

Oral Questions

should take the time to go to the committee to see what is going on there.

Miss Carney: I have been.

Mr. Chrétien: I must say that in January I made an offer in writing to the justice critic in her party. He is the one who has always insisted that there be a formal reference, while the subject matter is already discussed in Bill C-53 in broad terms. However, if he continues to nitpick and insists that there be a formal reference, I will try to organize it. However, the procedures of the committee are the responsibility of the committee, not of the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Clark: Not the reference.

Mr. Chrétien: Of course, if the hon. members want to use this type of tactic, I want the problem to be discussed in the committee. I felt that it would be nice to deal with it through Bill C-53. If hon. members want to have another reference to further delay, I will give them another reference.

Mr. Clark: Good!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Chrétien: The Tory party will have once again utilized procedural technique to ensure delay, because if it wanted to deal with the problem in Bill C-53, it could be dealt with right away.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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● (1440)

[Translation]

DISASTERS

INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT WILL HELP EASTERN
TOWNSHIP REGIONS AFFECTED BY FLOODING

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Privy Council, who is also responsible for emergency planning in Canada. In view of the flooding that has affected a number of towns in the Eastern Townships on the weekend, and I would mention especially Sherbrooke, Lennoxville and Richmond, and the considerable damage caused by the flooding, which is estimated at several million dollars according to preliminary estimates, could the minister inform the House whether the areas affected by this disaster will be able to obtain some form of assistance from the Canadian government?

Hon. Yvon Pinard (President of the Privy Council): Madam Speaker, we are of course quite aware of the situation prevailing in the area described by the hon. member as well as in other areas. I can assure the hon. member that under its program for compensation in case of natural disasters, the federal government will, as soon as the province of Quebec so

request, provide compensation and take appropriate action to assist the areas affected.

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[English]

NORTHERN AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT POLICY ON TAXATION OF NORTHERN
ALLOWANCES

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. On March 30 of this year he met with representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress and listened to a request by them that there be an extension of the remission order on the taxation of northern benefits until the government comes up with a policy on what kind of tax benefits people in northern Canada should have. He also promised that he would get back to the representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress once he had met with other cabinet ministers who are on the cabinet committee concerned with the matter. Does the minister have an answer for the millions of workers across Canada who are very concerned about this taxation policy?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): No, Madam Speaker. I do not have an answer to many of the submissions put to me by the Canadian Labour Congress the other day, outside of the initial response I gave, namely, that many of the recommendations were already being seriously considered, that they parallel those in the mining community, that that study would require some considerable time and during that time we would be getting back to them for further refinement of their views and exchanges. That process is going on. The meeting with them was only three or three and one half weeks ago. It is premature to have a decision at this time.

EXPIRATION OF TAX REMISSION ORDER

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Madam Speaker, my concern and the concern of a number of other people who live in northern areas is that this taxation policy was announced years ago. It was again announced in the budget of last November. The minister just responded that it will take a lot longer before the government has its own policy in place. The remission order on taxation of the benefits expires this year. Those people in the various unions in northern Manitoba have to know what they are going to be negotiating this year. If the government does not come up with the policy soon, how can the workers know what to negotiate when their collective agreements expire? The cost of housing there is high. The cost of transportation there is extremely high. They have to know what the hell the government is going to do.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): As the hon. member knows, Madam