

Oral Questions

sexual abuse. Clearly, there are deficiencies. We have a long way to go but we have made progress on a number of very important fronts, including the fact that this government contains the largest number of women ever to serve in a federal cabinet.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORT

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. There are rumours that public servants at Transport Canada in Ottawa are about to shorten working hours at the control tower at the Val-D'Or airport, which opens at 6.30 a.m. Does the minister intend to change the schedule of air traffic controllers at Val D'Or for the next twelve months just to save a few pennies, while every morning service quality and safety are diminished?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there are no plans to change business hours at Val d'Or Airport.

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. Yesterday, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation announced the sudden shutdown of three regional stations in Quebec, including one in the riding where he was born. The mayor of Matane said the federal government was antagonizing an entire region. My question is this: How can the Prime Minister justify abandoning his birthplace, his former riding? How can the Prime Minister justify abandoning eastern Quebec?

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to make it clear to the hon. member that the decisions he just described were made independently by the CBC, without partisan interference from the Prime Minister.

Second, I would like to quote from a newspaper article, a public, not a secret document, for the benefit of the hon. member from Hamilton. In *Le Soleil*, a newspaper that covers these regions—and I hope the hon. member is listening—an article on the editorial page

explains that although the decision made by the CBC was painful, it was very similar, at least as far as the French network was concerned, to what was recommended by the Caplan-Sauvageau Commission in 1986. Caplan-Sauvageau wanted to restrict the role of stations at Matane, Rimouski and Sept-Îles to news coverage only and recommended concentrating French language services in Montreal, Quebec City, Moncton and Ottawa. The conclusions of this commission or this task force were reached after wide-ranging consultations and published three years ago, and the hon. member must have had time to read them.

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my second question is again directed to the Prime Minister. It is really too bad he doesn't care about his region.

The CBC was the only network broadcasting local and regional programming in the Gaspé and on the North Shore. You want to quote people? So can I! The Mayor of Rimouski says their link with the rest of the country has been cut off. You want some more? Let me quote the Conservative Member for Matane, a member of your own caucus, who says that closing stations throughout an area that is already disadvantaged is unacceptable.

My question is this: Is the hon. member wrong? Is the mayor wrong? Are 500,000 viewers wrong? Could an entire region be wrong? Is the whole region out to lunch or is this government out to lunch?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, any budgetary cutback is painful for the people or the individual affected. I have no doubt that the hon. member for Matane, like the hon. member from Calgary or Windsor, knew what he was talking about and did so with a great deal of sincerity. The fact is that the general public realizes we have an enormous fiscal problem, a legacy whose antecedents my hon. friend knows full well.

The CBC acted independently, which, and I refer to the facts mentioned by my hon. friend, is quite clear since the cutbacks were made in a region I know very well and which I represent. This is conclusive evidence that there was no political interference by the government and that Mr. Veilleux and his colleagues made their decisions in the national interest.