

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I believe this matter is before the House for debate. However, the question itself is of a broad enough nature that if the hon. minister would care to I will permit him to answer.

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member's question refers to a proposal that would save Canadian taxpayers millions of dollars. It seems quite unrealistic at this time to redraw the electoral map which now has too many ridings, according to the hon. member's own party, which says that there are already too many MPs.

• (1455)

This proposal would further increase the number of members. I therefore urge the hon. member to assume his responsibilities for saving taxpayers money and to postpone this plan until later.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, we have offered to meet with the government any time to negotiate a reduction in the number of members in the House, and the government has refused to do that.

My question is on the constitutionality of this act. During the last suspension of the process, Bill C-67 in the last Parliament, considered legal opinion, indicated to a parliamentary committee at the time that there was an implied time limit for carrying out readjustment under section 51 of the Constitution Act. Delaying it past the next census was a violation of the Constitution and had an impact upon other sections such as section 42(1)(a) of the Constitution Act.

The Speaker: Order. The question itself perhaps would find a better response on the Order Paper. It is a very detailed question. I would ask the hon. member to consider putting this type of question on the Order Paper.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Fishermen in my riding are concerned that their livelihood is being threatened by a few large Canadian vessels fishing bluefin tuna off Bermuda's coast. As the parliamentary secretary knows, Bermuda is new to the bluefin tuna fishery and is not a member of ICCAT, the international body overseeing the conservation of this fragile resource.

This Canadian fishing activity in Bermuda's waters could threaten the ability of other tuna fishermen in the Gulf of St. Lawrence to fish their own quota later this year.

Would the parliamentary secretary please explain to the House and to my constituents what actions the government is taking to stop this inappropriate fishing activity?

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House the five vessels in question have been formally advised that their activities are not sanctioned by this government and that their existing licences to fish inside the Canadian zone are in jeopardy.

They have also been informed that Canadian tuna and swordfish industry representatives have been advised that the catches of bluefin tuna and swordfish by these Canadian flag vessels will be counted against Canadian quotas.

We are doing everything possible to control these vessels and hope to put an end to it.

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[Translation]

TAINTED BLOOD INQUIRY

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

In January, Mr. Justice Krever, who is in charge of the tainted-blood inquiry, said that he did not have sufficient funds and resources to carry out his mandate. Questioned by the Official Opposition, the Minister of Health said that a request for additional funds had been presented and was being considered by Treasury Board.

Can the Minister tell us if Treasury Board has finally made a decision on this request for additional funds?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we are still reviewing the request today. We will make an announcement once we have made a final decision.

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[English]

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jake E. Hooppner (Lisgar—Marquette): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Canada's grain exports are being hit hard by reduced rail movement. According to Howard Restall of XCan Grain, ships are waiting from two to three weeks for prairie canola, forcing XCan to pay as much as \$10,000 per day in demurrage. Ships are also leaving empty after collecting demurrage of up to \$350,000 without any canola.

When will the minister demand that railways honour their commitment to expediently move farmers' grain when markets demand it, instead of constantly lobbying government to allow them to reduce services?