

*Oral Questions**[English]***GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Okanagan Centre):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal promise to restore trust and public confidence in the government has been broken. The Liberals criticized the Conservative government for the appointment of its political friends. They said they would appoint people only on the basis of competence. There are many very competent people who are not high level Liberals, yet once again yesterday or the day before we saw that this government has appointed one of its own.

My question is for the Prime Minister. I notice the Prime Minister is not here but it is directed to him.

**The Speaker:** I invite the hon. member to put his question.

**Mr. Schmidt:** I stand corrected. My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

How can the public trust be restored when this government continues to blatantly make patronage appointments to reward their loyal Liberals?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Verchères.

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*[Translation]***LUMBER INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères):** Mr. Speaker, while Canada has won all the binational panel reviews on the matter, the American government is now considering the possibility of paying back the 800 million dollars it owes to timber producers in Canada and Quebec. United States politicians and businessmen are furious against Canada and the very integrity of the Free Trade Agreement is threatened.

● (1445)

Meanwhile, the Minister for International Trade can do no better than hope that a cheque will come in soon.

My question is for the Minister for International Trade. Why is he content with just waiting for the Americans to pay us back? Why does he not demand that this circus be stopped and that the sums owing be paid immediately? All we are asking is for the government to put its foot down on this issue.

*[English]*

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, the United States is reimbursing the amounts collected after March of this year. With regard to the amounts

collected prior to March, the process is under way for the full reimbursement of the outstanding amount plus interest.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères):** Mr. Speaker, we would like this government to assume its responsibilities towards the timber producers. Can the government assure this House that it will take all the steps required in order to solve this problem before the end of the current year? The minister seems to forget that almost a billion dollars are at stake here.

*[English]*

**Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, I fully share the member's eagerness to see this situation resolved. We have pursued our discussions with the United States administration at the highest level. We have received assurances that the amounts will be fully refunded.

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**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert):** Mr. Speaker, a report on the funding of interest groups is scheduled to be completed by the Treasury Board tomorrow.

Will the President of the Treasury Board commit to immediate action and tell this House how soon we can expect big cuts to special interest groups, saving the taxpayers millions of dollars in wasted spending?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure):** Mr. Speaker, there will be no announcement tomorrow if that is what is anticipated by the hon. member.

However, I will say that the staff of the Treasury Board has been working on guidelines. We will issue guidelines to the various departments with respect to dealing with the issue of special interest groups and their funding. We will be asking the different departments to address this issue in the framework of the program review.

I do anticipate, like all other aspects of the program review, that there will be cuts because we do need to have these cuts to get our spending in line and get the deficit down. Therefore, we will be issuing those guidelines to the various departments to examine their grants.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert):** Mr. Speaker, we were led to believe that an announcement was coming tomorrow. There had been a study commissioned by the previous government that was produced last February. Here we are talking about more discussions and having more debate about when and where we are going to cut.

How soon will we get serious action on the cutting of funds to special interest groups so that the Minister of Finance can make some real cuts in the deficit which has to be addressed today?