

*Oral Questions*

• (1500)

We must be very vigilant. The disaster is a terrible one and we are deeply concerned with it. We are exercising the utmost vigilance to make sure that the oil will not reach our coast.

**Mr. Fulton:** Mr. Speaker, the response we just heard was pathetic.

## THREAT TO BRITISH COLUMBIA COAST

**Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena):** Mr. Speaker, I address my supplementary to the Minister of Transport. I confirmed with the Minister of Transport's own Coast Guard emergency officials an hour prior to Question Period that this spill is 50 miles south of Cordova, and for anyone who wants to look at a map it is 200 miles from the B.C. coast.

What is the Minister going to do? Is he going to move containment and spill clean-up technology to the north coast of British Columbia now while there is time to prepare, or will he wait until the oil hits our coast?

**Mr. Benoit Bouchard (Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, the Member is wrong. I prefer to use figures given by my colleague which come directly from the Canadian Coast Guard. It is not the time to play politics with those.

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## TRANSPORT

## ATLANTIC FREIGHT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte):** Mr. Speaker, the threat of hard times ahead for Atlantic Canada implicit in yesterday's Throne Speech has unfortunately already borne fruit.

I have in my hand a copy of a letter dated yesterday to the Prime Minister from the Premier of Nova Scotia, John Buchanan, written on behalf of the Council of Maritime Premiers in which is raised the serious concern that the Atlantic Freight Assistance Program worth \$90 million a year is about to be eliminated or reduced.

I quote Premier Buchanan in yesterday's letter: "According to a 1983 study in a worst case scenario, removal of the Freight Rate Assistance Program will result in job losses in the region totalling 12,100 and annual income losses to the region of \$330 million".

The Prime Minister has that letter in his hands today. Is he prepared to assure this House, and through this House, Atlantic Canadians, that the the Atlantic Freight Assistance Program will neither be reduced nor eliminated as a consequence of the budget measures expected shortly?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much the concerns which the Hon. Member has read out as expressed by the Atlantic Premiers. The Hon. Member is raising a speculative matter. He can understand that it is not possible for me to comment on speculative matters. The question is directed at what or what might not be in the Budget, and the Hon. Member will have to wait until budget time before he can get an answer to that.

**Mr. Tobin:** Mr. Speaker, I am sending a copy of the letter to the Prime Minister from Premier Buchanan to the Prime Minister.

## PROVISIONS OF CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

**Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte):** Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. The matter is not speculation. Brian Wentzell, Chairman of the Atlantic Provinces Transportation Commission, informed me an hour ago by telephone that he has met with the senior staff of the four Atlantic Ministers and the senior staff of the Minister of Transport and has discussed this matter. He informs me as well that he has been told that one of the reasons for the elimination of this \$90 million subsidy is the Free Trade Agreement.

My question to the Prime Minister is the following. Given the Prime Minister's assurances during last November's election that subsidies to the regions would not be affected by the Free Trade Agreement, why is Premier Buchanan writing this letter? Why are senior staff of the four Atlantic Ministers and the Minister of Transport telling the Chairman of our transportation commission that the program is about to be eliminated because of pressure resultant from the Free Trade Agreement?

**Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know exactly what the hon. gentleman is talking about. He refers to some private conversations apparently he had about an hour ago. I am not privy to those conversations. I will be happy to review that conversation with him.

Apparently his respondent indicated that it was because of the Free Trade Agreement, in which case I presume that he was consulting with the Liberals and the financial critic of the Liberals who said that should the