

Mr. Karygiannis: I would like to let my colleague from Scarborough Centre know that we have a lot of room on this side of the House for her.

However, returning to reality, there are many people in Canada from the Middle East who are seeking refuge: people from Syria, people from Iran, and even some people from Iraq.

I noticed previously that the Minister of Employment and Immigration was present in the House, but I would like to ask my colleague a very specific question. Does he believe, as I do, that the cases of people seeking refuge in Canada from that part of world should be expedited and looked at very carefully so that if there are any terrorists among them they will be weeded out? Does he believe that those particular cases should be brought to the forefront and dealt with as expeditiously as possible because those people could end up being stateless?

Mr. Mills: Madam Speaker, first I would like to say to my colleague from Scarborough that I have written to the minister on this issue several months ago, not only in terms of the areas the member has mentioned but the entire backlog situation. I think we should all be deputized to assist the minister of immigration to expedite the process, especially right now for the countries the member mentioned.

The member reminds me of our mutually good friend, Bishop Sotirios, who has mentioned no doubt to him as he has to me and our colleague from Saint-Denis, that we are very nervous about Cyprus right now. We are nervous that there may be a chance that the government is thinking of withdrawing its troops. In this period of deliberation and debate, we had better make sure that we reflect on all the facts and make sure that does not happen.

[Translation]

Madam Deputy Speaker: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House took recess at 1 p.m.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 pm.

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

GULF CRISIS

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, now that it has come to war, I believe the top priority of this House must be the safety and well-being of Canadian troops and civilians in the Persian Gulf.

I know that the thoughts and prayers of all Canadians are with our citizens, Armed Forces and civilians alike, in the Middle East. We all hope for their safe and speedy return.

My thoughts are also with those Canadians who have family members and loved ones in the gulf. I would urge the government in the strongest possible terms to make provisions immediately for family members to be kept abreast of unfolding events in the Middle East. It is simply not enough that these individuals be forced to rely on the media for information as to the status of their loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to establish a toll-free, nation-wide hotline so that family members can receive up to the minute information on what is happening in the gulf, especially as it pertains to Canadian troops and civilians.

I also urge that regular communications with family members be initiated by the government and that these communications be as open and frank as possible.

Our troops and civilians currently in the Middle East deserve the best possible support we can provide for them and I strongly believe the same consideration should be extended to family members here in Canada.

I would strongly urge the government to get with it in this regard.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, Premier Robert Bourassa of Quebec will be announcing today an important economic recovery plan of one billion dollars to counter the effects of the recession in Quebec. Mr. Bourassa said yesterday: "The economy obviously remains the first priority."

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that Mr. Bourassa is doing well. We need him in these difficult times in Quebec because, as far as I am concerned, he is a great Quebecer as well as a leader.