

Oral Questions

Liberals would congratulate me, but it will be for the next time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan): My supplementary question is for the same minister.

No progress has been made for seniors in the fight against poverty since this government came into power. There are more single women over 65 living in poverty today than there was 10 years ago. The last time pensions were raised above inflation was by the Liberal government in 1984. When is this government going to take serious action against poverty among seniors?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be honest with my friend. I will always stand up for seniors. But as long as in this country people have to fight to protect their jobs, as long as working people have to accept the lowering of their salaries to save their jobs, as long as children as you ask me every week need to be helped, I will stand by the policy I have for seniors, Mr. Speaker.

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• (1500)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Alan Redway (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence who last week announced the fact that the Toronto military supply depot was being moved to Montreal.

Metropolitan Toronto, the traditional cash cow of Confederation, is already reeling under an unemployment rate that is above the national average. Will the minister, as was done in the case of Summerside, Prince Edward Island, set up a committee to find compensation for the closing of this base?

Will the minister also advise the House whether the decision to move to Montreal is contingent upon Quebec remaining in Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, during the last fiscal year, the Minister of Finance announced a \$2 billion reduction in defence expenditures over the next five years, in addition to the \$4 billion reduction announced in 1989. With such a contribution to deficit reduction, the Department of National Defence obviously had to take steps. For instance, the Canadian forces establishment will be reduced by 11 per cent. Our depots—one in Edmonton

and one in Montreal—will be unified, which means savings of \$35 million a year. I think that was a logical and fiscally responsible decision. I think under the circumstances it was the right decision to make, Mr. Speaker.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy Saint-Julien (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade. The softwood lumber market in the United States is so brisk that the 14.48 per cent interim countervailing duty on Canadian imports has been almost completely absorbed by American consumers. In Columbus, the aggregate price of lumber increased from \$290.20 U.S. per 1,000 board feet, on March 6, to \$325.74 U.S. now.

In view of these latest developments, can the minister confirm today that the stream of sawmill closures in Canada now seems to have been contained? What does he intend to do next on that issue?

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, my friend is right. The price of lumber has indeed risen by almost \$100 as a result of the U.S. government decision. I think that he is right when he says that the better part of the increase in countervailing duties was passed on to the American consumers. Our position, at the present time, is to present a very strong position to the American administration, with the support of the provinces as well as that of the industry in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. I think that once the process regarding the countervailing duty is completed, we will have a finding in favour of the Canadian industry.

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[English]

INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Today we read about another tragic event with regard to child poverty and the death in 1987 of a child from God's Lake Narrows in northern Manitoba. I just toured those communities and of the 11 communities I toured last week not one of them has water and sewer systems. These are areas with total population in excess of 10,000 people.