

Privilege—Mr. Langdon

[Translation]

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

AWARDING OF CONTRACT CONCERNING FRENCH TEACHING AT DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Supply and Services. On May 20, in the absence of the Minister of Supply and Services, the Hon. Member for Laval-des-Rapides directed a question to the Minister of Public Works, seeking to know why certain Quebec firms had not been given an opportunity to bid on contracts related to computer technology and French teaching to the Canadian military. Among others, he referred to Matrox, DIL International and Technogram. The Minister of Public Works replied that an investigation was under way. Can the Minister tell us what this investigation was all about and, if indeed there was an ongoing investigation, what are the findings?

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this question since it enables me to shed light on this contract award. Never was there any question of launching an investigation into the award of this \$700,000 contract because it is very much in keeping with our purchasing policy. There was a tender call, 17 firms were asked for bids, including eight from Quebec. Unfortunately the eight Quebec firms decided not to bid and, as a Quebecker, I regret that.

With respect to the suppliers mentioned in *Le Devoir*, these companies did not care to register on my Department's list of suppliers.

One last comment, Mr. Speaker. I would simply remind the House and the people who may be listening to us that anyone who wants to deal with the federal Government should first register on the list of suppliers. The Chicoutimi firm thought it was adding its name to our list when it filled in a Statistics Canada questionnaire. Would anyone having filled in a census questionnaire have the impression that his or her income tax return has been completed? I suggest that one should be serious and register properly if one wants to do business and land contracts.

● (1210)

[English]

Mr. Speaker: I would like to advise the House that I have a question of privilege from the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon).

PRIVILEGE

USE OF UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—ALLEGED FALSEHOODS

Mr. Steven W. Langdon (Essex—Windsor): Mr. Speaker, I would like to register my concern over the number of statements made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) accusing me of uttering falsehoods in the House of Commons. First, it is my understanding that is not the type of language which should be used in the House. Second, it is my understanding also that one must do what one can in raising questions on behalf of one's constituents without such language being used in an attempt to attack one.

I therefore respectfully request the Speaker to refer the question of whether falsehoods have been uttered in the course of questions this week, and I assume that is the allegation from the way the Minister put his position; I would like that question referred to the appropriate committee or have the Minister withdraw his comments. I think it is possible to have critical debate in this House without descending to that level.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my support to a reference of this question to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure. We have reached a new point of allegations of falsehoods being made, in this case by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) against my Leader and several other Members. Whether or not the technical use of that word in the past has been considered by previous Speakers to be appropriate, its repetitive use against Member after Member asking questions takes it to a new level. I urge you to have this matter referred to that committee so we can look at a new way of treating questions in the House of Commons; decide whether we agree with what has taken place and whether we want this to be continued by Ministers in their answers or, indeed, Members in their questions.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I think this is an important question and I am pleased that it has been raised by members of the Opposition. We all know that Canadians take their view of reality, at least some Canadians, from some of what is said on the floor of the House of Commons. If statements that are not true are frequently repeated in the House there is the danger that the Canadian public watching television will come to believe something is true when it is not. A complication in this case, of course, is that at least one of the Parties in the House, the socialist Party, has been quite consistently seeking to have the Government of Canada reveal the details of its negotiating posture in public in a way that would subvert and undermine the negotiating process.

Mr. Murphy: Another falsehood.

Mr. Beatty: Look who is using the word "falsehood" on the other side.