

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, this is precisely why my predecessor has instituted the open skies negotiations with the U.S. These negotiations are ongoing with success and we hope to have a new agreement signed by the end of this year.

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[Translation]

NUCLEAR TESTS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment and has to do with the Russian President's visit. Our two countries share all sorts of concerns about the economy, the environment and international policy. However, the international community is worried because President Yeltsin has decided to end his moratorium on nuclear tests; they are to start again this fall.

Has the Government of Canada encouraged Russia to restore this moratorium and redouble its efforts to achieve an international moratorium?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, I know that today and yesterday, the Prime Minister had discussions with Mr. Yeltsin on co-operation in various fields. The issue of co-operation on nuclear matters also came up. He no doubt knows that some concern has been expressed publicly for several months now on the nuclear installations in the former Soviet Union, among other things.

I am waiting for a report on those discussions and I will be pleased to provide my colleague with the part on nuclear tests, the subject which concerns him, once we have an opportunity to find out what was said in the discussions between the two leaders.

[English]

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Madam Speaker, the various treaties and accords with Mr. Yeltsin which have been announced today do not include, so far as I can tell from the information which has been given us, any information or suggestion that we are trying to persuade the people of Russia to take action to ensure the moratorium on nuclear tests which is due to end this October will be continued. This is a crucial issue for all Canadians and all people throughout the world.

Will the Canadian government take advantage of this important visit and push for this moratorium to continue in the future and for it to be extended to all countries throughout the world?

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, as I just indicated there have been discussions between Mr. Yeltsin and the Prime Minister on a range of issues. Some of them pertain to nuclear safety. A nuclear safety initiative was made public today.

As the member might know there has also been some concern, probably more of it voiced in Europe and Germany, around nuclear safety power generating stations which is also related to this issue.

On the issue of testing I will have to await, as he will, an opportunity to hear what the contents of the discussions were. I will be happy to inform him as soon as I get that information.

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GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville): Madam Speaker, my supplementary is also on the Yeltsin visit and is directed to the government House leader.

The government House leader, who is from the prairies, is fully aware that three-quarters of Canadian aid to the former Soviet Union was in the form of grain credits. The Prime Minister signed a treaty with President Yeltsin in February for a five-year contract for 25 million tonnes of grain.

My question is very important to the prairies. There are now some stories and rumours that the port of Churchill may be about to close. In view of the importance of that port to prairie Canada, can the government House leader tell the House today whether or not the Prime Minister had a chance to raise the issue of grain shipments to the Soviet Union with President Yeltsin? Was the suggestion made that some of that grain should go through the port of Churchill so that all Canadian ports can benefit from increased trade with the federation of Russia?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, we know how important the market to Russia is for Canadian farmers.