

## CMHC ADVERTISEMENT—INFORMATION RELATING TO HOUSING PROVISIONS

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for housing, who chose his response very carefully. He indicated that there had been no publication prior to a certain date. As he knows from the exchange yesterday, what is at issue here is not the date of publication but the date of advance release of information contained in the budget. The minister has said that he knew nothing about the contents of the budget on November 10, although Vickers and Benson advertising was reserving space in his name on November 9, the day before he says he knew anything.

**An hon. Member:** So what?

**Mr. Clark:** "So what," the Liberals ask. "So what" about the breach of budget secrecy. "So what" about the waste of public taxpayer money.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Clark:** My question to this "so what" minister of this "so what" government is very precise. Can the minister tell the House of Commons exactly to whom this detailed budget information was given? To what individuals, inside or outside government? When was it given, and on what authorization was this detailed budget information given?

**Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works):** Madam Speaker, I have to say again to the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition that no material was released from the government to the public or to anyone until after the Minister of Finance had completed his budget speech in this House on budget night. I wish to make that clear. There was no breach of secrecy whatsoever.

As the minister reporting to this House for the CMHC I am discouraged at the thrust of questions such as this one from the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition. Over the last three weeks the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the New Democratic Party have been tripping over one another to release to the public secrets of what they perceived and thought to be a secret document prepared for budget consideration.

● (1450)

## QUERY RESPECTING PUROLATOR FIRM

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** The minister's revised position now is that there was no information made available to the public. It will be interesting for the House to know what he defines by the "public" because of their contractual relations with Vickers and Benson, Purolator and others. We would still like to know the exact information and dates on which that detailed budget information was made available outside the bureau of the office of the Minister of Finance. We would like to have that information.

*Oral Questions*

I should like to ask a question about Purolator, the organization which carried this advertisement to some 140 newspapers, by the minister's evidence, across the country. On what precise date and by whose authorization, and by whose foreknowledge, was the information made available to Purolator?

**Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works):** The preparation of the material in question was undertaken by officials of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation who worked with me, as I have indicated, over the last few months, giving advice to the minister in anticipation that there would be relief offered in the budget to the mortgage renewal situation. Because of that, space was reserved in the newspapers, on my instructions. At eight o'clock on the evening of the budget I indicated that the material, as I understood it, could be released as reflecting the position of the government.

**An hon. Member:** You did not say that yesterday.

## REQUEST FOR REFERRAL TO PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition):** This statement is contradictory to what the minister said yesterday in the House. Let me ask the Secretary of State of Canada a question regarding Canada Media Corporation to which this government is paying over \$2 million to do the job that apparently Vickers and Benson is doing. Why was Vickers and Benson involved in this particular transaction if the Government of Canada has retained Canada Media Corporation at \$2 million to do exactly what Vickers and Benson did in this case?

Because there apparently was the issuance of budget information released outside the office of the Minister of Finance prior to its publication in the budget, in the House, on the evening of November 12, by the minister of housing's admission, and in light of the fact there is this controversy about the possible premature release of this information to newspapers across the country, will the minister give this House an undertaking that he will refer this whole question to the appropriate committee of this House so that we can put detailed questions and receive detailed answers as to exactly what went on here, who was told budget information prior to its publication, what was the role of Vickers and Benson and the role of Canada Media Corporation?

**Hon. Gerald Regan (Secretary of State):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure I can give the hon. member any information that will help him in his witch hunt. I suggest to the hon. member that I may be able to give him a better understanding of the system with which he is concerned. First of all, an advertisement that is placed by a government agency, such as CMHC or Crown corporations, does not usually follow the same procedure as advertisements that are placed by government departments. It would be less likely that CMHC would have occasion to be involved in such a circumstance or the cabinet committee on communications.

In relation to the other part of the question, that might be more properly directed to the minister. I should like to point