

Adjournment Debate

The proposal is obsolete in view of the changed world conditions and what we are hearing from authorities in the United States and other countries. First of all, with the end of the cold war, the end of the Warsaw pact and the dismantling of the Soviet Union itself, the Soviet submarine threat to North America has ended. If there is any sub threat to the western nations it is of a totally different order, and as a result of that the U.S. Congress has frozen a similar proposal from the U.S. navy. In fact, the U.S. navy has proceeded to modernize the Labradors, and because the Labradors are twin rotor, they are far safer working on search and rescue than would be the EH-101 helicopters that DND proposes we should be spending \$52 million a crack for.

Our position is that, sure, the navy and the air force in Canada need helicopters, but for one-fifth the price they can end the proposal and can save the taxpayers billions of dollars. It is a responsibility the government should respond to.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians know that there have been drastic changes in the over-all geostrategic situation. The conflict between east and west has thankfully receded, we hope permanently, into the pages of history.

That being said, all members are no doubt aware that there are unfortunately significant areas of instability throughout the world.

The April 1992 statement on defence policy makes it clear that Canada cannot isolate itself from the world. We must be concerned about threats to the larger community of nations with whom we live, work and trade.

Specifically that April statement notes, and I quote:

Military capability is in itself an essential element of national policy, even in peacetime. The government is responsible for the surveillance and control of areas under Canadian jurisdiction, be they on land, in the air or at sea, regardless of any immediate or apprehended activity by anybody else.

There is a limit to which a nation can relinquish its defence responsibilities and continue to remain an independent country. If Canada is to maintain the capability to carry out surveillance and control of our sovereign areas of responsibility as well as operate in supportive

collective security, then we must have the equipment and expertise for a general purpose capability.

The proposed new shipborne helicopters of which we have heard so much recently will, in fact, be used in multiple roles. The helicopters will possess a wide variety of capabilities, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-shipping surveillance, and of course search and rescue. These helicopters will represent the main weapon system of the new Canadian patrol frigates and, as such, are essential to the full realization of the operational effectiveness of the new frigates.

• (2210)

I also want to add that these helicopters will contribute to the Department of National Defence support of other government departments in the roles of fisheries protection, drug interdiction, environmental monitoring, and protecting environmental resources.

Much has been made of alternative options to spending funds on the new shipborne helicopters, including modernizing the existing CH-113 Labrador fleet. Does the hon. member really want the brave men and women of the Canadian forces eventually to be flying 70-year old helicopters because these ships are to be used to the year 2035.

[Translation]

FRENCH COLLEGES

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Cochrane—Superior): Mr. Speaker, on May 4, I asked the Secretary of State why the matter of a French college in northern Ontario was dragging on so long. The Bourbeau report, which unequivocally recommended building a French college in northern Ontario, was published two years ago. The issue has moved forward very slowly. People were and still are tired of being told again and again that something is coming soon.

First of all, I would like to make my colleagues in the House aware that such a college is essential.

At present, it is sad to see young people move out, exiled as it were, to southern Ontario. The attraction of the big city and the possibility of completing their education in their mother tongue are the main reasons for this unfortunate migration. There is no doubt that northern Ontario loses a little of its future every time a student decides to stay in the big city. Of course, the ideal solution is to have a French college in our region as soon as possible.