

Privilege

the Prime Minister and Mr. Mulroney took place on September 27 at around 1.30 p.m., thus after the Tuesday morning cabinet meeting. The question is therefore pointless.

That being said, what is important is that the matter has been dealt with in a way that is fair to all Canadians, including Quebecers. That was this government's aim. We did exactly what we said we would, that is if there was written evidence of an agreement, we would reimburse Quebec, and that is what we did.

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● (1200)

[English]

WATERWAYS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. The people of eastern Ontario are greatly concerned with the suggestion that the hours of operation for the Trent-Severn and Rideau waterways are going to be reduced. Such a reduction would greatly affect tourism and all associated businesses.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage assure us that the hours of operation of the Trent-Severn and Rideau waterways will not be reduced?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to give our colleague a position report on this important issue.

As he knows, there is an operational review concerning the Trent-Severn waterway and the Rideau Canal. Some recommendations have been made in that operational review concerning hours of operation.

Extensive consultations were carried out during the summer by stakeholders and users. An independent working group has been set up to examine the results of these consultations and I expect a report to be in my hands on October 15.

I can assure my colleague that we will take very much into consideration the representations that have been made by users and stakeholders.

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PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw to your attention the presence in the gallery of the Right Honourable Douglas Hurd, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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[Translation]

PRIVILEGE**COMMENTS BY PRIME MINISTER**

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, on September 28, in this House, the Prime Minister, answering a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition, said and I quote: "If conversations took place between Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bourassa, I would be delighted to know what they were about. I called Mr. Mulroney, who did not give me an answer".

This statement by the Prime Minister, which caught our attention, is the subject of our question of privilege since it was categorically contradicted by the member for Sherbrooke who said yesterday: "I made inquiries, and I later found that before Question Period yesterday, the Prime Minister knew that his predecessor had promised the Government of Quebec he would submit to his government a request to compensate Quebec for referendum expenses".

Moreover, a press release from the office of the President of the Privy Council and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs clarifies the whole issue, contradicting the statement made by the Prime Minister.

By his behaviour the Prime Minister impeded the Leader of the Official Opposition and members of the House in the discharge of their duties since the nature of the answer he gave during Question Period changed our line of questioning. The Leader of the Opposition and members of the House were asking questions pursuant to Standing Order 37 and as such were entitled to a valid answer enabling them to carry on their duties as parliamentarians.

In our view the Prime Minister's behaviour clearly constitutes contempt as defined by May, page 136, nineteenth edition:

Any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any member or officer of such House in the discharge of its duty, or which has a tendency to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

● (1205)

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, given the facts I mentioned, I respectfully ask that you rule that the behaviour of the Prime Minister on September 28 constitutes an obstruction to the discharge of the duties of the House and of the Leader of the Opposition and declare votable a motion to refer the issue to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with a view to getting to the bottom of this whole thing, and reviewing the Prime Minister's answers and behaviour by calling wit-