

Oral Questions

[Translation]

This is a quote from the press release made public after the conference. It is an extremely serious accusation which undermines the Minister's credibility.

Now then, I would like to ask the Minister of State for Finance — surely she has all the reports and data — whether she can tell us if, in her opinion and in the opinion of her Government, the Northland Bank is viable.

[English]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I have made it clear from the beginning that these negotiations were important to the future of the Northland Bank. I hope these negotiations have not been jeopardized by the discussions which have taken place by the president of the bank and those which have taken place in the House today. There are arrangements being discussed, and those discussions continue.

I have also made it clear on behalf of the depositors and the taxpayers that whatever negotiations are under way will have to be completed as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Raymond Garneau (Laval-des-Rapides): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

The accusations the Minister has just made against the Opposition are unacceptable, especially coming from a Government which, on September 1, tabled in the House notices indicating that Northland Bank liquidation applications would be filed.

Again I direct my question to the Minister since this matter falls under her jurisdiction. Can you tell us today, without jeopardizing the negotiations, whether the Northland Bank is viable, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I might also add that Mr. Neapole, following his press conference, and on *The Journal* last night, said that he was not attacking the Government. I would like to make that very clear.

The negotiations which are under way are being conducted in a business-like manner. They are dealing with an institution which is under the control of a curator. Those are facts. They are part of the negotiations. The viability of the bank will depend on the outcome of those negotiations.

[Translation]

APPARENT CONTRADICTION BETWEEN STATEMENTS BY MINISTER AND BY NORTHLAND BANK PRESIDENT

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister also deals with the Northland

Bank. Is the Prime Minister aware of the contradictions which exist between the statement Mr. Neapole, President of the bank, made yesterday in Edmonton, and those which his Minister of State for Finance has made on the question of whether the Government is trying to save the bank instead of merely liquidate it?

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to allow the Finance Committee of the House to listen to both Mr. Neapole and the Minister of State for Finance over the coming week-end in order to find out what the situation is, in view of such major and serious contradictions?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): What we have just heard is utter nonsense, Mr. Speaker. For the past two weeks, we have been asking the House to refer this type of question to a committee and we have been refused by NDP Members who wanted to look into the matter. Make up your minds! We are prepared to refer this issue to a committee. Nobody can question this Government's ability or desire to try and help these financial institutions, and we are prepared to have a Parliamentary committee look into this. But make up your mind, we are running out of time!

● (1140)

[English]

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE MEETING

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker we have had trouble getting answers from the Government and I am afraid we fear the same thing may happen in the committee as well.

The last time a bank closure occurred it was over a weekend. That could occur. It could be planned by the Government right now. Surely tomorrow we should have the Finance Committee of the House hear Mr. Neapole, hear his allegations against the Government, in order to find out what is going on, rather than see the Canadian taxpayers landed with the cost of another bank bail-out without Parliament even being informed of what the situation is?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, we have been trying for two weeks to get a discussion in committee of everything related to these banks. Let me assure the Hon. Member that I think it is in Mr. Neapole's interest to spend the weekend negotiating a deal and not appearing in Ottawa before this committee.

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ENERGY

CANADA-PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND ENERGY AGREEMENT

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion. It concerns the Canada—Prince Edward Island Energy Agreement. Will the Minister confirm that the