

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

The division has published several reports on the Cape Breton tax credit, pension plans, exploration tax credits and remission orders. These reports concluded that the fiscal policies put into place were not, these particular measures anyway, always meeting their aims. Other reports were not publicly released by the Department of Finance.

Commitments were given to the public accounts committee by the Department of the Comptroller General. We have on the record these commitments to reduce the committee's apprehensions about the consequences of this bureaucratic decision, but they do not diminish the seriousness of the problem.

The Department of Finance has proposed to table a calendar for the next three years covering evaluations of future tax measures. This will not solve the lack of independence and the lack of objectivity in the evaluations made by employees reporting to a staff manager without real power.

This is why the public accounts committee asked Revenue Canada to join the work of the advisory committee put in place by the Department of Finance. This advisory committee is supposed to establish the work plan and discuss the evaluations.

The Comptroller General has also been invited by the Department of Finance to sit as a representative. The public accounts committee expects the Comptroller General to report to this committee regularly.

Parliamentarians must be informed. Bureaucrats must respect the guidelines established by the Treasury Board. Departments must comply. The Comptroller General should make sure that these guidelines are all respected.

If we allow the Department of Finance not to respect the guidelines the message sent to the other departments will be wrong. We fear that the example set by the Department of Finance could be something that would be repeated in other departments and I do believe would lead to a very serious situation in terms of the government's control over public funds.

The Department of Finance plays a major role and has a lot of influence in the working of the government.

A precedent could be created by this department. Other departments might be tempted, as I said, to disband their program evaluations unit.

[Translation]

In conclusion, if each department and agency acted like the Department of Finance, we would have confusion and chaos. There would be no more standards and therefore no more controls. Members should rise in the House and sound the alarm and tell bureaucrats and public servants that we want standards, we want controls, we want information, and we want it to be effective and efficient.

[English]

The repercussions for all Canadians could be very costly. Parliament could be kept in complete ignorance as to whether, for example, the finance department tax measures are efficient. By adopting this unanimous report by the public accounts committee a strong signal will be sent throughout the government.

I therefore want to thank the members of the committee for their co-operation in presenting the second report and I hope the House will approve of it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre H. Vincent (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier who, as chairman of the committee, does an excellent job and who this morning explained in a correct detailed way the motion before us that deals with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which made recommendations concerning the Department of Finance.

On the issue discussed this morning, I think we must go back a bit and ask why the Department of Finance decided to close something down. You will remember that in 1984, when we were elected, the government was spending \$16 billion more every year than it took in, setting aside interest on the debt for now. I repeat that as far as operations are concerned, the government that preceded us spent \$16 billion more than it took in. This year our government will spend almost \$13 billion less than it takes in, which means that there has been a turnaround of close to \$30 billion in seven years. How was this change brought about? How is it that today the government is running an operating surplus when it ran a