

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Like my honourable friend, I too will move quickly away from any precise comment on what might or might not evolve later in the day. However, I certainly will take his representations to the Prime Minister and my colleagues on the general topic that he has raised.

The honourable senator will also be aware that the government is in the process of engaging in a vigorous defence policy review, and members of this house will be asked to participate in a joint committee to that effect, something which will be dealt with in this chamber in the next few days. I am certain that the question of peace-keeping will be a very integral part of that review.

NECESSITY OF PEACE-KEEPING TRAINING— GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Gerald J. Comeau: Honourable senators, recent events are now unfolding with respect to what happened in Somalia and the military's continued reticence in that regard — and they have been very reticent. The military keeps stating that a Canadian-trained troop receives the best training in the world. In light of what has happened in Somalia, perhaps the military's thinking should be revisited.

Would the Honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate undertake to remind military leaders that peace-keeping training is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity, and it is something that we must provide now for our Canadian troops serving overseas.

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): I would be delighted to do that.

[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO KEEP QUEBEC WITHIN CONFEDERATION

Hon. Jean Claude Rivest: Honourable senators, I would ask, first of all, what this government intends to do to keep Quebec in Canada and convince Quebecers to remain part of Confederation.

If the government's intentions are as genuine as we have just heard in this house, why did the Speech from the Throne fail to mention that, as a result of the actions of the Liberal government in 1982, Quebec was unable to become part of the Canadian Constitution?

Second, because of this Liberal government and Liberal critics, the efforts of all Canadian first ministers leading up to the Meech Lake accord failed, in the final instance. If the government really wants to convince Quebecers that they should remain in Confederation, who in Canada's present government will be able to speak to Quebecers with a minimum of credibility? Why did the Speech from the Throne fail to mention the problem of Quebec in Confederation?

[English]

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I appreciate the question from my honourable friend. The commitment of the Prime Minister to a productive and profitable future for the province of Quebec within Canada is probably the greatest motivation the Prime Minister has to continue in public life.

There is no question that that is at the heart of —

Senator Lynch-Staunton: That is why the Bloc got 52 seats.

Senator Fairbairn: This motivation is at the heart of the government's efforts to improve the economy of this nation and the economy of Quebec, to create jobs for the people of Quebec, and to imprint in the minds and hearts of the people of Quebec the understanding of how important they are to this country, and the importance the rest of Canada places on their partnership within this country. There is absolutely nothing more fundamental to the work of this government than to keep this nation together.

Hon. Orville H. Phillips: Honourable senators —

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, I note the time for Question Period is running out, and that is why I asked for brief supplementary questions. However, I think I should not deprive Senator Rivest of the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. Then perhaps we will attempt to accommodate Senator Phillips and Senator Forrestall as quickly as we can.

There are days when we run out of questions; there are days when we run out of time.

Senator Thériault: It's their rules.

[Translation]

Senator Rivest: Honourable senators, I would simply like to come back to my question. If indeed everyone is thoroughly convinced that Quebec should be a part of Canada, why then, in the Speech from the Throne, which is supposed to reflect the government's commitments, is there no mention whatsoever of the major constitutional problem created by the previous Liberal government?

[English]

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I will simply repeat to my honourable friend what I just said. However, I will add that the notion is absolutely without foundation that the leader of this government, or the activities of that leader throughout his career in any way have been of a nature to pull this country apart and isolate Quebec.

Senator Rivest: Not true! Not true!

Senator Fairbairn: That notion is absolutely without foundation. The efforts that he will make personally, and that colleagues in the government — particularly those from Quebec — will continue to make will be very much directed at creating an atmosphere for Quebecers to thrive within this country. That is the commitment of the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien and his government.