

Oral Questions

Why has the minister failed to designate these committees so that jobs can be created in communities devastated by fish plant closures?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): In the absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted to answer? The minister is not here today for personal reasons.

The minister of course has always been very concerned with the development of Atlantic Canada. The best thing that members of the opposition could do with regard to the Community Futures Program or job training moneys for Atlantic Canada would be to suggest to their colleagues in the other place that they pass Bill C-21.

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, the program was announced in January, at the beginning of the year. Surely the minister and her department had the resources then to finance the project. If they did not have the resources, why was the program announced?

There is a procedure available which is known to the government for resolving the impasse over Bill C-21. The government knows how to use it.

When will the government stop holding Atlantic Canadians hostage over Bill C-21 and live up to its promises?

Hon. Marcel Danis (Minister of State (Youth) and Minister of State (Fitness and Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, if I were allowed I would put the question another way. When will the other place stop holding Atlantic Canada hostage and pass Bill C-21? This is the place where people are democratically elected, not the other place.

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MEECH LAKE ACCORD

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

In light of the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister about the offer made to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs apparently being turned down, will the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House what the government's plan is now?

There is a lot of concern in the country about the secrecy of the talks two weeks ago and about the process two weeks ago. In order to alleviate the concern that Canadians have about where this government is going with constitutional talks, will the Deputy Prime Minister tell the House what the plan is now that the Assembly of Chiefs in Manitoba has turned down the proposal?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have not had the benefit of listening to the statements at the press conference made by Chief Fontaine or other spokesmen on behalf of the Assembly of Nations. Thus it would be very difficult to determine at this point in time whether in fact there is any hope for further discussions. Perhaps there is.

The Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations is there along with senior officials who are ready, willing and able to sit down to engage in discussions, as well as to engage in further discussions with the Government of Manitoba in trying to break the log-jam.

I am sure the hon. member realizes that this is a very sensitive and delicate stage in the proceedings. I acknowledge his co-operation and support throughout the whole process.

I can assure him and the hon. members of the House that as soon as anything further develops I will certainly be very pleased to take him into that confidence.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Mr. Speaker, in that regard, I wonder if the Deputy Prime Minister can make a commitment today that the Prime Minister will come to the House either later on today or tomorrow to make a full statement to the members of this House as to what the plan is in terms of the impasse we appear to be in right now.

I think it is very important that the Prime Minister is as open as possible during this delicate time in negotiations.