

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES****SUGGESTED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT RESPECTING LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN TEACHING**

**Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister. As the premiers gathered in Montreal last week have recognized the principle of free access for everyone to French and English education according to their mother tongue, when the number of children justifies it, which the Minister of State responsible for federal-provincial relations described as significant progress, and as the provinces have reassured at the same time the exclusive jurisdiction of provincial governments in the field of education, would the Prime Minister tell us if, in the circumstances, he still intends to propose a constitutional amendment concerning linguistic rights in the education field?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** I agree with the Minister of State responsible for federal-provincial relations that some progress has been made at the premiers' meeting last week. But I would point out that this progress simply corresponds to what the federal government obtained at the 1968 and 1969 conferences where indeed we discussed those problems with the provinces and received from them the acknowledgement of the right of French-and English-speaking minorities to be educated in their own language where it is justified. I am encouraged by the fact that the provinces are still proceeding in the right direction. I only regret that we have not yet succeeded in confirming this progress in a constitutional document. It is good to recognize, as we did in 1968 and 1969, the right of minorities to be educated in their language, but this would be a reality had we proceeded as suggested then and now by the federal government. This progress would be included in the constitution and courts would ensure its becoming a reality. This is why our suggestion is still valid and I hope that the premiers and hon. members will understand that such a constitutional amendment would not remove this matter from provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. La Salle:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a supplementary question.

I would say to the Prime Minister that I understand quite well and that is perhaps why I ask the question. The Prime Minister has just said that he still intends to introduce this amendment. Given the circumstances, would he assure the House that such a constitutional amendment on educational linguistic rights will not be presented without securing prior agreement from the provinces?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, I suggest that this House must recognize the protection of minorities as one of its roles. In any case, that is the position of the government under my leadership. Already in 1968—and I have documents to prove it—we had secured agreement in principle. And during the last ten years, we have been asking the provinces to come together on that point so that this agreement in principle, which is very important for Francophone minorities in provinces other than

[Mr. Andras.]

Quebec—and now for the Anglophone minority of the province of Quebec—we have been asking, as I said, that is this agreement in principle go one step further. Of course, we will keep on asking the provinces to come to an agreement on that matter but I do not think the hon. member would prevent us from making such a proposal to those governments.

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**THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION****INQUIRY WHETHER GOVERNMENT PROPOSES AMENDMENTS**

**Mr. Gilles Marceau (Lapointe):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the right hon. Prime Minister.

Notwithstanding the attitude of the Quebec government which seems to have lost interest in the evolution of the constitutional debate, could the Prime Minister tell hon. members whether the government is prepared to take concrete action to make it clear that we are not for the *status quo* and that we are ready to consider the constitutional changes requested by Canadians and more particularly by Quebecers?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, I think this supplementary question is very pertinent to the previous one. As I have been saying again and again since 1968 and 1969 and at the Victoria conference, then again in my letters to the premiers in 1975 and 1976, and again in my other letters to them last September and October, we have been constantly proposing constitutional changes, particularly changes designed to protect public liberties and of course linguistic rights. Therefore I do not think any sincere person can describe this situation as a *status quo*. We did make a series of proposals. To answer the question of the hon. member, I would say yes, we have announced them in the Speech from the Throne and we intend to bring before the House before the end of this session other proposals related to constitutional changes, because indeed it seems clear that we cannot expect them from the government of Quebec which has only vague formulas and does not give any clear definition of its sovereignty-association option.

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[English]

**ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS****RUNWAY AT VANCOUVER AIRPORT—REQUEST GOVERNMENT CANCEL PLANS**

**Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of State (Environment). Could he tell the House exactly what is going on with respect