

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's facts are simply not true. The fact of the matter is that in the province of Quebec we have approved, in conjunction with the provincial government, because it is a joint federal-provincial program, 65 per cent of the applications we have received. I think the expenditure represents almost 45 per cent of the entire POWA expenditure in that province alone. It has been a very important program.

I do agree with the hon. member in one area. It is an awkward program to run. I am quite prepared to talk with the provinces about how we can improve the program and how we can, as I said in my earlier statement, use many of the existing programs to consolidate into broad based employment services so we can then direct resources to those groups that need it most, and they can help make the choices to put their own signature on their re-employment efforts.

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CANADA POST

Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rest assured my question is not one of whining and rewhining about a letter. My question is for the minister responsible for Canada Post.

Canadians from coast to coast and I were pleased last winter when the minister stopped the closure of post offices in small communities which are vital for their social and economic development.

Could the minister tell the House what plan he has to modernize those post offices in order to provide decent, modern, written communication abilities for all Canadians?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the excellent question. It is an extraordinary question and has particular significance for rural Canada and small communities across the country.

Canada Post will be working co-operatively with a number of federal agencies and departments to see whether it can utilize existing facilities in small town Canada in order to provide better government services to Canadians, and to partner with the private sector so that we can elaborate and bring into these facilities more services in order to serve rural Canadians who are a very important element of Canadian society.

Oral Questions

ETHICS

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we have clear rules on dealing with quasi-judicial bodies. We have very clear statements in the 1976 Trudeau guidelines. We have the 1984 Starr-Sharp guidelines. We have the government's conflict of interest code. We have the guidance for ministers guidelines. The guidelines from the Privy Council are very clear.

• (1445)

I ask the Prime Minister: Since the government has plenty of guidelines, is not the real problem a shortage of confidence and integrity from the front benches?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a very competent cabinet.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to see how the government side gets its exercise for the day: up and down, up and down.

The government's pursuit of improved ethical guidelines is just a red herring to divert attention from the failures of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and from the incredible lapses in the Prime Minister's office. Reform MPs will not be diverted.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Despite the shrieking Liberals, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to put my question.

When is the Prime Minister going to live up to all of his talk about integrity and responsibility and ask the Minister of Canadian Heritage to resign?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want the Reform Party to change its policies and divert. It has the right policies to lose the next election so badly that we are supporting Reformers to stick to these policies. This is why we want them to stay on it.

I made the decision about this problem and I have informed the House of Commons many times. The answer is that I have not asked the minister to resign and he is still a minister.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gilbert Fillion (Chicoutimi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Defence.

In a majority report on Canada's defence policy, Liberal and Reform Party members recommended cosmetic changes instead of a real and thorough reorganization of the Canadian Armed Forces.