

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, I will relay the question to my colleague and obtain for the honourable senator whatever information I can.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

REFORM OF CHILD SUPPORT SYSTEMS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Janis Johnson: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate regarding the Task Force on the Tax Treatment of Child Support, which was set up last May.

As honourable senators are aware, this task force was set up to tour the country for the purpose of soliciting the views of Canadians with respect to the tax treatment of child support payments. Will the honourable senator provide an update on the status of the findings of this task force? Will the task force be reporting its findings to the House in the near future and, if not, why?

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I cannot give you a sense of timing on the results today. I will inquire and communicate with you at the earliest opportunity.

Senator Johnson: Honourable senators, the report of the federal-provincial-territorial committee on family law and its recommendations on child support were released in January, and the task force completed its cross-Canada tour many months ago. When can we expect action on the part of the government with respect to reforming the child support system? What exactly is the government's timetable for this reform? Will legislation be tabled in the House this session?

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, this issue is very much in the minds of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Human Resources Development. I will attempt to get for the honourable senator as quickly as I can as much detailed information as I can on the process of the issue.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

INQUIRY INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Raynell Andreychuk: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. Further to the statement I made about the Airborne Regiment, will the minister and the government allow the members of the inquiry to fully investigate the advisability of disbanding the Airborne Regiment? Will they be able to look at the management of the decision-making process that led to the disbandment?

Supplementary to that question, will the inquiry also be looking into, not only the wrongdoing or alleged wrongdoing, but also the actions of those who served honourably? Will there be recommendations on how to acknowledge and pay tribute to those who served honourably within the regiment?

Honourable senators, in asking these questions, my concern is that we not wrong those in the Airborne Regiment who acted

appropriately and fairly and with honour while representing the people of Canada.

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): I thank Senator Andreychuk for her question.

Honourable senators, the public inquiry on Somalia, as I have indicated, will be broad. A three-member panel has been struck to handle that inquiry.

I will put the honourable senator's question directly to the Minister of National Defence. I honestly cannot answer the question, nor do I wish to speculate on the reply at this point.

One thing I have no hesitation in doing, however, is joining my friend and the Minister of National Defence, who has already done so, in paying tribute to the fine service of the many members of the Airborne Regiment over the years.

Honourable senators, the disbandment of the Airborne Regiment is undoubtedly to many people a very sad and tragic incident. As my honourable friend knows, over the last number of months, serious occurrences and breaches of proper conduct have come to light and as a result a decision was made. That decision does not, in my view, take away from the honour of the many people who have served in that regiment courageously and with distinction over the years.

Senator Andreychuk: Honourable senators, by way of a supplementary question, will the government indicate today, instead of awaiting the outcome of the inquiry, what action it intends to take to reassure Canadians, particularly members of the regiment who have acted appropriately, that the contribution of the Airborne Regiment will be recognized in some tangible way, either by reinstating the regiment or some other means?

Senator Fairbairn: Honourable senators, the Minister of National Defence has made it clear that the decision regarding the Airborne Regiment was a final one.

As for the remainder of the honourable senator's question, I will be pleased to forward it to the minister.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE AT SAINT-JEAN—DECREASE IN RECRUITMENT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Roch Bolduc: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I read recently that the recruitment drive for the Royal Military College at Saint-Jean has resulted in a drop of approximately 30 per cent in the number of applications compared with previous years. What does the Minister of National Defence intend to do to remedy that intolerable situation?

[English]

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, the statistic cited by the honourable senator is one of which we are aware. The Minister of National Defence made it clear in the House of Commons a few days ago that one of the reasons for the reduction in the number of applications was