

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** I suppose the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to take another position on the presumption of innocence.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** There is an investigation.

**Mr. Hnatyshyn:** There is an investigation and I think it would be inappropriate for any member of the Government to comment on that investigation. We should allow the matter to go ahead, uninterrupted and uninhibited by outside influences. That is a principle of justice in this country, and I do not think any off-the-wall allegations by the Hon. Member should be tolerated by his Leader.

**Mr. Boudria:** Can I have a further supplementary, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** Sit down!

**Mr. Speaker:** I do not think a supplementary would be appropriate at this time, but I want to say something not only to Hon. Members but also to the public.

The questions put by the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell were, as I think Hon. Members will know, especially experienced Hon. Members, extremely careful. The rule is that a civil action is not *sub judice* at least until a trial starts. While that has been a long-standing dictate of Beauchesne to which Speakers have referred on many occasions, it still would not prohibit the Chair from making a contrary ruling if, in the total context, the Chair felt the question was about to prejudice the rights of either of the litigants. I did not believe that was the case. The Hon. Member quoted from pleadings, which, by the way, Hon. Members and the public should know, are all public documents.

The inquiry was on a serious matter. The Government, through the Minister of Justice, as is its right, said it does not want to comment on the merits of the case because it feels it might be prejudicial. The Government has stated there is an investigation going on. We have had carefully drafted questions and we have had replies.

I interrupt Question Period only to make this explanation so Hon. Members and the public understand what is appropriate in the Chamber, and that sometimes there is a fine line where something may not be appropriate. I allowed the questions because they were careful and appropriate.

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**NATIONAL REVENUE****FARM FUEL TAX REBATE—REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF PROGRAM**

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. The off-road fuel tax rebate program for primary producers ends on December 31, 1987. Does the Minister intend to raise the

price of farm fuel and other fuel for primary producers by 30 cents a gallon on January 1, 1988, or will he be extending the rebate program for at least another year?

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to inform my hon. friend that this matter is under close review. I think he can be certain that the present program will be continued. That is my present understanding.

**REQUEST FOR EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that answer. The producers will be glad to hear it.

There is concern that this program might be a casualty of the free trade deal. Can the Minister assure the House that the announcement of this extension would be a little earlier than two years ago when a considerable amount of concern was caused because it was so late and many farmers had already purchased their fuel?

**Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Minister of National Revenue):** Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to take that as a representation. I want to assure my hon. friend that this has nothing whatsoever to do with the free trade negotiations and that farmers, in that regard, will be very pleased when these negotiations are finished and the agreement inures to their benefit.

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**CANADA LANDS COMPANY****RESIGNATION OF FORMER MINISTER**

**Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. I want to return to the subject raised by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I understand a lawsuit is under way. I understand there is now a criminal investigation under way. However, I want to ask questions about the enforcement and policing of the conflict of interest guidelines which are the responsibility of the Prime Minister.

Were any inquiries made by the Prime Minister, when the Hon. Member for Joliette left the Cabinet, into possible fall-out in the matters that were heavy around him at the time he left? Was the former Minister spoken to? Were officials spoken to about the fall-out of his departure and the matters for which he was responsible?

**Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada):** Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted to answer that question, I understand that the Hon. Member for York Centre has carefully crafted the question with respect to circumstances surrounding this whole matter. I am sure, as a former Solicitor General, he will understand that where there is an investigation it would not be appropriate for us to