

Oral Questions

fact, be contacted so that the next steps can be agreed upon on a multilateral basis.

But let me remind him and the House that in a speech last night that the Prime Minister delivered to the Canadian Advance Technology Association and the Canadian Information Processing Society, he stated:

As Prime Minister, I intend to spare no effort to develop a consensus and break the deadlock, if at all possible. I have begun to speak to each Premier personally and in the next few days, Senator Murray will again visit provincial capitals at my request.

It is clear that a First Ministers' Conference will eventually be necessary to achieve an agreement. But I will only convene such a conference if there are reasonable prospects of success. The deadlock can only be broken by the exercise of Canadians' proven talent for reasonable accommodation, for working things out together.

All members should applaud the efforts of the Prime Minister in bringing this very important issue to this stage at this time. Of course, we very much want to commend the work of everyone, particularly the members of the special committee.

• (1420)

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in quoting the Prime Minister's speech, the Deputy Prime Minister seems to be saying that there may not be a First Ministers' Conference before June 23. If that is the case, I say to the Deputy Prime Minister, Canadians will be very disappointed. They will feel that the Prime Minister and the government have let them down.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the report tabled today provides a good starting point for helping us out of the present constitutional impasse. Again, I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister why the Prime Minister, at this point, doesn't think it would be useful to call a First Ministers conference as soon as possible, even without first consulting with the provincial Premiers. Why?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Leader of the Opposition would not try to twist words. The Prime Minister has never indicated that he would not call a First Ministers' Conference. Obviously, there has to be preparatory work

done, and he has said that when it is appropriate, a First Ministers' Conference will be held.

Let us get the work done that needs to be done leading up to the First Ministers' Conference. If and when it is appropriate, I am sure that one will be called. I hope it will have the support of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Yesterday, another environmental disaster occurred at Saint-Amable where nearly four million tires burst into flames, spreading a toxic cloud as far as 20 or 30 kilometres and spilling toxic oils that may contaminate the water supply.

Since this is the third fire at a tire dumpsite in Canada in less than three months, what does the federal government intend to do to prevent another ecological disaster?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): My colleague, the Minister of State responsible for Fitness and Amateur Sport, whose riding includes the town of Saint-Amable, just spoke to me about 15 minutes ago, and he is watching the situation very closely.

The Government of Quebec is responsible for coordinating emergency measures. Yesterday afternoon, Quebec asked us for technical assistance. Environment Canada immediately went to the site to do air quality analyses and provide meteorological data. All this was done to ensure public safety.

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Mr. Speaker, since there are tire dumpsites across this country and this has become a national problem, will the government implement a national tire storage policy to prevent environmental disasters like the ones at Hagersville, Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, and now at Saint-Amable, from happening again? It's all very well to say the government was on the spot, but it must find a way to prevent these things from happening!

Mr. Blais: This is provincial jurisdiction.