

Statistics Canada

I have decided, therefore, to initiate a comprehensive but private examination of Statistics Canada's operations, with the undertaking to Parliament that I shall make public the conclusions of the examination, subject only to the protection of innocent people. Because of the unusually complex and technical nature of the work of Statistics Canada, I am adopting some very special measures in this examination. First, as I have already indicated, I asked several management consultants to make proposals to me for studies of Statistics Canada's management processes and structures. I have accepted the proposal by Price Waterhouse Associates, and I expect their report by February.

Let me deal with the terms of reference for their study. First I will speak about the objectives. The over-all objectives of the inquiry will be to identify areas for improvement in the management, organization, personnel and communications processes in the agency, to recommend practical solutions that may be implemented expeditiously, and to provide advice on the terms of reference and work plan for a review of the methodology employed.

● (1520)

Now I should like to speak about the scope. This study will include a review of the agency's mandate and objectives and the relevant policies and practices affecting its organizational structure; a review of the agency's organizational structure; a review of the division of responsibilities, authorities and accountability in the decision-making process; an examination of the way in which resources are deployed in the agency; an analysis of policies and influences outside the control of the agency that might affect its policies, plans and programs; a review of the procedures followed in matching the qualifications of individuals with job skill requirements; an assessment of manpower and succession planning and other practices affecting human resources and human relations; the development of guidelines for a methodology audit and the provision of co-ordination and liaison with the technical audit team; an analysis and an assessment of quality assurance practices and procedures as they relate to the application of methodology and execution of plans and programs in general; a survey of the internal and external quality audit process, including surveillance over incoming and outgoing materials; an assessment of the methods employed in transmitting information in and between sections and upwards and downwards in the agency; an examination of the process for communicating with users and the news media, including guidelines for the preparation of releases and security over confidential information.

Finally, let me refer to the timing. The study will commence today, December 10, 1979, and a report will be presented to me in early February of 1980.

I should like to go on to the second item. I am negotiating with a well-known international expert learned in statistical science to study the technical and statistical production aspects of the agency's work. As the person is not a national of Canada and does not live in Canada, I am sure the House will understand that it takes a few days to negotiate a suitable

contract with this gentleman. I shall announce the expert's name and the terms of reference of his study in a few days' time, however.

In order to help me in the co-ordination of these two studies and to assist their reports, I have secured the assistance of three senior public servants: the Clerk of the Privy Council, the Comptroller General of Canada, and the Secretary of the Treasury Board, to act as an advisory committee to me.

I am also taking a third step, which I do not wish to see misunderstood or given undue importance. I shall recommend to the governor in council that Mr. Edmund Peter Newcombe, Q.C., be named the commissioner under the Inquiries Act to investigate allegations regarding Statistics Canada made by Mr. Boris Celovsky or others. I must emphasize, however, that I have absolutely no reason to believe nor, for that matter, to disbelieve some of the observations that have been made. The commissioner will help us to dispose of these observations one way or another.

I have indicated that I shall make the conclusions of these reports public. I expect they will demonstrate that Statistics Canada, with whatever problems it might have, is, nonetheless, strong and reliable and its professional integrity is fully intact. We might learn that we have loaded the agency with so many difficult technical tasks that some problems are almost inevitable. Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, that if problems of a continuing nature are revealed, be they in methodology, personnel or organization, they will be corrected. In due course, if Parliament sees fit, I am quite prepared to have the report's conclusions, together with my plans for any remedial action, referred to a parliamentary committee for review.

Finally, let me make one thing clear. While Dr. Peter Kirkham, chief statistician, took no part in the final decisions I have announced today, I advised him of them, of course, after the decisions were made. He assured me of his full co-operation, that he welcomes my approach and he is confident Statistics Canada will emerge with its credibility undoubted.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I will give the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) a C minus for courtesy in sending copies of his statement to the leader's office only at about two o'clock. I received one copy only after he came to the House. We got the copy but I think it is fair to suggest that it would have been better had we received it earlier and, furthermore, had it contained the terms of reference of the inquiry to which he referred in his statement. At this time I will say only that perhaps this is due to inexperience, but we are asking him and other ministers to perform in that sense the same way as they asked us to do when we were on the other side.

With regard to the substance of the statement, may I say that perhaps in any circumstances there should be notice of such a statement, but in this case when the issue arose because of questions asked in the House of Commons, most particularly by the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) and