

Oral Questions

[English]

YOUTH

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM—CRITERIA FOR POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Secretary of State. Since the minister has now advised Members of Parliament that there is going to be an increase in the number of opportunities for youth projects funded this year, may I ask whether a different set of criteria has been used in the selection of the additional projects compared with the first batch?

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure that I understand the hon. member's question. No additional funds have been provided for the program. What might take place is that, with the extension of certain LIP projects, projects that we might have been involved in through the opportunities for youth program will be funded that way. If this happens, then these additional funds will be applied to projects that were turned down but against the same criteria that applied to the first batch. There will be no change in the criteria.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, a letter from the minister's office advised my office that there were four additional projects to be funded in my riding. I do not know what has happened in other ridings, but 50 per cent of those additional projects funded are not from the rated list at all. I asked the question to find out whether new projects have been selected on a different set of criteria from the former ones?

Mr. Faulkner: No, Mr. Speaker, but I should like to look into that particular case because that is not my understanding.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Yukon on a supplementary, then the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe, and then call orders of the day.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PROGRAM—ALLEGED NOTIFICATIONS THAT PROJECTS REJECTED AS A RESULT OF CONSULTATION WITH MEMBER FOR AREA

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same minister. Is it the practice in his department when notifying applicants whose applications for OFY projects have been rejected to state that the rejection has been arrived at as a result of consultation with the Member of Parliament of the area? If so, will the minister cease and desist from the continuation of this rather reprehensible practice unless it is in fact the case?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. James Hugh Faulkner (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I have had some strong representations on the phrasing of the letter of rejection, particularly from my colleagues on this side. In my judgment, and I know this view is not shared by many of my colleagues, if one views

[Mr. Chrétien.]

the letter objectively and dispassionately the opportunity for consultation was open to Members of Parliament. Where the confusion seems to arise is on what consultation means.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Faulkner: If I may continue, Mr. Speaker, I think I have made it abundantly clear to hon. members and to the public that consultation does not mean that the member of parliament has the final say. It simply means that, as an individual who in my judgment knows his constituency well, he should be approached for advice on projects, but the final decision—I repeat this for the fourth or fifth time—lies with me. Responsibility for rejection does not lie with Members of Parliament; it lies clearly with me and I am prepared to take that responsibility.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise now because this matter affects the privileges of all members of the House. There are some members who have chosen not to reply to the letters that have been sent by the minister and have not offered any advice to the minister one way or another. It is an offensive practice and contrary to the privileges of members for the minister to leave any inference, directly or indirectly or in any manner, that such grants have been rejected after consultation with the Member of Parliament. The question of privilege centers upon the abuse of ministerial prerogatives to that extent. The minister is not entitled to do it and it is an offensive practice.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Fraser Valley West and also the Leader of the Opposition are seeking the floor. In view of the fact that we have reached the end of the question period I suggest we should try to get on. I was hoping to recognize the hon. member for Grey-Simcoe, but the hon. member for Fraser Valley West rises on a question of privilege after which I will recognize the Leader of the Opposition and then, hopefully, the hon. member of Grey-Simcoe.

Mr. Rose: On the same question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, that was raised by the hon. member for Yukon, I would ask the Secretary of State whether he is aware that a prominent former member of the government, former employee of the government and former member for Burnaby-Seymour has been quoted in print as implying that Members of Parliament in their constituencies have the power to approve or veto any project.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That is a question. Again, in the hope that we can make some progress the Chair will recognize the minister for the purpose of replying and then recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Faulkner: No, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that statement, but I will certainly make it clear to my colleagues, if there is a continuation of OFY in the future, that there is no support for consultation among members of this House. It seems to me that is a regrettable retreat.

Mr. Nielsen: It is not.

Mr. Faulkner: Of course it is.