

Points of Order

In terms of the rest of the week, discussions are ongoing with the opposition parties in this regard. I will get back to the hon. member as soon as possible.

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POINTS OF ORDER

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Madam Speaker, during his response to my question, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans observed that the Minister of the Environment was not in the House. Unfortunately that was not only incorrect but of course was a question of order because he was commenting on the presence or absence of a member.

However, as the Minister of the Environment is here and under the circumstances, I think he should be allowed to confirm the assertion of the fisheries and oceans minister that he would in fact grant the money required to the program.

Madam Deputy Speaker: This is an extension of Question Period, but as the minister seems to be prepared to answer of course he may.

Hon. Jean J. Charest (Minister of the Environment): Madam Speaker, for the record I think it is important to point out that yes, the Minister of the Environment was in the House. What the minister of fisheries said, and I think everybody understood, was in jest. I felt that it was probably better that he answer the question given the fact that he had fully briefed me on this issue.

[Translation]

ADMISSIBILITY OF QUESTION RAISED DURING ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Madam Speaker, I appeal to you to help me understand a Standing Order of this House, since I wanted to ask the minister of multiculturalism a question about a case of racism. In this House, ministers are responsible for the law on hate literature. We talked about racism and fighting racism and I do not know why my question was not in order. I would like you to tell me who in this House is responsible—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The Speaker was in the Chair at that time and he already made a decision. The purpose of questions asked during Oral Question Period is to call the government to account on the work of a

department and that question in no way concerned the work of the minister or the department. The Speaker already gave his decision and I uphold it.

[English]

NOTICE OF WAYS AND MEANS MOTION

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Madam Speaker, on March 10, the Minister of State for Finance and Privatization tabled a notice of a ways and means motion.

This motion appears to me to have been irregular, and I want to explain why. I asked the Chair to provide some guidance on this issue and to consider ruling out any further proceedings based on this notice.

The notice that I am referring to is short and I will quickly read it in its entirety:

That it is expedient to amend the Excise Tax Act and other legislation respecting the implementation of the goods and services tax to give effect to the statutory measures that were announced by the Minister of Finance in the press release dated March 10, 1992 relating to the goods and services tax, to be applicable as specified in the announcement.

This notice on its own does not tell us much. It contains nothing of substance except to indicate that it will change the GST and that the changes are contained in a press release.

I do not think it is necessary as this point to take up further time outlining the important role of a ways and means motion or the strictures it places on the ability of the House to amend the bill based on it.

I accept that this is not the first time that a ways and means motion has referred to a press release or another non-parliamentary paper, but we have raised that general issue before. In fact the Speaker has ruled:

There is nothing in our Standing Orders or in our practice to restrict all references in ways and means motions solely to documents tabled in the House.

I ask today whether that ruling has not been misinterpreted by those who prepared these notices. Surely that ruling was not intended to permit notices which contained as little real substance as that which was tabled on Tuesday.

After all, the Speaker qualified in his ruling of January 29, 1990 that:

In considering whether a ways and means motion should only refer to documents tabled in the House, the argument appears to hinge on whether the House and members had access to the documents and that these documents were public in nature.