

and support, we will make our society proud and prosperous, at peace with itself and with its people.

[English]

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-18. As my colleagues have said, the Bill establishes a new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship following on the earlier Multiculturalism Act which established objectives for multicultural policy in Canada. The Department will have a Minister and possibly a Deputy Minister, though it is not quite clear whether it will have a Deputy Minister.

Previously, these responsibilities were administered by the Department of Secretary of State. There is still not a completely clear line drawn between those respective responsibilities.

The new Department will have power over most matters relating to multiculturalism and citizenship. It will have the responsibility to enforce implementation of multicultural policy as outlined in the Multiculturalism Act within all government Departments and within government institutions. I think this is one thing that is not spelled out clearly enough in the Bill. Its specific duties as outlined are to promote national policies and programs with respect to multiculturalism and citizenship, to provide services for acquisition of citizenship, to promote the values of Canadian citizenship, to promote an understanding of human rights and to make grants in support of programs. Special programs on race relations are included.

I would like to commend the Government and the Minister because, during this time of decreased funds in many areas, the Government has increased funds to promote race relations. We feel that this is very important. I cannot say this without also condemning the cuts in funds which have occurred and have caused great hardships for ethnic, native, the disabled and youth organizations, particularly for the advocacy groups.

We will be supporting this Bill. We hope it will be improved during committee stage and third reading. We support it because it has been a part of New Democratic Party policy for some time. We feel it is quite important to carry out the objectives of the multiculturalism policy and it was strongly recommended by the Standing

Multiculturalism

Committee on Multiculturalism in the last Parliament. As well it has been supported across Canada by ethnocultural groups.

I have several concerns about the ability of the new Department to carry out its mandate as stated and its objectives which are outlined more specifically in Bill C-93. The present staff members who are to be transferred from the Department of Secretary of State are not sufficient to carry out the responsibilities of this Department. Clause 5(a) states that the responsibility is to initiate, recommend, co-ordinate, implement and promote national policies and programs with respect to multiculturalism and citizenship. This is a very large responsibility and certainly more staff members are needed, as are more resources for community groups.

Extra staff members from very diverse backgrounds are needed. We need people who are sensitive, come from the grass roots and understand what the communities need. These kind of people can then influence the Department, the Minister and the Government. It is very important that staff members who are culturally sensitive to multiculturalism are hired, and it is very important that there be additional funding for community programs as well. If there is not, the new Department of Multiculturalism will simply be window-dressing. It may be political tokenism on the part of the Government unless the funds exist to carry out the job. That will be the test. I do not doubt the sincerity of the Minister, but I do question whether the Government will really put any teeth into the multiculturalism policy by providing adequate resources.

I have spoken many times about my Party's concern that funds for multicultural organizations have been cut by 15 per cent, and over three years, this will accumulate to a 50 per cent reduction in funding. These are the groups that speak for ethnic communities. They are the advocates that help us and give us advice on policy. One such group is the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, and it is very important that these groups have adequate funding in order to help us do our job and help the Minister do his job.

I was very concerned to learn that funds for the Citizenship Instruction and Language Textbooks program, referred to as CILT, have been cut by 50 per cent