

Oral Questions

[English]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**BRITISH COLUMBIA—REDUCTION IN STAFF OF REGIONAL OFFICE—REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS**

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. In view of the statement made earlier today by the minister to the effect that he has a handle on all the affairs of DREE across the nation, may I ask what he has in mind for British Columbia in view of the fact that in that province the staff of the department has been reduced from 24 to four people? Is this an indication, with four employees and eight telephones, that we are going to be treated in the same fashion as the miners of Cape Breton?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. member that before the end of this month officials in my department as well as in several other government departments will meet with British Columbia officials. On this occasion, we will determine together which courses of action will be considered and developed during the next few months. I really hope that following this meeting both parties will be able to announce which programs could be developed.

[English]

Mr. Brisco: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Would you indicate, Mr. Minister, that you will be in a position to make a statement—

Some hon. Members: Order, order!

Mr. Brisco:—regarding the position in your department and the problems of British Columbia—

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Brisco:—for the ensuing year. Can you indicate whether or not you will be asking—

Some hon. Members: Order!

An hon. Member: Address the Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Pembina.

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NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD**ILLEGAL TRANSFER OF OPERATING COSTS TO ENERGY SUPPLIES ALLOCATION BOARD—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO RECTIFY**

Mr. Peter Elzinga (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. On Wednesday, November 10, the President of the Treasury Board, in response to my question, indicated that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources had introduced measures to ensure that the illegal action taken by the National Energy

[Mr. Trudeau.]

Board in transferring \$90,000 of its operating costs to the operations of the Energies Supplies Allocation Board would not occur again. Would the minister now be kind enough to share with the House the measures he has taken to ensure this will not happen again?

Hon. Alastair Gillespie (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, I forthwith wrote to the chairman of the National Energy Board and conveyed to him the sentiments of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts as expressed in their report, and adding my own stating that I would expect him to take the necessary disciplinary action to make sure that this kind of thing did not happen again.

Mr. Elzinga: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. In view of the fact, as the minister stated, that the Public Accounts Committee recommended in its sixth report that disciplinary action be taken immediately by the minister as the transfer of funds clearly contravened the provisions of the Financial Administration Act, would the minister now advise the House what disciplinary action has been taken?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, that course of action was left in the hands of the responsible chief executive officer of the National Energy Board.

Mr. Elzinga: Don't you know?

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION**NEWFOUNDLAND—GOVERNMENT ACTION IN VIEW OF CLOSING OF LINERBOARD MILL**

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. I wonder if the minister would indicate whether he has been approached by the province of Newfoundland in view of the continuing high unemployment there and particularly with regard to the proposed closure of a linerboard mill which will affect 1,000 jobs in the economy and the social climate?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I cannot report something specific regarding the industry the hon. member was referring to, but I can inform the hon. member and the House that I intend to go to Newfoundland and Labrador those next few days and that on this occasion both governments will sign an agreement to help develop some part of the province. It is a very important agreement. I think the hon. member will be very interested in its content.

[English]

Mr. Marshall: A supplementary question. I am glad to note that the minister has shown responsibility by visiting, but would he initiate efforts on behalf of this particular industry which is depressed because of certain difficulties facing it? Would he also co-ordinate with the Minister of Industry,