

Oral Questions

the provinces to eliminate duplication. The only government that does not want to sign an agreement with us in an attempt to identify areas of duplication which could be eliminated is the government of Quebec, because it wants to use the status quo for its purposes. I just hope they will hold a referendum soon, ask an honest question, so that the blackmail business will be over with.

[English]

CANADA COMMUNICATION GROUP

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Communication Group has been recommended for privatization, yet unbelievably the President of the Treasury Board has extended the workforce adjustment directive giving the employees of CCG guaranteed job protection. This is the very same workforce adjustment directive the minister is attempting to eliminate from other federal employees.

Why would the minister extend a policy that guarantees these federal employees job protection when the recommendation is to get rid of the agency?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said before in the House that we are going through a downsizing. Part of that downsizing will require that different programs and services are curtailed or completely removed from what we provide to Canadians. That is part of getting our deficit reduction targets met.

In the course of doing that it will be necessary to downsize the public service, but we will be treating our employees in a fair and equitable fashion in doing that, whether they are part of that agency or any other part of the government.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question was: Why give them the protection of the workforce adjustment agreement when we are trying to downsize the government?

Will the President of the Treasury Board assure the House that he will rescind the most recent extension of the workforce adjustment agreement and that there will be no further extensions of the policy, as he admits, while we are downsizing the government?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as it applies to the particular agency the hon. member is mentioning, I would have to repeat what I am saying in terms of the public service overall.

[Translation]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech to the Chambre of Commerce of Metropolitan Quebec, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and minister responsible for Quebec stated that the government must concentrate less on regional development and focus instead on helping small business.

Can the Minister of Finance, minister responsible for regional development in Quebec, confirm his government's intention to withdraw from regional development and focus exclusively on helping small business?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that the best way to go about regional development is to help small business. That is truly where most new jobs are created. I am not the only one to say so, so do local authorities in Quebec, as well as the provincial government, the parent company.

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. If it is clear, given that Quebec has adopted a general strategy for regional development, including assistance to businesses, would the minister not agree that, in the interest of avoiding all duplication and overlap, as the Prime Minister has said, he must recognize Quebec as the sole authority in terms of regional development, including assistance to businesses?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only do I disagree with the hon. member's hypothesis, but I say that, having discussed the matter with the current Government of Quebec, the current government does not agree with the hon. member's hypothesis.

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• (1440)

RAILWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Georgette Sheridan (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Yesterday, he tabled a report entitled "On Track" from the committee reviewing the Railway Safety Act. Can the minister tell us when he will be in a position to respond to the report's recommendations?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has mentioned a very major report