

Oral Questions

the Minister of Defence intend to do about the ten armed forces suicides at Valcartier? What is he doing to get to the heart of this distressing situation?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the matter of suicides in the armed forces was raised some months ago, I looked into the matter and discussed it with the chief of defence staff. We have found that the rate of suicides is lower in the armed forces than it is for the population as a whole.

There has been some concern recently about a number of suicides, specifically with troops coming back from Bosnia and Croatia. I have asked for more information on it to see whether or not there is a disturbing trend.

Any suicide, any death is tragic. The hon. member talks about morale and leadership in the armed forces. As a former distinguished general officer in the armed forces, I would hope he would discuss with his colleagues ways in which they can help to assist with morale and leadership in the armed forces, not by the comments in their questions.

The morale and leadership in the armed forces are a hell of a lot better than they are in the Reform Party.

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would be more than delighted to help him or the troops directly in any way I can.

In the meantime my question through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister is: What are you doing specifically?

The Speaker: I am sure the member would want to rephrase his question.

[Translation]

Mr. Ringma: In that case, Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary. Canadian soldiers and their families know that death is an occupational hazard. It is expected in the course of duty, but when it takes the form of ten suicides, some sort of explanation is necessary.

What steps will the minister take to reassure the families of the other soldiers that he has the situation in hand and will initiate a plan of action to resolve the problems in the armed forces?

Hon. David Michael Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the suicide rate is lower in the armed forces than it is in the general population.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, world leaders are beginning to meet in Berlin. I believe the Minister of the Environment will be travelling next week to Berlin to participate in talks aimed at stabilizing levels of greenhouse gases now threatening the earth's climate.

Most of the world's largest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases including Canada have filed shameful reports indicating that they will not meet the commitments they agreed to at the Rio Climate Summit in 1992.

Given that it is clear the world is facing an issue with uniquely large and irreversible consequences and the delegates in Berlin cannot afford to waste the opportunity to begin turning the ship around, why is it that Canada's wimpy actions on climate change are not as forceful as our resolve to preserve the fish stocks off the Atlantic coast?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I thank the hon. member for the question. It happens to be one of the few opposition questions on an issue which actually threatens the planet far more greatly than any threat for even the fish stocks.

• (1500)

In fact, the death of the cod stock is partly as a result of the global warming effect which has seen the level of the planet's temperature increase by three degrees since the beginning of time. We expect another three degree increase in the next 50 years.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Copps: Members across the way may not be interested, but the member is right. We need a stronger position and we need a stronger international position.

We are hoping that with the forward thinking proposal we are bringing forward on technology twinning we will be able to achieve the dual goals of helping developing countries meet their global warming reductions utilizing Canadian technology, but above all making sure that we meet our goals not only for stabilization but also for the reduction of this deadly problem.

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[Translation]

TRIBUTE TO JEAN-CLAUDE DEVOST

The Speaker: This concludes question period, but I would like to mention this afternoon that Jean-Claude Devost, table officer and deputy principal clerk at the journals branch, will be leaving this week to take his well earned retirement.

[English]

Jean-Claude is at our table right now. Jean-Claude, will you please stand for a moment while I read this to the House.