

Given the volume of legislation and regulations that exist, this task will take a considerable time, and it will likely be several months before the review and assessment are completed.

Since the purpose of this study is to identify legislative and regulatory measures that may require modifications, rather than tabling the study, the more likely course will be for the government to introduce amending legislation where necessary, or to adopt appropriate modifications to regulations and administrative practices.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

ATLANTIC PROVINCES—PRODUCTION OF IRISH MOSS

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, on March 18 Senator Macquarrie asked a question concerning Irish moss.

Senator Flynn: No!

Senator Perrault: I must repeat what I told the honourable senator on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, that the confidentiality clauses of the Statistics Act preclude the release of any information concerning the value of tonnage of Irish moss produced in the Atlantic provinces. The Statistics Act would, therefore, have to be amended in order to furnish the information that the honourable senator seeks.

[Later:]

Hon. G. I. Smith: Honourable senators, may I ask the Leader of the Government a supplementary question on his delayed answer in reply to Senator Macquarrie's question concerning Irish moss? I am not quite clear from the reply—that is probably my fault and no one else's—whether the question referred to the total production of Irish moss in the Atlantic provinces or whether it referred to individual amounts of production by individual producers.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, as I recall, the question asked for statistics involving individual producers. I do not have the honourable senator's original question before me. The answer, however, was that the confidentiality clauses of the Statistics Act preclude the release of any information concerning the value of tonnage of Irish moss produced in the Atlantic provinces. But the other information has also been sought. A number of questions, successively, have been directed to the office of the Minister of Supply and Services to obtain the information, and I regret that for the reasons stated I am unable to provide further information.

Senator Smith: I thank the Leader of the Government for his reply. Since he is seeking further information on the question, would he be prepared to seek sufficient information to let us know what provisions of the Statistics Act prevent the production of the information requested, to which he referred today?

[Senator Perrault:]

THE CONSTITUTION

PETITION FROM SOLIDARITÉ QUÉBEC

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, on March 19 Senator Flynn asked a question concerning correspondence allegedly received by the Prime Minister from Solidarité Québec.

Honourable senators, the Right Honourable the Prime Minister did indeed receive a copy of the petition referred to by Senator Flynn. The Prime Minister has no intention of tabling the document in light of the fact that no one in the House of Commons has asked him to do so.

Hon. Jacques Flynn (Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as a supplementary question in connection with that reply, may I ask the Leader of the Government if he would obtain from the Prime Minister a copy of that petition and table it in this house? Or, possibly, His Honour the Speaker, who had indicated that he had received a copy, could make it available to the Senate.

APPROPRIATION ACTS

GOVERNMENT POLICY RE BUDGETARY DEFICIT

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I have a delayed answer in connection with the debate on Appropriation Bills C-62 and C-63. Senator Grosart asked whether, in general terms, it was the policy of the government to decrease the budgetary deficit in the years ahead, as a percentage of GNP, to the 1982-83 target figure of 2.9 per cent. I undertook at that time to try to obtain an answer, or get some information from the government as to its policy on that point.

In obtaining the answer, I have assumed that the specific relationship between the budgetary deficit and the GNP that was mentioned by Senator Grosart was obtained from the Minister of Finance's budget speech of October 28, 1980. The budgetary deficits for future years, contained on page 43 of that document, are projections and, as such, the data and the specific percentage relationships to the gross national product will be subject to some variation.

The general intentions expressed in this same document by the Minister of Finance on the relative size of the deficit are perhaps quite relevant, and I quote:

One of my main tasks as Minister of Finance will be to reduce the very large deficits in the government's accounts to more manageable proportions. This is important not only to restore our flexibility to meet future needs and to slow growth of our interest payments. It is also essential if the rate of inflation is to be brought down. Otherwise we will run the risk of a new outbreak of inflationary pressure. The immediate outlook is for rather slow growth and I, therefore, judge that only a modest reduction in the deficit is needed next year. But larger declines in the deficit will be required as growth speeds up.