

Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's first question was what the government has done.

I agree with her that there is a constriction of credit in schedule A banks toward small and medium sized enterprise in Canada. I think it is a concern. The Minister of Finance and I have carried that concern to the Bankers' Association and to individual bankers.

In fact the last budget brought in some very important new provisions to help small business. The foremost of course is the Small Businesses Loans Act. We are going to lift the limit to \$200,000 under the small business financing program. We continue to have the lowest rate of tax of any country in the OECD for small business.

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THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs.

The Beaudoin-Dobbie committee unanimously recommended a preamble as part of this Canada round of constitutional renewal. The minister knows that the government has received over 35,000 letters from business and community leaders, chambers of commerce, service clubs and thousands of individuals from coast to coast who have strongly endorsed the special joint committee's preamble as a poetic statement uniting Canadians with their history and the values we all hold dear.

Can the minister tell the House that the preamble is in fact a part of the government package it is negotiating with the provinces and that the government is actively seeking their support for that preamble?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister Responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is a poetic preamble. I get it read to me at meetings across the country. There have been thousands of representations made to the government.

The question is: What legal weight would language of that kind have in a Constitution? That is the question we are looking at now. I cannot give any guarantees as to exact language, but it is agreed in the conference I am chairing that it is important the document finds some

Oral Questions

way to summons a sense of pride in the country. We are looking at both that draft preamble and some other language. We will do the best we can.

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[Translation]

THE CONSTITUTION

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

In his recent statements, I believe it is obvious that the Prime Minister is cooking up a unilateral referendum fraud in spite of the firm opposition expressed by the National Assembly in Quebec and Premier Bourassa.

My question for the right hon. Prime Minister is this: Why is the Prime Minister about to become a traitor to Quebec?

Mr. Speaker: The preamble as well as the wording of the question are absolutely unacceptable.

[English]

Some hon. members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member knows perfectly well that the question was unacceptable and is improper. I am sure as a member of long standing in this House—and I know the respect he has for this place—he would want to withdraw.

• (1500)

I am asking the hon. member to withdraw.

Some hon. members: No.

[Translation]

Mr. Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Prime Minister owes everything to Quebec. He is now denying it and I must raise this matter in the House.

Mrs. Venne: Exactly.

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is an experienced member here and has been here for many years. He knows perfectly well, it seems to the Chair and it probably seems the same way to other members, that the comments that he has made and the comments that he made after I asked him to withdraw are clearly designed to be such that they are not acceptable in this place.