

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

VULNERABILITY OF MONTREAL REGION

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

For some time now, we have been trying to make the Minister aware of the fact that Montreal's industrial base is being eroded beyond the point of no return. The Minister has been saying that 51,000 jobs were created in Montreal during the past year. Today, however, we are informed by Statistics Canada that it was only 39,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker, and that the number of unemployed has increased by more than 1,000.

I therefore want to ask the Minister to do the honourable thing and, first of all, correct her statement on the number of jobs created in Montreal, and above all, to explain how she intends to prevent the impending disaster, in other words, the 5,000 jobs that will be lost very shortly unless the Government overcomes its inertia and does something about it.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, in September 1982, the unemployment rate in Montreal was over 13 per cent. Today, it has dropped to 11 per cent. There has, therefore, been a drop in the unemployment rate.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Hon. Member whether he was asking questions in the House in 1982, when the unemployment rate was so high. The answer is no. He remained silent.

Mr. Speaker, we will be investing \$200 million this year in Montreal, to create jobs for the men and women of that city.

SITUATION IN MONTREAL

Mr. Jacques Guilbault (Saint-Jacques): Mr. Speaker, the Minister can twist and turn the statistics any way she likes. She can ignore the fact that the jobs that were created are part-time jobs. However, there is one question she has been constantly evading and that is, whether she could inform the House what her specific plan is to prevent the impending disaster in Montreal. Two hundred thousand dollars is not enough to save 5,000 jobs that will be lost unless the Government wakes up and does something about it.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. It is not \$200,000 but \$200 million.

Mr. Speaker, between 1980 and 1984, more than 225 companies closed their doors in Canada, and 50,000 Canadians lost their jobs during that period. This was a tragedy.

● (1430)

[English]

It is for that reason that we have changed the *ad hoc* measures which the former Government took. When it saw 225 companies closing their doors what did it do? Nothing. We have changed in order to prepare long-term—

Mr. Speaker: The Minister may want to complete this under Statements by Ministers.

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ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

WELLAND CANAL LOCK BLOCKAGE

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. It concerns the Seaway blockage. Given that the reputation of Canada as a shipper which can be counted upon for the supply of a number of bulk commodities in the world market is precarious, to say the least, and given the second major mishap in less than 13 months—so serious in fact that some American authorities are calling for a takeover of the operation of the Seaway—will the Minister advise the House what action his Government is prepared to take to prevent future mishaps which can bring the Seaway to its knees?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member is aware that the St. Lawrence Seaway Authority is acting with all due dispatch to get the Seaway operational again. A contract has been awarded to Cannon for the stabilizing of the wall. Another contract has been awarded to Pitts Engineering Construction. A contract has been awarded to Acres International Limited, a firm of consulting engineers in Niagara Falls to determine the cause of the blow-out.

I think it is rather interesting to note that both the Shipping Federation of Canada and the Dominion Marine Association, which are major users of the Seaway, said that they were satisfied that neither the accident last year nor this year could have been prevented.

FUTURE VIABILITY

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is basically the same question. What exactly is the Government prepared to do on the rest of the Seaway to ensure that in future years it remains viable and that there will not be accidents due to the deterioration of the walls or the locks?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, first, we are not sure at this point in time whether the walls are in a deteriorated condition. This was a blow-out. I think the Hon. Member would expect me to ascertain the facts, which is precisely why we have appointed a consulting