

Oral Questions

This Liberal government is dedicated to cost efficiency, to spending the taxpayers' money wisely, doing so in a fair and open fashion, a transparent fashion, so that people can see how their money is being spent. We intend to bring about reforms and changes from what the last government did in terms of contracting.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

There has been more troubling revelations regarding the Canadian Museum of Nature. This morning, at a press conference, representatives of the science community asked that the questionable lay-off of several scientists be investigated in view of the fact that it has far-reaching consequences. It gives a bad name to the museum and jeopardizes its research activities as a whole.

Given these new facts, is the Minister of Canadian Heritage willing to reconsider and, without delay, ask for a public inquiry with a view to hearing the testimony of all the people involved in this matter?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, I have already had the opportunity to speak several times on the problems that have been brought to light regarding this museum.

The person I rely on in this matter is the Auditor General of Canada who has the trust not only of the government but also of this House. He said he would perform a special in-depth audit of the museum's operations and finances. I understand that the museum board of directors has requested that this audit be conducted without delay. Once we have all the facts and the Auditor General's conclusion, we will be able to pass judgement.

• (1440)

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that this museum has a unique responsibility in Canada to perform basic, theoretical and applied research, and that any delay, given the time it will take the Auditor General to conduct an audit and elected representatives to hold a public inquiry, seriously jeopardizes the mission of the museum and its reputation in the scientific community?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's remarks, which are more a comment than a question, start from the premise that the museum is guilty as charged, even before we have the facts and know what is really going on. I am aware of the criticisms that have been levelled and I take them seriously. Soon we will know the facts.

[English]

SEA KING HELICOPTERS

Mr. Ron MacDonald (Dartmouth): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The future of the Canadian military Sea King fleet is once again before the public with the recent crash of a Sea King at the cost of two lives with two other airmen seriously injured.

Although meticulously maintained many of these aircraft are older than the pilots that fly them and there is a need for the government to make a decision soon to replace this fleet.

I ask the Minister of National Defence if he can assure this House of the airworthiness of the remaining Sea King fleet and indeed will he give a commitment that this government does intend to replace these aircraft?

Hon. David Michael Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to acknowledge that we extend our sympathy to the families of the two airmen killed and the other two that were seriously injured in this particular crash.

I know it is of great concern to the hon. member because these helicopters are based at CFB Shearwater in the hon. member's constituency. These helicopters are well maintained, otherwise we would not fly them.

This party in the election campaigned against the EH-101 helicopter because we felt it was too expensive a solution for the helicopter needs of the government. We never denied that there would have to be some replacement at some point in time for the Sea Kings. The Sea Kings are airworthy until the year 2000.

I want to assure the hon. member and other colleagues in the House that we intend to fly them. They will do the search and rescue work and other naval reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols. They will keep flying until the year 2000 because they will be well maintained.

I believe once the defence review is over later this year, we will have some answers as to the kind of equipment that we will need to discharge our future obligations.

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EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

Ridiculous statements from senior cabinet ministers continue to plague the government, not only today but yesterday when the Minister of Human Resources Development said that if people with jobs would not work overtime there would be more jobs for unemployed Canadians.