

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Reform Party. It has finally asked a question on the environment. It is the first question in a year and a half.

In particular I want to thank the auditor general for focusing on areas which are of very serious public concern. I believe, Mr. Speaker, if you speak to the auditor general he will tell you that one of the reasons he undertook this very thorough environmental analysis was at my request in anticipation of the new role of his department as commissioner for sustainable development.

I will tell the hon. member that last month I gave the order to cancel the federal PCB site program because over the last six years under the green plan millions of dollars were spent to look for places to burn PCBs and they did not find a single site. I did not think it was a good use of taxpayers money. I ordered an end to the program.

I have further ordered that we work with the Department of Public Works to have all federal PCBs burned where there is a legally sanctioned facility in the province of Alberta.

**Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am still waiting for the answer.

The Reform Party has always said that cleaning up Canada's environment is a top priority and we are on record with that plan. It is this level of government that lacks leadership in the area.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Harper (Simcoe Centre):** You may learn something if you listen. Pay attention.

The auditor general stated clearly in his report that the government has failed to create a national plan or to set money aside to clean up contaminated sites that pose a risk to human health and the environment. Why does the government not have such a plan? Where does it plan to get the money to meet its obligations?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member obviously did not listen to the answer to his first question.

He asked a question about PCBs. I told him that I cancelled the program because we had spent \$20 million travelling around the country and we had not destroyed a single PCB. I did not think it was a very good use of taxpayers money, given that there is a licensed facility in Alberta. I am working with the Department of Public Works. We will meet our agenda. We will meet the 1996 deadline. We will probably have all PCBs destroyed by the end of this year.

I also reiterated the position that we will take responsibility and we will clean up all federal contaminated sites. We will not endorse the concept of orphan sites because we believe in the unanimous resolution of ministers of the environment from every province, which was stated two years ago and restated last

year, that the concept of orphan sites leaves polluting companies off the hook.

The commissioner for sustainable development would be the first one to underscore that if company *x* makes a mess of the environment company *x* should pay the liability for the clean up. That is not a liability to be borne by the taxpayers and that is why the federal and provincial governments have banned the concept of orphan sites.

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● (1135)

[*Translation*]

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of National Defence. Last week the Minister of Transport announced that he had asked the auditor general to review the \$380 million contract awarded to Hughes Aircraft Canada for automation of the air traffic control system. Work on this contract is already two years behind schedule, and the total cost may be two and a half times the initial cost.

What explanation does the Minister of National Defence have for the fact that his department approved a similar contract for \$70 million with Hughes Aircraft Canada, when more than 16 months ago, he was informed by federal auditors of the delays and cost overruns that occurred in the case of the contract with Transport Canada?

[*English*]

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, national defence has been working alongside people in Transport Canada and I along with my colleague, the Minister of Transport, on these matters.

Should any changes be required to the defence air traffic control side of these contracts those changes will be made.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, considering the poor performance of the Minister of National Defence in controlling costs and considering that this contract shows cost overruns of 150 per cent, why did he not follow the example of his colleague at the Department of Transport and ask the auditor general to investigate this contract?

[*English*]

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the lead on the air traffic control system comes from my colleague, the Minister of Transport. He has taken certain steps with which I concur. Certainly the Department of National