

Oral Questions

legislation refers to as Canada's offers. One way or another, the Government of Canada must prepare a Canadian position.

Actually, our government would prefer to have an agreement supported by the other governments in Canada. That is what we are seeking now. However, if it is impossible to get an agreement with the other provinces, then the Parliament of Canada will have to get ready to prepare proposals for consideration by the Government of Quebec.

For the time being, I can give no indication whether there will be another multilateral conference to seek an agreement by the various governments. If it is feasible, if there is a very real possibility an agreement can be reached, then of course the Government of Canada will convene another ministerial meeting to finalize such an agreement.

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[English]

WESTRAY MINE

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

We learned this weekend that the federal government commissioned just one independent technical study before it committed \$80 million in loan guarantees to the owners of the Westray coal mine.

We also learned that the energy department bureaucrat who conducted the review spent—and I want to underline spent—a meagre 18 hours reviewing safety and other issues at this mine.

Why was the Government of Canada content to spend only 18 hours reviewing the safety aspects before pouring \$80 million into the Westray coal mine?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member already has the documentation. It is very clear that the CANMET report, which is the report to which he is referring, was a study of several other reports that had already been done and it was a report that concluded that the mine was technically feasible. It concluded that on the basis of at least three other large reports that were done by consultants.

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, the minister is contradicting his colleague, the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism somewhat. He said in the House on June 5, and I quote: "We did further studies of a technical type in order to make sure that our loan guarantee was reasonable".

We now know exactly the technical study which was done. It was an 18-hour review consisting of nine pages authorizing \$80 million for the Westray coal mine.

Again I ask the question of the Deputy Prime Minister. Why was the Government of Canada content with only an 18-hour review, a nine-page summary of information with no further technical studies done to pour \$80 million into the Westray coal mine? Why was there such gross negligence by the Government of Canada?

Hon. William C. Winegard (Minister for Science): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows, because he has had the documentation available to him for some time, that every party in the negotiation had its own interest. We had to be able to insure the bank loan.

We had the CANMET review. Eighteen months after the CANMET review we provided financial assistance for this project. ISTC undertook detailed economic and financial investigations of this project. The Bank of Nova Scotia undertook detailed technical, economic and financial investigations. The Government of Nova Scotia undertook to ensure that this project could be done, was technically feasible and could be done safely.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Louise Feltham (Wild Rose): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. Many Canadians agree that Canada has too many military bases and that military bases must be closed.

The panel formed to provide guidance for the process has recommended that the decisions for closing bases be established on the basis of national security and not on considerations of regional development.

When future closures of military bases are made, will these closures be in line with the recommendations of this committee?