

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Solicitor General. One of the central issues before the House now is how the Solicitor General has carried out his responsibilities in this matter.

The Solicitor General has indicated, in his words, that he was informed by the RCMP 24 hours after this matter has been raised in the House. My question to the Solicitor General is: Did he take initiative and raise this with the RCMP? Or did he wait until the RCMP had launched its investigation before he informed this House of its actions?

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member's question concerns the RCMP. What is important in this country, Mr. Speaker, is to let this honourable police force do its job, without political interference.

Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has in fact informed me that it was reviewing all the facts in this connection. And I think that the freedom we enjoy in this country also means having a police force that operates without government interference.

[English]

Mr. Brewin: Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the answer that the minister did not, in fact, ask the RCMP to do its duty in this respect.

Given the onerous other duties that the minister has been given by the Prime Minister in this case, perhaps it is not surprising he is not aware of his duty under Section 5 of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act. That act makes it very clear that the Commissioner of the RCMP is under the direction of the minister, and the minister is responsible to this House for its actions. Given that the minister with a great deal of fanfare last week declared this Crime Prevention Week, is this his idea of crime prevention?

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in my previous answers. I informed the House that the RCMP had exercised its right to engage in an investigation and to look at the facts as it sees fit, whether or not at the request of the Solicitor General.

In the circumstances, I felt it was of the essence to announce, at the earliest opportunity, which was this afternoon, that the RCMP informed me this morning it had already started looking at all the facts, all the allegations made here in the House and elsewhere, to find out whether there was a case for pursuing the matter further. I think this is entirely normal in the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and that this complies with the spirit and intent of the legislation.

• (1440)

[English]

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Energy who is being very careful in his choice of words today.

The Parliament of Canada Act prohibits a senator or MP from taking money for lobbying another senator or MP. The Minister of Energy today said: "Yes, but Senator Cogger did not lobby anybody in my department. I have checked. That has been confirmed".

Given that the Member for Châteauguay has told several reporters outside the House that that member and the then Member for LaSalle together attended a meeting with Hydromega officials, organized and at the request of Senator Cogger, and given that we know that Senator Cogger was paid \$2,500 for lobbying those members to attend those meetings—that is the allegation—my question for the Minister of Energy is the following: Will he check the records, or has he checked the records, and can he tell us whether the member for Châteauguay met officials of his department? If the member for Châteauguay and the then Member for LaSalle met officials of his department, were they lobbying on behalf of Hydromega? In other words, were they fulfilling the request of Senator Cogger who has violated the Parliament of Canada Act?

Mr. Speaker: I have tried not to interrupt because, as I have said before—and I want not only members to hear this, I want the public to hear it—in this place there is not only a right to inquire on matters such as this, there is a duty. It is very important that allegations and accusations are not made unless there is a very serious basis for them. The Question Period in preambles is not the place to do it. I would ask the hon. member to be very careful. I think that the hon. minister is prepared to answer. But, clearly, that preamble goes a little too far.