

Oral Questions

in the economy we find that the normal group of people who would be attracted to the armed forces has found other options.

With respect to Quebec, recruitment is down about 50 per cent overall. It is down 40 per cent in Ontario. It is down about 20 per cent in the west. It is about even in the Atlantic region.

I should say that part of the problem concerning recruitment to the military college was due to the uncertainty as to what would happen with young students coming out of high schools in Quebec. That uncertainty was created because of the opposition tactics by the official opposition and the government in Quebec City that refused to accept the agreement originally signed by the former Government of Quebec.

Now that we have the agreement in place and now that the parents of francophone students in Quebec know what is going to happen, we believe recruitment will pick up in the next few weeks and we will meet our target very shortly.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Marc Jacob (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find the minister's answer extraordinary.

Does the Minister of National Defence recognize that the sharp drop in francophone officer candidate enrolment will inevitably aggravate the already serious problem of francophone under-representation in the senior ranks of the Canadian Armed Forces, thereby compounding the unfair treatment of Quebec?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it extraordinary that the hon. member did not listen to my answer.

Because of the uncertainty surrounding the disposition of the site of the former College at St-Jean, the advertising for those students specifically in Quebec was delayed a number of weeks. Now that we have a deal that was signed a few weeks ago we know what exactly is available. Those students coming out of high schools in Quebec can take the prep year at the new civil institution in St-Jean.

In the last few days we have been heartened by what we have seen. Recruitment is picking up. It was merely delayed.

The hon. member talks about the decline in francophones overall in the armed forces. That is not borne out by the facts. About 27 per cent of members of the armed forces are francophone and fully 24 per cent of all senior officers are francophone, and that will continue.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a shocking document has been released to the Vancouver *Sun*, the concluding document of immigration consultations in B.C. in which the minister's employees say the following: "We go about congratulating ourselves for our overexuberant acceptance of bogus refugees while the rest of the world snickers at us for the suckers we are. The lawyers are making a circus out of refugee claims".

The minister ignores Canadians, experts and the Reform Party. Will he also ignore his own employees or will he make change?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where this member has been for the last little while, but this government has made a number of reforms not only to the immigration procedure but also to legislation like Bill C-44. Reforms to the IRB were announced last week. He was upset that we announced them during the budget process.

However, this government has moved on both IRB and immigration procedures. We support immigration. Immigration is positive for this country regardless of what this member and his party stand for.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister needs more suggestions for change than those we have offered already, here is what his own employees have to say: "End inland refugee claims. Limit family reunification. End official multiculturalism and make personal suitability the key criterion for immigration to Canada".

Why did the minister hide this damning document? Will he admit that last summer's consultations were as bogus as the refugee system he so ardently defends?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot hide a document I have never seen. My department and my government do not stand for the comments he has made.

The answer to his request is no. This party is bogus to the reality of Canada and does not know how this country has been built. If it did it would not have the temerity to suggest what it does day in and day out.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Gordon Kirkby (Prince Albert—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today in Washington the leader of the third party denigrated the Canadian Wheat Board.

Many Canadian farmers know they produce high quality products and that the wheat board has greatly assisted Canada's