

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Landry (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I must tell the hon. member that in the short time I have held my new position, I had an opportunity to meet representatives of women's groups from across Canada and of course we discussed their priorities. I encouraged them to continue in the direction they had taken and I renewed the commitment to the women's program, which has been cut 10 per cent, like all other government programs.

I also discussed with them a new approach along the lines that my colleague mentioned earlier of developing new partnerships. The government gives them very substantial support. Indeed, we support 500 groups a year. But I think that we must go beyond that and try now to discover partnerships with the private sector and the public sector. Many experiences have already been very positive. This is really the kind of message that I discussed with them and I will continue as well.

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• (1455)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Bjornson (Selkirk—Red River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

As the House knows the green plan is the operative strategy of the Ministry of the Environment. In the green plan the Red River and Assiniboine River are identified as areas that require an awful lot of attention.

Could the minister tell the House what his plans are to resolve these issues?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to tell the hon. member what my plans are—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Charest: —on the Red and the Assiniboine, of course. As he has referred, there is an interest in our government to undertake an initiative around the ecosystem of the Red and the Assiniboine.

I understand the Government of Manitoba has also undertaken some work in this area. We look forward to working together as we examine the different alternatives there are for us in dealing with that ecosystem which is very important for Manitoba and Canada.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of employment.

In late January officials of CIC in Halifax rejected outright a request by Lasmo PLC to use foreign instead of Canadian crews in its operations within Canadian waters. The reason for this was simple. It was because there were hundreds of qualified, ready, willing and able Canadian seafarers to do those jobs.

Now that the file is on the minister's desk does he support the decision of the Halifax office or has he overruled it to allow Lasmo PLC, a foreign company, to displace Canadian workers with foreign crews?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the issue the hon. member raises implicates the Canada first employment policy. It has been applied in this case just like in every other case. The decision has been taken according to the act, to the law and to the principles involved.

I do not think he is serving Halifax or Nova Scotia well by claiming this is about taking jobs away from Canadians. The policy is clear. It is a Canadian first policy. In this specific instance the hon. member should know the principles of the law will be applied.

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, less than 40 minutes ago senior officials in the minister's own department confirmed that a decision had been made to allow Lasmo PLC to displace Canadian workers with foreign crews.

What form of twisted logic does the minister suffer from that would allow him to make a decision to favour a multinational British oil company over the interests of Canadian workers?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the interests of Canadian