

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTREQUEST FOR DETAILS ON QUEBECAIR AND REGIONAIR ISSUE
IN MANICOUAGAN REGION

Mr. André Maltais (Manicouagan): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. At the opening of the Gagnon airport on October 13 of this year, the people of Gagnon submitted a paper to me and to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport in which they criticized the quality of services provided by Quebecair, and again yesterday the town of Schefferville sent another telegram to the member for Manicouagan, stating that Quebecair had practically stopped all services in that area. Considering the fact that air transport is an essential service in our area, is the Minister of Transport prepared to provide full information on the services of Quebecair and Regionair in the northern towns in the riding of Manicouagan and also on the middle and lower North Shore, and would the Minister of Transport ask the Canadian Transport Commission to check the routes and rates for the type of airplanes used in this area, with a view to preparing specific recommendations for future use, all this in order to assist people who need air transport since there is no alternative means of transportation and air transport is thus an essential service?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, actually I think we have acted in the best interests of the honourable member, who represents a vast territory, by considerably improving local airports. We also have a study on aviation operations on the North Shore which should come out in a matter of days or weeks. As to the representations made by his constituents to me through him I think that they should also be addressed to the Canadian Transport Commission. In fact, I think this was done and subsequently the Canadian Transport Commission held a public hearing in Sept-Îles a few months ago, if I remember correctly. And why go to the commission? Because it is largely up to that body to look after the licences it grants, and when carriers do not operate effectively the commission takes it into consideration when licences are up for renewal and also when granting new licences. So, while the hon. member should certainly continue to listen to the representations of his constituents and pass them on to me, I would suggest that he might concentrate his efforts, and he has done so most of the time, on the Canadian Transport Commission.

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[English]

FISHERIES

MARITIME POLLUTION CLAIMS FUND

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and concerns Bill C-48 and some of the provisions in that bill.

The minister is aware of representations from the Canadian Labour Congress, in particular, regarding the Maritime Pollution Claims Fund, which they feel is totally inadequate to compensate fishermen, and recommendations to the minister to have that fund changed in that it should become a first recourse to fishermen. I should like to ask the minister in regard to compensation related to offshore drilling whether he will now make representations to the Minister of Transport regarding the Maritime Pollution Claims Fund, and also to his government, particularly the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to see that Bill C-48 reflects that concern of fishermen about offshore oil pollution, and that a fund be set up within Bill C-48 that gives compensation firsthand to fishermen, with that fund claimed from the polluters?

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, the issue has been one of very considerable communication between the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and myself. In fact I have given, as an example of the way an enlightened approach could be taken, the pollution claims fund administered by my colleague, the Minister of Transport, where the changes made have gone a very long way to meet the concerns of fishermen and plant workers, and generally to protect those who are earning their living from the sea.

On the question of drilling under the provisions of Bill C-48, again we have had many communications. I think the bill was very substantially improved as a result of those representations and those made by members on both sides of the House. Certainly I will continue to exercise this type of enlightened communication with my colleague, if and when it is required.

NECESSITY FOR FISHERMEN TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Madam Speaker, those on this side of the House, and particularly members of this party, really do not think there has been very much enlightened discussion on Bill C-48. It still requires court action for fishermen to claim compensation for what has been claimed by a Norwegian study to be inevitable offshore pollution because of oil rigs. I would like the minister to give some idea to the fishermen on both coasts of what his role in C-48 has been. He seems to have been particularly silent. There is no jurisdiction in that bill which gives the fishermen any confidence that the minister of fisheries is really protecting their interests, and the interests of offshore fishermen and shore workers is particularly important to the Atlantic maritime provinces. We would like to see some assurances in Bill C-48 that the compensation fund can be accessible to fishermen for what may be very, very serious economic implications to the fishermen of Canada.

Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Madam Speaker, the intention of the co-operative approach which I have used, for example, with the Minister of Transport, is exactly to avoid duplication, and in fact to make sure that those who expose the fisheries to industrial dangers are very conscious of what they are doing. Obviously it will take some time before we develop the sort of regime we have in