

Oral Questions

nisms and procedures. If that meets this request and it is what they want, Mr. Speaker, of course we will co-operate with the committee, as we have always done in the past.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the minister of employment what he was going to do to save thousands of jobs in the pulp and paper industry. His answer to me and to this House was that they could use the unemployment benefits that were available to them.

We have a better idea. What we want to do on this side of the House is save all of those jobs in the pulp and paper industry.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. Will he instruct all of his ministers, all of the Crown corporations in Canada to use only fine paper products produced in Canada. This will immediately create full employment, full production in the paper mills that produce fine paper products in this country. Would the Deputy Prime Minister issue that directive today please?

• (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of State (Employment and Immigration) and Minister of State (Seniors)): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that as a government, we are very concerned about the employment situation that now exists in the pulp and paper industry.

We are therefore studying mechanisms which could meet all the needs that are specific and different from one company to another and of course we are making available to laid-off workers all our job strategy programs. We are trying in the short term to be able to meet the financial, cultural and economic needs of every worker.

[English]

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Thank you, Madam Minister for that answer. However, the job strategy is not what we had in mind. What we are trying to do is keep the jobs that the people are presently working in today.

If we could receive this direction from the Deputy Prime Minister, the Island Mill in New Westminster, British Columbia and Provincial Papers in Thunder Bay could return immediately to full production, but more importantly, to full employment.

We already know that the Americans give their U.S. mills a 7 per cent benefit in price when they supply paper. We do not and I think this bends the free trade agreement.

We know that the fine paper products made in this country beat other products in quality. They are very competitive in price. We also know that there are simple solutions at times to the employment problem.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister today: Make the directive to all ministers and all Crown agencies to use the fine paper products in this country.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his suggestion.

I simply advise him that I will take his question as a representation.

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CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

The minister knows that cross-border shopping cost Canada over \$2.3 billion in 1991. He is also well aware that one of the major incentives for Canadians to cross the border is the attraction of cheaper gasoline in the U.S.

Later today the minister will be announcing measures he is prepared to take to stem the flow of cross-border shopping. Will he include a reduction of federal excise tax on gas in these measures so that this inducement for Canadians to cross into the U.S. will be eliminated?

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, it would be unfair of me to make part of the announcement at this time.