

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Last week, the independent truckers of Abitibi-Témiscamingue paralysed traffic on Highway 117 in Louvencourt, in order to let the governments and companies know their demands and to make the public aware of their problems.

I went to meet the truckers twice on the weekend. Our discussions were positive and constructive and they decided to lift the road blockade on Saturday afternoon.

My question is: can the minister tell us the latest developments in connection with these demonstrations in Quebec and whether he promises that the Government of Canada will take part in negotiations with the independent truckers of Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Quebec, and with the Government of Quebec, so that all together, they can go over the contentious points as soon as possible and assess what can be done?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I was asked to provide a representative to the provincial committee established by my provincial colleague, Mr. Elkas, and I shall do so.

The commitments I made to the owner-operators in Windsor will apply to all truckers throughout Canada. I shall meet Mr. Elkas in late June.

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[English]

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I asked the Minister of Transport whether the government was considering a reduction in flight inspections, training for air traffic controllers, and other questions. He said that my allegations were completely unfounded.

Well, here it is, Mr. Speaker, the document itself. It is a Transport Canada plan, as the document itself proclaims, to determine areas of savings required to meet budget restraints.

Now that the minister can no longer deny the existence of the report, will he stand in his place and reject its recommendations?

• (1450)

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Canada and Transport Canada, I make no apologies for making an effort to save taxpayers' money.

If my hon. member would read the entire transcript of Friday's exchange, he would see that I said that we would not compromise safety. It does not mean that one cannot find savings in expenditures and at the same time not compromise safety.

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that just on Friday the minister admitted that he had no knowledge of the report, and today he is interested in saving Canadian taxpayers' money.

An official at Transport Canada's air navigation system tells me that the minister will be making a decision on the report by the end of this week.

Will the minister come clean and tell us that he has seen the recommendations in the report and that he will not slash costs at the expense of safety, as this report suggests he do?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I will have continual briefings all week. I certainly would not want to miss the briefing with this particular individual. If the hon. member could give me his name, I would be glad to take it up with him.

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TRADE

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton—The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. The minister stated that there is a 90-day period for discussion on the lobster fishing question. The minister also knows that during that 90-day period, one of the things that will not be changed is the Mitchell bill. That is firm for that 90-day period.

The lobster fishing season is now well under way. The lobster fishermen, who have had to suffer through abnormally low prices, are now faced with this restricted market.