

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I do not know how many ads.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cosgrove: Whether there were different ads sent to one of some 140 newspapers across the country on the twelfth or thirteenth of this month, the end of last week, I do not know.

An hon. Member: Squirm.

Mr. Cosgrove: But I repeat once again that the provisions of that ad were reviewed by the cabinet committee on communications on Friday the thirteenth.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Cosgrove: A number of suggestions were made regarding changes. None were made. The ad was authorized during that meeting.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO ADVERTISING AGENCY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, we now know that the breach occurred not simply in one newspaper but, by the minister's own admission, in some 140 newspapers across the country. We do not know whether the contents of the ads were the same in all cases. The House has not yet been informed whether other budget information was released to Vickers and Benson prior to it becoming public to Canadians through the budget presentation, and consequently was a breach of budget practices.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Who gave the precise details of the budget proposal on housing to Vickers and Benson in time for them to have the advertisement prepared on November 11? Who gave that information? If the minister cannot give me an answer today, will he give us an undertaking that he will come back with details tomorrow and tell us precisely who gave that information, at what precise time, and on whose authorization?

Mr. Nielsen: Gerry Regan.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I already indicated that I do not have the responsibility for advertising, either in that department or in any other. I have no information on the subject. I think the minister to whom questions have been addressed has been answering them very fully. I would recommend that the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition ask him for further information.

QUERY RESPECTING DRAFTING OF ADVERTISEMENT

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the minister responsible for housing, and it is very specific. I would like to know whether or not it was Vickers and Benson who drafted the ad. Specifically, who drafted it, on whose instructions, and at what point in time

prior to the release of the budget did instructions go to Vickers and Benson that this ad could be released?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, I would be repeating myself to say that the ad was not authorized until following a meeting of the cabinet committee on communications, Friday, November 13, at approximately 12.30 p.m. After reviewing that ad with suggested changes, authorization then was given for the use of that ad in advertisements the following day, November 14.

TIMING OF RELEASE OF ADVERTISEMENT

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister. I point out that the ad actually appeared on the morning of November 13. When was this ad prepared and when was it authorized by the minister or by an official of CMHC to be released to Vickers and Benson?

Hon. Paul J. Cosgrove (Minister of Public Works): Madam Speaker, my information, once again, is that all of the ads for all of the papers were authorized on Friday, November 13. If the member has information that the ad was published or was released prior to that time, I would like to have the particulars of that, and I would like to have the time to look into the matter.

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AGRICULTURE

GUIDELINES FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BOND PROGRAM

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. In light of rising farm bankruptcies, an increase of 150 per cent over the last two years, and the need for funding by many farmers, including some dairy and turkey producers along with beef and pork producers, who the minister has admitted are in trouble, could he inform the House what guidelines are being put forward so that bankers and farmers can determine eligibility for the new Small Business Development Bond and that definitions, such as financial distress, can be defined and administered in practical terms?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I understand that all of the district officers from the Farm Credit Corporation are meeting in Ottawa today, tomorrow, and possibly for part of Thursday, to review the program to determine what they can do and to determine how they can work the Small Business Development Bond program with the other lending institutions that are involved. We think they can assist many of these people.

I am surprised at what the hon. member says about dairy farmers. Of the hundreds of letters that I have received, only one or two have come from dairy farmers. These letters generally come from young dairy farmers who bought farms