

taking to ensure that this stamp is not being improperly used and that the integrity of the system will be maintained?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of State (Agriculture)): Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we did some checking, but not concerning the loss of this stamp. It was misplaced, we immediately took the measures required to locate it, and this has been done. We follow this kind of incident very closely to prevent abuses. I want to assure the House that we will do everything possible to avoid similar occurrences in the future, even if that means calling in the police or taking any other such measure.

● (1500)

[English]

REDUCED NUMBER OF INSPECTORS

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister would be ready to admit today that the cut-back in the number of inspectors is having an adverse impact on the integrity of the system. For instance, we are told that in some poultry plants the number of inspectors will be reduced to 85 per cent starting in the next month. Could the Minister explain to Canadians how, by reducing the number of inspectors in some of these poultry plants and changing to the American streamlined system, we can have as good a quality of inspection?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Minister of State (Agriculture)): In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, Canada would be justified to boast having one of the world's best—if not the world's best—inspection system in this sector where we have always taken measures to rank among the best. The mere fact that a stamp might be misplaced in a plant—and found the following day—does not justify questioning the soundness of a whole inspection system. We hired inspectors when there were staff shortages, and the House can rest assured that we will maintain our high standards in that sector and monitor this kind of incidents very closely.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: This will be the last question.

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AIR SAFETY

AIR-INDIA—REQUEST FOR SERVICES OF BOMB-SNIFFING DOGS

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. Will he confirm that the Indian Government and/or Air-India

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requested bomb-sniffing dogs to protect its flights from Canada to India seven months prior to the Air-India crash? If it is true that they did ask and the Government of Canada did say no, will the Minister explain to the Canadian people why the Government did not provide that protection?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that Air-India did make a request that all bags be checked by dogs. It was not acted upon because it was decided X-ray equipment would be used to screen the bags and also because of the fact that, through discussions with Air-India, it was proposed they would use a mechanical sniffer.

I should also point out that dogs are used from time to time when there is a specific threat on a specific flight. In this particular case, because there was not a specific threat, those precautions were not taken.

GOVERNMENT SECURITY MEASURES

Mr. Iain Angus (Thunder Bay—Atikokan): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister will be aware that not all the bags that were processed for Air-India flights over that period of time were in fact X-rayed or properly inspected. Would he now indicate to the House exactly what steps were taken, after hearing the request from Air-India, both for increased surveillance and the possibility of bomb threats? What steps did the Government of Canada, through the Department of Transport, CSIS, the RCMP, or whatever, take to ensure the protection of the people on those flights?

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and President of the Treasury Board): With respect, Mr. Speaker, I did not say what the Hon. Member said I said. I tried to answer the question on the basis of the information which was provided to me. With regard to the specific flight, as has been indicated on many occasions in this House, there had been a request for additional security for all Air-India flights. That additional security was provided. That has been alluded to both in the CASB report and, indeed, the judicial inquiry by the Indian Government. It indicated that they had requested the additional security measures and that they were provided.

In addition to that, they did provide, on a regular basis and particularly in the case of Flight 182, for the attendance of a security supervisor who was flown in from New York. He works for Air-India and he supervised the whole operation. Really, in essence what I am saying to the House is that the requests that were made in terms of a general beefed-up surveillance that was required were in fact responded to by the Canadians.