

[Texte]

Mr. Mackay: As we pointed out in our response earlier, we had agreed with the Auditor General's comments and we did not follow the Treasury Board guidelines or directives on this particular issue. I think it requires some explanation as to why we did not.

Mr. Anguish: Who gave you the authority, though? That is the question I would like to have answered right now.

Mr. Mackay: The authority, of course, in this particular situation, was on the basis of our recommendation to our Minister, who supported the department in our approach with respect to this subject matter.

Mr. Anguish: So the Minister of the Department of Public Works at that time gave you the authority to break the threshold of Treasury Board?

Mr. Mackay: Yes. I would have to explain, for the benefit of the committee, why we felt this was necessary.

Mr. Anguish: Certainly.

Mr. Neil: We would be glad to hear that.

Mr. Mackay: In very simple terms, we place somewhere in the neighbourhood of over 1,000 contracts for consulting services—and this is what this happens to be—per year. When the Treasury Board originally introduced the directive that we were to go out on competitive proposals for the consultants, first of all, as you point out, I think the figure was \$30,000. The department objected to this, through its Minister, indicating that this would put quite a delay into the process of selecting consultants, and that while we were not objecting to the principle of having proposal calls, what we wanted was to have the threshold moved up quite dramatically. Through our Minister we were in contact with Treasury Board with respect to having this threshold moved up—at one point, we were talking of around \$100,000—so that we would reduce the number of proposal calls that we would force upon the professional consultants who, in fact, would be responding through that type of proposal call.

Over a protracted period of time there were various conversations and discussions and there was correspondence with respect to this particular subject. More recently, in fact about a year ago, we requested that, as the \$100,000 was not a reasonable figure, it should be \$500,000. However, as of the May 20, 1983—it was just about a year ago—the Minister of the day decided he would accept the \$100,000 and since that point in time we have been following that procedure.

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Mr. Anguish: I have heard you, Mr. Mackay, use the term twice now, first when referring to Centennial Towers and now referring to this issue of contravention of government contract regulations, about imposing impositions. First you talked about an imposition on the landlords concerning leasing of properties, and now an imposition on the consulting firms. When we are dealing with amounts of money that are sometimes in excess of \$1 million I am sure the landlords and the consulting

[Traduction]

M. Mackay: Il est tout à fait exact ainsi que le Vérificateur général l'a fait valoir qu'en l'occurrence nous n'avons pas respecté les directives du Conseil du Trésor. Je pourrais vous en expliquer les raisons.

M. Anguish: Moi je voudrais savoir qui vous a autorisé à dépasser ce plafond.

M. Mackay: C'est le ministre qui a approuvé la recommandation que nous lui avons soumise.

M. Anguish: C'est donc le ministre des Travaux publics qui vous a autorisé à dépasser le plafond fixé par le Conseil du Trésor?

M. Mackay: En effet. Je voudrais si vous le permettez vous expliquer pourquoi nous avons estimé nécessaire de procéder ainsi.

M. Anguish: Je vous en prie.

M. Neil: On vous écoute.

M. Mackay: Généralement nous passons chaque année environ 1 million de contrats pour des services de consultants. Lorsque le Conseil du Trésor a décidé que ces travaux devaient être mis en adjudication, le plafond à l'origine avait été fixé à 30,000\$. Le ministre des Travaux publics a fait valoir que cette mesure retarderait très sensiblement le choix des consultants, et que si la méthode d'adjudication était valable en principe, le plafond devrait être sérieusement relevé. Le ministre a donc essayé d'obtenir un plafond de 100,000\$ afin de réduire le nombre d'adjudications auxquelles nous devrions procéder pour les services des consultants.

Une série d'entretiens et un échange de correspondance ont eu lieu à ce sujet il y a un an environ nous avons demandé un plafond de 500,000\$ plutôt que de 100,000\$, chiffre qui ne nous paraît pas pratique. Cependant, le 20 mai 1983, le ministre des Travaux publics a décidé d'accepter le plafond de 100,000\$ et depuis lors celui-ci a été respecté.

M. Anguish: Vous avez dit à deux reprises parlant de l'immeuble du Centenaire et des entorses aux directives régissant les contrats du gouvernement que vous ne vouliez pas causer de tracas, d'une part aux propriétaires des immeubles en ce qui concerne les baux de location et d'autre part aux consultants. Or comme il s'agit de montants très importants dépassant souvent un million de dollars, je suis sûr que les propriétaires de ces immeubles n'ont pas à se plaindre de la façon dont le ministère des Travaux publics les traite.