

Oral Questions

Moreover, I am convinced that if we do not meet our deadline this will be perceived or reported as an indication of deeper differences than the ones that actually exist. The reality is that there is a great consensus among the federalist parties here and we do not want to give Quebecers or others the impression that we do not agree on basic issues, because we do agree on the basic issues. I believe it is in our interest to indicate to the world, to Canada, and to Quebec that we agree.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

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MAIN ESTIMATES

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, the Main Estimates for the Department of Employment and Immigration have been reduced by some \$177 million.

Can the minister explain why the government has withdrawn over \$100 million of the funds allocated to job creation and to training when the number of public servants within his department has increased by over 1,500?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I could provide details on the 1,546 person-years that were absorbed by my department, but the reason is that we wanted to have additional resources to serve Canadians who need the unemployment insurance program. We have also added 367 person-years, again to help the unemployed workers who need advice in the manpower centres. The party that the hon. member represents complained a few weeks ago in the House that people were not getting service because of a shortage of staff. Now we have the staff.

[English]

Mr. Douglas Young (Acadie—Bathurst): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the President of the Treasury Board.

The Auditor General in his last annual report said that the deficit for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1991, was understated by nearly \$2 billion.

Can the President of the Treasury Board assure the House that there will be no more cooking of the books and that approved accounting standards will be respected when the government reports to Parliament and to the Canadian people?

Hon. Gilles Loisel (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that over a period of 15 years, I do not recall the auditor having given clearance to government except maybe last year.

There is an honest disagreement between the auditor and the comptroller. They both agree that the amounts are right. Where to put them in the books is where the disagreement is and I am not one to decide between them. I will let the auditor and the comptroller sort out their problem themselves.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister and it concerns today's estimates. Today's estimates officially end the Prime Minister's drug awareness program. Given that it was the Prime Minister himself who on September 14, 1986 called Canada's drug problem "an epidemic", when precisely was the epidemic cured and by whom?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that the drug strategy has well served Canadians for the past five years. We have had wonderful results which we will communicate to Canadians. At the same time I am aware that this strategy will be over at the end of March. We are working within the Department of Finance to see what we can possibly do.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): I do not think that answered the question.

[Translation]

I would like to direct my supplementary question to the Prime Minister. It is also on the estimates. Once again, today's estimates make no mention of the number of person-years in the Prime Minister's Office. Canadians would like to know why, and especially what does the government have to hide regarding the number of person-years in the Prime Minister's Office?

Hon. Gilles Loisel (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member takes the trouble to look at appendix II, he will find the number of person-years clearly indicated there. Indeed a Liberal member pointed out to me this morning that the number was 119 higher and he found it amazing that it could be higher when the budget was the same. I suggested that he read some more.