

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[Translation]

**LABOUR CONDITIONS****HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN GASPÉ REGION OF QUEBEC**

**Mr. Brian Mulroney (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Right Hon. Prime Minister, I wish to direct my question to the Acting Prime Minister.

Considering the human drama that is unfolding in the Gaspé, is the Acting Prime Minister . . . But here is the Prime Minister! I shall repeat my question.

Considering the human drama that is unfolding in the Gaspé, has the Right Hon. Prime Minister met or tried to meet personally with the Premier of Quebec in order to break the stalemate on a matter that is absolutely vital to the Gaspé area?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** No, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Mulroney:** I have a supplementary, Madam Speaker.

I know the Prime Minister is starting another series of trips across the country, as he announced and will spend two or three weeks trying to meet other heads of government in order to conclude agreements. It is therefore rather surprising that he does not take five minutes to call the Premier of Quebec on behalf of the people of the Gaspé—

**An Hon. Member:** Did you call him?

**Mr. Mulroney:** The Prime Minister has referred to a \$250 million program for the Gaspé Peninsula, announced more than five months ago by a number of his ministers. Could the Prime Minister inform the House when the people in the Gaspé will be hired under this program, and could he also inform the House how many people will be involved and what the duration of their employment in the Gaspé will be under this \$250 million program?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party is asking me the same question I was asked yesterday by the Leader of the New Democratic Party.

**An Hon. Member:** He was not here!

**Mr. Trudeau:** He could have asked about what I told the Leader of the New Democratic Party yesterday, namely, that the office in Rimouski would be opened within the next few days, and that the funds we had committed would be spent as the projects were carried out. For instance, I know that as far as transportation is concerned, we have already spent \$20 million of the \$50 million that were allocated, and I can say that everything is proceeding according to plan, as far as the creation of jobs is concerned. Again, I am sorry we were

unable to reach an agreement on priorities with the Government of Quebec, but as I told the Leader of the New Democratic Party yesterday, that should not prevent us from earmarking these funds for a disadvantaged area of the province—the member for Central Nova knows what I mean—that must be helped with public funds.

**Mr. Mulroney:** Madam Speaker, it is just like the Government to appoint a public servant in an office in Rimouski to help people in the Gaspé Peninsula. That really makes a lot of sense.

**An Hon. Member:** Ask your question!

**Mr. Mulroney:** Madam Speaker, the question, in this increasingly sad and difficult situation, is as follows: In view of the fact that the plan was announced five months ago by his own Cabinet colleagues—two years ago he himself went to the Gaspé to announce the program—five months ago, he was advised that the program was imminent, will the Prime Minister, in view of the emergency situation that continues in the Gaspé and is affecting human beings, both individuals and their families, could the Prime Minister table in the House a schedule specifying the amounts to be spent and the jobs that will be created in the days, weeks and months to come in the Gaspé Peninsula, and could he do so as of today?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I fail to understand why the Leader of the Opposition is so upset about the fact we are opening an office in Rimouski. The alternative would be to run everything from Ottawa, but I think it makes sense to have Government employees in this area to help the ministers implement these projects, and I fail to see why the Leader of the Opposition should criticize this form of decentralized administration.

As far as the actual projects are concerned, as I said in my first reply, certain funds have already been committed for airports and harbour facilities. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) has gone to announce other projects as well. However, I repeat that when we announced the major development plan for this very disadvantaged region of the province, we did not do so on impulse, spontaneously, without preparation, a little like the Leader of the Opposition seems to ask questions. The problem has been given serious thought and has given rise to a program that will be spread out over 15 years, and it would be misleading the people of this area to say, as the Leader of the Opposition seems to want me to say, that we are going to spend all this money in the first month or the first year. It will be spread out over a number of years, just as the problems in this area of the province have grown over many decades. A major decision was necessary to help this region, and our ministers have done their share. Once again, I am sorry this has to be a federal rather than a federal-provincial undertaking, but I really do not see why the Leader of the Opposition is so upset.