

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to the minister he would have understood that we asked for a review of the question precisely for that reason.

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SUPPLY AND SERVICES

TECHNOLOGICAL CONTRACTS—PREFERENCE FOR CANADIAN BIDDERS

Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Supply and Services. Inasmuch as government procurement policies are acknowledged to be a key tool in advancing Canadian scientific expertise by providing opportunities for private Canadian firms to develop their unique proficiencies through the supply of specialized services and technological benefits to the Government of Canada, will the minister advise the House as to the specific rules and criteria used by his department to ensure that Canadian bidders are given a decided advantage when bidding on contracts of a technological nature?

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Minister of Supply and Services): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member wanted to ask that question in committee this morning. Hopefully we will be able to go into further details at the next session. I am pleased the hon. gentleman has called to the attention of the House and all hon. members the role the Department of Supply and Services is playing in the research and development field.

● (1425)

Yesterday I issued a press release relating to the 172 contracts which I had signed for research and development with various institutions and corporations in Canada valued at \$10,348,943. The criterion which we used is the furtherance of research and development in Canada for Canadian-based companies and the marketability of the products of that research and development.

Mr. Siddon: Madam Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the same minister, who may not be aware of the fact that a \$250,000 contract was awarded by his department in 1978 to the Tracor Corporation of Texas for the supply of an airport noise monitoring system to be installed at the Toronto International Airport. The awarding of this contract was met with strong opposition from the Canadian acoustical community.

Does the minister realize that at least four qualified Canadian firms had bid competitively on that contract, that scientific experts in the Ministry of Transport and elsewhere, including other government laboratories, had strongly and forcefully advised against the procurement of the Texas system, and that the \$250,000 imported system now sits in mothballs at Malton Airport because it does not work? It is completely useless. How does the minister explain this blunder in the face of his remarks of a few moments ago?

Oral Questions

Mr. Blais: Madam Speaker, I would point out to the hon. gentleman that I am not familiar with what occurred in 1978. My responsibilities were assumed in March, 1980.

I will look into the matter which the hon. gentleman has identified. I point out to him that when we deal in the field of science and procurement with contracts in the range of \$1.5 billion a year, the amount of the contract which he has identified, namely \$250,000, is not huge. But notwithstanding that, I will look into the details and give him a full report.

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AIR SAFETY

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF REPORTS ON EMERGENCY LOCATOR TRANSMITTERS

Mr. J. R. Ellis (Prince Edward-Hastings): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. It refers to transport matters but I think it has much interest to the Minister of National Defence, to whom I wish to put the question. It now seems obvious that despite repeated questions and repeated non-answers from ministers of transport, in my case back to 1973, they have been fully aware of the problems related to the ELTs. I wonder if this minister would undertake to have his colleague put on the table of the House the report or reports which are in existence dealing with those problems.

Hon. J. Gilles Lamontagne (Minister of National Defence): Madam Speaker, the question of the hon. member is very interesting to me and as far as the defence department is concerned we always have been very interested because if the use of ELTs was compulsory in all small aircraft, our costs on search would be much less.

We have collaborated very closely with the Ministry of Transport to see how they can devise a new ELT with a proper battery which can stand all kinds of weather. We are pushing very hard to have this done as soon as possible because it will afford protection to the flyers and also to the department.

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, the minister did not answer my question. I am going to ask it of him again, plus a further question, because he touched on the cost. The cost to pilots has been more than \$4 million. The cost in dollars to the Ministry of National Defence has been incalculable, to say nothing of the cost in lives, which is completely unacceptable.

Given those facts, would the minister give a clear and definite undertaking that he will support in cabinet, if necessary, or with the Minister of Transport, the research necessary to produce a suitable ELT and support with some dollars, the placing of them in private aircraft; and as I have asked earlier, will he have the report which is available now placed on the table of the House?

[Translation]

Mr. Lamontagne: Madam Speaker, I think I did answer the question when I stated that we are now co-operating with the Department of Transport to have an ELT as technically