

Oral Questions

also provided funding for projet La Relance, but we have made some division of responsibility so that we can get more efficiency and more effectiveness out of it. That was a choice that was made very much within the local region.

I believe that trying to turn this into some kind of great abstract argument of the role of the federal government in Quebec simply makes no sense at all. The federal government, as the member well knows, is highly committed to the employment of people in Quebec because we are doing something about it. That is why we have created close to 100,000 jobs in that province in the past 11 months.

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ETHICS

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said over and over again in the House that his officials had consulted the ethics counsellor regarding the letter by the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

He said over and over again that the ethics counsellor's advice had affirmed his own decision to not fire this minister. The ethics counsellor has a different story. He says that he was not asked to rule on this incident.

Can the Prime Minister explain why the ethics counsellor was set up to be the fall guy for providing bad advice when his advice was not even sought?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have said everything I have to say. We talked to the ethics counsellor. I said to the House that I have consulted a lot of people in my life. I know one thing. At the end of the day, I am responsible. There is no fall guy in this. We have debated that. We went a long way. I have asked every cabinet minister to look over the files and to say whether they have written letters. It is an open process. These documents were public at any time.

If the Reform Party is so smart, why did it not go to the CRTC? These documents were public. Those members did not do their job. We had to tell them what the facts were. We were not trying to have a set up person.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says they talked to the ethics counsellor.

Did the ethics counsellor talk to the government? The Prime Minister indicated to us that the ethics counsellor had advised him on the minister's letter and the ethics counsellor says that this is simply not the case.

This morning he said no, and that is clear. The question of course is: What part of no does the Prime Minister not understand? Will the Prime Minister accept responsibility for this contradiction in his integrity and apologize for breaching the trust of the Canadian public?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Beaver River for getting up and giving us a lesson.

Yesterday she made an accusation that was completely false. It was on national TV and she does not even get up to apologize. I do not want an apology from her because I do not need an apology from her.

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• (1440)

[Translation]

PROGRAM FOR OLDER WORKER ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development.

On Monday, the minister stated that he had included in his discussion paper on social program reform proposals regarding older workers who are laid off. But the paper contains no concrete proposal, and does not even make reference to POWA.

How does the minister, after undertaking to make known his intentions regarding POWA, explain that no reference is made to this program in his reform? How does he explain this?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would read chapter 2 of the green book, he would recognize the entire chapter is devoted to the question of how we can take resources of the federal government, provincial governments and the private sector and redirect them toward proper training, job core development, literacy programs and community based employment through a strategy that would help older workers, young people, workers who need adjustment.

The chapter is devoted to how we basically can improve the entire system of employment development services.

It would seem to me that the hon. member should be able to read the entire chapter and come to the conclusion that it is a brand new philosophy and direction by giving a lot more local control, a lot more responsibility to the people to make decisions about how they get re-employed.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the minister rise in this House and tell us how, in concrete terms, and in what sense he intends to reform POWA in order to end the discrimination to which older workers are subject, since 75 per cent of them are excluded from the very program designed to help them?