

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board):** Mr. Speaker, any inertia was caused by our colleagues opposite who, for 19 years, failed to take any action at all.

Mr. Speaker, since Bill C-72 was passed, in addition to the consultations on the regulations to be tabled in this House, Treasury Board introduced for Crown corporations operating under a memorandum of agreement the same system that applied to departments. As far as the department are concerned, at the time, four memoranda of agreement were in force; we negotiated 25.

I would like to quote what the Commissioner of Official Languages said on page 53 of his report. He said, and I quote: "Greater than the increase in the number of bilingual positions and more indicative of the capacity of the Public Service to serve the public in both languages is the increase in the number of bilingual employees in both relative and absolute terms".

The ratio of bilingual employees rose from 28 per cent in 1984 to 33 per cent in 1989, and this is something the government can be proud of.

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**TOURISM**

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the minister responsible for tourism. Package tour organizers in the northeastern United States warn us of the harmful effects the GST will have on the Canadian tourism industry and more particularly on Quebec, where tourism is the fourth largest industry.

If the minister understands the threat the GST poses for tourism, what does he intend to do to help this industry now?

[English]

**Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to tell the hon. member that most of what he has asked for has already been done as of the end of last week.

If the hon. member will read the bill, which has been reported from the committee, he will see there have been changes made exactly as he suggests. I support those changes. It will be good for the tourism industry and good for the Province of Quebec.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre):** Mr. Speaker, how can the minister explain that, since the tour operators are critical of your proposed rebate system? What do you intend to do to rectify the situation now?

[English]

**Hon. Tom Hockin (Minister of State (Small Businesses and Tourism)):** Mr. Speaker, this is how the rebate system should work. I hope it will be put in place this way and that it can be accommodated under the legislation as it has been reported.

When a group tour is organized the entrepreneurs of the tour will be able to apply for a rebate of the GST on behalf of the clients on the tour, thus making the whole process easier. This will make the GST not a problem for the clients.

This is a streamlining of the rebate system for which I have fought in the last two or three months. The Minister of Finance supports it. The finance committee of the House supports it. I hope the hon. member will support it too.

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**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton—Melville):** I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

I have in my hand a copy of a letter written to John Bulloch from the Sweda Cash Register Company. It is addressed "Dear John".

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

• (1440)

**Mr. Nystrom:** The letter explains that there is no way the cash registers of the country will be ready by January 1, 1991 for collecting the GST. It states in part: "We sincerely believe that this will result in a chaotic situation with retailers, who we firmly believe will be unable to collect the GST under the prevailing circumstances".

In light of the fact that there will be cash register and consumer chaos, is the minister in a position to stand up in the House today and admit that there is no way that he can meet the deadline of January 1, 1991, that he has come to his senses and that he will withdraw the GST bill now?