

Point of Order—Mr. Epp

1. Yes. The Department of External Affairs has as part of its external information activities a program to encourage visits to Canada by selected foreign journalists, broadcasters and other "opinion formers" and to assist others in these categories visiting Canada on their own initiative. The program is designed to encourage a greater knowledge of Canada abroad and better understanding of Canadian attitudes and policies affecting our relations with other countries.

2. Yes. Where desirable, the Department of External Affairs meets the cost of travel to and from and within Canada of foreign journalists and other "opinion formers" selected on the recommendation of Canadian missions abroad. The financial assistance available to each visitor is limited by Treasury Board regulations. The funds are drawn from those available for information and cultural relations under the "Canadian interests abroad program" provided for in the estimates of the Department of External Affairs.

3. The number of sponsored "opinion formers" who have visited Canada under the auspices of the Department of External Affairs and the costs involved in each of the past four fiscal years are:

	Number of Sponsored Visitors	Total Cost \$
1974-75	278	\$215,218.08
1975-76	284	\$256,090.26
1976-77	203	\$268,488.94
1977-78	234	\$246,587.83

[English]

Mr. Pinard: I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER**MR. EPP—QUESTION NO. 679—CONTRADICTORY INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY SOLICITOR GENERAL**

Mr. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When a member places a question on the order paper with the expectation of receiving an answer from the government, he also expects the answer to be in accordance with the facts. It creates difficulty for an hon. member who has raised specific questions about government activity in his riding to receive an answer to such a question on the order paper that is totally contradicted by the minister who supplied the answer in the first place.

On December 4, 1978, I placed question No. 679 on the order paper asking the Solicitor General (Mr. Blais) the following:

Is the government planning expansion of the RCMP Highway Detachment Building located at Steinbach, Highway No. 12 and, if so (a) what is the capital spending (b) on what date will construction (i) begin (ii) be completed?

I received an answer to that question on January 30, 1979, which appears in *Hansard* at page 2700. The answer the Solicitor General gave was very succinct. It consisted of the one word "No". I think everyone in this House would interpret

[Mr. Jamieson.]

that answer as meaning only one thing, namely, that the construction about which I inquired was not taking place.

I asked the question in view of the fact I had spoken with a number of officials in the RCMP detachment office as well as at headquarters in Winnipeg who indicated to me that in fact this construction was to take place. After having received that negative answer on January 30, 1979, an answer signed, as nearly as I can make out the signature, by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General (Mr. Young), I received a letter signed by the Solicitor General dated February 13, 1979. This letter from the Solicitor General totally contradicted the answer I had received as recorded in *Hansard*. The letter dated February 13, 1979, and addressed to myself reads:

● (1530)

Reference is made to your letter dated 1978-12-21 and to the interim reply dated 1979-01-09 from my Ministry Assistant, concerning the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachment at Steinbach, Manitoba.

I am informed by the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that interior renovations as well as a new parking lot at the rear of the building, with access from the Town's back lane, are indeed programmed for the fiscal year 1980/81. The estimated cost for the project is not expected to exceed the \$180,000 figure as you mentioned.

As you are aware, however, projects such as these are evaluated on a force-wide basis yearly and should others be deemed of a higher priority in the competition for scarce resources, a delay in present plans could occur.

The letter is signed by the Solicitor General from whose department I received this negative answer.

After I received the negative answer and prior to receiving the letter from the Solicitor General, the local press contacted me as to the RCMP's plans for the RCMP detachment building located on highway No. 12. I supplied them with the question which I had placed on the order paper and also the answer. An article appeared in the local press which indicated that the Solicitor General's department had now decided that the plans were not to go forward. I accepted these answers as factual and in good faith. How else should I have interpreted the answers? Subsequently, one week later, from the same minister, from the same department, on the same question about the same detachment building, the minister gives me a reply which in fact had been confirmed by the RCMP in Winnipeg.

At the moment I can only place myself in your hands, Mr. Speaker. As an individual member, I do not know what other recourse I have. When an answer is given, then totally denied, and in fact an opposite answer given by the Solicitor General, what response can I possibly make to my constituents? This matter came to my attention last night, and I am placing myself in your hands, Mr. Speaker. If there is in fact a *prima facie* case, I will look at it and advise as to whether I will proceed with it.

Hon. J.-J. Blais (Solicitor General): Mr. Speaker, I fully sympathize with the hon. member on the point that he is making. I have looked at the question which he has on the order paper and, indeed, it is a very normal and very short question that he poses. I do not have with me the written inquiry which he directed to my attention and to which he has