

*Oral Questions***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

EAST COAST FACILITIES—REPORT OF STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of National Defence. In view of the heavier commercial ocean going traffic on the East Coast, fishing activity, and offshore drilling, could the Minister give some justification to the House why he is reported to have said in an interview yesterday that any further funding for search and rescue facilities would be carried on in northern British Columbia?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have that question because it provides me with an opportunity of clarifying the point. The hon. gentleman will know full well that I recognize there is a greater incidence of traffic on the East Coast. Of course, there is also a greater number of dedicated SAR resources and secondary SAR resources on the East Coast. Coming from Nova Scotia, the hon. gentleman is well aware that Shearwater has military facilities as well as our own helicopters and our own fixed aircraft resources, which are available for search and rescue. He knows that since December we now have, in the Auroras at Greenwood, search and rescue equipment available for the offshore. The Auroras and the tracker aircraft provide a secondary SAR role.

On the West Coast we have had a high level of search and rescue incidents that we have had to respond to with fewer dedicated resources and secondary resources. The Hon. Member knows that there are not as many military bases on the West Coast. He also knows that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not have as much equipment on the West Coast as it has on the East Coast.

When the analyses were done under the Cross report and other reports of the distribution of resources, we ascertained that while deployment on the East Coast was at its optimum point, on the West Coast there were still some improvements to be effected.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into the problem of knowing where ships are and where provinces are, or where Shearwater and Greenwood are. Greenwood happens to be right in the heart of my riding and it does a great job in Maritime Command.

CO-ORDINATION OF PROGRAMS

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Mr. Speaker, I have a relatively short supplementary, and I hope to get a short answer. I am sure the Minister will agree that the incidents in British Columbia involved more pleasure craft. If fatalities in the sea are taken as a measure, certainly the East Coast, with its unfortunate recent tragic history, warrants further funding for SAR. It is not in an optimum position.

I should like to ask the Minister very directly—or perhaps the Acting Prime Minister knows what the Government is going to do—when the Government is going to implement the

recommendations of the inter-governmental evaluation of search and rescue tabled on September 8, 1982, including the proposal that “A Minister other than the Minister of National Defence be named responsible for co-ordinating search and rescue programs”.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, we have implemented the recommendation relating to making the Minister of National Defence the lead minister. We have established the co-ordination function, because the Hon. Member is quite right, that in a country the size of Canada, with inclement weather for six or seven months of the year, there are search and rescue demands on an on-going and a national basis. As a result of that we have to ensure that we concentrate all efforts of all government departments, including provincial Governments, on ensuring that the equipment is available to respond to any search and rescue emergency.

The hon. gentleman knows that we have had good success with our search and rescue efforts. We are continuing to improve those resources. We hope that we will be able to count on the hon. gentleman and on the Hon. Member for Skeena, and on hon. gentlemen and ladies on all sides of the House, when trying to improve the search and rescue effort in Canada.

I thank the hon. gentleman for giving me the opportunity of explaining some of our aims and policies in this regard.

* * *

CANADA POST CORPORATION

ACCURACY OF SERVICE EFFICIENCY TESTS

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for the Post Office. He will know that for the last few months Canadians have been bombarded with information on how the service of Canada Post is improving. Recent press articles have indicated that the tests used to demonstrate this improvement have been falsified. Can the Minister tell us what steps he has taken to ensure that the Canadian people are not misled about the efficiency of Canada Post?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I have asked for explanations and I shall be happy to let the Hon. Member know of the reply provided by the Canada Post Corporation.

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENT

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister. Since 1981 the Auditor General has said that these tests were at best inaccurate. Why are we just getting action now? What is the delay, and how much more delay can we expect?