



Manley regrets focus on anti-monarchy comments

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CTV News Staff

Deputy Prime Minister John Manley said Saturday he regrets that comments he made suggesting Canada sever its ties to the monarchy have become a topic of discussion during the Queen's visit.

"The Queen is in Canada to receive the thanks of Canadians after 50 years of service and it's richly deserved," Manley said. "I wished I'd been a little more skillful at not answering a question."

Manley, an outspoken critic of the monarchy, made his controversial comments to reporters in Montreal just hours after Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh touched down Friday in Nunavut on the first leg of her Golden Jubilee tour of Canada.

Manley said the Governor General should become Canada's head of state after the Queen's reign ends.

"I've always said I have a lot of respect for the Queen and the work she does," Manley said after a question-and-answer session with university students.

"But I still think for Canada, that after Queen Elizabeth, it will be time for us to think about the institution and I would prefer to have an entirely Canadian institution."

Manley said that while the Queen deserves everybody's respect and does extraordinary work, "personally, I would prefer an institution after Queen Elizabeth that is just Canadian. It might be as simple as continuing with just the Governor General as the head of state in Canada.

"But I don't think it's necessary for Canada to continue with the monarchy."

John Aimers, chairman of the Monarchist's League of Canada, was appalled at the comments.

"It's just bad manners," Aimers said, calling Manley's quip an "unpardonable breach" of etiquette.

He said that regardless of Manley's personal views, the comments were rude and inconsiderate of a woman who has been a friend to Canada for 50 years.

Tory MP Elsie Wayne was shocked at the timing of Manley's statement, and urged him to apologize.

"His timing is outrageous," Wayne told The Globe and Mail in an interview from her home in Saint John. "It's an insult to the whole of Canada. If you were in (the Queen's) position, you'd be very hurt."

Wayne said she intends to call Manley to account in the House of Commons next week.

According to a new poll, Canadians appear mixed about the idea of ditching the monarchy.

The Ipsos-Reid poll, conducted for CTV and The Globe and Mail, shows that 48 per cent of Canadians feel that Canada should end its formal ties with the British monarchy once the Queen's reign is over.

However, the poll also indicated half of Canadians believe the monarchy issue to be unimportant and so changing a form of government that seems to work is unnecessary.

Overall, 58 per cent of Canadians see the Queen and the Royal Family simply as celebrity figures, with the Queen and Prince William among their top favourites.