

*Oral Questions*

Atlantic Container Express just a few days later said that the closure of the Newfoundland Railway would mean that its business of shipping from Montreal to Corner Brook and St. John's would increase by 12 per cent to 15 per cent, which would have a devastating effect on the freight crossing from North Sydney to Port aux Basques and Argenticia.

Now the workers in North Sydney are more alarmed than ever because the statistics, since the closure of the Newfoundland Railway, indicate that freight traffic from North Sydney to Newfoundland has declined by 70 per cent. This is despite the Government's statement that North Sydney would not be affected.

When will the Government realize it is devastating freight shipments from North Sydney to Newfoundland?

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### PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

#### ONTARIO—EFFECT OF PROVINCIAL POLICIES ON HEALTH SERVICES

**Mr. John Oostrom (Willowdale):** Mr. Speaker, the Peterson Government has announced that 101 beds at Wellesly Hospital must remain closed in order to meet budgetary restraints. In fact the Peterson Government will soon force more bed closures in all hospitals across the province as a result of its overspending in other fields. What hypocrisy!

What happened to the 1987 election promise of \$3 billion toward health care? The Peterson Government recently enacted one of the biggest tax grabs in Ontario history by raising taxes across the board, including substantial hikes in sales and personal income taxes. Yet the Peterson Government is ignoring health care, the most vital of all government services. It is apparent that the Government of Ontario places politics above the health of its citizens.

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

#### TRADE

##### CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT—WATER

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Last night, our deputy chief trade negotiator, Ambassador Gordon Ritchie, declared for the first time that during the talks with the United States, Canadian experts from the Department of the Environment and experts on our negotiating team had drafted a special clause to exclude, to exempt our water from the FTA, and that the Canadian negotiating team had never insisted on getting this exemption.

Mr. Speaker, this raises some troubling questions. First of all, why have Conservative ministers systematically denied before the House that there had ever been any intention of excluding water? Why this misleading attitude? And second, since the trade legislation has paramountcy over Canada's water policy, why didn't Canada insist on obtaining this exclusion which was judged to be necessary by our experts from the Department of the Environment?

[English]

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, it seems very difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to understand that water was never on the table in the free trade negotiations.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

● (1420)

**Miss MacDonald:** Quite frankly, the Leader of the Opposition may not want to understand that because, of course, his past references to water would lead us to believe that he indeed would have put it on the table.

**Mr. McDermid:** He would have given it away.

**Miss MacDonald:** There is no question about where this Government stands on the issue of large-scale diversions of water. We have said that there will be no large-scale diversion of water from this country. What is more, we have done something which the Liberal Party had never done in all its time in office. We have issued a water policy which expressly prohibits the exportation and the diversion of large-scale amounts of water.

I think it is about time that the Leader of the Opposition understood what this issue is all about, without trying to contrive some false approach which simply does not hold water.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** Mr. Speaker, I had known for a long time the Minister was Acting Prime Minister today, but I regret to say that she appears to have caught the contagious bombastic disease of her absent seat-mate. We might as well have been listening to the Minister for International Trade today. His philosophy when dealing with the House of Commons is simple.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Deny, deny, deny.

**Mr. Turner (Vancouver Quadra):** No, it is don't read the deal. That is number one. Don't debate the issues. That is number two. Try to bluff your way out of any falsehood you can. That is number three.

#### LENGTH OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS

**Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, may I ask the Acting Prime Minister, while she is in