

Oral Questions

significant project that people in federal jurisdictions should have to face.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do not say that the question is not relevant. I say that the question is premature. The government will consider very seriously that kind of matter.

My friend said that they started with informal discussions. As far as the government and I are concerned, it is not sufficiently specific to be able to give the appropriate answer. As soon as the company will be more specific, I believe the Minister of the Environment and myself will be more able to answer what I consider to be a relevant question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure the House would not want to close Question Period before hearing from the member for Gander—Grand Falls.

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AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has decided to hire American air traffic controllers not only at Pearson International but at other centres throughout Canada.

In Newfoundland, according to the internal memo that I have here, the government is going to hire 20 Americans with fat contracts paying them more than Canadian controllers get to go our job starved province of Newfoundland.

Because the memo says that they are going to be hired next week, will the Minister of Transport intervene and cancel these contracts to Americans who are taking highly paid Public Service jobs that Canadians want and need? I have met with the Canadian Air Traffic Controllers Association. It says we can solve the problem here.

Why is that under this government the Americans are always flying high while Canadians are grounded?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my friend that I am aware that the Gander centre for air traffic controllers is understaffed. We are taking that into very serious consideration. As a matter of fact, we have 18 students

on site training in Gander; 10 from Newfoundland and 8 from the other Atlantic provinces.

I also met Mr. Fisher from CATCA and he is supposed to provide me with a list of 52 people who are ready to move from Atlantic Canada and elsewhere to Gander. If I can get that list we will consider that very seriously.

In the meantime, my friend knows very well that safety is the priority of the department and we have to staff Gander in any event. Of course we will give priority to Canadians, but we will also give priority to safety.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Mr. Speaker, the solution that the minister just mentioned is the solution that I have been suggesting for a long time. It is not only Gander. It is Vancouver and Montreal, if they could get away with it, but in Montreal you have to speak French as well as English.

[*Translation*]

Montreal now needs 30 more bilingual controllers.

My question is for the minister responsible for the decisions to hire Americans. What will the government do in Montreal now? Will they look for Cajuns from Louisiana?

[*English*]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to compliment my friend on his French. He is so good that I will recommend him for a job as an air traffic controller in Montreal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the situation in Montreal is different from Gander, because we are now able, within the resources we have in Quebec, since no control tower is short-staffed, to find enough controllers from among Quebec applicants to meet Montreal's requirements while the students are in training. The group which starts training in Cornwall this spring is francophone and while these young people are being trained, we will have enough people within the Province of Quebec to satisfy—

Once again, this time in French, I would like to compliment my colleague for learning French. I think it is extremely important. Again, we appreciate it a lot.