

Government Orders

One of the reasons we are faced with this dilemma this morning, or why we have the change in order, is because of conversations that were going on between the three parties. They did not wrap up in time for us to give the proper notice to the table in terms of the order for today. So we regret any inconvenience it has caused the opposition. They can be assured of our continued and ongoing and habitual co-operation which we are more than delighted to give on every and any occasion.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The last time the bill was before the House, the hon. member for Ahuntsic had the floor. She still had some time left. Does the hon. member wish to continue her speech?

Ms. Roy-Arcelin: Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

Ms. Nicole Roy-Arcelin (Ahuntsic): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a comment and perhaps ask a question, if I may.

Mrs. Maheu: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): The hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, on a point of order.

Mrs. Maheu: Madam Speaker, I would appreciate your opinion. Is it customary for a member to ask questions when that member has the floor for the purpose of making a speech?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): I think that the hon. member can certainly understand that sometimes during a statement a Member might ask a rhetorical question, as many of us do, I think, at times.

The hon. member who was asked some questions has a few minutes left. Since she is there, she can surely answer a question she was asked and if her last comment takes the form of a question, I see no reason to object.

The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

Mrs. Roy-Arcelin: Madam Speaker, I can also use my time to make a comment.

The multiculturalism policy was established by the Liberal government in the 1970s because they saw it as a way to integrate into the Canadian mainstream Canadians whose origin was neither French nor English.

But since then, Madam Speaker, the face of our country, Canada, has changed. More than a quarter of our population is of other ethnic origins and our country is already in fact multicultural.

As the hon. member believes, Madam Speaker, this concept is no longer directed only to these minorities but to all Canadians, whatever their origin. Instead of dividing Canadians and "ghettoizing" them, it tends to unite them, to help them discover and respect their diversity, which is a great asset for our country.

That is why several European countries and even Australia envy our multicultural policy.

Madam Speaker, why do some hon. members not want to give our country a chance to develop in diversity, which is the reality of our country's existence?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Saint-Denis.

Mr. Prud'homme: Madam Speaker, may I ask my distinguished colleague a question? She said that Canada should develop in diversity. But how does she fit the Official Languages Act into this diversity? Where does it fit into the new Multiculturalism Act? How can one combine what is an official fact, Canada's two official languages, although I know it is misunderstood in many parts of the country, how can one reconcile it with the new Multiculturalism Act?

Ms. Roy-Arcelin: Madam Speaker, I would say to the Hon. Member that the official languages will still be respected, as will all the new arrivals and the ancestral languages of the ethnic groups. But it must be clearly stated that the official languages, English and French, will be respected. Of course, the intention here is not to change the Official Languages Act and I think that all these newcomers and those who have been here for a long time will respect the Official Languages Act.