

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***ARTS AND CULTURE**

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's cultural community is greatly disturbed by the Arpin report recommendations that the Canadian government should withdraw from the cultural sector. People in the film, television and publishing industries, including producers, directors, technicians and authors of books, films and videos, with their colleagues in the recording industry, as well as many members of the *Union des artistes*, totally disagree with this approach.

The arts community in Quebec is well-known here and abroad. Its creative spirit and talent reflect the diversity of our society. However, the vast majority of its members recognize the fact that their energy and enthusiasm would no longer be the same without the financial contribution and the sustained and indeed necessary support of the Canadian government.

That is why I hope members of this House and members of the arts community will explain to others the advantages of the federal government's contribution to arts and culture and urge the government to maintain its contribution intact.

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*[English]***CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING**

Mr. Ken James (Sarnia—Lambton): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the media reported that the government might be considering a fee to be paid by returning Canadians at the border. My immediate and public reaction was: Over my dead body.

I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance to that effect. The minister knew of my strong opposition to such a surtax. We do not need a fee which will unduly increase the workload of our customs officers and run counter to our efforts to move the traffic at the border. What we need are initiatives to address the underlying causes of our uncompetitiveness, federal measures that complement and supplement those which need to be undertaken by the private sector and our provincial counterparts.

For a few weeks the minister made me sweat it out. I could not sleep at night. I was on the edge of my seat. My wife said I was more irritable than usual.

Finally last week I met with the Minister of Finance. At the meeting the minister gave me his assurances that the federal government would not proceed with this cross-border levy.

On behalf of my friends, my family, my staff and my constituents the message to the Minister of Finance is thank you: "Thank you, Mr. Minister, for this breath of life and this momentary peace of mind".

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[Translation]***POVERTY**

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister. Two years ago, all parties in this House supported a resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada, and for two years the government has done nothing about this terrible situation. Today, the number of children living below the poverty line in Canada is greater than the entire population of Nova Scotia or Saskatchewan. These children are Canada's future. Does the government intend to act and do something about a problem as the House of Commons had asked it to do two years ago?

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I think it was reported recently that I was about to make a major statement on poverty in general, and more specifically on children. This may include both children at risk and other child-oriented issues. However, the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that this is above all a matter under provincial jurisdiction. Perhaps he could ask the hon. member for Hamilton East. I imagine her leader would care to listen, and if she would have the decency to listen when we are talking about children, she might understand these issues.