

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a result of my intention to increase the number of enforcements at the federal level there were 13 charges laid in the metropolitan Toronto area last week alone as a result of the activities relating to the export of illegal hazardous material.

I have issued a new directive in my department. We are moving away from the issuance of letters of warning. It will be one strike and you are out. I intend to pursue aggressively those polluters who would despoil our environment simply to make a buck.

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UPPER NICOLA BAND

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, B.C. tribal chiefs are sending a warning shot across the bow of the B.C. treaty process by saying there could be more barricades this summer. They are reacting to the province of B.C. attempts to reduce unfulfillable native expectations. Yesterday provincial minister John Cashore called on the federal minister to help resolve the dispute at Douglas Lake Ranch.

Will the minister do more than facilitate negotiations as he has already agreed to do and cut off funding to the Upper Nicola Band until this illegal blockade is removed?

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that a mediator was appointed by the province yesterday and he is in the process of mediating. All the parties to the dispute have publicly called for a peaceful resolution to this situation. I think the hon. member should be aware of that.

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, these standoffs often go on for an extended period of time.

The federal minister has said that this is not his territory because it is off reserve and the band is not part of the B.C. treaty process. This is irrelevant. The barricades and this whole process are expensive to the taxpayer and to local residents.

Will the minister assist in efforts to achieve a voluntary removal of the blockades by insisting on removal of the funding to the band in order to ensure compliance?

• (1150)

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

The hon. member should be aware that a peaceful resolution to this is being sought by all parties. The minister has also made it quite clear that he is prepared to assist if asked by the province, by the First Nations or by any other group involved but to date we have not been asked.

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FOREST FIRES

Mr. Ron Fewchuk (Selkirk—Red River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

The people of Canada would like to know the federal government's involvement in dealing with the forest fires raging in Canada and most distressingly in western Canada.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, a very serious situation is emerging with a number of forest fires that are burning, in some cases out of control, in western Canada.

Emergency Preparedness Canada has been contacted by the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. We have offered our full support. Emergency Preparedness Canada under the auspices of the Department of National Defence has already provided a number of possible airlifts and is ready and willing to provide more.

We are also working to mobilize the Department of Transport where necessary. Certainly we are hoping that over the weekend things will stabilize. We are concerned and we are offering whatever help we can to both the provinces involved.

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[Translation]

IRVING WHALE

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

On Tuesday, an Environment Canada spokesperson suggested that the *Irving Whale* would only be raised high enough to slide a submersible underneath. Yet, the solution outlined in the government's call for tenders is to lift the barge more than 70 metres with steel cables before using a submersible.