

*Statements by Ministers***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 1985-86

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting Supplementary Estimates (C) with regard to the sums required for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 1986, was presented by Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of Treasury Board) and read by Mr. Speaker to the House.

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● (1110)

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

REFERRAL TO STANDING COMMITTEE

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, a list of Governor in Council appointments, pursuant to Standing Order 103(1). This document is deemed referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade.

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EQUALITY RIGHTS

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO REPORT OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, pursuant to Standing Order 67(2), in both official languages, *Toward Equality*, the Government's response to the parliamentary committee report *Equality for All*.

Some Hon. Members: Bravo!

Mr. Crosbie: I could go on, Mr. Speaker. This document outlines the Government's detailed response to all of the 85 diverse recommendations which were presented in *Equality for All*. On behalf of the Government, I should first like to commend the subcommittee for the fine work which it did in consulting Canadians on a wide range of different issues. The views expressed by Canadians were very helpful to the Government in the preparation of its response, *Toward Equality*.

Toward Equality is an important part of the Government's commitment to equality and social justice for all Canadians. The equality initiatives taken by the Government mean new opportunities and greater fairness for all Canadians in their efforts to find a job, to build a future, and to play a full and equal role in society.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, equality and social justice require that persons be treated on the basis of their own qualities, not on the basis of any stereotypes or other false assumptions.

[English]

To translate that, equality and social justice require—

Mr. Deans: That is not necessary.

Mr. Crosbie:—that persons be treated on the basis of their own qualities, not on the basis of any stereotype or other false assumption. I think that is important enough to make the point in both official languages.

Equality and social justice require that individuals be given a fair chance to make their own way in society and that when opportunities are not fairly distributed, positive action must be taken to ensure that they are. This includes eliminating so-called systemic discrimination.

The initiatives proposed in *Toward Equality* are a reflection of the commitment of the Government to these principles and a recognition of the needs of many Canadians who are still unfairly and unjustly discriminated against. However, meaningful equality cannot be imposed. We have confidence that the people of Canada will make the most of their own opportunities and allow others to do the same on an equal footing, if the Government provides the right leadership. The initiatives contained in the document I have tabled today demonstrate the Government's commitment to providing that leadership.

We have not waited for the courts to make decisions on all difficult issues, nor do we intend to force Canadians to go to court to find fairness and equal treatment under federal laws or in the federally regulated private sector. In fact, in many areas our equality initiatives go beyond a generous interpretation of the charter requirements where we consider this is necessary to achieve full equality and social justice.

I should like to take just a moment to review some of the measures contained in the tabled document. First, the Government agrees that human rights legislation should, in general, have primacy over other laws. Of course the courts have held in that direction as well. Second, the Government has decided to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to incorporate the concept of reasonable accommodation, which was requested by groups representing the disabled among many others. We have agreed, as part of the review of this Act, to consider amending it so that it states expressly that systemic discrimination is prohibited. Again the courts have indicated that this is so. We believe that systemic discrimination is always encompassed within the charter guarantees.

As Minister of Justice, I am currently re-examining the Canadian Human Rights Act to ensure that it complements the Charter and is an effective instrument to ensure non-discrimination and fairness in the private sector. It is the Act itself which applies to the private sector. The Government will take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that sexual orientation is a prohibited ground of discrimination in relation to all areas of federal jurisdiction. The Government believes in