

Oral Questions

their communities. Whether it is opening up a second hand store for the needy in Montreal, setting up crime awareness programs in Winnipeg or preserving native culture in Yukon, projects are geared to help both the kids and their communities.

Unemployed youth who participate in Youth Services Canada are breaking the cycle of dependency and learning good, solid job skills.

The announcement underlies once again the government's commitment to the youth of the country and its determination to take action on it.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the Solicitor General confirmed for the record that the commissioner of the RCMP advised that the commercial crime section of the RCMP in Winnipeg had reviewed allegations made by the member for Lisgar—Marquette and found no evidence to support an investigation.

The crime section of the Winnipeg RCMP has no record of a request from the commissioner of the RCMP on the matter.

My question is for the solicitor general. The commercial crime division in Winnipeg says one thing; the solicitor general says another thing. Who are we to believe?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have conveyed to the House, and earlier to the hon. member's colleague, information provided to me by the commissioner of the RCMP.

The deputy commissioner for operations of the RCMP today sent a letter to the hon. member's colleague setting out the position of the RCMP on the matter. If the hon. member's colleague will agree, I would be delighted to ensure that the letter is released to the public. I think it should clear the air and help the hon. member to get on to something more constructive.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I hope we are making progress here. We are not asking the solicitor general to launch an investigation or become involved in the day to day operations of the RCMP. However, we are very concerned that we find out exactly where the file went. There is supposed to be a file.

Could the solicitor general advise the House where the file went? If it did not go to Winnipeg, as they say it did not, then where did the file go?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped the hon. member would have

confirmed, on behalf of his colleague, that the letter the deputy commissioner of the RCMP sent to him explaining the involvement of the RCMP in the matter be made public. I think that would be a better way to clear the air than to keep asking this kind of question.

● (1145)

There must be some other matters the hon. member could deal with rather than attempting to create wrong impressions which should be the subject of an apology.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

In her recent answer to a question on the health hazards from 24 highly contaminated sites, the Minister of the Environment has reaffirmed the polluter pays principle and confirmed that Environment Canada denies any responsibility concerning so-called orphan sites.

Could the minister tell the House when the inventory of contaminated orphan sites will be completed by her department, and when she expects to be in a position to lay charges against owners who refuse to clean up their sites?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question could have been addressed to my Quebec counterpart. The hon. member is aware that the federal government signed an agreement with Quebec a few years ago whereby we financed, in partnership with the province, provincially identified orphan sites. Federal funds have been paid to the provinces, and they made the decisions on the use of those funds for clean-up operations.

When all environment ministers agreed two years ago that we should stop paying for orphan sites, we did so at the request of the provinces, who have the instruments to initiate prosecutions in the private sector, more particularly in Quebec.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of the Environment expect us to take seriously her commitment to the polluter pays principle, when, in 1994, the Canadian government initiated just 13 prosecutions under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which is 30 per cent less than in 1991, and 40 per cent less than in 1992. And that does not include contaminated sites in the Arctic which are not under the direct responsibility of the provinces. How can the minister explain such a drastic drop in the number of prosecutions, if not by a total lack of commitment to a stringent enforcement of the act?