

Supply and Services, and as it is the responsibility of the Minister—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Could everybody in the House please listen to the question? Instead of yelling back and forth it would make things so much simpler.

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, as it was a contract for the benefit of the Ministry of Finance, will the Hon. Minister of Finance do what we expect from the Minister of Finance under the circumstances in order to clear the air completely, and ensure that the Minister of Finance who will present the next Budget will not have his name being questioned in the House of Commons and in the nation?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I should not have to say this to a former Minister of Finance, but what we are talking about is the Bank of Canada, a different institution, not the Department of Finance. The Bank's office is in a different location. It has its own staff, separate from the staff of the Department of Finance. The Bank called us and said it needed an agency to undertake a program. We hired the agency. The wisdom of our decision is demonstrated by the fact that we are saving hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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[Translation]

TRANSPORT

INQUIRY IF MEASURES TAKEN TO RECOVER EXCESS PAYMENTS TO CERTAIN COMPANIES

Mr. Fernand Jourdenais (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, could we perhaps have two minutes of minding the business at hand? My question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Considering the fact that according to the Auditor General's report last December, the then Minister of Transport, in April 1983, gave VIA Rail \$75 million more than was budgeted and that in 1981, the Minister did the same for Canadian National to the tune of \$46.5 million, could the Minister inform the House whether he has taken steps or intends to take steps to recover the excess payments made by the former Liberal Government? Yes, you guys over there!

[English]

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, in reply to my hon. colleague, first, this particular issue arises from some very legitimate differences of opinion in accounting practices. Second, it may very well have to do with the disposition of the thirteenth and fourteenth billing, which occurred as a result of the kind of open-ended contractual arrangements which VIA Rail has had with the two operating railway companies. Hopefully, that is being cleared up by the

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establishment of a new costing arrangement. With respect to the specific question regarding accounting practices, that is also a matter which is being looked at. Hopefully, it will be resolved satisfactorily.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

AWARDING OF CONTRACTS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. A few minutes ago the Minister of Supply and Services said, in reply to a question, that if he had to make the decision which was made, in terms of the contract which went to the brother-in-law of the Minister of Finance, he would do it again. After that the Prime Minister acknowledged that, perhaps, the Government had made a mistake in this instance. My question to the Prime Minister is simply—

Mr. Clark (Yellowhead): Stick to the truth.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Broadbent: Oh, the Prime Minister did not acknowledge that he made a mistake. I want clarification from the Prime Minister.

In light of what the Minister of Supply and Services said, that the same decision would be made again, will the Prime Minister assure the House that a decision to award a contract to a relative of a Minister of the Crown, without a tender, will not be made again by this Government?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): That is like the clarity I heard on the news at noon on the CBC, when the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam said that the NDP is out of NATO, and the NDP Leader said: "We're in". That is the same kind of clarity and reason.

I tried to respond to my hon. friend. We inherited two sets of guidelines, one for Cabinet Ministers, which is being approved. I do not think it is appropriate for me to respond to nor is it appropriate for the Hon. Member to ask a hypothetical question. All I can do is tell him that we are committed to upholding the highest possible standards of human conduct in the exercise of a public trust. We have two sets of guidelines, and in both cases we are tightening up and enhancing them to the credit of the Government and to the credit of the House of Commons.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister was not hypothetical. It was straightforward and clear. I am looking for a policy decision from the Government. Will he assure the House that the newly-elected Conservative Government will not make any decision in the future which will give a contract on an untend-