

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF THIRTY-THREE MAYORS FROM
MIRABEL AIRPORT REGION

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of 33 mayors from the province of Quebec who, I understand, come from the Mirabel airport area and to whom I extend our welcome.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[English]

INDUSTRY

CANADIAN CONTENT IN MANUFACTURE OF MINING
EQUIPMENT

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is related to a question asked a moment ago, and it is directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The minister knows that Canadian manufacturers of mining equipment have been quickly losing ground to foreign competitors in supplying our rapidly growing demand for mining equipment. In fact he knows that between 1970 and 1980 the percentage of Canadian-manufactured mining equipment dropped from over 70 per cent to a mere 29 per cent, giving rise to a \$167 million trade deficit in 1980, compared to only a \$48 million trade deficit a decade earlier.

Will the minister explain why his government has allowed the Canadian content in mining equipment to slip to rock bottom levels over the past ten years? Instead of speaking in pompous platitudes, as he did yesterday, what specific plans is he prepared to announce today in this House in order to rectify the kind of problem we heard about a few moments ago and to substantially increase the manufacture of mining equipment here in Canada?

● (1440)

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, it is true that in 1980 Canada produced \$342 million worth of mining equipment and imported \$372.4 million worth. When you look at the exports of \$205 million, you come up with the figure my hon. friend mentioned. The over-all picture is somewhat more positive than he suggested in light of these statistics.

At the same time, jurisdiction over most mining projects is in the provinces in which they are found. Therefore, we have to work in a way which takes that into account in achieving our objective of having a much higher production in Canada of the equipment used by our mines. A recognition of this development problem, as I said yesterday, is why we convened the Opportunities in Mining Conference in Vancouver last year to begin a process whereby Canadian mining companies can

become more aware of Canadian capacities and so there will be much higher purchases of Canadian equipment.

Second, one of the objectives of the office of industrial regional benefits, working with respect to projects on the Canada Lands, and voluntarily with the provinces, and with respect to projects there, would be to achieve a much higher level of Canadian content in mining equipment. This is our objective. I think we are making progress.

CONTRACT AWARDED TO JAPANESE COMPANY

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, platitudes, programs and conferences do not solve problems. In fact the minister has not responded to my question. Why was the situation allowed to deteriorate over the past ten years to the extent that less than one third of our mining equipment is manufactured in Canada? Does the minister condone the kind of contract award that his seatmate just announced whereby the Mitsubishi company of Japan will take a contract away from a Canadian company which was actually the low bidder? Does he condone that? Where are his specific proposals?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Madam Speaker, the equipment my hon. friend is talking about, if I am not mistaken, is not, strictly speaking, mining equipment but equipment to enable the loading of coal on ships which take it abroad. At the same time, this is the kind of equipment we want to see built and used in Canada to the extent it is technologically sufficient and available within the time required. We have been working with the National Harbours Board to make sure full attention is given to Canadian capacities.

I might add that my hon. friend's reference to this example does not support his contention that only one third of the content comes from Canada. The Minister of Transport said that over 50 per cent of the content of this equipment comes from our country. We have to do better, and that is what we are working to achieve.

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[Translation]

AIRPORTS

TRANSFER BETWEEN DORVAL AND MIRABEL—DATE OF
MINISTERIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr. Robert Gourd (Argenteuil-Papineau): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport.

At a meeting last year with the members for Duvernay, Laval, Terrebonne, Labelle, the Minister of Communications representing Blainville-Deux-Montagnes and our mayors and councillors, the minister said that an expression of political will would be necessary if there were to be a transfer of activities between Dorval and Mirabel.