

*Private Members' Business*

mandated public policy objectives, all within the constraints imposed by the accountabilities of a public enterprise.

The final workshop addressed meeting the information needs of the board. Participants examined the information needs of the board from a variety of perspectives, including the often unique perspectives of the exempt crown corporations referred to in Bill C-263.

Work is continuing in these areas. Options for an education program for newly appointed directors of crown corporations are under review, which will strike the balance needed between the fiduciary responsibility of directors and the public policy role of the crown corporation.

The auditor general maintains an ongoing brief in this area as well. All of these measures are designed to increase the accountability of crown corporations, including the exempt crowns.

I invite the attention of members to the program review decisions announced in the February budget.

• (1130)

The budget states that the government will undertake a fundamental review of its support and mandates of the CBC, NFB and Telefilm Canada. Strategies and mandates that were developed under radically different circumstances must be re-examined in light of today's technological possibilities and the evolution of both the audio-visual industry and the domestic market.

That and similar opportunities may be the more appropriate avenues for the hon. member to pursue his very worthwhile interest in improving the accountability of the exempt crown corporation. Such an approach will preserve the flexibility and the accountability regime for those crown corporations which require a degree of independence from the direct ability of the government of the day to intervene in their policy and administrative decisions.

**Ms. Shaughnessy Cohen (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-263 has as its goal the bringing of five crown corporations under the accountability provisions of the Financial Administration Act which now applies to all other crown corporations. The corporations this act seeks to include are the Canada Council, the National Arts Centre Corporation, the Canadian Wheat Board, Telefilm Canada and the International Development Research Centre.

Hon. members have listened to earlier discussions on the merits of having all crown corporations operating under a sound system of control and accountability. I can only add my support to those expressions of interest that crown corporations should be appropriately managed, but I cannot support Bill C-263.

The objective of good government management of crown investments is neither a mountain of bureaucratic rules and regulations nor a flawed system that fails to provide the adequate tools to evaluate corporate performance. Appropriate accountability must balance control against an adequate degree of empowerment for corporate managers to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. After all, crown corporations have a real and valuable public policy purpose.

I am sure all hon. members would wish to ensure that important publicly owned institutions such as the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation and others are held accountable for the results they achieve and the money they spend. I am equally certain hon. members would not wish to see the mandates of these corporations compromised, mandates that Parliament carefully protected in corporate enabling legislation. Or is that the case with this particular bill?

Perhaps the real agenda here is to remove from these particular crown corporations their arm's length quality, their ability to act at arm's length from the government. Perhaps the real agenda is to stifle the creativity which is part of the Canada Council, part of Telefilm Canada and part of the National Arts Centre. Perhaps the real agenda is to suppress the work of the International Development Research Centre or to prevent the wheat board from performing its mandate which has been so valuable particularly to the western provinces.

What is appropriate accountability for these corporations? That is the real question. Clearly, the present system of laws, regulations and government policies affecting crown corporations has evolved considerably. It can provide both Parliament and the government with much useful information and the assurance that crown corporations are being well managed.

The Auditor General reports to this House on a regular basis on crown corporation matters. Indeed, the Auditor General is the auditor or the joint auditor for 35 out of 48 of these corporations, including four that are part of this bill: the National Arts Centre, the Canada Council, the International Development Research Centre and Telefilm Canada.

Moreover, Treasury Board reviews the operations of crown corporations. It deals with resourcing issues for those corporations that are exempt from part X of the Financial Administration Act but nevertheless require government appropriation.

Of prime importance also is the fact that each crown corporation by law has an appropriate minister. The corporations are accountable through their ministers to Parliament. These ministers must table a number of important accountability documents relating to their crown corporation, such as annual reports, summaries of corporate plans, operating and capital budgets.