

Oral Questions

I want to ask the minister this. The role of Canadian troops is not entirely clear. When will Canadian troops be leaving? To whom will the Canadian military forces be accountable? What precisely will be their role and who is paying the cost?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, much of this will come out in the discussion tonight.

As I said to the hon. member, it is the responsibility of the government to take decisions in a timely way. It was important that we respond to the request immediately. It is our responsibility and our prerogative to do that.

In the initial announcement we said that we would look forward to a parliamentary discussion of the issue, so we have been very forthcoming from the beginning with information.

The unified command held briefings in New York on the weekend and all of these things are emerging. We will make them as clear as we can tonight in the debate and before the week is out.

Hon. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Clearly the government does not care about the democratic process. The minister made statements outside the House on what the decisions of the government would be and did not make these statements inside the House.

Surely the Government of Canada has a responsibility to seek the wisdom of all sides of this House on such an important matter.

As we read in the media—not discussed here—we realize that this is a short-term exercise in Somalia. We know that it also needs a long-term solution.

What initiatives has her government taken to ensure a long-term solution after the military relief effort is over, and what assurances do the people of Somalia and the world have that the situation existing now will not simply continue as it is?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in announcing our decision on Friday, I said that we would be taking part in this first phase but that we would not remain to perform a peacekeeping function.

I informed our Ambassador to the United Nations last night on the telephone that obviously there will be a need for other things afterward besides peacekeeping forces. There will need to be assistance in building some of the democratic institutions, the infrastructure and so on, bringing some kind of orderly economic development into Somalia. We are very aware of that.

I have asked her to tell the Secretary-General that we will be working on some ideas and some proposals with the United Nations for what comes afterward.

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• (1430)

ATLANTIC CANADA

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

In 1984 the Prime Minister of Canada promised to inflict prosperity on the Atlantic region. It has been eight years since that commitment, and it is not prosperity with which we have been inflicted but rather unemployment which has afflicted the people of the Atlantic region.

Last week in his budget the Minister of Finance made a bad situation worse by announcing cuts to the Atlantic freight rate subsidy, cuts to the Atlantic inter-regional subsidy and cuts to the Atlantic selective westbound subsidy.

How does this government expect to inflict prosperity or even bring a measure of prosperity or even nudge Atlantic Canada toward prosperity when it continues to cut the region adrift from the rest of this country?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows—and many members on his side of the House have pointed it out—that there has been upward pressure on the deficit due to the very dramatic decline in revenues. We have gone through a process of broad based belt tightening all across the board in order to get a better handle on the deficit and to contain it as best as we possibly can.

We took a number of measures to reduce expenditures, but we also took a number of measures to invest in growth, jobs, people and economic activity so that we could generate jobs and growth. We emphasized training and we emphasized a number of infrastructure projects like the fixed link and improvements in the road system which will be very important to the Atlantic region.