

Oral Questions

However, we treat this at the federal level as a very serious situation. We intend to take action based on the federal-provincial task force because the solutions lie in a concerted effort at both the federal and provincial levels.

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[Translation]

DOUBLE HULLED SHIPS

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of the Environment kept insisting that, last year, Canada had passed legislation on double hulling. She referred to the Maritime Shipping Act, which simply does not exist. She probably meant the Canada Shipping Act, which was amended last year by Bill C-121, in which the government merely announced its intention of legislating double hulled ships.

How can the Minister of the Environment justify her answer, when the legal services of the Department of Transport, her own department and the Canadian Coast Guard maintain that there is currently no legislation on double hulling?

• (1435)

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the so-called facts mentioned today by the hon. member are just as valid as those of yesterday, since my department does not even have jurisdiction over the Coast Guard.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I simply ask the minister to give an answer.

An hon. member: It is because she does not know!

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday that the Canada Shipping Act, which was passed on December 31, 1993, deals with the issue of double hulling for ships carrying oil, that is the tankers.

I also said yesterday, and I repeat it today, that if the hon. member is suggesting that all ships be double hulled in order to ply Canadian waters in any part of the country, the ports of Quebec City and Montreal will have to shut down. Somehow, I do not think this is what the Bloc Québécois wants.

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[English]

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Since the release of repeat sexual offender Larry Fisher, the RCMP has issued an internal memo stating that he will probably strike again. Over the weekend Fisher was reported sighted in my riding in the city of Dawson Creek. Local residents are

deeply concerned about the sudden appearance of Fisher in their community.

Which laws need to be changed so that dangerous offenders like Larry Fisher are never turned loose again?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am not going to comment on the case of Mr. Fisher, but I will respond as best I can to the question in general terms.

The place to start is with enforcing the laws that are already on the books. Part 24 of the Criminal Code already provides in express terms that at the time an offender is sentenced the crown attorney in the appropriate circumstances can bring an application to have the court declare that person a dangerous offender. If that occurs that person can be detained indefinitely and not released until they die.

Therefore the first thing is, as my hon. colleague the Solicitor General has pointed out, that our counterparts in the provinces must be alert to the application of that section in appropriate cases. They should ask the court to designate persons dangerous when the facts justify the application.

There can be cases which fall short of dangerousness as defined in part 24 but still require continued detention in the public interest. As the Solicitor General has said we are awaiting the results of a report being prepared at the federal and provincial levels to deal with those kinds of cases. It involves the conjunction of the criminal system which is federal and the health system which is provincial. It is our intention in collaboration with the provinces to develop a system to deal with those cases for the safety of the public in Canada.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer. I notice that once again we are hearing about reports and studies. The last thing Canadians want right now is another study into the causes of crime. This issue has been studied to death. People are demanding action from this minister.

With predators like Larry Fisher on the loose, how long does the minister plan to examine the alternatives he referred to in this House last week?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, it is easy to mock the process of study. If I may say so, I think the last thing Canadians want is ill-informed action by which government would rush to a solution which may not be effective.

My colleagues and I know that this issue is important and these cases must be provided for. We also respect the complexity of the issue and we are going to go about it in the proper way. The study will be thorough and our action will be effective. We will have results to show after we work it through with our provincial counterparts.