

Oral Questions

In my answer I acknowledged his use of the word. But I also acknowledged in the course of that dialogue that I thought that all parts of the country could and should do more.

I did not utter a pejorative word about Ottawa or about the National Capital Region. I think that it is clearly a very prosperous and very innovative part of our nation. This government has had to take some initiatives, here and across the country, that have impacted negatively on certain aspects of institutions in the region, and I regret it deeply.

I wish that we had more money to do more things, but I think the people in the National Capital Region, who are principally responsible for the efficient functioning of the federal government I think they realize, perhaps more than most, the extent to which it is important to bring about sanity in the finances of Canada. They have made a contribution to that, as we all have, which I readily acknowledge, and I can assure my hon. friend that the statement made by the journalist is not one that I or any member of my government shares.

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ACID RAIN

Mr. Bob Corbett (Fundy—Royal): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of the Environment, my question is for the parliamentary secretary. Recently, there have been discouraging signs from Washington that the Bush administration is wavering on its commitment made earlier this year to reducing acid rain. Can the parliamentary secretary indicate what steps the department's officials are taking to impress upon the American government that the environmental problems associated with acid rain are only too real?

Mr. Lee Clark (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, first, I would indicate on behalf of the Government of Canada that we firmly believe that there is ample evidence of the trans-boundary effect of acid rain, which is the case before the U.S. Court of Appeal. Of course, the government of Ontario is one of the petitioners in that case.

Nevertheless, the position which the United States government is taking in this particular court case certainly demonstrates a need for acid rain legislation being passed by the U.S. Congress. Furthermore, it reaffirms a

need for a bilateral accord between Canada and the United States. With regard to the latter, Canadian officials have already met twice with their American counterparts in preparation for setting the basis for the talks, which will hopefully lead to the development of a bilateral accord. There is a third meeting planned for the month of January.

In closing, I would note that Ambassador Burney, in a recent issue of *The Globe and Mail*, stated, referring to the year 1990, "I am hopeful this is the year we will conclude an acid rain accord with the United States". We share that hope, Mr. Speaker.

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PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Speaker: On Friday, November 3, the hon. member from York Centre sought to obtain the unanimous consent of the House in order to raise a question of privilege at the outset of the sitting without having submitted written notice.

[Translation]

The substance of the question had to do with what the hon. member for York Centre characterized as the deliberate interference by an official of the Federal Business Development Bank with the delivery of documents which the Bank had agreed to provide. He indicated that he wanted these documents in order to turn them over to the RCMP. In anticipation of their receipt, he had arranged a meeting with RCMP people in his office on the Thursday afternoon. As it happened, the documents were not turned over to the hon. member for this meeting.

[English]

The hon. member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell supported the question of privilege and explained that the material requested from the bank was in the public domain, as these documents had already been given to *The Montreal Gazette*. He went on to state that the failure of the bank to deliver the documents in the time previously arranged prevented the hon. member from York Centre from turning them over to the RCMP. Both members asserted that the decision to withhold the documents by an Ottawa official of the bank interfered