intensify these efforts, including efforts to increase the opportunities for the industry in the United States, in spite of the weakened economic conditions there, conditions that have been confirmed as being weak just recently by the president of that country. On both sides of this House we share a commitment to the strengthening and development of the forest industry across Canada. I am sure we will continue working together in that direction.

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PUBLIC SERVICE**POLICY ON RIGHT TO STRIKE**

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): My question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. I am sure the minister is aware of the landmark decision of the Federal Court of Appeal handed down last week, which clearly established the federal government's power, in a strike situation, to determine the number of public servants who may or may not go on strike. The minister will recall the case dealt with air traffic controllers in particular. I would like to ask the minister whether he is considering any policy whatsoever which would result in a decrease in the number of public servants, generally, who may or may not go on strike.

Hon. Donald J. Johnston (President of the Treasury Board): Madam Speaker, of course I am aware of the decision. I took the appeal to the Federal Court, because we felt that the original intention of the law, as adopted by Parliament in 1967, entitled the government, through the Public Service