

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, of this Government, and this Party, I can assure the Hon. Member that we are deeply committed to the Official Languages Act which we supported when it was introduced by the previous Government almost six years ago.

With respect to the specific question, which falls within the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice who is absent today, I shall take notice of the Hon. Member's question and ask the Minister to be in touch with the Hon. Member.

[Translation]

FACTUM PRESENTED BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Does the Deputy Prime Minister, considering that he probably did not read either the factum presented by the Tory government, that the Minister of Justice as well did not read it, and that nobody on the other side seems to know what is going on... I agree that the government endorsed the Official Languages Act, and I also agree that minority rights must not be restricted—

[English]

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member knows the rules.

[Translation]

Mr. Gauthier: Will he withdraw the factum to enable the government, the Minister of Justice and himself to read the document, come back to the House, consult with the government and the Prime Minister, and then perhaps take the appropriate action?

[English]

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I have very grave doubts whether I would have the jurisdiction to intrude in that depth into the responsibilities of the Attorney General of Canada, as his own Leader pointed out in the House a few days ago.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRESENCE IN GALLERY OF MR. FRANCISCO LABASTIDA OCHOA,
MINISTER OF ENERGY, MINES AND PARASTATE INDUSTRY FOR
MEXICO

Mr. Speaker: May I interrupt proceedings to advise Members of the presence in our gallery today of Mr. Francisco Labastida Ochoa, Minister of Energy, Mines and Parastate Industry for Mexico.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

LABOUR CONDITIONS

LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. She knows that we have added 50,000 to the rolls of the unemployed in the last month alone, and that we have 244,000 people who have been unemployed for between six months and a year already. She knows her program will provide only 70,000 jobs during this winter. There is a tremendous short-fall. Will the Minister bring forward new programs now to try to meet at least the requirements of those who seem to be long-term unemployed?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in this House, \$1 billion has been dedicated by this Government to new job opportunities and to developing human resources. That \$1 billion will be spent to the benefit of Canadians in this field. It will not be frittered away on partisan boon-doggling as it has in the past. I would say to the Hon. Member that that \$1 billion will be allocated in a way that will bring real solutions to the problems of unemployment.

PLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE EXHAUSTEES

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Doesn't the Minister recognize that the 244,000 people who have been unemployed for over six months have lost benefits, are not able to meet their commitments, and cannot wait for the Government to introduce its programs to spend the billion dollars? Will she move now to provide them either with an income or with a job opportunity?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it is because we recognize that the problems of the unemployed have not been solved by the kinds of past programs he is advocating that we will take the time necessary, and without any excuses whatsoever, to work out the best possible programs that will address the needs of these people who are in such desperate need.

Mr. Deans: When?

Miss MacDonald: I can tell the Hon. Member that those consultations are going on right now. They are going on with labour unions, with business, and with provincial Governments. When we present those programs, it will be with the undertaking that they do the job.

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[Translation]

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DISASTER IN INDIA—MEASURES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jean-Guy Guilbault (Drummond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Environment.