

Oral Questions

Government of Ontario is wrestling with this problem now along with the Governments of Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It is a structural problem that is going to take—

An hon. member: You brought it on.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend says we brought it on. We have lowered it. We have lowered the unemployment rate in Canada and we have put in place low inflation and strong economic growth that are the only ways unemployment can be reduced on a durable basis.

I come back to my earlier point. In the last week the IMF and the United Nations said that Canada was the best place in the world in which to live and my hon. friend cannot find any sunshine in that news.

Mr. Speaker: We do have to move on.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The government appears not to have any clear procedures for the awarding of its defence contracts. Over the past few weeks the minister has made a whole series of announcements on the acquisition of new equipment.

How does the minister justify the fact that some of these contracts were made without any public tendering process when, first of all, that is contrary to Treasury Board guidelines, and second, is contrary to the professed statement of his colleague, the Minister of Supply and Services, a week ago who bragged about his success in creating a procurement system that was more visibly open and fair to all potential suppliers. How does the minister answer that?

Hon. Paul Dick (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, it is very simple to answer that. We have created a system which is much more open and fair. As a matter of fact I have been informed by my officials that in the last three years we have increased the percentage of tendered contracts by 8 per cent. I can tell the member that we have sole source contracts. There always have been sole source contracts in this country and in most other countries. He will notice the sole source contracts were to Canadian companies which have an international expertise and ability to make those goods.

• (1430)

Hon. William Rompkey (Labrador): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of National Defence. He has announced base closings in Toronto, Moncton, and elsewhere and the construction of new bases, contrary to the recommendations of his department and before a report of the special committee he established to recommend a fair and impartial process for base realignment.

How can the minister proceed on base rationalization contrary to the recommendations of his department and in the absence of any recommendations whatsoever from his own advisory group on defence infrastructure?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, some base closures to which the member refers arise from the 1989 budget and are now under way across Canada.

Second, we did set up a committee that is to report to us at the end of this month on the criteria that we should use as a government in deciding on closures.

Third, some projects are under way, including the one concerning the Montreal depot that you refer to, and the first part of this decision was made before the committee reported. I also wish to tell the member that the minister did not go against the decisions of his department, but worked in very close communication with it on this new distribution of depots in Canada.

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[*English*]

AKWESASNE

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. This morning the RCMP detachment in Cornwall, Ontario, confirmed that the Tribal Council of Akwesasne had acquired from the U.S. military trucks, landing crafts and two torpedo retrievers. Given the history of violence at Akwesasne, a community which is still a high security area patrolled by five different police forces, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs immediately contact the U.S. government and ask that this transfer of military gear be terminated forthwith?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to look into the matter for the hon. member and confirm what he has just said. I am certainly prepared to say to