

Oral Questions

jobs in that province, what is the government prepared to do to protect these industrial jobs that are very important for the province of Quebec?

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we are confident that the plant is in a good position to make its new products successful, which will make it viable in the long run. We have a problem with the market in the short term, not the long term.

[English]

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, the government is great at giving general statistics with respect to job creation, but when it comes to answering about a loss of jobs or plant closures, it has nothing to say.

The workers at Ste. Therese want to know exactly what the government is going to do to protect those 1,700 jobs. Tell us directly what you are going to do.

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, I should tell the House that the Minister for External Relations, who is at St. Therese in her riding, has been in constant touch with management and the unions in the past three days. She is hopeful that they will see that the intelligent course is a long term course of new products. They have one of the best operating environments in the world. Some of the most modern technical improvements in the world are in that plant. They have a good long term future. We should be optimistic, not pessimistic.

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LITHUANIA

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. It pertains to the increased Soviet Union military presence in Lithuania. The forced intervention and the intimidation observed in Lithuania over the weekend is clearly counter-productive.

Has the minister made further representations to Mr. Shevardnadze, urging the two sides to come together in dialogue and negotiate a peaceful acceptable resolution? I repeat, Mr. Speaker, to negotiate a peaceful and acceptable resolution. Is he still receiving consistent

messages from the Soviet Union that there will be no crackdown?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am in regular touch with Mr. Shevardnadze, although I have not been in touch with him since the events of the weekend. As the hon. member will know, there have in fact been some developments in Lithuania that may give some cause for encouragement. There was a meeting earlier today between Lithuanian officials and Soviet military officers and it appears that the Soviet army has now agreed to notify Vilnius of any troop movements on Lithuanian territory. That may indicate that there is now a movement toward some of the kinds of discussions and negotiations that both sides had been signalling would come to pass and certainly that members of this House unanimously hope will be the means by which this situation is resolved.

I am keeping it under very close review. I had the opportunity to consult on Friday with other members of the House who have been in Lithuania. I look forward to the opportunity to consult directly with the hon. member and will keep the House advised.

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the minister for the non-partisan way in which he is handling this very important situation.

My supplementary question is directed to the Prime Minister. On March 19 the Canadian Lithuanian community asked for an emergency meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the Lithuanian crisis. This weekend the Lithuanian Canadians have open a crisis centre in my riding to monitor the events in Lithuania and to see if they can provide humanitarian aid. Members from the Canadian Lithuanian Youth Federation are on their way to Parliament Hill to hold a peaceful vigil urging Canada's support for Lithuania's independence.

As of 2 p.m. today neither the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State nor his parliamentary secretary have had time to meet with the Canadian Lithuanian community. I say that with no criticism. Mr. Speaker, you know how busy we are in this House. Will the Prime Minister agree to meet with the Canadian Lithuanian leaders today or, at the latest, tomorrow?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the House and the member will know that on the date mentioned the Prime Minister was on an official visit to Mexico and was therefore out of the