

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** Will the hon. member please put his question.

**Mr. Harris:** On behalf of all concerned members of my riding, is the parliamentary secretary now telling us, the House and all other concerned people that the government will consider intervener funding for non-native groups?

**Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans indicated earlier in response to a similar question that there was funding available for intervener groups. We will look at any group that wants to make application and make sure that we stay within the budget.

There are also funds available through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. They can make application there as well.

What I am saying today is that we will review groups that want to come forward and make application for the existing budget for intervener funding.

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[Translation]

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg):** Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner of Official Languages has intervened personally at the Department of National Defence to ensure that francophones who have lost their job have access in their language to career renewal and reclassification courses at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa. As it happens, the person in charge of this service for the past six years is a unilingual anglophone.

● (1450)

My question is for the Minister of National Defence. How can the minister, an unswerving defender of francophone rights in our Armed Forces, tolerate this kind of situation? What action does he plan to take to ensure that francophones, who account for roughly 30 per cent of staff at headquarters, have access to the same services as anglophones?

**Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. We have implemented many of the recommendations of the Department of National Defence. The former minister established a ministerial committee. We also have a general Canadian Forces-wide committee. We have carried out many recommendations and we still have a great deal of work to do.

[English]

It is a good point at which to state to the House that in view of the questions that came about in recent weeks regarding military

colleges we have been reviewing the whole question of bilingualism in the armed forces.

In a few weeks, when we come back after our Easter recess, I might be in a position to make a statement to the House. It will deal with how we propose to make the military college in Kingston acceptably bilingual for members opposite. It is a bilingual institution and we are going to enhance that bilingualism.

We will also generally deal with some of the concerns raised by the Commissioner of Official Languages and others who have criticized the department in the past.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg):** Mr. Speaker, in spite of the answer he has just given me, does the minister not recognize that this new case illustrates once again the problems francophones have working in their own language within DND, even here in the bilingual city of Ottawa? Given this state of affairs, how can the minister expect us to believe that he will transform the military college in Kingston into a bilingual institution?

**Hon. David Michael Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House and the hon. member that it is possible to work in French at headquarters in Ottawa. As minister, I work in French, as do all of my senior officials.

[English]

It is an ongoing problem we have in Canadian society that we feel very strongly about. We are committed to bilingual national institutions. We are committed to bilingualism within the operation of government throughout the headquarters of national defence. We have made great strides. That is not to say that we cannot make even greater strides in the weeks ahead.

I invite the hon. member opposite and his colleagues to help us make the Canadian Armed Forces much more bilingual and acceptable to Canadians who speak both official languages.

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**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES**

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, the House has been considering the matter of suspending the process of redrawing electoral boundaries in Canada before the public can have public hearings on the matter and after we have spent \$5 million. Apparently also, we hear rumours, the government is intending to impose closure after only one day of debate.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Will the minister inform the House whether the government sought an opinion on the constitutionality of this law before it was tabled in the House? If it did, will it table that opinion? If it did not, will it explain why not?