

Oral Questions

Is the Minister prepared to guarantee this decision will not have a negative impact on these programs in the future?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes. These economic regional development programs are not challenged or affected by the Free Trade Agreement.

This Party, this Government, has demonstrated in a tangible manner more commitment to the regions of this country and to their economic prosperity than any previous Government. We remain committed.

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**STEELEY QUARRIES—REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION UNDER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION ACT**

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton—Wentworth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. In my riding we have an environmental time bomb that is waiting to go off, and last week it almost did. We had the evacuation of 75 to 100 families as a result of a mysterious fire at Steeley Quarries.

In view of specific mention in the Speech from the Throne that the federal Government intends “to further the process of cleaning up dangerous land sites”, and because many of my constituents are outraged about an earlier history of PCBs stored at that site, and they are worried about Steeley’s extremely cosy relationship with Ontario’s provincial authorities responsible for guarding the public interest in connection with the site, will the Minister consider invoking Section 108 of the Canadian Environment Protection Act to determine precisely what sensitive toxic materials Steeley has been dumping, burying, and burning on the escarpment?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the Hon. Member that happily the new federal law on the environment provides a way to cope with this type of question.

Section 108 of this law authorizes any two persons who are residents of Canada to petition the Minister to trigger an investigation into any alleged impropriety. The only thing to do is get such a petition, and I will be happy to respond to it.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT**BELGO PLANT—REQUEST THAT PROVINCIAL JURISDICTION MEASURES BE TIGHTENED**

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, for the information of the Leader of the Opposition whose comments a few minutes ago were somewhat confused when he mentioned the name of the town of Shawinigan for the first time in his life, and considering the fact that the Belgo plant in Shawinigan comes under provincial jurisdiction and the fact that the St. Maurice River is also under provincial jurisdiction, could the Minister of the Environment ask his provincial counterpart whether her province’s environmental regulations could be applied more strictly in the case of the Belgo plant in Shawinigan?

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as I had the privilege of stating earlier in my reply to the Leader of the Opposition, I have already been in touch with my counterpart, the Quebec Environment Minister. I will be discussing the situation with her later today, and I may add that Canada’s new environmental legislation has expanded the role of the federal Government and the Department of the Environment. Today, on the basis of the new regulations, we are able to intervene to punish the reprehensible acts that constitute a violation of these regulations.

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HOUSING**MINISTER’S INFLUENCE**

Mr. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State for Housing. The Minister’s appointment has raised many hopes and expectations. Unfortunately, these hopes have been dashed by the complete absence of any reference to housing in the Throne Speech. This is a matter of renewed concern for Canada’s 100,000 homeless and for low-income Canadians who want decent housing.

My question is as follows: Are we to conclude that the Minister has no influence on his cabinet colleagues or should we conclude that the Minister’s appointment was merely a way for the Government to stop his questions and criticism in the House, in other words, keep him quiet?