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change of Ministers, which also delayed the introduction of this, or the final compliance, if you like, with the Treasury Board ruling on this, and hence there was quite a delay, if you like, before we actually agreed that we would stay at the \$100,000 plateau, and for anything above \$100,000 in fact we would go out through a competitive proposal approach.

Mr. Neil: But surely until such time as the regulations were changed, you should have obeyed the regulations as they existed, regardless of the fact that they created problems for you. That is what regulations are for, surely—that you obey them.

Mr. A.D. Wilson: With respect, Mr. Chairman, the regulations call for—without the authority of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Public Works may enter into contracts at certain threshold levels. We got the authority of the Treasury Board to enter into these contracts.

Mr. Anguish: What is the threshold of the Minister's signing authority?

Mr. A.D. Wilson: \$100,000.

Mr. Anguish: His is \$100,000?

Mr. A.D. Wilson: That is today.

Mr. Anguish: I also do not, in all respect to you, Mr. Mackay, buy your argument about the hardship placed on the consulting firms, because if I understand the marketplace properly, if everyone had to tender in competition for these contracts that exceed \$100,000, eventually their cost of preparation time in preparing their tenders for these contracts would be ultimately reflected in the price that they submit to you and the government would pay for it anyway. So I do not buy your argument about it being an imposition or a hardship on the consulting firms, especially when you are talking about contracts of that size. Ultimately they would be reflected in the system of the marketplace when their contracts are provided.

Mr. Mackay: I agree with you that eventually the clients, if you like, pay for the work that is involved in putting proposals together. But we are still getting representations from the consulting fraternity even today. We have been under way now for a year. We are still getting representations from the fraternity concerned that they are having to spend a fair amount of time and money putting together proposals. I know that the RAIC, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, of course, supports the process, but recognizing that there is in fact a cost associated with it, some of which, as you point out quite rightly, is picked up by the government and other private-sector companies that perhaps go through the proposal route as well.

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Mr. Kelly: What is the cost of preparing a proposal? Can you give me an idea of the spectrum of costs involved in preparing a proposal?

Mr. Mackay: I suppose a lot of it depends on the size of the project itself, but I would imagine that for anything in the neighbourhood of a \$2 million or \$3 million project, which is

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nous respecterions le plafond de 100,000\$, montant à partir duquel on procéderait à partir d'adjudication.

M. Neil: Que ce Règlement vous ait causé des ennuis ou non, vous auriez dû le respecter.

M. A.D. Wilson : D'après ces Règlements, le ministre des Travaux publics est autorisé à confier certains travaux à concurrence de certains montants sans autorisation du conseil du Trésor. Or en l'occurrence ces contrats ont été approuvés par le conseil du Trésor.

M. Anguish: Quel est le montant maximum pour lequel le ministre est autorisé à signer.

M. A.D. Wilson : Cent mille dollars.

M. Anguish: Cent mille dollars, vous dites?

M. A.D. Wilson : Oui.

M. Anguish: Le fait de devoir soumissionner n'aurait pas à mon avis causé de grands ennuis aux consultants, car si toutes les firmes étaient obligées de soumissionner pour des affaires de plus de 100,000\$, les frais de soumission seraient de toute façon répercutés sur les prix. Je ne vois pas en quoi cela aurait causé des difficultés aux consultants, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit d'un marché aussi important. Comme je viens de le dire, les frais de soumission seraient de toute façon répercutés sur les prix.

M. MacKay: Il est vrai qu'en dernière analyse c'est le temps qu'il paie pour les frais d'adjudication. Il n'empêche que les firmes de consultants continuent de se plaindre un an après, que ces soumissions exigent beaucoup de temps et d'argent. Ainsi l'Institut royal des architectes du Canada, compte tenu des frais afférents au système d'adjudication est d'avis que dans certains cas des contrats pourraient être passés directement même si les frais d'adjudication se répercutent sur les prix.

M. Kelly: Qu'est-ce que cela coûte de préparer une soumission?

M. Mackay: Tout dépend de l'importance du marché mais j'imagine que pour un marché de deux ou trois millions de