

Oral Questions

How can the government then justify the actions of the Minister of the Environment who rewarded his leadership campaign manager with taxpayers' money? Does the Acting Prime Minister still think that there is "no problem here"?

Hon. Mary Collins (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Environment) and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I am sure my hon. colleague or members of his caucus have people who have worked with them over a period of time who on their own time undertook other activities whether related to their past leadership convention or other kinds of political activities.

People employed by the government on a contract basis are quite free to participate in other kinds of political activity after they have fulfilled the requirements of their contract. I assume that is what Mr. Small has done.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, assume my eye. What we have here is the minister who said one thing and Mr. Small who said something that was directly opposite.

Canadians have a right to know which of the two, if either, is the truth. That is what is at stake.

[*Translation*]

I would like to ask the minister this: Can she finally tell us the truth? Did Mr. Small work for the leadership candidate at the same time as he held a government contract, yes or no? That is all we want to know.

[*English*]

Hon. Mary Collins (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Environment) and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, let me assure my colleagues once and for all that Mr. Small was employed on a contract by the department to undertake certain activities, certain responsibilities.

He fulfilled those responsibilities in every way. What he did with the rest of his time obviously was up to him.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Madam Speaker, the Minister of State for the Environment is skating better than Wayne Gretzky these days.

Last week the Minister of State for the Environment said that no contract was given in excess of \$50,000. We now know that that is wrong.

Last week the minister said during Question Period that Mr. Small was not the campaign manager of the Minister of the Environment. We now know that that is wrong.

Last week the Minister of the Environment said: "When he came on board the team to work during this race he resigned his position with the department". We now know that is wrong.

I want to ask the Minister of State for the Environment what actions this minister and the government are taking to investigate properly this conflict of interest and to recover taxpayer funds which have been used improperly to subsidize a Tory leadership race.

Hon. Mary Collins (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Environment) and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, again it is not very difficult to put forward the answer.

Mr. Small was employed under a contract for the Department of the Environment to carry out certain responsibilities. He carried out those responsibilities. The taxpayers' dollars were used very effectively in the work that he did for the department to follow up the UNCED process and related to the green plan.

I can assure my colleague that taxpayers' dollars were indeed used appropriately in the employment of Mr. Small.

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Madam Speaker, Treasury Board rules make clear that contracts cannot be split to avoid the requirements of the Treasury Board rules on the letting of contracts.

All contracts over \$50,000 are to be publicly tendered to give every Canadian an opportunity to do that work.

In the case of Mr. Small contracts were systematically broken up to less than \$50,000 to deny Canadians the opportunity to compete for that work and to guarantee that Mr. Small was given the work. In one case the contract was exceeded by \$33,000; not by \$1, not by \$10, not by \$100, but by \$33,000.