

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

REQUEST THAT REGULATIONS BE MORE HUMANE

Mr. Jacques Lavoie (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for unemployment insurance.

Considering that several UIC officers act in a disgraceful manner towards claimants, for example by making them sign statements and then forcing them to make payments over a long period, and considering that some people must pay up to \$20 a letter to a physician to get their benefits, which is an acquired right, can the minister tell this House whether he intends to establish more humane guidelines for the implementation of this legislation?

● (1150)

[English]

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Commission employees, with very few exceptions, have been acting totally under the provisions of the Act and not in an inhumane or shameful fashion. I resent the criticism and allegations about them. With regard to the monitoring of unemployment insurance benefit payments, I believe it is necessary in order to maintain the integrity of the plan. The practice of signing statements through the benefit control process was discontinued three or four months ago and those details have been explained before the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration. In so far as other activities are concerned, if the hon. member has any specific instances, I would be glad to look into them.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

SYDNEY EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDY—GOVERNMENT POSITION ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF CITY COUNCIL

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. The minister is aware of a report by the Environmental Protection Service stating that effluent from the operations of the Sydney steel plant into the Sydney harbour contains more than 100 times the level of pollutants allowable under U.S. standards. May I ask the minister if she is in receipt of a resolution from the Sydney city council making seven recommendations pertaining to the Sydney epidemiological study and, if so, is she prepared to accede to the request of the city council?

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have not received and I do not have before me the resolutions of the Sydney Health Board, but I know that for some time they have been preoccupied by the problem of air pollution in that region. My officials have met with them in order to reassess the situation in Sydney. We have underway an epidemiological study involving the federal Department of National Health and Welfare and my own department, by which we are trying to establish whether there is a health hazard resulting from the air

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pollution. Once we get that report we will want to act to the extent the present legislation will allow us. We must first prove there is damage to health. However, with the recent passage of the Contaminants Act, and under other pieces of legislation and if I am able to come to grips with the problem of the provincial and federal jurisdictions, all levels of government should try to do something to solve that problem which is a very important one.

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HOUSING

LIMITED DIVIDEND PROJECTS—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION OF RENT INCREASES IN OTTAWA AREA

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. It has to do with a question I asked him on December 1 to which the minister answered that he would agree to look into the circumstances surrounding rent increases which have been proposed on federally controlled low income housing units in the national capital area. Has he had an opportunity to make that investigation, and could he make a statement to the House in response to my question?

Hon. Barney Danson (Minister of State for Urban Affairs): I asked for information on this, Mr. Speaker, but I do not have the answer yet. Regrettably, I have been away in the last few days. It might be in my papers but I would rather give a comprehensive report.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): During the course of that exchange I asked the Minister of Finance whether he would look into the position of CMHC in terms of federally financed low income housing units as an element of the control program, and the minister undertook to give an answer. Would he be kind enough to speak to his colleague to see whether he would be prepared also to give an answer specifically with respect to low income housing?

Mr. Danson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will look into both these questions.

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HEALTH

GOVERNMENT VIEW OF QUEBEC HYDRO RULING THAT HUSBANDS AND WIVES HAVE SEPARATE QUARTERS ON CAMPSITE

Mr. Bruce Halliday (Oxford): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of National Health and Welfare may I direct a question to his parliamentary secretary. In view of the concern which the federal government should have for the general physical and mental wellbeing of Canadians, and in view of the widely accepted desire of Canadians to preserve the integrity of the family unit, does the government condone the action on the Quebec hydro site where husbands and wives are required to sleep in separate dwellings and, if it does not, what action is being taken?