

*Adjournment Debate*

Canadians have confidence and faith in our democratic system. It must not be undermined by an antiquated system of enumeration. Surely there must be alternatives such as permanent voters lists that would be updated as frequently as possible to ensure that there are no oversights, no surprises and indeed no shocks when Canadians who are eligible to vote can do so.

**Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture):** Mr. Speaker, the Government has long recognized the need for reform of Canada's election laws. In June 1987, the Government introduced Bill C-79, "An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts in relation thereto".

The Chief Electoral Officer indicated in his 1989 report that the amendments contained in Bill C-79 would, in large measure, have brought the Canada Elections Act in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In addition, those amendments would have introduced more flexibility into procedures to revise the preliminary lists of electors and would have expanded the rules for proxy voting. If those provisions had been adopted, a substantial number of otherwise disenfranchised electors would have been allowed to vote in the last election.

Unfortunately, these and other important amendments contained in Bill C-79 were not adopted prior to

the last election. It is of course a serious matter when a single elector is unable to exercise their democratic franchise as a result of not having been enumerated. It should be noted, however, that according to Elections Canada, approximately 99.39 per cent of eligible voters were registered to vote in the last general election.

The Government remains committed to reforming our electoral laws and to making voting easier and more accessible to Canadians consistent with the provisions of the Charter. In order to facilitate the process of developing amendments which can be supported by Members on both sides of the House, the Government announced in the Speech from the Throne that a commission of inquiry would be established to make recommendations on changes to the electoral laws. The establishment of such a commission was recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer in his 1989 report. As indicated by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Mazankowski) on May 3, 1989, the Government is currently examining terms of reference as well as the potential make up for the commission.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House therefore stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.19 p.m.

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