

Oral Questions

Part of the federal government's contribution in the current fiscal year has been expended for the acquisition of the nationally significant Bead Hill aboriginal history site. It is the intention to bring this site into the Rouge River park when the necessary arrangements have been made.

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[Translation]

TOBACCO TAXES

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Last night's news and this morning's papers reported that the federal government was not in favour of the Quebec government's proposal to reduce tobacco taxes as a way of eliminating smuggling. Can the Minister of Finance confirm that what the Finance Department spokesperson said is official government policy and therefore that Ottawa rejects the Quebec government's position of reducing the tax rate on tobacco as a way of eliminating the scourge of smuggling?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with my friend that smuggling really is a scourge that must be dealt with. Certainly, considering the discussions and measures taken by my colleagues, the Solicitor General and the Minister of National Revenue, the laws which already exist will really have to be enforced.

That being said, there is no doubt that one option is to lower tobacco taxes and Quebec has put forward the case for it very well. That is an option to consider, but as you know, it will have to be coordinated with all the provinces or at least most of the provinces concerned.

● (1455)

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance referred to other possible options, one of them being enforcement.

Can the Minister of Finance give us specifics on new enforcement measures that could be more effective in solving a problem which has gone on for a very long time?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec)): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is up to my colleagues, the Minister of National Revenue and the Solicitor General, to act on this. I believe that the Minister of National Revenue intends to make an announcement on it. I will let him speak about this at the appropriate time.

[English]

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Last Sunday CTV disclosed the results of an internal study by CIDA in which nearly all of the Canadian advisers received a failing grade. Nearly 80 per cent of the 1,400 technical advisers interviewed were rated as ineffective.

On behalf of millions of hard-pressed Canadian taxpayers I would like to ask the minister precisely what he intends to do to end this enormous waste of public funds.

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the hon. member that the interview given by CTV was in relation to projects that took place some time ago. In fact CIDA has been aware of the situation.

Measures have been taken to correct the situation and hopefully in the future projects of this kind will be done in better fashion and will be more productive.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Some allegations have been made to the effect that the brutal crackdown by the federal Mexican army to quell the revolt of peasants and zapatist infantrymen violates human rights in several ways. Indeed, several observers have mentioned that people have disappeared, have been murdered or have been intimidated.

Can the minister tell us what is the government's official position regarding this issue, and can he tell us if he has asked the Mexican government to ensure that human rights are respected and protected?

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that representations have been made by Canadian officials to the Mexican authorities. The Canadian ambassador to Mexico has met with the minister of Foreign Affairs of that country to inform him of our concerns.

There is no doubt that the Canadian delegations which are now in Mexico will have the opportunity to meet officials from my department. In fact, a group has already met with the Secretary of State to discuss issues relating to Latin America. Later this week, I myself will meet with Mr. Ovide Mercredi