

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. The question to be referred for consideration to the Special Committee of the House concerns the companion resolution, better known as the McKenna proposal. This proposal is aimed at amending the 1987 Constitutional Accord or Meech Lake Accord. Does the Prime Minister think the mandate of this committee could be expanded to include any other amendment concerning Canada's Constitution?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I believe I answered this question in my speech Thursday evening, when I said this was not a final offer, take it or leave it, but a number of changes that all Canadians should examine very seriously. I think there is a way to reach out to Canadians who feel left out by Meech Lake—aboriginal people, northern residents, certain women's groups—without compromising the Accord itself and the consensus it creates. I think that answers the hon. member's question.

[English]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, Premier McKenna has said, and I quote from his own document: "The companion resolution would require public hearings to be held by Parliament and all effective provincial legislatures before the adoption of any constitutional amendments."

How does the Prime Minister of this country intend to involve all of Parliament, that is the House of Commons and the Senate, in this process to make it really a constitutional process?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it has already been agreed that the leader of the Liberals and the NDP and myself will speak to this issue tomorrow afternoon at three o'clock, precisely on that point.

As my hon. friend knows, it is up to each legislature to be seized of a constitutional motion that initiates the process.

Mr. Gauthier: The Senate.

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend is asking about the Senate. He may want to ask his Liberal caucus colleagues in the Senate in order to have a better idea as to what the Liberals in the Senate are planning.

We will act on behalf of the House of Commons. Other legislators will act on behalf of their legislatures. We will act on behalf of the House of Commons, and I hope that my hon. friend will continue to maintain the supremacy of the elected House of Commons over an appointed Senate.

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TRADE

Ms. Audrey McLaughlin (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Prime Minister. During the 1988 election campaign, Canadians heard time and time again how many jobs were going to be created by the trade deal. The Prime Minister himself, during the 1988 campaign, said that the trade deal was going to create 250,000 new jobs in Canada.

Over the weekend, former deputy chief negotiator Gordon Ritchie told a conference attended by the Prime Minister and the deal's co-signer Ronald Reagan: "The free trade agreement will not be a major creator of jobs. This is a specious claim made in the heat of an election campaign."

Thousands of jobs are being lost as a result of the trade deal. I ask the Prime Minister to admit today that in fact he was wrong when he said that the trade deal would create jobs in Canada.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the claim to which my hon. friend apparently refers is a claim that was made by the Economic Council of Canada through its distinguished chairperson Judith Maxwell who said that the free trade agreement would create 250,000 new jobs. I believed Ms. Maxwell then and I believe her guilty today only of having underestimated her case.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mulroney: My hon. friend refers to a comment made by an individual at a conference. The popularity of free trade is such that there are conferences going on all over the place.

May I refer her to a report in *The Gazette* of another conference that took place at Bishop's University in Lennoxville over the weekend at which the conclusions were the following:

Several of the country's leading economic researchers believe free trade has paid a surprisingly strong and early dividend in the form of robust business investment, made up partly of Canadian companies modernizing or expanding and partly of foreign firms investing in Canada. That helps explain why Canada has avoided a recession and why unemployment, contrary to expectations, has not gone up much