

Oral Questions

of interest matters when directed to the Minister concerned have sometimes been answered by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen), since the possible oversight of the conflict of interest code is a responsibility which he says has been delegated to him. Of course, the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF SENATOR LOUIS SOUVET—VICE-PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL COUNCIL OF FRANCHE-COMTÉ

Mr. Speaker: Order! I wish to draw the attention of the House to the presence in our distinguished visitors gallery of Senator Louis Souvet, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Franche-Comté, France, and a delegation from Franche-Comté.

● (1415)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ADMINISTRATION

APPROVAL OF GRANTS BY MINISTER OF REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and relates to his ministerial responsibility. I believe Canadians know that the Minister must answer in respect of how he discharges that responsibility. The Minister cannot delegate to another Minister his reputation, his integrity or his responsibility. Therefore, why did the Minister approve millions of dollars in grants and incentives for a company when the son of the man who gave him a \$2.6-million loan is an executive and shareholder of that very company?

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Ouellet: Sit down.

Mr. Nielsen: No, I will not sit down because it is my responsibility to respond to questions with respect to conflict of interest. The right hon. gentleman, as a former Prime Minister of this country and one who has much experience in the House of Commons, should look to the conduct of some members of his own caucus as was displayed nationally on television last night. For the sake of this institution itself, he should speak with those people about the common standards of behaviour and decency expected of anyone, let alone—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ouellet: Ask him to withdraw!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I think all Members know that comment about other Members is out of order.

Mr. Ouellet: Ask him to withdraw. Withdraw—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. For the same reason, I cut off a statement made yesterday by one Hon. Member without asking him to withdraw his comments. All I am doing is pointing out to the Hon. Minister that those comments were out of order.

[Translation]

TIMING OF PRIME MINISTER'S KNOWLEDGE OF FACTS SURROUNDING MATTERS INVOLVING MINISTER OF REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty weak defence.

In that case, I want to direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. Canadians have had enough of these blatant attempts to hide the truth. Obviously, the Prime Minister asked the Minister 10 days ago for all the facts surrounding the case now before the House.

My question is as follows: For how long has the Prime Minister of Canada been aware of the facts surrounding the case of the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion, and does the Deputy Prime Minister, acting on behalf of the Prime Minister, intend to provide the House with the parameters of this enquiry?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I am responding as Acting Prime Minister and one who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct. I have told the Right Hon. Member, his caucus Members and those of the New Democratic Party over 10 days that the Minister has met the very strict and demanding requirements—

Mr. Ouellet: That's not true and you know it.

Mr. Nielsen: —of the Code of Conduct.

Mr. Ouellet: This is not true and you know this.

Mr. Nielsen: The Hon. former Minister knows that what he just said is unparliamentary. He charges me by saying that it is not true and I know it. That is something, Sir, that must be withdrawn.

Mr. Ouellet: Not at all.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I heard the Hon. Member say that it is not true and it is his privilege to say that as a heckle. That is all I heard.