

Oral Questions

servants reached \$617 million, which is more than \$2.5 million a working day in travel by federal civil servants.

• (1455)

The minister asked members of the Bloc Québécois for suggestions; should he not work at reducing travel by federal civil servants which costs, as I said, \$2.5 million a working day?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually the amount of travel costs has been going down.

There has also been a decline in the number of people in the public service as has been pointed out previously. Of course this is kept under very close scrutiny by the Treasury Board and by the various ministries. We intend to keep doing that.

We are in a position in which we have to cut the cost of government to get the deficit down to 3 per cent of GDP. It requires that we keep vigilant on all of our expenditures including travel expenditures. We intend to do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while we are on the subject of costly travel, my second question is for the defence minister. Can the Minister of National Defence confirm that Lieutenant-General Scott Clément used a government Airbus 310 for the sole purpose of going to the William Tell missile firing competition in Florida, when he could have taken a commercial flight?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge of the specific question the hon. member has posed.

Quite often there are training flights using A-310s and Challengers. I will look into the matter for him.

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CRTC

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

With respect to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the application process of the CRTC was tainted by political interference by the minister.

The CRTC in refusing the application may itself have made a political decision just to be on the safe side. The panic stricken phone call from Mr. Darling to the member for Calgary Southeast yesterday merely confirms the concern felt by many Canadians that this quasi-judicial body is now feeling pressure for political reasons.

How can the Prime Minister assure us that the integrity of the CRTC and its decision making process have not been compromised by the actions of the minister?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the letter of the secretary general to the hon. member he states quite categorically that all communications related to a public process are treated in the same way. This includes a minister of the crown or other members of Parliament.

The member pointed out quite rightly yesterday that obviously the influence of the minister could not have been that substantial because the application was denied.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when a letter comes from a minister it is often as much what is not said as what is said that influences an outfit like the CRTC.

In 1976 the Minister for Public Works at that time telephoned a judge on behalf of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs. That minister offered his resignation voluntarily to the Prime Minister but the Prime Minister of the day, Mr. Trudeau, refused to accept it.

Surely it is not Liberal tradition to interfere with judicial bodies and get away with it. Will the Prime Minister, if it is, break with that tradition, do the right thing and ask for the resignation of the Minister of Canadian Heritage?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member can pose his question to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is not here. It is awfully hard for us to respond to allegations of things that were not said in letters that were not written.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

There are growing concerns among the Canadian small business community about the sustained growth of the economy and third quarter results.

The small business community in particular now is undertaking long term investment and hiring decisions on the prospect of sustained growth. What assurances can the Minister of Finance give this House that the recovery is secure and under way?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development - Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for asking a question on the economy which is obviously of the greatest interest to Canadians, albeit clearly not of interest to the opposition.