

Oral Questions

said during that consultative process. It would be very unfortunate if we were to simply draw wild conclusions from every single document coming from any department.

• (1515)

Canadians are looking for and deserve improvements in how immigration is being managed and we have begun to deliver on that. In fact this morning we discussed Bill C-44. I hope the Reform Party sees fit to support that bill because it is an improvement in how we conduct and manage the program. We will continue to do this in the best interests of our country.

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[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. According to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate rose by 0.7 per cent in Quebec last month and now stands at 12.2 per cent. In spite of a slight economic recovery, given the increase in population, Quebec still needs 210,000 jobs to reach its pre-recession level of employment.

Could the Minister of Finance, who recently claimed to be waging a world economic war, modestly try to create jobs by taking concrete recovery measures instead of pursuing his policy of laissez-faire?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, since we took office, we have not only expressed a desire but also a capacity to improve the employment situation in Quebec. In fact, as we have seen in the last quarter, this is why economic growth has been strengthened since the election. During the last quarter, the rate of real growth in Canada was 6.4 per cent, the highest among the G-7 countries. I want to tell the hon. member that, in Quebec alone, we have created 77,000 jobs since we took office. This is a record over such a period of time.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance realize that, at this pace, it will take at least three years just to reach the pre-recession level of employment, given the increase in population? Under the circumstances, is the minister prepared to give a boost to job creation by immediately reducing UI contributions, since there is a surplus, as the official opposition has been requesting since the minister himself raised these contributions?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, the first initiative taken by the Minister of Human Resources Development was to announce that UI contributions would not only be frozen but reduced.

Clearly, we recognize that this situation, created by the previous government, is a very serious impediment to job creation. Consequently, we will correct the problem.

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[English]

CANADA COMMUNICATION GROUP

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that the Treasury Board internal investigation focusing on Canada Communication Group found that departmental managers throughout the government had illegally stashed \$61 million in bank accounts to be spent at their whim without the purview of Parliament.

Can the President of the Treasury Board tell the Canadian taxpayers why all these ministers in the front row sit idly by while their departments blatantly break the law and stash that money in bank accounts without approval?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, we do not sit idly by even if it is in matters that were undertaken during the last government. We get to the bottom of them. This is a serious issue. I want to have this matter thoroughly investigated and in fact that is under way. I made an announcement to that effect earlier today.

The internal auditors in the various departments and of course the internal auditors in the Department of Public Works and Government Services are looking further at the matter of Canada Communication Group. We will get to the bottom of this and will take the appropriate corrective action. We will report further to this Parliament.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear that the President of the Treasury Board will not stand idly by. However, the Auditor General pointed this problem out to him in 1992.

• (1520)

If he feels this is serious, why would Treasury Board try to sweep this matter under the carpet rather than calling in the RCMP?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure): Mr. Speaker, I suppose if at the time the Auditor General had called the mayor of Toronto then maybe I would know about it today.

The deputy comptroller general in our department has issued very clear guidelines to various departments that Treasury Board rules and regulations must be followed. The deputy minister, the secretary of the Treasury Board, has also similarly sent a letter to various deputy ministers and has asked for a report within 30 days. When I receive those reports corrective action will be taken and I will be reporting further to this House.