

matter itself. Chief Superintendent McConnell, who says he made the decision last year to delay because of the election, has said that if he had to do the same thing he would do it again.

Under the minister's responsibility for the direction of the RCMP, as a general policy matter does he agree with Chief Superintendent McConnell? Does he believe that it is appropriate for the RCMP to delay the administration of justice for election and political purposes?

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, there are two elements here. First, what Chief Superintendent McConnell said, as reported by the newspapers, and as far as I can see, first of all, he clearly explained that he had never been subject to any political interference whatsoever, that he made the decision himself and that he informed his superiors at the RCMP accordingly. The RCMP Commissioner said this week that he had been informed the day before—I think it was Monday or Tuesday, I'm not sure which—and that he would check all the details of this decision and find out exactly what had happened.

As the hon. member for York Centre said earlier, I believe we should trust the integrity of the RCMP Commissioner, and in this respect, I think we should wait until the Commissioner reports to us on all the circumstances of a case that would seem to be sensitive, and we must consider the fact that some elements are still before the courts. I think we have a duty, and with me the hon. member for Victoria and the other Members of this House, to ensure that we do not interfere with a police investigation, especially when such investigations are before the courts, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY

Mr. Ken Atkinson (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Transport.

The 1989 Great Lakes Water Quality Board's report to the International Joint Commission states that proposed changes of regulations to no longer require licensed pilots on the Great Lakes may undermine navigational safety, especially in areas where compulsory pilotage is now required, including the Welland Canal.

Oral Questions

This has caused concern because navigational safety of commercial vessels is fundamental to avoiding spills of hazardous materials through collision or grounding.

Will the Minister of State for Transport follow the recommendations of the board and review the potential consequences if compulsory pilotage is eliminated?

Hon. Shirley Martin (Minister of State (Transport)): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question because I know of his concern for safety and shipping within the Great Lakes.

Actually the proposed amendments do not affect the areas set aside for compulsory pilotage. Those areas remain the same.

The proposed amendments are for exemptions for captains who have the experience to travel the Great Lakes with their ships. Nevertheless concerns have been expressed, and just last Tuesday the minister appointed a very eminent lawyer experienced in maritime law who will investigate as far as the recommendations are concerned and come forward with a report to the minister.

No decision will be made until that report is received.

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EMPLOYMENT

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, I want to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister if I can just get his attention for a minute. The question is on a serious matter in Labrador and Newfoundland, those fishermen and plant workers who do not qualify for unemployment insurance because of the failure of the fishery.

Three weeks ago the minister said in the House, as reported on page 5000 of *Hansard*, that she was going to build in flexibility to the criteria to meet the needs of those who really needed help. Yet, a directive from her office in Newfoundland went out this past week saying: "These are the only funds we have for this initiative and the program has been designed to assist bona fide people who meet the criteria". Only 50 per cent of the fishermen and plant workers meet the criteria.