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Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

Oral Questions

Minister of Natural Resources

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the Prime Minister, who said last year: "The former foreign affairs minister admitted that he left classified documents in unsecured premises. That is the reason why he tendered his resignation and I accepted it."

Does this standard still apply?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I have indicated to the House already the steps that have taken place. We do treat it as a very serious matter. Procedures that we had in place were not followed by a member of my staff and corrective action has been taken.

As well, it is important to note that I did offer to resign to the Prime Minister and he did not accept my resignation.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's own guide for ministers says this:

The Prime Minister holds Ministers personally accountable--
--I repeat, personally accountable--
--for the security of their staff and offices, as well as of "Confidences of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada"... and other sensitive information in their custody.

Are these just words on paper? Why will the Prime Minister not apply his own rules?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to the House, we do take this as a serious matter. In fact, that is why corrective action was taken instantaneously, once it was discovered that the procedures were not followed.

I have offered my resignation to the Prime Minister, if he felt it necessary, but he did not accept my resignation. However, I have taken responsibility.

The person taking responsibility for handling these documents offered to resign and I accepted it.