

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Hon. Member would withdraw those sexist remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend mentions his concern about the secretive nature. This has been very public. There were meetings with the Atlantic Premiers. I went to Charlottetown for a public meeting with them. I met with them again in Vancouver after the First Ministers' Conference. There was a meeting this morning involving Senator Murray after the Constitutional Conference, and there is one going on now. If my hon. friend is in St. John's on Saturday, he will find out a lot more.

Mr. Baker: I will be there for the Liberal leadership convention, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An Hon. Member: Way to go, George.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member will put his question. Thank you.

AMOUNT OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. George Baker (Gander—Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion said recently that multi millions of dollars have been removed from Atlantic Canada since this Government took office. There have been cuts in transfer payments. There have been cuts in programs. The Fisheries Improvement Loans Program is about to end. It will finish at the end of this month after 33 years in Atlantic Canada, and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is scared to announce it.

I ask the Prime Minister will the amount of money which will be put into this new program at least match what has been removed by this very Government in the past two years? Will that amount of money be matched? If it will not be, how can the Government have the audacity to promise Canadians over and over that this will address the regional disparity problems of eastern Canada? You can't eat promises. Where is the beef?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear that the Hon. Member is going to be in St. John's on Saturday. I want him to know that he has my vote.

Mr. Gauthier: It is his brother who is running.

Mr. Mulroney: Well, I will vote for the family.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Baker's dozen.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: This is what happens when he stays up all night.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: I just want to tell my hon. friend something that, of course, he knows. There have been no cut-backs at all in the amounts allocated to Atlantic Canada. On the contrary, there has been a very, very sizable increase. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency will represent an even further increase not only of opportunity, but of real dollars, to the benefit of Atlantic Canadians, which is something which has been long overdue by Governments over many, many years. It is an effort to reach out and to work with Atlantic Canadians with their participation, having designed the programs and mechanisms which will allow Atlantic Canadians a real role in the decision-making process which affects their lives.

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MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

MAYORS' REQUEST TO MEET PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. The mayors of 14 of Canada's largest municipalities have written to you, asking that they have the opportunity to meet with you—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Order.

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Angus: Sorry. Through you, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister asks whether he is prepared to meet with the mayors of 14 municipalities in Canada who want to ask him to reconsider federal funding or federal participation in rebuilding our aging cities. Will he meet with those mayors?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should point out to the Hon. Member that I have personally met with representatives from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on a number of occasions over the past two and a half years where this matter has come up. I have been very clear with them as to the position of the Government. We are in a position of major fiscal restraint. What the municipalities are asking us to do is to share with the provinces and municipalities in programs which are essentially the responsibility of the municipalities and the provinces.

I want to take great exception to a report in the paper the other day which said the Government was renegeing on promises I have made. I have never made those promises. I have been quite up front in telling the municipalities exactly where we stood as a Government. Unfortunately, this is something that we just cannot afford at this point.

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER MEET MAYORS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister