

[Translation]

CANADIAN UNITY

INQUIRY WHETHER LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WILL DEFINE HIS POSITION ON RIGHTS OF FRENCH MINORITIES OUTSIDE QUEBEC—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, given the fact that in a speech he made last February 18 the Leader of the Opposition strongly insisted that the rights of the English-speaking minority in Quebec be maintained in the constitution without, however, extending the same protection to the French-speaking minorities outside Quebec; given the fact that during the same meeting Newfoundland Premier Frank Moores pressed the Leader of the Opposition to act as follows, and I quote:

[English]

“take a very very strong stand on minority language rights whether it is in the provinces or in Quebec”, I move, seconded by the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming):

That this House urges the Leader of the Official Opposition to make his position clear. Does he want language rights—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Order.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

SUGGESTED REVISION OF DECISION CONCERNING ABOLISHING CANADIAN COUNCIL OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT—MOTION UNDER S.O. 43

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 43 to present a motion of pressing necessity.

Since the Canadian Council of Rural Development was established in 1965 to improve the poor economic situation in many rural areas of this country; since that council made up of national and regional organizations directly concerned with development disparities in rural areas is a vital link between the people involved and the government; and since the government will put an end to the activities of that body as a result of the recent budget cuts, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette):

That this House direct the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion to review that decision in order that the important work the council has started be continued.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Pursuant to Standing Order 43, presentation of such a motion requires the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Oral Questions

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

TABLING OF EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before proceeding with the question period, I have the honour of tabling in the House the eighth annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

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[English]

VACANCY

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that I have received a communication informing me that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely: the Hon. Ron Basford, PC, member for the electoral district of Vancouver Centre, by resignation.

Accordingly, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a new writ of election for the said electoral district.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

TREATMENT OF DEBT CHARGES IN THE ESTIMATES

Mr. Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the President of the Treasury Board. When making his statement following the tabling of the main estimates yesterday, the minister stated, among other things:

—the money the federal government pays out in debt charges can be considered as a form of transfer payment, since it is money being paid directly to Canadians.

Is it, therefore, the government's position that this \$8.38 billion in expenditures and, indeed, debt charges in general, are really inconsequential; that they are merely transferred from one pocket to the other and may, in fact, be beneficial since they provide income to bondholders? Is that the position of the government?

Hon. Judd Buchanan (President of the Treasury Board): No, it is not, Mr. Speaker. I believe I suggested that in a sense it is a form of transfer payment since 94 per cent or 95 per cent of it goes to Canadian bondholders.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, the minister also stated in his remarks yesterday, speaking about Canada's net debt, that “it is less worrisome when viewed in the context of Canadian history” during the last quarter century. He went on to state, also, that we have a long way to go before “the size of this nation's debt” becomes “an albatross to economic development and growth”.