

**ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL—REQUEST COUNCIL REPORT TO  
PARLIAMENT

**Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands):** Madam Speaker, my question is addressed to the minister responsible for the status of women. Having practically destroyed the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the minister is now forced to turn—

**Some hon. Members:** Question!

**Miss MacDonald:** I see hon. members are waiting for the question. I will be glad to put the question. I am sure a lot of women would like to put questions to the minister. The minister is now forced to turn to women's organizations across the country to try to put the council back together again. He is becoming like the original Humpty-Dumpty. I would like to ask how he has gone about selecting these women's organizations with which he is asked to meet or, rather, why he has left our certain key women's organizations such as the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women, women representatives from the Canadian Union of Public Employees or the National Association of Women and the Law, all of whom strongly condemned the minister's actions in recent weeks. Will he tell us exactly why he has been so selective and left out representatives of the groups that I have named?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration):** Madam Speaker, it is a matter of some dispute as to who really is responsible for whatever damage has been done to the council. I ask the hon. member to examine her own conscience in that area.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Beatty:** That is like blaming the police for the crime rate.

**Mr. Axworthy:** I would simply point out that the selection of groups was done on the advice of the council's office. They represent national organizations. If there are other groups which would like to be consulted, I would certainly be open to having discussions with them as well.

**Miss MacDonald:** Madam Speaker, all of these groups that I mentioned would have been at the original conference in February had the minister not interfered with it. Therefore, they are surely owed the courtesy of an invitation to any subsequent meeting. All of these groups in recent days have stated very strongly that they want to see the Advisory Council on the Status of Women report directly to Parliament and not to a minister. Even Win Gardner, the interim president of the advisory council, who has described the minister as a close and personal dear friend, over the weekend said that the council as it is now constituted could be open to political manipulation.

In view of all these representations, will the minister now agree, before the meeting takes place with these women's organizations, that the council will in future report directly to

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Parliament and not to a minister, such as the current one responsible for the status of women?

**Mr. Axworthy:** Madam Speaker, unlike the hon. member, I am not apt to judge pre-conceived solutions to problems. I am prepared to sit down with the groups we have invited to listen to their recommendations and advice. Once we have received those recommendations and advice, we will be prepared to act. I would like to give them the courtesy of hearing them first, unlike the hon. member who has already made up her mind, as she does in most cases, without benefit of the facts.

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● (1440)

**TRANSPORT**REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN URBAN  
TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. I would draw to the minister's attention that the 2nd Cities Energy Conference is being held in Winnipeg this week. Their primary concern is to find alternatives to fossil fuels for urban transportation. In light of the fact that the federal government invests so little in urban transportation and that bus fares continue to rise all across the country, as evidenced here in Ottawa, does the minister not agree that now is the time to make a serious public investment in urban transportation?

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport):** Madam Speaker, I would debate the premise that the federal government does not do much for urban transportation. There are programs, such as those for line relocation, grade separation, crossings, branch lines and so on, and therefore this topic would have to be debated. But I want to agree that the needs are unlimited. There was a time when having the main line in the centre of the city was a status symbol in Canada. The situation has now changed. Consequently there is a need for more money to be spent on urban transportation, and we do our best in that regard.

**Mr. Keeper:** Madam Speaker, the minister says he would like to debate whether the federal government invests much in urban transportation, but I point out to him that only one half of 1 per cent of the \$1.85 billion federal financing for transportation goes for urban transportation. Three quarters of the funds under UTAP go into grade crossings to traverse rail lines and not into mass public transport.

Would the minister reconsider his first response and assure people from cities across Canada who will be in attendance at this conference that this government will now make a major investment in urban transportation?

**Mr. Pepin:** Madam Speaker, inasmuch as grade separation and rail line relocations are in cities, they are a contribution to urban transportation. That is the way the reasoning goes. Again, I agree with my hon. friend's proposition that more