

Oral Questions

[Translation]

VISIBLE MINORITIES

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism and Citizenship, and in his absence, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister to respond.

At the meeting of the standing committee last week, the minister was unable to justify his failure to hire representatives of visible minorities, especially women. Today, could the minister give us his reasons and tell us when he intends to remedy a situation that has become unacceptable and intolerable?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, we have been making considerable progress in recent years as far as visible minorities are concerned. Although we would like to do more, the objectives set for 1991 show an increase of 3.8 per cent in minority representation in the Public service, compared with 3 per cent in 1989. I may add that the departments are committed to meeting these objectives.

Regarding women's employment in the Public Service, Mr. Speaker, I think we have worked very hard in this area during the past years. In fact, I can inform the hon. member that in all categories— including management, scientific and professional, and administrative—there has been a major increase in the percentage of women's participation, compared with the situation in 1984 when this government was elected.

[English]

Mrs. Shirley Maheu (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. minister that this does not answer the problems, the double-whammy that visible minority women face.

• (1430)

[Translation]

My supplementary question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The latest report on the Employment Equity Act clearly shows that the government is slow to act in this area, despite your figures. When will the government amend the Act in order to increase the number of

women in key positions in the Public Service and when can we expect concrete results?

Hon. Robert de Cotret (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, concerning key positions in the Public Service, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that the proportion of women appointed to positions by Order in Council—ambassadorial positions, and so on—has increased as never before in the history of this country.

I would also like to tell my hon. colleague that the management category, for example, which is the most important one in the Public Service, was only 7 per cent female in 1984. This proportion increased from 7 per cent in 1984 to 13.6 per cent in 1989. We doubled it, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing, we are not stopping there.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Prime Minister and concerns the desperate financial situation facing western prairie farmers.

Six weeks has passed since the government promised to take some action with regard to the financial crunch facing prairie farmers. Now that the western premiers have adopted a common front saying they simply cannot afford to cost share any supplementary assistance to farmers because the government has cut off or reduced their transfer payments, how long will the government continue to stonewall western farmers on these payments, payments that were needed weeks ago and are due now?

Mr. Murray Cardiff (Parliamentary Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, this government has never in history stonewalled farmers.

There is a meeting taking place at the present time in Winnipeg dealing with this special problem. The Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds are meeting at the present time with the ministers of agriculture of the three provinces to formalize and, hopefully, to finalize an agreement with those provinces.