

Oral Questions

The Hon. Member knows that since the accident occurred, the Saskatchewan Department of the Environment has had officials there. The AECB has had officials there. We have sent our officials, and the company is conducting a study. Next week the two officials who have gone to the site on behalf of Environment Canada to inspect the situation will be in Ottawa. I will be glad to invite the Hon. Member to the briefing session that I will organize on that occasion, so that he will be educated on the issue that he is trying to raise in this House.

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NATIONAL REVENUE**HIRING OF CONSULTANT—REQUEST THAT REPORTS BE MADE PUBLIC**

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. After weeks of denying in the House, and elsewhere in public, the crisis that exists in his Department, the Minister today made the incredible announcement that he had hired a private consultant to tell him how to do his job. Will the Minister undertake that, immediately upon their receipt by him, all the consultant's reports will be tabled in the House of Commons and made available to the Canadian public, or will the coverup in which he has been engaging continue?

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, in the preliminary remarks of the Hon. Member we see an obvious sign of bad faith on his part. For weeks he has been drawing some problems to the attention of the House. The Government and I, as Minister of National Revenue, have those concerns in mind. As I said this morning, I had the opportunity to discuss those matters with my colleagues. Today we have given a positive answer to those concerns. The Hon. Member says that it is a recognition of something bad. There are always ways to improve any system. What we must show to the taxpayers is the will to improve a situation. Indeed, the final report prepared by Mr. Farlinger will be made public.

Mr. Beatty: The problem is not bad faith. The problem is a bad Minister.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: Let them shout.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people want the Minister to answer this question. If he does not know what is wrong with his own Department, if he needs a private consultant to tell him what he should be doing, why does the Minister not do the honourable thing, resign, and allow the Prime Minister to appoint Woods Gordon as Minister?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, when someone does not have the courage to carry his arguments to their logical end, he attacks someone else. This is what the Hon. Member is doing. We are concerned and some taxpayers feel that they might be abused. We would not want the efficiency of the system to be achieved at the expense of the taxpayers or to trample on their rights ignoring the respect owed to them.

We have therefore asked someone who is objective and independent for advice and recommendations to improve if possible the administration of extremely rigorous laws, especially the Income Tax Act.

Mr. Speaker, asking for independent advice does not mean that you do not know how to correct problems. It means that you want what is now being done internally to be evaluated objectively, confirmed and even improved if possible.

Second, I want to ask the Hon. Member to reflect on the fact that businesses, large and small, regularly ask consultants for objective advice on the way to improve their operation. This study indicates that the Government is responding to the concerns of Canadian taxpayers and that it wants to take action instead of simply making totally negative criticisms.

[English]

DEPARTMENT'S PRACTICE IN DEALING WITH NOTICES OF OBJECTIONS FILED BY TAXPAYERS

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Revenue. I understand that there is another significant change in policy that the Minister has not announced, and of which many Canadians are not aware. It has to do with the collection of taxes. I have checked this with Mr. MacDonald of his Department, who, I believe, is in charge of this particular matter. Will the Minister confirm that where there is a notice of objection filed by a taxpayer, in circumstances where there has not been an audit on his file, collection has been postponed until it is put through the local appeals branch of the district office? This will have a very significant effect, especially with regard to artists, in the collection of taxes. Will the Minister announce that publicly to Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Bussières (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, in cases where, in the judgement of assessment supervisors, the assessment notices seem questionable, we have the power to delay the collection of taxes until further reassessment and review the amount due if required.

[English]

TAX COLLECTION POLICY

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, this is a dramatic change in policy. Now, instead of collection initiating right at the time that the person receives it, what the collection