

basis of any society that calls itself multicultural, as we want ours to be, Mr. Speaker.

So that is why it is important, even in an administrative act like this one which creates a department, to define it. When it is not defined, either they do nothing or they completely alter the approach to the situation. If it is defined, at least they must take it into account. And every time, the minister responsible for this department can at least look at the definition of what multiculturalism is and ensure that this priority, his definition is respected.

I have seen the Secretary of State here in this House answer questions about the funds that he eliminated, not reduced. I understand that we are in a period of budgetary restraint, so one must make some sacrifices, cut a little here and there. But he completely—with a stroke of the pen, he said, “Not a cent. It’s over. This program no longer exists.” That is what I was just talking about—the funds for teaching heritage languages. He answered some questions from my colleagues and clearly said, “I did not cut because the Minister of Finance cut my budget; I cut because I decided to use that money for other priorities in my department.” So what is the priority? Does the minister believe in multiculturalism or is it only rhetoric? Does the government believe in multiculturalism? If so, it should maintain the programs needed to promote multiculturalism, to ensure that Canada remains a multicultural country. I think that Motion No. 1 defines it in a bill creating the department. The preamble defines exactly what multiculturalism is. I think it is important that not only the present minister and the present government but also all ministers and governments that come after take account of it. If they do not agree with the definition, at least they will have to come before the Parliament of Canada to change it.

But if it is there and as long as it remains unchanged they will have to respect it. I am sure that had we had that kind of definition the federal government assistance to heritage language instruction would not have been completely slashed as it has been this time around.

Mr. Speaker, I know that groups have come from Montreal, and I meet some of them. A petition is being circulated in my riding and I intend to present it in the House to urge the government to reconsider its decision

### *Government Orders*

and to provide financial assistance to heritage language instruction. That is the very foundation of our multicultural system and I want to encourage the government to make sure that Canada remains a multicultural country because otherwise, without that program. Of course the federal government participated in that program, as did the provincial government. I might add that I know what I am talking about, for in the case of the Italian community, for example, the Italian government also takes part in this program.

But now that the Canadian government has chosen to withdraw from the program, I would not be surprised to hear that the government of Quebec will do the same and, of course, there is no reason why the Italian government would not follow suit so that the program will simply disappear. Italy does not stand to lose, Canada will lose that cultural heritage which made it possible for our children to be good Canadians and to be proud of their own culture. Together we make Canada a special country, unique in the world. I am sure you will agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that the moment Canada loses its multicultural identity it will no longer be the Canada we know, the Canada we want to promote. Consequently, I intend to support the motion and I hope the minister, who is here, will look favourably on this motion to define multiculturalism, reconsider his decision and re-allocate the funds required for heritage language instruction.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Karpoff (Surrey North):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this legislation.

I think we should take a look at the proposed definition that has been suggested in the amendment where it says that multiculturalism means: “the fundamental characteristic of Canadian society which recognizes the diversity and equality of all Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion.”

• (1620)

I think there are two or three very key words in that. One is diversity. It means that we honour and treasure our differences. Another is equality. These differences do not make us unequal, there equality is in spite of differences. It talks about all Canadians. It does not talk