

[English]

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, I was absent from the House last week, but the responses given by my colleagues, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Communications, essentially set out the parameters of the position of the federal Government.

As the Hon. Member will understand, these are essentially provincial matters of jurisdiction. I understand as well that the Province of Saskatchewan in particular is reviewing its options, and we are very much interested in the decisions that will be made by the Province of Saskatchewan. We are in ongoing communications with the provincial Governments on such matters and will continue to observe what is happening there. The offer of assistance has been made and is in fact there, should the province decide to solicit our assistance.

With regard to the Province of Alberta, the Hon. Member will know that there are other matters of litigation in respect of similar questions dealing with Alberta. My officials are looking at those pieces of legislation as well to see what is involved in that matter, and we are considering the implications of the judgment in the *Mercure* case in the Supreme Court of Canada.

APPLICATION OF SUPREME COURT DECISION TO ALBERTA

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the Minister will concede that these legal procedures are costly and that in terms of human resources they can be exhausting for minority groups.

Given that the federal Government can answer a question which begs to be answered, that is, does the judgment on Saskatchewan apply to Alberta, and therefore avoid a long delay through the court system by asking the Supreme Court to state clearly that Alberta is subject to the same judgment given on February 25, would it not be in the interest of all Canadians for the Government to take that initiative now and ask the Supreme Court to make a decision by reference?

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, without getting into the legal niceties of the matter, with respect to matters which are essentially in provincial jurisdiction—and I think that is an important consideration the Hon. Member will appreciate in respect of references—our position respecting the official languages of Canada is quite clear in our federal domain. I think the Prime Minister and the Government have shown outstanding leadership in respect of this position across the country.

I reiterate the fact that we remain ready, willing, and able to render any assistance whatsoever in the furtherance of the equality of languages across the country which may in fact be solicited by the provinces. In terms of the Province of Alberta,

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the same offer goes to that province as goes to the Province of Saskatchewan.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

FLOW-THROUGH SHARES—REQUEST THAT MINISTER NOT CHANGE SYSTEM

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. The Minister knows perfectly well that the Government's proposed changes in the flow-through shares program may, directly or indirectly, threaten the existence of from 30,000 to 40,000 jobs. Will the Minister now respond positively to requests by municipal councils, business people and workers whose jobs are threatened, and say that the Government will not reduce the benefits created under this program?

[English]

Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, if this is not the clearest example of the Leader of the NDP talking out of both sides of his mouth, I do not know what is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): On the one hand the NDP says: "Get rid of all these tax gimmicks"—

Mr. Broadbent: No, no.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member should read his own Party literature which says: "Get rid of all these tax gimmicks". His colleague sitting right next to him is the one who is leading the battle, and the one who is just between the two of them, and behind, is the third man. All three of them are saying: "Get rid of these tax gimmicks because they are things that help the rich and we have got to avoid all these tax gimmicks"—

Mr. Boudria: That's before they became rich.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): That is right. The Hon. Member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell—

Mr. Broadbent: Agreeing with the Liberals.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): —is saying that before the NDP got ahead of the Liberals in the polls they were not in favour of all these things.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to send a speech going back to 1984 to the Minister and a letter that he received from our finance critic last year, which made it clear that the NDP is opposed to tax exemptions that do not have a net benefit to the community and that we favour those that do. If he does not understand that, we do.