

*Oral Questions*

objective of \$23 million promised by the Department of National Defence?

[English]

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the period of examination of national defence covered by the Auditor General was mainly for the time before this government was elected.

In discussing the base closures at Portage la Prairie and Summerside the Auditor General certainly had good reasons for the claims he made. We did not repeat those mistakes when we closed bases earlier this year. We were much more meticulous about the cost savings that would accrue. Of course we have stood by those figures as they particularly apply to the question raised by the hon. member for the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the Auditor General of Canada has demonstrated that the Department of National Defence mismanages all of its capital assets and has a poor record regarding the closure of military bases, does the minister recognize that his only argument to justify the closing of the military college in Saint-Jean, namely to make savings, is no longer valid, and does he agree that he should review his decision and take into account the constructive suggestions made by stakeholders?

[English]

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member did not hear my previous answer. I stated this yesterday and we have stated it before. We believe absolutely that the financial reasons certainly justify the closure of the two military colleges.

● (1425)

When the hon. member opposite came to the defence committee sometime last spring he was given all the details and he never challenged the facts. In fact once he got them he left and ran away. He did not even challenge the facts.

With respect to the CMR there is no question that our financial figures are exact. With respect to the general question on base closures the department learned from some of the mistakes that were made by the previous government. That is why even though the painful decisions taken in February had to go on, they have gone on reasonably smoothly in the rest of the country.

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#### GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in a few short months the contest between federalism

and separatism will begin in earnest. Surely the Prime Minister would agree that now is the time for federalism to put its best foot forward, not its worst. Federalism does not put its best foot forward through partisan, patronage appointments to key federal institutions, such as Rideau Hall and the Canadian Senate.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that continuation of the Mulroney practice of high level patronage appointments to federal offices discredits the federal system? Will he promise to abandon this practice before it infects his entire government?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I should reply to an attack on the Governor General designate. The man served his country for about 23 years and is highly respected everywhere. He is the first Atlantic Canadian to be appointed as Governor General.

Ask anybody to look at the quality of the people I have appointed. For example this morning I named Jean-Robert Gauthier, who is not a member of Parliament any more, as a senator. He served for 22 years as a member of Parliament. He is the one who proposed a bill to have the Auditor General report four times a year. I was somewhat sorry he accepted the offer I made to him because I think he still would have been very good serving here, but after 22 years he accepted that appointment.

This man had a great contest in the House. It was good for you, Mr. Speaker, that it was by two votes he did not become the Speaker. A lot of people thought we had two great candidates and he lost by only two votes. He is a very respected Canadian who will make a great senator.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** I did not know that I had won by two votes.

My colleagues, may I very gently remind you, and this is not in the form of a lecture in any way, that some of our institutions should not be reflected upon negatively, nor I believe should we attack each other's character. I wonder if we might keep this in mind with both the questions and answers.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister defends partisan patronage appointments to the highest political offices. In so doing he is sending all the wrong signals to his ministers responsible for lower level appointments. He is saying it is okay for the immigration minister to make patronage appointments to the IRB. He is saying it is okay for the Solicitor General to make patronage appointments to the National Parole Board.

● (1430)

Will the Prime Minister change the signals he is sending to those ministers and rescind his latest patronage appointments so that Canadians can believe he is serious about restoring integrity to government?