

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to preserve the integrity of the consultation process.

All of us in the House are involved in a unique experiment. We are opening up the whole process of budgetary consultation. We are getting rid of budget secrecy.

That really means the Minister of Finance should not comment on individual suggestions. If he does so, he will eventually make the process impossible because the budget will have been given well before its official date.

I do not intend to make specific comments on specific suggestions because I want the process to work, and that is what Canadians want.

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CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to the Canadian military personnel that served in the Persian gulf war. It is reported that Canadian personnel were administered a drug to combat potential nerve gas attacks. Many are now complaining of severe side effects referred to as gulf war syndrome.

● (1445)

Can the minister please inform the House of the progress being made to help these deserving Canadians.

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this question because it involves the long term health and welfare of the Canadian forces personnel.

In direct response to the question, we have had 12 people with symptoms similar to those voiced by the United States forces personnel. They have been seen by a Canadian forces doctor and are currently experiencing no difficulty whatsoever.

As the minister has previously stated in this House, we have not been able to determine a causal link between the chemical biological warfare agents used in the gulf and the symptoms experienced by the Canadian forces members. In fact we find evidence to the contrary.

I want to reassure the House that there is no scientific evidence that the drugs that were administered to the Canadian forces members had harmful effects. On the contrary. In fact, the

body of evidence that exists would show that everything attests to their safety and their use.

PEARSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Once again we are seeing the federal government playing politics with the economic well-being of Canada. The users of terminals one and two at Pearson airport are languishing in outdated and overcrowded facilities while the government's fatally flawed Bill C-22 is passed back and forth like a football between the Liberal dominated Commons and the Tory-run other place. This is economic planning at its shameful worst.

Can the minister advise this House what action he is taking to ensure the economic well-being of Pearson airport while this political football game continues.

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I and I am sure many members of the House and especially people who understand the importance of Pearson International Airport to the economy not only to that area of Ontario but to the entire country are looking forward to this afternoon and tomorrow because I understand that members in the other place have already indicated that they are looking very much to the position of my colleagues in the Reform Party.

I think if they support this bill we will be able to get it through the Senate and do what we have to do with Pearson which is get on with the business of running Pearson.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister's response did not tell us what he has planned for Pearson.

Under the minister's national airport plan we will not see the commencement of construction on a new facility until at least 1998. This is not acceptable. I cannot believe the minister is prepared to tell Toronto it will have to wait until past the turn of the century for needed facilities.

What is the minister doing to shorten this unacceptable delay?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with the premier of Ontario with respect to this matter. As the hon. member will know, the new Canadian airport authority at Pearson will have representation from the Government of Canada, from the province of Ontario and from various municipalities in the metropolitan Toronto area.

We have done that now. We will have concluded the transitional requirements but we are faced, and I want to tell my hon. colleague this, with a very serious problem. We have identified the people. We have the structure all set to go but our friends in