

The church 'eco-tender' passes

At a press conference in Feb. about the cabinet's anti-corruption successes, Karolína Peake said that money was saved by canceling the large environmental-cleanup tender. This same Karolína Peake led her new party, LIDEM, in voting last night with the coalition to pass the church-restitution law, which had been vetoed by the Senate. The restitution law has many things in common with the eco-tender. They both originated as pet projects of Finance Minister Miroslav Kalousek; each was designed to create an annuity to the participants; and each involves untransparent factors that make it impossible to exercise any effective public scrutiny of the money flows. Most striking is the information that some of the same people will be involved on the receiving end. Kalousek didn't get his eco-tender, because public outcry became too great. But yesterday he got his church-restitution law in a late-night vote that excluded any last-minute public debate. There won't be any anti-corruption press conferences this time about how much money was saved.

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