

Oral Questions

is intolerable. Already \$30,000 has been spent preparing the replacement vessel and each day that the minister stalls costs an additional \$8,000.

A crew of nine is now collecting unemployment insurance for the first time ever. Why? Because the minister has been sitting on this request rather than approving it.

I have a message for the minister and this government. The people of Atlantic Canada are sick and tired of having to swallow this government's indifference. At least show some semblance of responsibility and approve this request.

* * *

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, coastal Atlantic Canadians anxiously await the government's aid package. Recent press attention has focused on the town of Canso, but let us not forget that the Canso plant has not yet closed, while people in communities like Port Mouton, Lockeport, Port Le Hebert, Bear Point, Shag Harbour and Woods Harbour have already seen their plants close and their people laid off.

The South Shore has also been hit by lay-offs at plants and from trawlers in Lunenburg, Clarks Harbour, Southside and Port La Tour, not to mention the closure of boat yards up and down our coast, and the closure of CFS Barrington.

Coastal Atlantic Canadians are in need of assistance, short-term relief for families, communities and for municipalities who have seen their tax bases eroded and their social budgets increased. Funds are badly needed to support and encourage economic diversification and a reduction of our dependence on the unpredictable fisheries resource.

Let the aid package come soon. Let it be comprehensive and let it not forget the communities of southern Nova Scotia.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister.

[*English*]

The fisheries crisis in Atlantic Canada is going from bad to worse. Every sector of the fisheries is affected, be it groundfish, lobster, snow crab or herring.

The government knew this crisis was brewing and had promised general and generous programs, to use the Prime Minister's words. We now hear from different ministers that there will be no special aid package for the affected communities. Whatever aid there is will be from existing programs and existing funds.

Can the Prime Minister explain to the thousands of workers in Canso, in Gaultois and the other affected communities just what is going to happen? Is the Prime Minister once again backing away from his statement that his government would come to the aid of the fishery in the same broad, generous way Ottawa has helped drought-stricken western farmers? Is he going to back out on those words?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, we are deeply concerned about the problem of the fishery in Atlantic Canada. Unfortunately it is not one that can be solved overnight. It is structural.

There are the problems of overfishing by foreigners. There has been undue pressure in terms of inciting people to join the fishery. There has been overfishing by some Canadians.

In many ways there has been an absence of planning that has come to bear on the entire fishery with unfortunate consequences for fishing communities and for people engaged in that occupation.

My hon. friend who has a degree of expertise in this knows that it is not a problem that can be readily solved by slogans or simplistic proposals. It can, however, be solved in the longer haul by earnest co-operation between federal and provincial governments, the communities concerned, the unions and all members of this House.