

Order Paper Questions

NATIONAL DEFENCE—GUIDELINES FOR CONTRACTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OR RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS

Question No. 1,565—**Mr. Howie:**

What are the guidelines employed by the Department of National Defence to determine whether contracts for the construction of buildings, roads, repairs to buildings and renovations will be called (a) by advertisement in newspapers (b) by invitation only (c) without tender?

Mrs. Ursula Appoloni (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): The Department of National Defence is subject to the provisions of the government contracts regulations issued pursuant to the Financial Administration Act and, accordingly, the following guidelines with respect to the calling of tenders reflect these provisions:

- (a) With few exceptions, tenders are called by advertising in trade papers and newspapers.
- (b) Tenders would be invited only in a case where the scope or complexity of the work requires a particular degree of expertise or experience. In such a case, the requirement would be advertised in trade papers and newspapers and firms would be invited to submit their credentials for prequalification. Only suitably qualified firms would be invited to tender.
- (c) Tenders would not be called where the need is one of pressing emergency in which delay would be injurious to the public interest or in the rare case where only one firm is capable of performing the contract.

MIRAMICHI RIVER, N.B.—DREDGING

Question No. 1,578—**Mr. Howie:**

1. Was there a delay in dredging the Miramichi River in New Brunswick and, if so (a) for what reason (b) what is the status of the project?

2. Were tenders called in the spring or summer of 1980 and, if not, for what reason?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works):

1. There has been a delay of approximately one year to the commencement of dredging in the Miramichi River.
 - (a) The delay resulted from a decision to cancel the tenders called during the summer of 1979 because the bids received exceeded the department's estimate.
 - (b) The project was retendered on October 21, 1980.
2. Tenders were not called in the spring or summer of 1980 because there was no advantage to commencing the project in the summer or fall. It is preferable to begin the dredging in the spring because of environmental factors.

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Cossitt (Leeds-Grenville): Madam Speaker, I have a point of order with regard to the unanswered questions on the order paper. I will not take the time of the House to list the numbers of the questions involved because there are quite a few of them. They pertain to the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation and, in particular, to Claudette Nadeau, the

president and general manager of that corporation, and to Yvon Gariépy, master of the Royal Canadian Mint. What I cannot understand is that on October 21, the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) said that he had signed the answers to all those questions and had sent them to the Privy Council office.

I assume the Minister of Supply and Services would not mislead us; I have never known him to do so. I am sure that if he subsequently found he had misled a committee of the House, he would have said so, and therefore I am assuming that his words, as they were uttered at that time, are accurate.

I assume, therefore, that at least as long ago as October 21, and presumably before that, these answers were signed by the minister, as he said, and sent to the Privy Council office for transmission in the usual way to the House of Commons. However, they have not reached us. What has happened to all these questions in the Privy Council office for well over a month, probably a month and a half or even longer? In other words, who is sitting on these answers? What official of the government has given instructions to the Privy Council office that these questions not be answered in the House, and why have such instructions been given—or have they been given? I assume they must have been given because the normal procedure, if an answer goes to the Privy Council office, is not to hold it for a month, two months or three months before the House receives it. Time and again we have received assurances from the parliamentary secretary, who I assume has been giving them in the best of faith, that he is doing all he can to expedite answers to questions. If that is the case, surely he could tell us now why these questions, according to the Minister of Supply and Services, have been sitting in the Privy Council office with no one attending to them, and why they are not being sent on to the House.

Mr. Collenette: Madam Speaker, I would be quite willing to shed some light on the question. The hon. member was quite correct when he stated that the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Blais) at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates on October 21, stated:

—I have signed that reply and that the replies will be tabled in the House within a very short time.

Subsequent to that, I should inform the House, the hon. member put down on the order paper further questions dealing with the same subject area. At the same time, the minister was reviewing the answers after having signed them and is providing additional information for the hon. member when these answers will be tabled. So far as the Privy Council office is concerned, in order to be fair to the questioner and to the department providing the answer in matters like this, we prefer to table all the answers dealing with the same subject matter at the same time.

So while it is true that the initial answers were prepared and signed by the minister and are being added to, to help the hon. member, answers will be forthcoming to the rest of his questions. I hope to be able to table the whole series of answers to the whole series of questions ranging from question No. 994, which was the earliest I believe, to question No. 1,595, which