

Oral Questions

If the member really cared about Atlantic Canada, really cared about the fishery, he would take more than 60 seconds or a one-day visit to write a new prescription for the problems of the region and he would address the House with some sensitivity and with, frankly, some intelligence.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The accelerated processing of citizenship applications during the Quebec referendum, an operation conducted only in Quebec, leaves very little time to carry out the security check required before Canadian citizenship can be granted.

How can the citizenship minister explain that, all of a sudden, during the Quebec referendum, the security checks required before applicants can become Canadian citizens, and eventually Quebec citizens, are four times faster than before?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the deputy premier of Quebec, their soulmate, said:

[Translation]

"We must assume that the federal government is acting in good faith; the right to vote is sacred".

[English]

We are not taking shortcuts on the applications. The applications within the system are being processed. There is a view at the lead up of every provincial and federal election, including the referendum this time as well as in 1980, that if there is an ability to speed up the processing with the viewing of granting the franchise of the vote it will be done.

For instance, in the province of Ontario in the lead up to the provincial election in 1994, instead of the 72,000 people that were processed in 1993 there were 107,000 people processed or a 49 per cent increase.

In Manitoba, in New Brunswick and in the other provinces the same thing has happened. We are not questioning how people are likely to vote as a function of whether or not we process. It is a shame that party is doing just that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is misrepresenting what Minister Landry said. The right to vote is indeed sacred. It is precisely because it is sacred that all due diligence must be exercised to make sure that only qualified applicants are granted citizenship.

Can the minister give us any assurances that Immigration Canada is not skipping any crucial steps in granting Canadian citizenship to immigrants?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tried to tell my hon. friend and the critic for citizenship and immigration that everything is being done according to law and according to tradition; that is what we have been saying.

If she checks with her seatmate, the critic for immigration and citizenship, he criticized us in the past for moving too slowly on the applications. Now they are saying we are moving too fast. Which one is it?

* * *

• (1455)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week in British Columbia two women were killed by their spouses after restraining orders had been issued for their abusive partners. They lived in fear for their lives and turned to the Canadian justice system for help and that system let them down.

Restraining orders are clearly not effective without more teeth to back them up. An electronic bracelet worn by the abusive partner would help alert a victim and police to the approaching danger.

Will the government introduce changes to the Criminal Code which would allow for greater use of electronic monitoring to help enforce restraining orders, peace bonds and protect victims of stalkers?

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although tragic events such as the ones the hon. member has referred to do not happen in great numbers, any one event like that is one too many.

The Minister of Justice is looking into the particular situation to see how the Department of Justice can perhaps help.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the government that incidents where women are being killed by their abusive partners are not isolated.

In Calgary where my riding is located, four women in the last eight weeks have been killed by their estranged partners. Something needs to be done.

Does the government have a study in the works directed toward using modern technology to enhance the protection of citizens in these kinds of circumstances?