

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 15, 1969

The house met at 2 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

FLOODS

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether he is today in a position to answer the questions asked yesterday about the serious flood threat in western Canada, whether he has ascertained through his office that provincial authorities have made requests for assistance and whether he has had an opportunity himself to inquire as to the extent of the flood threat and the availability of assistance from various federal agencies in that area?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I received a report from my office on these points. The essence of the report is that there will be no disaster of major proportions that we can foresee, although there has been considerable damage. There have been no requests made by the Saskatchewan government to the federal government in Ottawa; however there have been requests to the prairie region headquarters of the Canadian Forces and a request from the Saskatchewan Emergency Measures Organization to the federal regional E.M.O. office in Regina.

The assistance we have given has taken two forms, one military and one non-military. One hundred and seventy-five troops are in Lumsden providing manpower in the town. One hundred and seventy-five thousand high quality military sandbags have been provided by the forces and delivered to the area. Another 200,000 sandbags of lower commercial quality have been flown in by Hercules aircraft from Winnipeg and Montreal. In addition, all the Canadian forces bases in the prairie region are on a 24 hour standby alert

ready to meet any further request. There are also a number of federal departments assisting, Mr. Speaker. I have further details if the opposition would like them.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether the Prime Minister has had an opportunity to inquire as to whether the flood threat is apt to increase, in view of conditions in the United States? Is it his view that the threat has reached a high now or that the danger is apt to increase?

Mr. Trudeau: I am informed that the flood crest is expected to be reached within the next 24 hours, and that after that it will subside gradually.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, knowing what the army was doing I asked a question yesterday in respect of this situation with particular reference to whether the P.F.R.A. authorities had been made available by the federal government for the purpose of assisting in this matter, in view of the fact they are particularly qualified.

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I can answer in only a general way. Apart from the military, there is some non-military assistance from the federal government, involving several departments. P.F.R.A. is actively advising with respect to minimizing possible crop damage.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. With reference to the province of Manitoba, which will feel the impact of the flood conditions within the next few days, has the Prime Minister been contacted by the provincial authorities, and what precautions are being taken in that province?

Mr. Trudeau: As I said, Mr. Speaker, even the government of Saskatchewan has not applied directly to us, and my information is that the province of Manitoba has not, either.