

Oral Questions

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, as we have come to expect, that answer was wonderfully irrelevant.

The supplementary question I have is on the issue of free votes. It has been the practice in the House and in most legislatures that on basic moral issues there are free votes. Even the NDP government in Ontario recently allowed free votes on issues related to sexual orientation.

Will the government remove the whips and allow free votes on issues of sexual orientation that pertain to government legislation?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, it is the position of the Government of Canada to defend the policies of the Government of Canada. One of the policies of the Government of Canada is that sexual orientation should not be grounds for discrimination and we intend to so proceed with the Canadian Human Rights Act.

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[Translation]

FORESTRY

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, as a result of which we were elected, the government gave thousands of Quebecers in eastern Quebec to understand that the federal contribution to private forest development in Gaspé and the Lower St. Lawrence would be maintained until 1998. The Minister of Natural Resources said in the House that she did want the program to continue but that her colleague responsible for regional development in Quebec would have to release the funds required to finance it. The newspaper *Le Soleil* tells us today that her colleague is waiting for recommendations from the minister—

The Speaker: Order! I would ask the hon. member to put his question.

Mr. Crête: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if she was able to convince her colleague responsible for regional development in Quebec to extend the Eastern Plan? If not, can she explain to us the reasons for her failure?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, let me assure my hon. colleague that everyone on the government side understands and appreciates the economic importance of private woodlot owners to Quebec and in particular, the region of eastern Quebec and the Gaspé.

Let me also say that since February I have taken the opportunity to meet with private woodlot owners from Quebec and elsewhere on six separate occasions.

As the hon. member pointed out, my colleague, the minister responsible for regional development in Quebec, and I have made a commitment to meet with private woodlot owners in eastern Quebec. He and I will deliver on that commitment in an attempt to resolve this acknowledged important issue for the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup): Mr. Speaker, the wood producers have had enough of committees on development in their area. However, the question is straightforward. Can the Minister of Natural Resources tell us whether or not the federal government is withdrawing from the Eastern Plan and thus abandoning the thousands of workers who depend on it?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, let me beseech, let me implore, my friend to suggest to his provincial counterparts that they send a political delegation next week to the ministers of forestry meeting in the province of New Brunswick, in Fredericton, where the issue of continued federal involvement in the forestry sector will be discussed.

As I say, I beseech him to encourage his provincial colleagues to be there at the political level to engage in this discussion. That is where resolution will take place.

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• (1430)

TRADE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, one of the Prime Minister's most important foreign affairs jobs is promoting Canadian exports outside of this country. This is what will provide jobs, jobs, jobs. We support this role and the Team Canada approach in China.

However I must ask: How is the Prime Minister going to handle the threat posed by Mr. Parizeau and Mr. Landry to sabotage the upcoming Canadian trade missions by using them as a forum to spread their separatist agenda?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear and open about the fact that it is important to involve the provinces in the job of Team Canada. He is very concerned in fact that the premier of Quebec should be there with Team Canada. The invitation is open to the premier.

The Prime Minister knows that the premier of Quebec was elected on an economic platform. We hope he joins the Prime Minister and all other first ministers in the job of selling Team Canada so that we can create Canadian jobs in every province, including Quebec.