

Oral Questions

business community is fed up. People living in Winnipeg and Hamilton want service. They are fed up with the cost of postage going up at the same time as mail service is declining.

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, the information I have is that postal service is in fact getting better. We will have independent third-party auditors. I do not know what system the Hon. Member would prefer to that. Independent third-party auditors will report to the House on a quarterly basis on the level of service. Wild accusations about what is happening serve no useful purpose, as I believe the Hon. Member knows.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS

NEGOTIATION OF HIGHWAYS AGREEMENT WITH PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Lawrence I. O'Neil (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. The Minister is aware of the interest in Nova Scotia in the new highways agreement between the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia. Can the Minister give us a status report on the negotiations with the Province of Nova Scotia?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there have been such negotiations. I believe I will be in a position to announce something in that direction before too many suns go down. I know of the Hon. Member's intense interest in this subject and in particular in the roads in his own area. He has made my life, in that connection, a nightmare during the last several months.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED FEAR OF BACKLASH IN WEST—REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for official languages. I wonder if . . . Perhaps the Deputy Prime Minister could reply. The tabling of amendments to the Official Languages Act has been delayed once more. We have been waiting for them for two and a half years. According to Senator Lowell Murray, the introduction of the Bill has been deferred until next fall. Mr. Murray has told us that this delay

is the result of the fear the Government has of a backlash from Western Canada following the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord.

Could the Minister or Ministers involved indicate to us why the Government fears such an adverse reaction from Western Canada about our official languages?

[English]

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, the process of consultation and revision with regard to the Official Languages Act continues. I met last Sunday with Alliance Québec. I am meeting in the coming week in Thunder Bay with the Fédération francophone du Québec. That process will continue. The Government is very interested in and concerned about bringing the Bill in. As I said, the process continues.

[Translation]

ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING ACT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, we have been waiting for three years already. I believe that the Bill is ready to be introduced. I am concerned about the backlash from Western Canada, because newspapers have been referring to the linguistic plan of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources as a "program for apartheid". What is worse, the Hon. Member for Calgary has been referring to it as "outright discrimination". The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources himself has been described as the "Canadian Peter Botha", emphasizing "racist programs" and so on. I ask the Government, which is doing nothing to deny these allegations, to stand up and say where it stands, to defend the Official Languages Act and to introduce this Bill in the House for us to study. Who is right, the Hon. Member for Calgary or the Government, which is doing nothing?

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, there is no backlash which I have experienced at all. I think the Hon. Member should be a little careful before he raises those kinds of questions in the House.

I might say, as well, that I spoke with Alliance Quebec and all its representatives last weekend. The Anglophones in Quebec are very supportive of the Bill. This is also true with the Francophone communities outside Quebec.

I can tell the Hon. Member and all Members who have an interest in this matter that we will proceed with the appropriate consultation and do it right. I agree with him that we have been waiting for three years. We have been waiting longer than that. It was this Government which at least had the gumption to take on the task.