

Oral Questions

sory Committee, as well as the industry advisory groups on international trade. I will have some further things to discuss with my colleague, as well as other members of the committee, tomorrow to provide them with an opportunity to have confidential briefings, but I stress the word confidential because that is the basis on which the briefings have been provided to both the Americans and the Mexicans by their governments.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, the reason why all parties joined in the request for closed consultations is to understand what specifically the national interests are which—and I use the minister's phrase in that regard—this government intends to defend in these negotiations.

Does the government hope, for example, to initiate improvements in the free trade agreement with the United States in such areas as energy, dispute settlement and, as he has just indicated, with regard to automobiles?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, I have said all along, as has my predecessor, that if there are ways by which we can agree with the United States to improve upon the terms of the free trade agreement between the United States and Canada during the NAFTA negotiations, we will do it.

One of the areas that we—

Mr. Peterson: So it is up for negotiation.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): I would encourage my hon. friend from Willowdale to hold himself to his chair again. He is a little excited.

An hon. member: Or else what?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the minister could complete his answer.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): With such provocation, it is difficult, Mr. Speaker.

On the question of rules of origin, my hon. friend is very much aware of the difficulties of the interpretation of the rules of origin and the lack of clarity. That is one area that we are expending quite a bit of effort on that

will help the automotive industry as well as other industries that are affected in a similar way.

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[Translation]

MINING

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

The mining industry ranks fourth in the Quebec government priorities for regional agreements. It would not even qualify for a Canadian olympic medal, be it gold, silver or bronze. Will the minister give us the assurance today that the mining industry will take one of the first three positions, thus ensuring help can be provided to the Quebec mining industry as soon as possible?

[English]

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this has been part of the discussions between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec and principally led by my colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

I understand he is having a meeting with Madam Bacon next week. Hopefully, some progress can be made on that file at that time.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

As the minister knows, last week Anderson Mutang Urud, an internationally respected spokesperson for the Penan and other indigenous peoples of Sarawak, Malaysia, was arrested. He is currently being detained without charge.

Will the minister tell the House what action she has taken to express the very deep concern of Canadians about Urud's arrest. Specifically, will she send a strong message to the Sarawak and Malaysian governments that this detention of a spokesperson for aboriginal peoples and protection of the Sarawak rain forest is profoundly unacceptable to Canadians, and that Urud should be released forthwith?