

Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Given the hour, I hope the questions will be short.

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AIRPORTS

NON DETECTION OF WEAPONS BY SECURITY GUARDS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Will the Minister confirm that nearly 25 per cent of all the fake and real weapons taken through airport security by Department of Transport staff were in fact not detected by the security guards hired by the contractors? If it is true, why has he not moved to replace these contractors with permanent, well trained employees of Transport Canada?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the hon. gentleman who observes the rules and traditions of this House and is a very good Member of the House. Such a test was undertaken by the Department, the result of which was that 25 per cent of the pseudo weapons were undetected. However, this was a test at all the airports in Canada, including very small airports and airports in the far North. It was not just major airports, as in the case of the United States where they only checked the major airports.

In the late spring of this year we introduced a new training program for airport security screening personnel. We believe there has been a significant improvement. This follows as a result of the recommendations of the task force on the screening process at airports that was set up by the Deputy Prime Minister. As always, he was very prompt to act when it came to his attention that action was needed.

SECURITY FACILITIES AT SMALL AIRPORTS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, given that the only successful hijacking in Canadian history occurred a number of years ago out of one of those smaller airports—Thunder Bay—and given that there is no matching fire power within the airport grounds and is not even available for 15 minutes in the event of a real threat through the discovery of weapons, what action will the Minister take to ensure that those smaller airports have access to proper security facilities?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the entire security arrangements at airports have been reviewed and in excess of \$30 million in additional funds has been devoted to security at our airports. The Hon. Member will know that there are certain procedures going into effect today, I believe, with reference to the security of those who are allowed into restricted areas at airports.

Privilege—Mr. Gérin

All of these steps have gone forward and there has been steady improvement in that area. We are living in a democratic country and there is a limit to what measures one can put into effect.

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[Translation]

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR MEGANTIC—COMPTON—STANSTEAD (MR. GÉRIN) AS PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I now recognize the Hon. Member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead (Mr. Gérin) on a question of privilege.

Mr. François Gérin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I have already asked the Right Hon. the Prime Minister to relieve me of my duties as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, at the most opportune time for both the Department and the Government.

Yesterday the Prime Minister told me he agreed to my request, so this decision is effective immediately. Over the past year I have done my best to fulfill the responsibilities assigned to me by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Hnatyshyn), and I am confident I did live up to expectations. I still fully agree with departmental policies, convinced as I am that the Minister attests to the excellence which in past history has been the hallmark of Canada's outstanding Ministers of Justice.

I greatly appreciated the non-partisan approach and the close co-operation of Liberal and NDP critics in the course of debates, particularly in committee, as well as the unfailing support of the Minister's staff and Department officials.

I thank the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) for having given me the honour to serve, and I am sure I will have further opportunities to do so again.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for his thoughts and comments which reflect the spirit of the very good traditions of the House.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, having worked very closely with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, I would say quite simply that he has done an exceptional job. I am sorry he has decided to resign as Parliamentary Secretary, but I congratulate him particularly for the work he did during the year he was Parliamentary Secretary.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Mr. Speaker, personally and on behalf of the Official Opposition, I too should like to