

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS

QUERY WHY GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO ESTABLISH PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO ACTIVITIES OF CANADA LANDS CORPORATION

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Minister of Public Works. Considering there are indications of patronage and questionable practices involving the Canada Lands Corporation at Mirabel, why is the Minister refusing to order a public inquiry into the Corporation's dealings? Does the Minister really believe there is no reason to order such an inquiry or have the Government's influential friends persuaded him not to order a public inquiry?

[English]

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, after reviewing the reports of the Auditor General, and the special audit of our own Department, they indicate that there has been no misappropriation of funds, and that there has been nothing done that is untoward or impeaches the integrity of any of the officials. I think that we have responded well in ensuring that, from now on, new management practices will be imposed and accepted, and that indeed is the case. That is an appropriate discipline to follow in these circumstances.

[Translation]

REASON FOR MINISTER'S REFUSAL

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre): Mr. Speaker, the answer does not reflect favourably on the Minister of Public Works. Contracts were awarded without tender. There was a management committee that acted unlawfully. They made all kinds of expenditures without having the authority to do so. Why is the Minister refusing to conduct a public inquiry into the affairs of the Canada Lands Corporation?

[English]

Hon. Stewart McInnes (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I categorically reject the suggestion that things have been done without approval. It is true that because of a misunderstanding of the authority of the corporation they did let contracts. But subsequently they applied to Treasury Board and did receive approval. That is why I am suggesting that nothing has been done wrong.

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INDIA—PROTECTION OF CANADIAN CITIZENS

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey—White Rock—North Delta): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and it has to do with human rights concerns in India.

Oral Questions

In Canada there is continuing concern that the Government of India tends to be quite cavalier with respect to human rights violations and civil rights violations.

Can the Secretary of State for External Affairs assure this House that Canadians who are travelling in the Punjab will have the full protection of our High Commission in New Delhi, and that officers from New Delhi will be visiting the Punjab to ensure that Canadians there are being afforded full protection under the law?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, certainly I can offer the House and Canadians who might be travelling to India the assurance that the consular and other facilities of our High Commission in Delhi will be available to them in the Punjab and elsewhere.

There have been particular cases that have been previously discussed in the House, which I have also discussed or had discussed with the Indian High Commissioner to Canada. There are areas of continuing concern, and we intend to continue to follow them vigilantly.

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FISHERIES

TOXIC MUSSELS—MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE OF ISSUE

Mr. George Henderson (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and it concerns the broadcast on CBC *Radio Noon* of an interview given on December 7.

The Minister is reported to have stated, "I and the Minister of Health, Mr. Epp, were made aware of the symptoms where some people became ill about a week ago and we took immediate action to send a notice to the producers of Prince Edward Island—"

We know that "immediate action" that the Minister is talking about, Mr. Speaker, is a "stop order" that was issued on November 29 to the shippers in Prince Edward Island.

That is backed up by the Minister of Health and Welfare's own chronology for November 29 when he stated that, as a routine precautionary measure the shippers of mussels from P.E.I. were requested to hold further shipments pending further investigation.

That is clearly on November 29, Mr. Speaker, and this statement clearly refers to November 29. Will the Minister come clean and tell us exactly the date that he knew when the mussels were toxic?

Hon. Thomas Siddon (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans): Mr. Speaker, first the reference to "about a week ago" is not very precise.