

However, I would suggest to her that any press report at this stage is purely speculative and hypothetical. We will know the kind of options we want Canadians to debate is when we table the report.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier):** Mr. Speaker, are we to understand that, through this bulldozing operation, the minister wants to impose his views on the provinces, by threatening to reduce financial contributions to provinces that refuse to link the payment of benefits to the obligation to do community work or take training courses?

[English]

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification):** No, Mr. Speaker.

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### ETHICS COUNSELLOR

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster):** Mr. Speaker, scandals, unfounded allegations and unanswered questions have plagued governments and Parliaments throughout our history. Certainly the Prime Minister's statement this morning was welcome in light of our past history.

In his speech this morning on integrity in government, the Prime Minister claimed that the power of the ethics counsellor will prevent deals like the Pearson airport privatization from happening again.

My question for the Prime Minister is this. What is there about the Pearson deal that the ethics counsellor would prevent?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, a deal like that will not occur again simply because the government will never sign such a deal. I do not know if it is very easy. The ethics counsellor is there. There is legislation. The members of the committee will have an opportunity to interview him. He is a very competent person. He will give advice to the government.

• (1425)

As I said, in the final analysis, it is the government that decides. When we have a bad government like the previous Tory government, you know it is the type of government that produced things like that. You can be reassured that will not happen with a Liberal government.

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster):** Mr. Speaker, we are hoping that some of the clout that this ethics

counsellor will have will prevent the Liberal government following in the footsteps of the previous government.

The Prime Minister said this morning that deals like the Pearson airport deal must never be allowed to happen again, and I concur.

Would the Prime Minister tell us if the ethics counsellor would have power of intervention to stop deals such as the Pearson when ethics issues arise? That is what he indicated to us this morning.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, if you conclude that the deal was made because of the lobbyists, you know the counsellor will look at the lobby business and intervene. At the end of the day, any deals, any contracts by the government are made by the government.

We cannot deny our responsibilities as government. We have been the government for eight months. The people are very pleased. You just made reference to that. It is not like it was before. Why? It is because the government is committed to honesty and integrity in the public eye.

This government will remain this way. The ethics counsellor can help us. That is why I appointed him, to help us. In the final analysis, as I said this morning, the government remains the government. We have been elected to make the decisions. We are trying to get the best advice possible.

Mr. Howard Wilson is a man of credibility that has done his job properly, advising ministers over a long period of time. He is competent and we are very happy that he has accepted to face these new responsibilities. His job is not to replace the government. The government will remain the government.

**Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Prime Minister's answer. He has made it fairly clear in our minds that the new ethics counsellor does not have power of intervention. His power lies in his ability to report to the public.

Recently it was decided that a single annual report from the Auditor General was not sufficient. This morning the Prime Minister informed the House that the new ethics counsellor would report just once a year to Parliament.

Based on past performance and our history, conflicts of interest and ethics may arise on a regular basis. Certainly an annual report to Parliament will not be sufficient.

Can the Prime Minister explain how the ethics counsellor can effectively communicate to the public without a chance of political interference regarding the conduct of government if he is only required to file a report annually?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry):** Mr. Speaker, the question being raised concerning the ethics counsellor misses