

Government Orders

• (1250)

As I said earlier, my colleague from Richelieu had tabled a motion where he suggested a ceiling and proposed copying the Quebec model that already exists. There is no need to start all over again. We are not talking about something that we have to get from nowhere. There is a model, and Quebec's political party financing legislation has been recognized all over the world as a model. But here, and for all kinds of reasons, now that the Liberal Party is in office, it is tempting to go around those people who hope to benefit from the financing of a political party in office, and who will do so. It can wait a couple years, in order to fill its coffers and, of course, to take advantage of the fact that the coffers of their former political enemies are empty and they have a lot more trouble getting financing because they are very far from power.

For all these reasons, I spoke briefly on Bill C-22. I had talked about it previously because there are too many things that were obscure in the old transaction and that the government does not necessarily want to solve. This government could have shed much more light on that issue in order to get to the bottom of the problem, but it is not really interested in doing that. It is then impossible for the members of the Bloc Québécois to support this bill. In concluding, I would even like the government to get this message well: if it wants to deal with real problems, it has a golden opportunity to connect this with the Pearson Airport issue and to put on the table a reform of political party financing which could very widely be inspired by the Quebec legislation.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in this House to discuss Bill C-22 regarding Pearson airport. The Minister of Transport stated in this House that the government decided that the agreements were not in the public interest, that the negotiating process was questionable and that there even might have been some political patronage in the Pearson airport issue. In cancelling the contract, the government is trying to negotiate amounts they consider to be fair and reasonable to compensate for expenses incurred in this transaction.

We feel that this gigantic issue is fishy in many respects, given the millions of dollars involved. It is why the Bloc Québécois refuses to support second reading of Bill C-22 because it says the principle of it is flawed since it does not provide for any measure to make the work of the lobbyists transparent. In fact, as we all know, the matter of the Pearson airport contract is closely related to the role played by lobbyists. It is very disturbing. We all know the influence lobbyists can have on the government when it comes to legislation. We all know they can get from the government millions of dollars which should probably be allocated to more constructive projects than this one. This is why we would like a royal inquiry commission to be set up. This particular issue could end up being one of the most serious cases of political patronage in the

history of Canada. It is therefore an issue which deserves attention and which could help us clarify the role of lobbyists and the wasteful spending of the government.

As I said, this very large transaction of \$700 million would have given a private firm control over Pearson airport for 57 years. Several irregularities can be found in the process. The bidding process took only 90 days, that is three months, a period of time which is quite unusual. Only two firms participated in the bidding, one directly linked to the Conservatives, the other to the Liberals.

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Of course, the firm which was close to the then Conservative government was chosen. That firm was not required to give any guarantee of financial capacity. Sure enough, it got in financial trouble later on.

Then, there was a merger with a firm which was close to the Liberal Party. Part of the reason why the government is attempting, with Bill C-22, to give financial compensation to lobbyists is because many of them are friends of the Liberals, who are now in power.

During the electoral campaign, the Prime Minister promised to bring to light the circumstances under which the agreement had been reached and to cancel the deal. It is done, the deal was cancelled, but we are still waiting for an explanation on how it was reached in the first place. There was only an in camera inquiry conducted by a former Liberal minister from the Ontario government who was close to the Liberal Party.

In fact, the only purpose of Bill C-22 is to cover up the whole thing without getting to the bottom of it. The government wants to determine, without Parliament having one word to say about it, the amount of potential compensation to be given to those thwarted investors.

Imagine! The government wants to have all the powers, to determine the amounts to be paid and to decide to whom those amounts will be paid. What a great way to deal with their friends. That is why the Bloc Québécois is asking for a royal commission of inquiry. That is the only way to know if the investors who were involved in this deal have to be compensated, to determine the amount of compensation and to know the role that lobbyists played with the government.

Bill C-22 is unsatisfactory in several respects, and above all, it falls short not by what it says but what it does not say. According to the government, the bill sets no limit on the amount of potential payments and does not prevent negotiations. It says what the government is prepared to consider and what it is not prepared to consider. It says negotiations may not continue indefinitely. However, the nature of such payments should be specified. This bill should specify the kind of payments that may be made and not the kind of payments that will not be made.