

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister can get heart to heart tomorrow with President Bush.

Given the information released under the Freedom of Information Act regarding the softwood lumber tariff, could the minister confirm that in fact the U.S. government must approve any changes in the export charge? I wonder if that is the minister's interpretation of the softwood lumber tariff MOU. And does he have agreement with the United States to do that?

**Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I do not need the agreement of the United States to do whatever is in the national interest of Canada.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Crosbie:** Despite the fact that the United States and Canada are allies, we do have differences from time to time. We will prosecute our side of any issue on which we differ with them very strongly, as we intend to do with reference to the memorandum of understanding with respect to softwood timber.

• (1450)

With respect to the question the hon. gentleman asked, with changes in the royalty systems and otherwise, we pass the information on to the United States so that there can be no misunderstanding as to what is happening. It has the right to be consulted and to be given information. We have the right to make the decisions and to bear the consequences of those decisions.

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#### PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport.

Just last week the Deputy Prime Minister said that the Department of Transport is not cutting air traffic control shifts at Pearson International Airport in Toronto.

I have in my possession an internal government document—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Keyes:**—which calls for the elimination of four controller positions at Pearson effective Thursday.

Why is the Minister of Transport prepared to put the lives of the Canadian air travelling public at risk just to meet his financial bottom line?

**Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, at no time is the government prepared to put any lives at risk, because safety is the number one criteria in the way Transport Canada operates.

My hon. friend knows that there has been a downturn in traffic and any reductions would be reductions in shifts, which is a temporary matter while there is a downturn in traffic.

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West):** Mr. Speaker, the memo states: "Do not cancel any overtime currently assigned" to those "shifts until March 14" and that these shifts will no longer be in place.

It is on the memo. The shifts are gone. There is no temporary movement. These are shifts that will be terminated.

Given the memorandum signed by the manager of air traffic control operations in Toronto, and the fact that it spells disaster for the minister's own recruitment program, how can the minister on the one hand promise safe skies and on the other hand justify the elimination of critical air traffic control positions at Pearson International Airport?

Will the minister now rise in his place and say that he is going to reassess and review these cuts at Pearson.

**Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. friend might do well to reassess the question and the answer to his previous question.

There is no cutting of any employment at Pearson. My hon. friend knows that we have difficulties in finding enough air traffic controllers, that we have been working to increase the number of air traffic controllers in the system, and in no way are we cutting employment.

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#### OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

**Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for External Relations.

This year's budget cuts another \$262 million in Official Development Assistance, adding to total foreign aid