

assistance. What is the Prime Minister going to do to alleviate the devastation that they have created in Kimberley, British Columbia?

**Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in reply to the hon. member's initial question, this is not a unique event in Canada. This is a mining country, where mines run out of ore and have to be shut down; or prices change. As a result of that experience, there are a large number of adjustment programs in place, a safety net, if you will, which will be brought to bear to help the workers who are affected by this quite natural event. At the end of their lifetime mines shut down and cannot be kept operating if they are no longer economic.

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[Translation]

#### COMMUNICATIONS

**Mr. Charles DeBlois (Montmorency—Orléans):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Communications. In last Tuesday's edition, the newspapers *Le Soleil* and *Le Droit* reported that Quebec had obtained only 2.2 per cent of all research contracts awarded since April 1989 by the Department of Communications, that is only \$122,000 out of a total of \$5.5 million. Furthermore, if we consider the total number of research contracts awarded by the federal government, Quebec, which has nearly one-quarter of Canada's population, received only 10 per cent of \$158 million worth of contracts awarded in Canada. What explanation does the Minister have for this situation and what action does the government intend to take to ensure that Quebec receives its fair share of federal research contracts?

**Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, when he mentioned 2.2 per cent in his article yesterday, columnist Michel Vastel was referring to a small fraction of the Department of Communications' research and development efforts. He was considering only those contracts that are awarded through the Department of Supply and Services. He did not include contracts, grants and contributions made directly by my Department. In fact, 33 per cent of the Department of

#### Point of Order

Communications' expenditures and investments in the field of research and development go to Quebec.

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#### AIR SAFETY

**Mrs. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Since December, there have been three tragic air accidents in the region, which caused the death of five people. It seems that bad weather was responsible.

[English]

Is the Prime Minister or any of his ministers aware that since October 1 weather information at Ottawa Airport is now collected by a private contractor, by employees who have one-quarter the training of environment staff who formerly did the work, that the information gets sent to Toronto then back to Gatineau where pilots have to get it by phone from Transport Canada employees who have four higher priority jobs?

Does the minister think that this absolute mess is good enough when people's lives are at stake, or will he call an immediate inquiry to ensure that further lives are not in danger?

**Hon. Frank Oberle (Minister of State (Forestry)):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps you would allow me to answer this question. All of us in this House obviously share in the sorrow that always accompanies such tragic accidents.

However, it would be wrong to say today or at this particular moment that this accident or any other near-misses that the hon. member refers to had anything to do with weather conditions. An inquiry is obviously under way and it will be determined what the cause of this accident was.

I can tell the hon. member that the weather services which Environment Canada provides for Transport Canada and its flying constituency have been significantly improved over the last little while. We will have to await the outcome of the investigation.

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#### POINT OF ORDER

##### WAYS AND MEANS MOTION

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order relating to the Ways and Means Motion that was tabled on Monday, January 22 and concurred in yesterday. As a result of Standing Order 83, no one in the House was able at that time to debate the motion or