

instead. This is what the Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Gorbet, replied to me:

• (1240)

[English]

"I believe you are reading it correctly and the answer is that we certainly did not expect \$2.5 million. I am not sure to what extent we want to relive the past. It was a very expensive past. The only thing I could say, Mr. Bellemare, if you want me to say it, is that I do not think there is any excuse for what happened in that instance and I think that has been acknowledged several times".

[Translation]

The Auditor General, again in the report, after the Comptroller General of Canada, who is in a way the government's senior manager of all civil servants regarding financial matters, reports directly to Treasury Board. He is a financial manager so to speak. He told the committee that the disbanding of the evaluation committee and its replacement by a self-review committee was not his preferred approach. It was a polite way of saying that it was wrong.

The general manager himself, the Comptroller General, admits that it was wrong and the Auditor General said that it was certainly wrong. I am still reading from the public accounts committee report. I told Mr. Gorbet, the Deputy Minister of Finance, this:

[English]

"Earlier you said that you were not abolishing the function evaluation. Would the Auditor General care to add some comments to that?"

[Translation]

And the Auditor General, Mr. Desautels, replied:

[English]

"As I said in my earlier remarks it is a department's prerogative to organize the function as it sees fit. There is no doubt about that. What they seem to be doing is to be moving toward what I would call a self-review approach as opposed to having a fully independent, autonomous group to do this evaluation. This is not my preferred approach".

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[Translation]

And he echoed what the Comptroller General had said:

[English]

"I think a move toward self-review has some validity but there has to be an element of sufficient independence in the process to make sure it meets the initial intentions".

First, I think that is definite. I think this is quite clearly a definite reduction in the independence of the process.

[Translation]

And the key word here is independence of process, something the hon. member for Trois-Rivières failed to mention in his speech this morning. He said that an evaluation function currently exists, but he was wrong not to admit that it was not an independent one.

That is precisely what we are asking for.

[English]

"There are other possibilities as well. For instance there could be a somewhat reduced level of effort", said Mr. Desautels. If the independent evaluation process is discontinued, after a while, we will not want to evaluate our own programs any more. It was very interesting to hear government members this morning talk about the national debt and their expertise in management. But they never set up a debt management evaluation committee, and the debt keeps growing. They spend their time whining, moping and complaining that the debt is going up every day and it is always the fault of the Liberals in the 1970s and 1980s. As a new member, I ask them where their debt management evaluation committee is. If you are such good managers, where is the debt evaluation committee?

The two members said that money should not be wasted.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The hon. member's time has expired, but there will be questions and comments.

Mr. Bellemare: I will not be long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I will let you finish, then.