

Routine proceedings

[Translation]

Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, the minister said there will be cut-backs at Canada Post. Well, this is not quite true because if this is a reference to subsidies concerning publications it is in fact a subsidy offered to companies that publish magazines and small newspapers, mainly weeklies, to enable them to sell papers at prices Canadians in rural areas can afford to pay. Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) is familiar with the town of Hawkesbury in my riding. Indeed I believe his wife was born in Hawkesbury and that he goes to my riding quite often. He would know just how important it is to publishers of small newspapers and magazines to do everything they can so that as many Canadians as possible have access to the news out of rural ridings.

I do not see this as a charitable gesture. I rather think it is intended to maintain proper balance between small newspapers in the various regions of Canada and the major dailies in urban centres. The same goes for magazines. Sure enough, the widely published magazines can do without government assistance, but most smaller Canadian publications will be hard-pressed to face higher costs.

[English]

A little earlier I consulted my colleague, the member for York West. He mentioned to me some features of this new so-called Immigration Cost Recovery Program. He reminded me that in 1984 when this government was sworn into office, the cost of processing an immigration document was zero. It was then set at \$125 and today it is \$250. A new Canadian or anyone else who wants to sponsor their brother, mother, or sister in Lebanon or another country will now have to pay \$250 in order to be able to present an application to the government across the way.

Not all new Canadians are rich. Not all people applying to come to this country are rich. As a matter of fact, in many cases it is the opposite. They have, of course, many resources in terms of their energy and their willingness, but their financial resources are very often small. These potential new Canadians deserve our compassion and should be assisted in a fairer way than

charging them \$250 before we decide whether or not we want to roll out the welcome mat.

My colleagues, the member for Ottawa West and the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and I will be making further comments later this afternoon on the cuts announced today and this cost recovery package.

I want to remind the minister of one topic where I think he is in error, and that is the cutbacks at External Affairs and International Trade. We learned this week that for the first time in many years, we now find ourselves with a trade deficit. That is all the more reason why the minister should look at the expenditures of those departments. But not to take the money out of the department, not to cut back. Reallocate it, make better use of it, and even increase those budgets in order to ensure that we can once again find our place in international trade and have the trade surpluses that we have had in this country in prior years.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, I must say I could not believe what I heard from the President of the Treasury Board. What he said today in the House of Commons is an insult to the intelligence of Canadians everywhere in this country, to think that they are going to buy this kind of line. Here he is, the artful dodger of the cabinet. It reminded me of the old riverboat gambler who would play out and lose a couple of hands to lure in the gamblers and then put it to them.

He is trying to lure in Canadians today. If I had the opportunity, the first question I would like to put to the minister would be, how much is the government going to spend on convincing Canadians that these are serious cuts he has announced today? What are those expenditures going to be?

What is this all about? The government has on its hands a goods and services tax of 9 per cent or 7 per cent that has been rejected by people right across this country. Virtually every single organization that has spoken out on this issue has been against it. The government has to find some way to recoup and to try to convince, or fool with a snow job, a con job, a smoke and mirrors trick, to give the impression that the government is cutting back on its expenditures. The President of the Treasury Board has the gall to stand up and announce a number of these cosmetic cuts today.