

Oral Questions

went through a very serious health problem which many other Canadians share with him. Obviously we are pleased that he has recovered and is with us today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Bégin: It is worth giving him our best wishes. He is an example of hope for many Canadians that they too can recover.

Of course the serious problem the Hon. Member has defined in his question is a priority. However, it is not the first priority. The Government's first priority is to target assistance whenever possible to those single pensioners, mostly women, who are 65 years of age and older and who are still below the poverty line. In that respect the other problem becomes a second priority.

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INDUSTRY

ANNOUNCED CLOSING OF CANADA PACKERS PLANT IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. Canada Packers, Inc., Prince Edward Island's largest private sector employer, has just announced that it will close its doors next fall, thereby throwing hundreds of people out of work. In view of the fact that on P.E.I. such a plant closure is equivalent to a lay-off of some 2,000 or 3,000 workers in Quebec or Ontario, is the Government open to the idea of exploring with the owners of the plant, with the provincial Government, with the union and with other interested parties, every possible option for keeping the plant open and maintaining those jobs?

[Translation]

Mr. André Maltais (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for his question. As soon as the company has informed the government of its intentions regarding shutdowns and lay-offs, at that time we shall do what is now being done for other eastern regions and Ontario and Quebec, namely, we shall meet with the union, the company and government officials in order to decide what programs to implement so as to provide direct aid for workers who may be laid off.

[English]

ALLOCATION OF NEED PROGRAM FUNDS

Mr. Tom McMillan (Hillsborough): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration, if I may have his attention. He has indicated that he does not yet know how the Government will allocate funds to the various provinces under its new job creation program, NEED. If the Canada Packers plant cannot be kept open with the help of the federal Government, the

Province and others, in any allocation of funds for Prince Edward Island will the Government consider not only current unemployment statistics on P.E.I., which God knows are bad enough, but also the fact that within a few months' time P.E.I. may well be facing the worst employment crisis in its history?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I should like to tell the Hon. Member that we are just about finished meeting with different provincial governments to discuss how we can put in place the final details of that Program. I hope to be in a position to bring those details forward in a matter of about a week's time. Also I indicate to him that we take into account regional differences in looking at the allocations, and that is one reason we have spent so much time talking in different regions to determine the best form of allocation. As well, I would remind him that there are other forms of assistance which we could provide to communities particularly hard hit by closures or lay-offs. I would be very glad to sit down with him or to have people from my Department do that, so that we could outline the range of options which might be helpful in this particular case.

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[Translation]

PETITIONS

TABLING OF REPORTS OF CLERK OF PETITIONS

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table the reports of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petitions presented by Hon. Members on Tuesday, November 2, 1982, and finds that the petitions meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

DISPOSITION OF BILL C-137

Mr. Pinard: Madam Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to a number of agreements that have been reached concerning Bill C-137 which we are to consider later today. There are four agreements. The first one concerns a change in the motion for second reading so as to provide for referral of the bill to a committee of the whole as opposed to a standing committee, so that the bill will remain before the House a little later today. The second agreement is on the time limit for speeches. With the exception of the first spokesman for each party, both on second and third reading, speeches will be limited to a maximum of twenty minutes each. A third agreement was reached on extending today's sitting beyond the usual time of adjournment, if necessary, in order to finish third reading of the bill later today. Finally, the fourth agreement