

Mr. Baldwin: Please answer the question.

Mr. Chrétien: I have not received any complaint from the House about the way we are to handle the new Auditor General's authority. He will be able to exercise it with the maximum freedom, within the scope of the present law.

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AIRPORTS

TORONTO ISLAND—REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE NO CLOSURE UNTIL STOL EXPERIMENTS CONCLUDED

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Transport is supplementary to that asked a few moments ago by the hon. member for York Centre. Not entirely accepting the minister's comment on STOL transportation, I ask him to take whatever steps are necessary to make sure Toronto island airport is not closed until the experimental time is over.

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, so far as it lies within my authority, I will do all I can to keep this airport in Toronto, because I think it will be useful in future.

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HEALTH SERVICES

INCLUSION OF AMBULANCE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES IN MEDICARE PROGRAM—SUGGESTED CONSULTATION WITH PROVINCES ON NEW COST-SHARING PROPOSALS

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Health and Welfare. Some days ago, when answering a question of mine, he said that he was optimistic enough to feel that after negotiations with the provinces, ambulance and emergency services would be included under the federal-provincial medicare program. Can the minister assure the House that, although the Finance Minister said during the budget speech that the federal authority intends to serve notice on the provinces with regard to the federal funding of medicare, his optimism is not lessened and that ambulance and emergency services will be included under medicare?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would consider carefully the answer I have already given, I did not make any specific commitment as the one he mentions in his question. Respecting the second part of his question, I refer him to the Minister of Finance's statement. It is obvious that the provisions of the budget do not affect in any way the present negotiations. As far as the federal government is concerned, those negotiations should be followed, and I hope we will reach a happy settlement this fall, if possible, and later, if the provinces want to delay the signing of new agreements.

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Grafftey: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Since the Minister of Finance indicated in the budget speech that he will serve notice on the provinces with regard to new funding arrangements, will the Minister of National Health and Welfare present the provinces with new and realistic cost-sharing proposals before the Minister of Finance sends out his notice?

[Translation]

Mr. Lalonde: No, Mr. Speaker, we are now discussing the possibility of extending the coverage under the present legislation. Regarding a complete new form of tax sharing, I think some time will be necessary before the provinces and the federal government can develop one that is more likely to be agreed upon than the one presented last time.

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● (1450)

[English]

FINANCE

POSSIBILITY OF CUT IN BUDGET OF CIDA—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Doug Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. Since it is now ten days since plans for cuts in government expenditures were announced in the budget, can the minister tell us whether the cuts in the External Affairs budget will include the CIDA budget of \$933 million and, if not, is it the minister's intention that the CIDA budget should grow in what has become the normal pattern of escalation?

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): I have said that this matter will be dealt with either by my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, or by the minister concerned.

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TRANSPORT

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY—WELLAND CANAL SYSTEM—POSSIBILITY OF INCREASE IN TOLLS

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. Can the minister confirm or deny persistent reports as to a pending increase in tolls on the St. Lawrence Seaway—Welland Canal system? Is the government contemplating an increase in these tolls and, if so, when might these increases be coming into effect?

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Transport): This matter has not been discussed with the Transport Council, much less in cabinet, so it is a purely hypothetical one at the moment.