

Oral Questions

• (1125)

Mr. David Walker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no further cuts will be introduced due to the failure of the budget because the budget is not a failure.

The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have indicated that as one goes about reviewing an organization as large as the Government of Canada, naturally one will continually come across better ways of doing things. We will continue to do things better.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Monday afternoon, heritage deputy minister Michel Rochon communicated to CBC president Anthony Manera the Cabinet's budget decisions for the next three years, I repeat, the next three years.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage continue to deny that budget decisions have been made concerning the CBC's fate in the next three years? If not, does this mean that he has once again failed to honour one of his commitments, namely to provide the CBC with multi-year funding?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that our hon. colleague still does not understand the difference between a budget decision and the program review. It would seem this is where the confusion stems from. I have publicly explained these matters both in and outside this House.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Quebec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify logically and rationally his decision to strike a committee of wise men and women to look at the CBC's mandate, after giving members of Parliament the mandate to do just that last August?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague does not seem to grasp too well what was referred to the heritage committee. Had she done me the courtesy of listening, perhaps she would understand better. This may explain why the hon. member and her colleagues never understand anything: they do not listen.

I think that our colleague has a gift for telling the future. We had not yet outlined how we intend to review not only the CBC's mandate, but also that of the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada. This means she will have to wait for the review mandate to be clearly spelled out. I can assure her that it will not be the

same as the mandate given the House of Commons heritage committee.

[English]

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is time to clear the air on the CBC issue.

On Tuesday the Minister of Canadian Heritage stated that the president of the CBC resigned for personal reasons, but last night Mr. Manera directly contradicted the minister. He resigned not for personal reasons but because the minister has secret and specific plans for cuts to the CBC over the next three years.

Given that the budget is a three-year document and given that we have a copy of the minister's plans precipitating the president's resignation, how can the minister justify not coming clean with Canadians about his plans regarding the CBC?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am asked to deal with two issues in the question, one on the motivation of Mr. Manera's resignation. I am not speculating about the motivation for his resignation. He can speak for himself.

As to the second matter, I think I have been clear in the House. The budget contains some indication for the next fiscal year. It is 4 per cent which amounts to \$44 million. The figures for the second and third year are derived from the program review.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems very odd that the president would resign if that in fact were the case.

When budgetary information is withheld from Canadians, it creates uncertainty and confusion. In this case, it has caused the resignation of the president of the CBC who accused the minister of failing to disclose the information to Canadians about future cuts to the CBC. The minister denies it. They cannot both be telling the truth.

• (1130)

Since this is the second time the minister has placed himself in a compromising position, will he clear the air and promptly submit his resignation to the Prime Minister.

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where our colleagues in Reform are coming from. One day they say they want to destroy the CBC. They want to privatize it. They do not want to see it any more.

I stand here saying we will defend the CBC. It will be a strong institution. It will be on the information highway and we are not going to have privatization. This is what I stand for.