

As we all know, if the global environment is to be protected, poverty in the developing world must be reduced. One year ago in Rio at the earth summit this government made a commitment to provide additional funds to the Third World.

How is it possible for Canada to do that if it is cutting its foreign aid?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of External Relations and Minister of State (Seniors)): Madam Speaker, CIDA continues and is determined to pursue and actively support the program approved at the Rio summit. The environmental guidelines for sustainable development published in 1992 have been observed in all CIDA programs.

I also wish to confirm here in the House that sustainable development, as a fully integrated policy component, is a priority and indeed a requirement in all our international development assistance programs.

[English]

Hon. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Madam Speaker, the minister has difficulty in dealing with my question.

In an op-ed article today in *The Globe and Mail* the minister herself praises her foreign aid policy program but does not mention the poor nations.

The question therefore is this: Is it still this government's goal to help the poorest countries as promised in her department document *Sharing Our Future?* How does the minister explain the cancellation of aid to Ethiopia, Madagascar, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania?

[Translation]

Hon. Monique Vézina (Minister of External Relations and Minister of State (Seniors)): Madam Speaker, as we have repeated time and time again since December last year, there were some difficult decisions to make, following the cuts in funding for international development assistance. We have maintained our government priorities, including, of course, aid to the poorest nations.

Privilege

• (1200)

Through our programs we are maintaining our support for the poorest nations, who need the assistance of the Canadian government. We have set up special programs under which these nations can request assistance. These include environmental programs and programs with an economic and commercial framework.

Very briefly, Madam Speaker, the government is meeting its commitments, protecting sustainable development and helping the poorest countries throughout the world.

[English]

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have received notice of a question of privilege.

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PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Brian Tobin (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte): Madam Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege regarding actions that are being taken. I believe these actions interfere with my ability to do my job as a member of Parliament.

I received in the lobby a minute or two before Question Period from the law firm of Radnoff, Pearl, Slover, Swedko, Dwoskin notice of its intention to reserve the right to bring action against me unless I make certain withdrawals. This notice was served to me in the lobby of the House of Commons a few minutes ago. I regard it as a deliberate act to prevent me from doing my job. I shall explain why.

Even as I speak, the government House leader is reading from that legal notice given to me. The government House leader obviously had in his hand in advance of the notice being served on me in the lobby, a copy of the letter from the law firm in question. During Question Period the government House leader quoted directly from the letter in question served on me. He is looking at it now, as I speak.

You quoted from it earlier, Harvie. Somebody sitting behind you in the Chamber watched you quote from it. I tracked you as you quoted from it.

I am prepared to make the letter available to the Speaker. I am prepared to have you, Madam Speaker,