

Mr. Alexander: It was close.

Mr. Andre: My remarks were that there is another consortium of Canadian companies on the verge of making a takeover bid. My supplementary question is: Given that Husky shares rose from \$28.75 to \$35.75 in the last week of trading and, indeed, \$4 of that was in the last day, within a few hours, could the minister indicate whether the government has taken any steps to investigate allegations that insiders who are privy to Petro-Canada's plans may have profited from this inside knowledge?

Mr. Gillespie: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a red-herring. The hon. member probably realizes that the directors of the stock exchange have already indicated that they will initiate an investigation to see whether there had been any insider knowledge and whether that insider knowledge had been used improperly.

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NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION

POLITICAL CLEARANCE OF MAJOR CONTRACTS IN QUEBEC

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, all the ministers that I wish to direct my questions to are absent, but perhaps I could proceed and see how well the system of acting ministers works. I had intended to ask the minister of urban affairs or the Prime Minister if either of those gentlemen would tell the House whether, while the current ministers of justice, defence and the treasury board were ministers responsible for the National Capital Commission, it was the practice to clear politically major contracts awarded by that agency in Quebec with the Quebec campaign chairman of the Liberal party, who at that time was Senator Marchand and whose post is now held, I believe, by the minister for federal-provincial relations.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take note of this question. In all matters pertaining to government administration, the ministers are advised of projects the moment such projects are submitted to the cabinet, but I do not quite see to what the hon. member is referring. When an hon. member is appointed minister, he or she is advised of what is going on inside the government.

[English]

Mr. MacKay: My supplementary to the Minister of Finance is this: Could he indicate as Acting Prime Minister, whether it is still the practice of the government to require political clearance for major contracts of the NCC as it was in September of 1975 when, in minutes of a meeting between the then minister of urban affairs, the now Minister of National Defence, and the then chairman of the NCC, Mr. Edgar Gallant, when matters were being discussed such as the Rideau Centre, the International Women's Year workshop and

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the Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent statue, the following appeared on page 2 of the minutes under paragraph 9:

The minister wants to make sure that the firms chosen for major contracts of this sort are cleared politically with the Ministers responsible, through his office.

These minutes were taken by Helen Tomlinson who, according to the government directory, is now special assistant to the Minister of Supply and Services.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I do not see anything wrong with that statement. Whenever projects are considered for this or that part of the country, we must make sure that everybody has been consulted. It is quite normal for inter-regional consultations to be held in a cabinet such as we have in Canada.

[English]

Mr. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, consultation is one thing and political clearance is another. I wanted to ask the Minister of National Defence a question but I will ask the acting minister, now that the minister is in his new portfolio as opposed to the one he occupied when these minutes were taken, has he issued a directive in his new portfolio that all major contracts are to be cleared politically through his office with the ministers responsible? I am thinking of some very major defence contracts.

[Translation]

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I shall take note of the hon. member's question. As I said, it is certainly important that, under any circumstances, each and every minister be aware of what the government is doing.

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[English]

HOUSING

MORTGAGE DEFAULTS UNDER AHOP

Mr. Dean Whiteway (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Prime Minister I will address my question to the Acting Prime Minister. It has to do with the CMHC, AHOP default in mortgages' statistics for the last several years. A few weeks ago I contacted CMHC for these figures and they informed me they had to be cleared by the Minister of State for Urban Affairs. The Minister of State for Urban Affairs has yet to authorize release of these figures from CMHC. Would the Acting Prime Minister tell the House whether or not it is cabinet policy to withhold this kind of information?

● (1422)

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I think it is absolutely normal that an agency of the Crown consult the minister responsible on things that happen in different organizations. I see absolutely nothing wrong in the question of the hon. member: I think when a minister wants to be responsible in his department, he should be lauded for it.