

INCOME TAX

CASHING OF REFUND CHEQUES—DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED
BY RECIPIENTS

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue who will know that a number of income tax refund cheques are now in the mail. Does he know that in fact recipients are having a great deal of difficulty cashing those refund cheques if they do not have an account in the bank where they present the cheques to be cashed? Does he realize this is the policy of most banks across the country because of the number of cheques stolen in the mail? Does the Minister know how many cheques are stolen in the mail, in other words, not received by the proper recipients, and why is the Minister not directing his Department to send the refund cheques by registered mail?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Madam Speaker, the problem the Hon. Member has raised is not peculiar to Government cheques alone, for anything which is sent through the mail may be stolen, just as any parcel which is delivered by other courier services.

As to the number of income tax refund cheques which may be stolen in the mail, I must confess that I have no idea. Perhaps the question ought to be addressed to the Department of Supply and Services whose responsibility it is to print the cheques and mail them.

I believe that the practice of financial institutions is to ask for a deposit. Would it be possible to make it more flexible? I think that the Minister of Finance would be glad to convey the Hon. Member's concerns to the Inspector General of Banks.

[English]

REQUEST THAT CHEQUES BE SENT BY REGISTERED MAIL

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Madam Speaker, the point I am trying to make to the Minister is that financial institutions across the country, indeed businessmen generally, are very leery of cashing income tax refund cheques because they know there is an epidemic of theft of these cheques from the mail. Why does the Minister not make it a policy of his Department that refund cheques go out by registered mail, recognizing that there is an added cost but also recognizing that the Government has had that money in its possession for upwards of three months and has drawn interest on those funds?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): On many occasions, Madam Speaker, we have heard in the House the Hon. Member who has just asked a question express concern over Government expenditures. On one hand, I am convinced that he is aware of the fact that the benefit derived from sending income tax refund cheques by registered mail would be definitely offset by the additional expenses incurred by the Government. On the other hand, I am not sure that

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financial institutions would be prepared to show more flexibility when cashing those cheques. Still, I will gladly look into the pros and cons of the Hon. Member's suggestion.

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[English]

SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

DEFINITION BY SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General who is finally getting some good advice because he is sitting there talking to my colleague from Durham-Northumberland. Earlier in question Period the Solicitor General said that his definition of the Security Service would stand scrutiny by the committee. Will it withstand that scrutiny in the same way his policy of gating withstood the scrutiny of the Supreme Court of Canada?

Hon. Bob Kaplan (Solicitor General of Canada): Better!

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RAILWAYS

ALLOCATION OF ORDERS FOR NEW ROLLING STOCK

Mr. Geoff Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and has to do with yesterday's awarding of the hopper-car and coal car contracts, whereby the industry in Hamilton came out on the distinctly short end of the stick. National Steel Car traditionally gets 40 per cent of the new grain car manufacturing business and it is now down to 35 per cent. It was bypassed altogether on the coal car contract.

Why did the Minister allocate these contracts under the special recovery program, when this was being discussed last Fall, and it was known that the CN yards in Transcona, Montreal and Moncton had, as it were, the inside track? Was National Steel Car considered at all in so far as getting a piece of that coal car contract was concerned?

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): Madam Speaker, National Coal Car got quite a piece of it. As a matter of fact, it got an order for 483 hopper cars, 35 per cent of the order. We followed the usual practice in this matter, a practice which has been used four or five times in the past ten years. The criterion is simply that the one with the best price gets 40 per cent; the one with the second best price gets 35 per cent; the one with the third best price gets 25 per cent. In the past the Hamilton company came up generally with the best price and it would get the 40 per cent. This time Marine Industries in Sorel was lower. As a matter of fact, Sorel bid at a lower level than it had bid the last time around and that is why it won first prize.

Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Madam Speaker, with the involvement of Canadian National some of us in Hamilton