

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimity.

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AGRICULTURE

FARM MACHINERY PRICES—REQUEST FOR UNANIMOUS CONSENT TO MOVE MOTION

Mr. Elias Nesdoly (Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, under the terms of Standing Order 43 I rise on a matter of urgency—it has been a matter of urgency for a number of years—arising from the fact that farm machinery has increased exorbitantly in price, and farm machinery parts and repairs have in many instances doubled or more than doubled in price during the last 12-month period. Therefore I move, seconded by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight):

That selective price controls be placed on the steel and farm machinery industry and that a committee be appointed to study the pricing mechanisms of these industries with the view to recommending price rollbacks if there are unconscionable profits.

Mr. Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: There is not unanimity.

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SUPPLY AND SERVICES

STATEMENT ON NEW BID SOLICITATION POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Hon. Jean-Pierre Goyer (Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce a system for public opening of bids in the Department of Supply and Services effective immediately. This decision stems from a study which I initiated last December to review our policies, procedures and practices dealing with the solicitation, receipt, handling and opening of suppliers' bids. In my study of this whole matter I discovered that Canadian government policies and practices, which have essentially been in effect since 1941, are in the forefront by international comparison. I have no hesitation in comparing our current policies and practices with any other jurisdiction in Canada or abroad. But there is always room for improvement.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goyer: What I have done in my review is (1) to ensure that the good portions of our existing policies and practices remain in force and are respected; (2) to introduce new ones and to improve others where this could be done; (3) to provide for a uniform approach in our headquarters and field operations; and (4) to provide

Public Tendering

greater visibility as to our method of carrying on business. My aim was to accomplish balanced economy, efficiency, and the achievement of national objectives in a way that will provide fair value for the taxpayers' dollar and, at the same time, provide equity of opportunity to all qualified suppliers to compete for government contracts. In this regard, the new policies continue to support Canadian industrial and regional development while at the same time recognizing our international obligations, particularly the defence production sharing program.

Let us now look at what was done specifically. Public tender opening is not an entirely new development in the Department of Supply and Services but, truly, not much in use. Eight years ago the department, after consultation with the Canadian Shipbuilding and Ship Repairing Association, introduced a system of public openings for certain shipbuilding requirements and, more recently, we have had public openings for requirements of the new major postal facility in Toronto.

But even if the use of public tender opening was very limited in the past, information relating to prices of the successful and other tenderers for government requirements has always been available from my department. This information is made available after a full evaluation has been undertaken and the contract has been awarded.

[Translation]

What I am now introducing is a generalized system for the public opening of tenders. This decision, along with existing policies and practices dealing with the provision of information on tenders for all our requirements, either in regularly published form or as a result of special requests, provides a degree of visibility regarding Canadian government purchasing operations which, I believe, is as good or better than any system in the world. An important consideration in this regard is the fact that we are charged with the responsibility of operating a large and complex system of procurement. This involves upwards of 275,000 purchase orders per year in an amount which far exceeds a billion dollars. Some sixty thousand firms participate in this program which covers many thousands of different types of commodities and services.

It is within the context of this mass operation that one has to relate our new system for the public opening of tenders. First, the purpose of the public opening of tenders is to ensure tenderers that the prices which they have quoted are the ones which are used in the assessment of tenders. This is essential. But it must always be remembered that price is only one factor in the assessment process. Other factors, of course, include delivery time, the availability of spare parts, the financial, technical and managerial competence of the companies concerned, and the degree to which they meet all the other conditions stated in the tender. It is only after all these factors have been assessed that a decision can be taken as to what supplier will be awarded the contract.

● (1420)

[English]

In order to improve the system, I have now decided that effective immediately all written tenders for requirements expected to result in contracts over \$10,000 will be opened publicly both in headquarters and in our regional and