

Oral Questions

having to cope with lack of information and often inadequate services, I have decided to post a departmental representative in Montreal who will be able to provide more and better information and services for all Members.

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[English]

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

NEW BRUNSWICK FOREST FIRE—COMPENSATION REQUEST

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Associate Minister of National Defence. On Friday the Minister of National Defence was asked what the Government was willing to do to compensate those people whose homes and buildings were destroyed as a result of the actions of the Canadian Forces Base at Gagetown. Is the Associate Minister ready to give an answer?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the Command Fire Marshall from the army is on site and is investigating the accident. A board of inquiry has been set up. The Base Commander is meeting today, and probably has met already, with the families concerned. I have issued instructions that the matter be looked into with due haste and that as soon as possible, within days, whatever actions are appropriate be taken so that no one is left financially penalized as a result of any due process.

● (1440)

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for that answer. Does the Government have a policy in place in the event of destruction of civilian property as a result of military action?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Associate Minister of National Defence): Yes, indeed it does, Mr. Speaker. The board of inquiry procedure is the process in place. When there is obvious responsibility on the part of the Armed Forces, compensation is made. That will be the case in this circumstance as quickly as possible.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREST FIRE

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is also addressed to the Associate Minister of National Defence. I would like to pursue this matter further. Would he assure the residents of that area that the military has recognized its responsibility for creating the fires along the highway from Gagetown to Upper Gagetown, and that they will not be kept waiting to know the results of the compensation program and rehabilitation program in the area for which the Government must take responsibility?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Associate Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, that, of course, is the purpose of the Fire Marshall being there and for the inquiry. I can assure you that I have issued instructions that, under no circumstances, is this process to take an undue amount of time and that, if there is direct responsibility by the Armed Forces, compensation should be quick and generous.

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[Translation]

TRADE

OBJECT OF NEGOTIATIONS—SOCIAL PROGRAMS—
NEGOTIATOR'S MANDATE

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. On the weekend, Simon Reisman, Canada's free trade negotiator, stated that social programs might become negotiable if they had a substantial impact on trade between the two countries.

Could the Prime Minister inform the House under what conditions social programs would become partly or fully negotiable? And second, who would decide whether that was the case: the Canadian negotiator, Mr. Reisman, the Prime Minister or the House of Commons?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, Ambassador Reisman never made that kind of announcement.

Mr. Malépart: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is forgiven if he didn't have time to read the papers and listen to the news on the weekend.

OBJECT OF NEGOTIATIONS—SOCIAL PROGRAMS—GOVERNMENT
POSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Could the Prime Minister give the House the assurance that Mr. Reisman will never have a mandate to negotiate either part or all of our social programs, even if the Americans think they may have a substantial impact on trade between our two countries? Is the Prime Minister prepared to make a commitment to that effect?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no need for us to repeat a position that is well-known.

Canada's social programs are not at stake in negotiations that are exclusively concerned with matters of international trade.