

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Mr. Speaker, actually, I have not been part of the negotiations but I have been involved indirectly in the process over the past few months. I should like to inform the hon. member that, indeed, there was a federal-provincial conference in Edmonton a few months ago on the question of housing as part of the preparatory conference leading to the first ministers' conference. At that conference there was a general review of the proposals announced by the minister. At the time, those proposals were very well received by all the provinces.

Mr. Hees: No, they were not; that is not my information.

Mr. Lalonde: Since then there have been telephone conversations between the minister responsible for housing and the minister responsible for housing in each province. I understand these conversations led to positive results, hence the announcement which was made by the minister which I think represents a very, very significant and major improvement in our housing program and which I think will benefit Canadians from all provinces.

Mr. Paproski: Order.

Mr. Lalonde: Also, it will increase the flexibility of our programs in terms of provincial participation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the same minister. "In the broad area of housing, consultation has been virtually non-existent." That is a quote from page 34 of the Western Premiers' Task Force on Constitutional Trends. In light of that which is found in the report of the four western premiers, can the minister assure the House that consultation and agreement will be sought with all provinces before any new federal initiatives are undertaken by the government and the minister?

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I should like to mention to the hon. member that he is referring to a report which is several months old; as a matter of fact, it is a report from last year. I have had an opportunity of discussing that report extensively with the western premiers. They recognized that in many respects, having studied the report with their officials, there were certain allegations contained in it which were not quite accurate, and they have been corrected since. Others were correct. Steps have been taken to remedy the situation. I have had very fruitful meetings with the western ministers concerned in this whole area. I think major improvements have been made in that respect.

● (1442)

As far as the latter question is concerned, I can only repeat to the hon. member that there have been extensive consultations on the proposals or decisions announced by the minister responsible for housing. All provinces have been consulted. If the hon. member wants to imply that in the field of housing

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the federal government cannot move unless it has the unanimous agreement of each and every province, then I think he is going rather far and it will be the Canadian people who will suffer from the lack of funds for housing in many provinces. I am not ready to subscribe to the notion that every province should have a veto.

HOUSING—ALLEGED LACK OF CONSULTATION

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the minister responsible for housing.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Paproski: I will get to my question if they will be quiet for one minute. I should like the minister to know that because of lack of consultation, the hon. minister for housing in Alberta, Bill Yurko, is running as a PC candidate against this government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): I can think of very many reasons, Mr. Speaker, why anybody else would like to run instead of some of the PC members from Alberta at the present time.

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NORTHERN AFFAIRS

REQUEST NCPC RATES BE SET TO COVER COST OF OPERATIONS

Mr. Wally Firth (Northwest Territories): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Solicitor General in his capacity as Acting Minister for Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The subject matter is the extremely high cost of electricity in the Northwest Territories. The people have been subjected to yet another increase by the Northern Canada Power Commission in the order of 10.5 per cent.

In view of the fact that some power bills now received by home owners exceed the cost of the mortgage payments, I would ask the minister whether he will consider seeking an amendment to the Northern Canada Power Commission Act which stipulates that the power commission must set its rates to cover the cost of operations in each of its two zones; and would the minister consider turning over responsibility for the Northern Canada Power Commission to the two territorial councils of the Yukon and Northwest Territories?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to take notice of the representations by the hon. gentleman.