

The people of Saint-Basile-le-Grand, a community that was so tragically affected by the PCB disaster on August 23, 1988, are still living with 130 containers of toxic waste in their environment, at this very moment.

Mr. Speaker, on November 15, 1988, the town council of Saint-Basile-le-Grand, in a letter addressed and delivered personally to the Minister of Transport, requested that the government in Ottawa use federal land to dispose of this toxic waste.

Saint-Basile-le-Grand is still waiting for a reply from the government. Could the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House when the government will be able to respond favourably to the request from Saint-Basile-le-Grand and what it intends to do?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must know that disposing of the PCBs at Saint-Basile-le-Grand is basically the responsibility of the government of Quebec. The federal government is willing to respect that fact but, nevertheless, has been working, and I am thinking more specifically of my colleague at the Department of the Environment, with the government of Quebec. It will continue to do so, and depending on what the government of Quebec decides to do and what its demands are, the federal government will act in terms of these respective jurisdictions, especially at the Department of Transport, because, I repeat, transport is one thing, while where the PCBs are stored is a provincial responsibility.

M. Cid Sampson (Timmins—Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, my question is again directed to the Deputy Prime Minister.

According to reports published in Chambly area newspapers shortly after the disaster, the Minister of Transport promised, on behalf of the Prime Minister, that the government would provide financial assistance to the municipality of Saint-Basile-le-Grand, matching any amount paid by the government of Quebec. I may add, Mr. Speaker, and I will quote from a report in the newspaper:

“The Prime Minister also announced that he was prepared to double provincial contributions according to the formula provided in the federal Emergency Measures Act, as the government did in the case of the tornado that struck Edmonton in 1986”.

Oral Questions

So far, Quebec has paid Saint-Basile-le-Grand \$658,607, the total bill being nearly \$2 million.

Could the Deputy Prime Minister inform the House why he did not keep his promises to the people of Saint-Basile-le-Grand?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, a few hours after the disaster at Saint-Basile-le-Grand, I went there, on behalf of the government, to give the people guarantees that the federal government would be directly involved with the government of Quebec in this matter.

My colleague ought to know, if he bothered to get the information from the government of Quebec, that my colleague at the Department of the Environment specified what the federal government's participation would be in terms of compensation—

Some hon. members: —oh, oh!

Mr. Bouchard: —yes I know, the Leader of the New Democratic Party wrote to the government. The matter is being discussed with the government of Quebec, but we must tread carefully.

Meanwhile, I think the people in the riding of Chambly would rather hear what the Leader of the New Democratic Party has to say about her position on the Meech Lake Accord.

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[English]

TRACKER AIRCRAFT

Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries. The government is in the process of tendering the mid-range tracker surveillance to the private sector at a stated cost of \$28 million over five years, a tender which people in the industry say will cost as much as \$60 million.

Why is the government going to tender at all when it already has a proposal which can do the job for \$14 million? In fact, why is the government closing CFB Summerside if it is prepared to pay private industry \$50 million to \$60 million for a job that DND now does for half that amount?

• (1150)

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that some months ago, the Department of National Defence decided to decommission the Tracker patrol aircraft from service. These aircraft are very old and will in time be replaced by appropriate and more modern aircraft. They