

I will certainly take the hon. member's question as a representation and raise it with the provincial counterparts. If there is a disposition on their part to provide the assistance in that manner, I will certainly make that representation on the hon. member's behalf.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, since trappers have recently had to invest in heavier equipment, heavier traps to meet the humane component of consumer demand, and since they are suffering from virtually the same negative income that Saskatchewan farmers are suffering, will the minister change the federal component of the program and make it available to fur trappers, which is not now the case, so that the provinces can pick up on that?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that it was through the provincial representation on behalf of the fur industry that the federal government responded.

As I said, I will certainly take his question as a representation. But we felt that because they were closest to the scene and identified the area of need we, in a generous fashion, responded, which this federal government has done in the past.

We can only hope and trust that the provinces will design their program in such a way that the industry that is affected in all its elements will be supported by the results of our joint efforts.

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• (1500)

THE ESTIMATES

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications.

Can the minister tell us if he is going to support the vote as proposed by the chairman of the finance committee to cut the budget of the National Gallery of Canada by \$1.8 million?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question, and there is going to be a lot of debate and a lot of anxiety. I hope the hon. member will be here this evening to see the last instalment of this drama!

Privilege

Mr. Speaker: I have a request from the hon. member for MEGANTIC—COMPTON—STANSTEAD to raise a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

HON. MEMBER FOR
MÉGANTIC—COMPTON—STANSTEAD—DENIAL OF
ACCREDITATION WITH RESPECT TO THE
CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

Mr. François Gérin (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, at noon I went to the Conference Centre where the First Ministers' meeting on the constitutional question is being held. I was denied the necessary accreditation to enter the building, unlike over 100 reporters from across the country, members of provincial legislatures, and leaders of provincial parties, including opposition leaders like Mrs. Carstairs and Mr. Doer. Members of the House of Commons were also there. I asked why I, as a member, could not go in. I was told it was since I had not been a member of the Charest Committee and was not on the list of a recognized party, either the government party or one of the opposition parties.

I know other members who were denied the same accreditation. Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a very important conference, and I wanted to express my objections to the fact that this important question is being discussed behind closed doors. Quebec's return to the constitutional fold will not only be without honour and enthusiasm—but they are now trying to do it in secret.

Mr. Speaker, my rights and privileges as a member of this House have been breached. Surely, a member of the House of Commons has the right to be admitted as an observer to the Conference Centre, as much, if not more, so than the people representing the media.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member has raised a very important question of privilege. I hope the Chair will, as usual, give it prompt consideration, as it has always done in the past.

I do not agree with everything my colleague said, but if there is one thing that must be perfectly clear it is that there can be no difference between members, whatever their political affiliation, whether it be an official party or not. When the Chair considers this very important question, and there may be other precedents, I hope it will take all the time required to do so. My colleagues