

Oral Questions

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, certainly, as the hon. member suggests, we are aware of the arrest and the detention at the moment of Mr. Urud.

We are attempting through our high commission in Kuala Lumpur to get to the bottom of what has happened, why he was arrested and what kinds of charges we might expect to be laid. When we have ascertained all the facts, I will determine whether any other action should be taken.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, it appears likely that Mutang Urud's arrest was intended to demoralize those Penan Indians with whom I met together with Urud last month who are peacefully maintaining a blockade to protect their rain forests from total destruction.

I want to ask the minister whether she will urge the Sarawak government not to move to violently dismantle this barricade as the government has threatened to do. Will she join the many, many Canadians in supporting the Penan Indian proposal for a biosphere reserve to protect this threatened rain forest?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been very active on the subject of the tropical rain forests in Malaysia.

We do believe, of course, in a balance between the ecological and the economic values. We are working very closely with the Malaysian government bilaterally, through our development assistance programs.

We are the third largest bilateral donor and the largest per capita donor to their Tropical Forest Action Plan and we will continue to be very involved on that subject with them.

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CANADIAN ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Mr. Larry Schneider (Regina—Wascana): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism.

It involves the issue of CAEDS, the Canadian Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy. CAEDS, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, is one of our more successful projects, a virtual unsung hero.

As a matter of fact, it has become so successful that a project backlog has developed. Some of my constituents have spoken to me, expressing some concerns in terms of the ability of aboriginal people to economically develop themselves. As a result, they have asked me to ask the minister what he is prepared to do about this backlog.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for recognizing the importance of this program.

It has in fact generated over 1,000 businesses on and off reserves across Canada. It is extremely successful. The applications were two and a half times greater than the previous program. Because of this, we have had to put in place a number of reforms to speed up the treatment of applications. I would like to tell my hon. friend that we now have a streamlined project approval system through regional boards. We have an expanded network of offices now for this program across the country and, finally, we are allowing some of the aboriginal organizations to work with the clients to speed up the process, all of this to help create jobs and entrepreneurship on and off reserves across this country.

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JOHN CRISPO

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. John Crispo, a Tory nominee to the board of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, spoke recently in an inflammatory and irresponsible way about bilingualism in the Public Service, citing selective figures which he called, and I use his words, "staggering and devastating". Mr. Crispo implied that official bilingualism, and I use his words again, "is working against unilingual English Canadians getting high level federal jobs".

The fact is that 77 per cent of senior management jobs in the Public Service are held by anglophones.

An hon. member: And not one unilingual French.