

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF SPEAKER OF THE CONGRESS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF GUATEMALA

Mr. Speaker: As well I wish to draw the attention of Hon. Members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Dr. Luis Alfonso Cabrera Hidalgo, Speaker of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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SUPPLY AND SERVICES

CF-18 FIGHTER AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE CONTRACT—REQUEST
FOR REFERRAL TO AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Right Hon. Prime Minister. It concerns the answer of the President of the Treasury Board to the question of whether or not to refer all relevant documents to the Auditor General. Surely the Prime Minister realizes that the time to clear the air about the contract is now, not next year when the Auditor General might look at the contract in due course. Would he agree to having that documentation and the contract referred to the Auditor General, as was requested by my Leader?

[Translation]

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Auditor General reports to this House. If we on the Government side were to try and influence the Auditor General, I think my hon. friends opposite would be the first to protest such action. The Auditor General is perfectly free to scrutinize these documents in the course of his duties, and I am sure he will do so.

[English]

REQUEST FOR IMMEDIATE REFERRAL

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, that answer is complete rubbish. My first question was directed to the Prime Minister who has made much—and rightly so—of the issue of national reconciliation. Given that this issue has exacerbated regional tensions in the country, and in the interest of national reconciliation, would he not have the air cleared now in respect of the integrity of the Government's position in the matter and agree that the Auditor General look into it now, not next year?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, despite fear of repeating myself, the Government does not direct the Auditor General. The Auditor General is a servant of Parliament. He is free to act as he so chooses. This is an important and complex issue. I am sure he will be very interested in looking into all the details. As a Government, as we have always done, we will be most co-operative in making the information available to him.

Oral Questions

BID SUBMITTED BY IMP OF HALIFAX

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. He must be aware that on October 24, 1986, the Minister of Public Works, through the media, informed IMP of Halifax that it was still in the running. To the dismay of that particular consortium and the people in Atlantic Canada, we found out from the President of the Treasury Board that its application had been dismissed because of technical insufficiencies months before that date. In view of the knowledge about the Minister of Public Works misleading the people of Halifax and IMP, what is the Prime Minister prepared to do about it?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is referring to the part of the submission process which had to do with repair bids. Initially we had asked three consortia to present bids to the Government for this important contract. The three bids were found to have some technical defects. Some were more serious than others, I will admit. However, in the sense of fairness and equity, and since we were asking for a repair bid, we thought it only equitable that we ask all three, after explaining to each one the details of the deficiencies, to try to bring forth a repair bid that would address those deficiencies. That is why we included all three throughout the process.

REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE REFERRAL

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister wishes—and I am certain he does—to protect the integrity and confidence of the bidding process with regard to this particular contract and future contracts, does he not think it fair and appropriate, under the circumstances and because of the many unanswered questions, that all documentation either be referred to the Auditor General as requested by my colleagues, or that the Minister and all documentation be presented before a parliamentary committee so that Canadians will have an opportunity to review firsthand all unanswered questions regarding this most important tool of economic development?

[Translation]

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I have conscientiously answered all the questions put to me in the House. As I said before, I am willing to make available any information that is not protected by a business confidentiality clause.

Mr. Speaker, a decision was made by the Government, a decision that has its merits, and if you are against that decision, I wish that once and for all, you would announce your position one way or another and let Canadians know where the Opposition stands on this issue.