

Oral Questions

However, this responsibility is shared with the provincial government. The provincial government also has its own inspection system. We are working in close cooperation. It is a lesson we have learned from the mistakes of past governments of which the Opposition Leader's colleagues were part. And I would point out that we can take the action we do now, Mr. Speaker, because of a law passed by this Government where there was absolutely nothing before.

Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, the Minister is making a statement to deny that there was a lack of co-ordination between the two governments.

[*English*]

MINISTER'S PRIORITIES

The Minister also promised when he was sworn in to his new Department that there would be tough new rules for pulp and paper companies. I ask him what that proves when he is not enforcing the existing rules.

Does the Minister say that in pollution matters, and we have heard him here for two days and one night, it is enough for him to say that we are lucky that the clean-up of the spill off Vancouver Island was done by volunteers because the Government was not fast enough; that we are lucky that the Valdez spill off the Alaska Panhandle has not spread yet into Canadian waters, that we are lucky that Hydro-Québec had a dam on the Shawinigan River so that the PCB spill did not go further?

If cleaning up toxic spills is the number one priority of the Minister, why did he not know earlier about this particular spill? Why was there no mechanism in place? Why did he not have in place a plan on the part of the federal Government to control and contain that spill in better co-ordination with the province?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked 50 questions in a single sentence. He also referred to spills. Was he talking about the Alaska incident? In that case it is obvious that the Canadian Government has no jurisdiction. This is not its responsibility, nor is it up to this Government to clean up the Alaska oil spill.

With respect to the Shawinigan spill, if that is the one the environment-conscious Leader of the Opposition had in mind, Quebec Government teams and local contractors—paid by the Belgo Company—have undertaken pumping operations to remove the PCB contaminated oil slick. We have been advised that the operations

are going smoothly and that the health of the public is not endangered. That is the essential consideration.

As to the rest, reference was made—I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I am taking more time than I should but I was asked a number of questions—to the pollution caused by paper companies.

I must point out to the House that this is the first time a Government has forced companies throughout Canada to provide information which will enable us within a few months to issue the strictest regulations ever in this sector.

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[*English*]

AIR SAFETY

REVIEW BY DEPARTMENTAL AUDIT
BRANCH—MINISTER'S INTENTIONS

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. I have here in my hand a document prepared by the internal audit branch of the Department of Transport dated June 1987. It clearly outlines that the Government totally failed to prepare for the wide-ranging effects of airline deregulation. The review points to critical short-ages of air carrier inspectors, air traffic controllers and other safety personnel which greatly contributed to potentially endangering the lives of hundreds of thousands of air travellers in Canada. Your own Department, Minister, told you two years ago what has to be done. Would you tell the Canadian air traveller today—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I could assist the Hon. Member and ask him to put the question through the Chair to the Minister.

Mr. Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, would he tell the people and this House today what he intends to do with respect to the safety of air travel in Canada considering that document?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have always refused to deal with leaked documents in this House and it is certainly not today that I am about to do so now.

My hon. friend has raised the issue of air travel safety in Canada, an important issue which certainly deserves the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's attention, so that he may understand what was said yesterday and again today, namely, that a process to deal with definite issues was implemented last week. My reply today is the same as yesterday, for the question is unchanged: We feel that the resources available to the Department of Transport are adequate.