

Oral Questions

and accountability. The exempt crown corporations include the Canada Council, the National Film Board, the National Arts Centre Corporation among others.

At a time when Canadians are demanding that governments spend their tax dollars wisely, can the minister explain why these crown corporations are exempt from part X of the Financial Administration Act?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the exemptions are perfectly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. They are principles that have been followed by the government for quite some time and they in no way imply that proper supervision of crown corporations is not taking place.

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister act on the Auditor General's recommendation to make these crown corporations responsible under part X of the act so they are properly accountable to this House and therefore to the people of Canada and subject to examination by the Auditor General?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the nature of these corporations is that they are responsible to their boards first and ultimately, as in all other things, they are responsible to the Government of Canada and therefore to the House.

The position of the government on most of these issues is that we agree with the Auditor General. We intend to put into effect the Auditor General's recommendations. There are some exceptions and this is one of them.

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[Translation]

USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. All stakeholders agree on the need for an anti-smoking campaign to make young people aware of the harmful effects of smoking, and the government's action plan makes provision for such a campaign.

Does the Prime Minister agree that no anti-smoking campaign can be conducted without the co-operation of the provinces? Can he give us the assurance that the provinces will follow his lead with the tax reduction or, failing that, at least support the health component of his action plan?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think that the provinces will examine the proposals we have put forward today and I am sure that they will be prepared to cooperate and contribute to the success of our campaign to

discourage young Canadians in particular from using tobacco products. We have said that we were embarking upon a campaign the likes of which have never been seen in Canada. I am positive that, even if some provinces are not too pleased with certain aspects of our plan right now, they will nonetheless try to help us.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Does the Prime Minister not agree that, beyond the proposed awareness program, further efforts must be made to control the movement of cigarettes among young people, especially at school?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why the plan we have tabled today contains specific measures with regard to teenage smoking. For instance, for the first time, those who sell tobacco products to young people under 18 years of age will be fined up to \$50,000. We will also take action to ban the sale of so-called "kiddie packs" to young buyers. And we have other specific measures to combat smoking among the young. This is all part of the health component of our plan, to prevent smoking from causing more harm to our young people.

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[English]

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT RETIRING ALLOWANCES

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. On January 24 in this House the Prime Minister promised to accommodate any MP who chooses to opt out of the current MP pension plan.

How soon can we expect these administrative changes to be made?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have said we want to give the option to all members not to participate.

• (1445)

We will look at finding a way to do this under the Financial Administration Act. We are working on it at the moment, but I want to make sure that when a member opts out he or she cannot come back in when the controversy is over.

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Prime Minister that we will not want to have that double option. I have a supplementary question.

As Reformers we want to save the taxpayers' money.

Mr. Nault: One term wouldn't get it anyway.

Mr. Silye: I hope the members who are yelling can hear me. The sooner we can opt out of this plan the sooner the government will not have to match the members' payments of 11 per cent.