

*Oral Questions*

make a decision this month and we will make it known to the House of Commons very soon.

We are of the view that it would be an error for the Croats to ask for the withdrawal of UN troops to get out of that situation but they have explained to us that they are afraid the presence of UN soldiers will create a de facto division of Croatia. They are afraid it might be another Cyprus. That seems to be their political reason to move. The danger is that if troops are out of Croatia by the end of the month there will be a direct confrontation with the Serbs which we think will cause a lot of deaths.

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[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a study conducted by a National Defence researcher shows that Quebec and Western Canada are largely disadvantaged in the distribution of defence expenditures. In Quebec in particular, the shortfall is at least \$650 million per year.

How can the minister of defence explain that, with only 3 per cent of the population of Canada, Nova Scotia alone has more military personnel and as many civilian employees as Quebec, which is eight times bigger?

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, military installations were not built as part of some kind of infrastructure program to benefit various regions of the country. They were built to serve the real needs of the Canadian Armed Forces in two world wars. Since we fought two wars in Europe and since most of the troops left by ship it is natural that there would be a big military presence by virtue of the navy headquarters being in Halifax.

With respect to Quebec, obviously if the port closest to Europe is Halifax troops would not be dispatched from Montreal or somewhere else farther inland.

However, I should point out that later this year we will be opening the naval reserve headquarters in Quebec City. We have been opening a number of small naval operations along the St. Lawrence River and in the Gulf of St. Lawrence so that Quebec does have a naval presence.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all excuses are good to justify inequity. The strategic position of Ontario, for example, is completely different from that of Nova

Scotia; yet, Ontario receives its fair share of military investments.

Does the minister of defence not think that it would have been wise to go along with the proposal made by the official opposition last year and keep the military college in Saint-Jean open, in order to help correct the unfair treatment of Quebec with respect to the Canadian Forces?

[English]

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been through this argument a number of times before.

We felt that with the declining numbers of the armed forces we only needed one military college in Canada, located at Kingston.

This government is very eager that Royal Roads in B.C. and St-Jean in Quebec, those military colleges, have their facilities used for the ongoing betterment of the citizens in the region. It is for that reason that my colleague, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, negotiated a very successful agreement with the local people in the St-Jean region over the objections of the Bloc Quebecois and the government in Quebec City.

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**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT PENSIONS**

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today, budget day, represents a test of character for the government. Today we would like to find out if this government has the courage to reduce spending and the courage to hold the line on tax increases. More important, we will find out whether it has the courage to lead by example.

If the budget contains significant spending cuts it is obvious to Canadians that the first of these must be made at the top with respect to MPs' pensions.

My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. Which members of the cabinet will be setting the example of spending cuts at the top by opting out of the obscene MPs' pension plan?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it has been made quite clear that when the pension bill is approved by this Parliament there will be 60 days that members will have to consider that, including hon. colleagues in the third party.

When it comes to showing leadership we have cut taxpayer contribution to this pension plan by fully one-third, \$3.3 million, and we are showing leadership in expenditure reduction.