

Oral Questions

● (1440)

[English]

REQUEST THAT MINISTER RESIGN

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, an hour ago at the press conference the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier would not join with me in calling for the Minister's resignation. I am glad to see he has changed his mind.

I would like to ask the Minister a question. If she cannot defend a CRTC decision, a decision of an independent agency, where the merits of the application that was approved were clearly superior to the merits of the application that was denied, if she cannot defend this decision against the goon squad in her own caucus—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Ms. McDonald:—how can she usefully serve as Minister? Should she not now do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, one thing we do believe in doing is following the dictates of the law. That seems to be beyond the sensibilities of the Member who has just spoken. We have advice from the Department of Justice as to the procedures to be followed, but it is terribly important that we recognize the concerns that do exist. I mentioned one, the concentration. I just want to say as well to the Hon. Member that we also have a concern about services in both the French and English languages in this country.

[Translation]

I said that it was important to determine whether it was necessary for such an important federal Crown corporation to get involved in an endeavour of this magnitude before taking steps to meet the expectations of both our major linguistic communities.

[English]

MINISTER'S POSITION

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I wonder that the Minister is not so interested in concentration of media when it comes to newspapers and cross-ownership issues. I would like to ask why she misled the press conference earlier today and came up with a false issue and stated that Francophone taxpayers would be required to pay for this service when that is contrary to what the CRTC said, that the money would come from advertising and subscribers? Why is the Minister setting the Francophone community against the Anglophone community in this case? Why does she not respond to the needs of the Francophone community, but act immediately now on the application which has been fully justified before the CRTC for the All-News Channel?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to send a copy of the ruling of the Department of Justice to the Hon. Member so she will understand when the appeal period exists. I also want to say to her that as a Government we have recognized the needs of the French-speaking communities, in the Province of Quebec and all across the country. We will be seeing, through the introduction of our official languages legislation, just how important this is not only in the Province of Quebec, but elsewhere in Canada.

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[Translation]

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

PROMISE CONCERNING ANTICIPATED PENSIONS AFTER 25 YEARS OF SERVICE FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYEES—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Robert Toupin (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General of Canada. This Government promised early retirement to correctional officers after 25 years of service. I have been pleading with the Minister for nearly two and a half years. He did express his good intentions, but we have yet to see any concrete results. As a matter of fact, I introduced in the House a notice of motion which will force the Government to come clean. Can the Minister provide us today with a progress report on this question?

[English]

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I can advise the Hon. Member that I am, of course, as the Minister responsible for those officers, very much in favour of early retirement for those people, given the very difficult and stressful job they have. I am hopeful that legislation will be brought forward in the very near future which will assist them in this regard.

[Translation]

QUERY WHEN GOVERNMENT WILL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION

Mr. Robert Toupin (Terrebonne): The Minister is aware of the problems of our correctional officers. Good for him! Can the Minister give us a specific date when the Bill might be tabled? Can he also tell us whether he has secured the funds required from Treasury Board?

[English]

Hon. James Kelleher (Solicitor General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am not the Minister responsible for the legislation when and if it is brought forward, but I can say that I am hopeful that it will be brought forward in the very near future. Certainly I am strongly supportive of it, given the difficult task these people have and which they perform so well.