

*Routine Proceedings*

might also say that for 14 years he represented the provincial constituency of D'Arcy McGee, which shares territory with my federal constituency of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

The hon. minister pointed out many of Dr. Goldbloom's accomplishments, including the fact that he was president of both the Quebec Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association. As minister, he was Minister of Municipal Affairs and the first Minister for the Environment in Quebec. Recently, he has been the president of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews. Also he was president of the committee which decided whether or not certain individuals and groups should get funding to contest violations of their official language rights before the courts.

Mr. Goldbloom himself is from a minority in Canada. Consequently, I believe he will be extremely sensitive to the position of the linguistic minority communities in this country.

That having been said and without any criticism of the individual who is appointed—and we support that appointment—I must say that the process by which the government went about this appointment was deplorable and once again shows the great incompetency of the government.

The government knew more than one year ago that Mr. Fortier, the previous commissioner, was to resign on June 14, yet even last week it had not started consultations with the opposition parties on an appointment.

I want to point out that the Commissioner for Official Languages is an officer of Parliament. He is not an officer of the government. He reports to Parliament. He does not report to the government. Therefore, he requires the support of all political parties in this House. Consequently, it is incumbent on the government to consult closely, in advance, with the opposition parties. It did not do that. Mr. Fortier retired from his position last week and consultations only started this week, the week in which Parliament is to adjourn.

That having been said, I hope this statement on the record will assure that the next time in seven years' time—and this will not be forgotten—this will be done in a more proper manner and that the consultations will be done as I think they were intended.

At the retirement party reception for Mr. Fortier, I congratulated Mr. Fortier and especially congratulated him for his close contact and communication with members of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. He was always in touch with us and he was always available. I also pointed out that he always acted with great balance and fairness and also with courage. If an ombudsman or a Commissioner for Official Languages is to be successful, he must be fair to all language communities in Canada and when he sees a violation of their language rights, he speaks out with courage and with forthrightness. That is what Mr. Fortier did and we are sure that Mr. Goldbloom will do the same.

Among the outstanding issues that Dr. Goldbloom will have to deal with, of course, is the fact that despite we passed the Official Languages Act in 1988, we still have not got in force the regulations that go with that Official Languages Act.

The government has presented to us draft regulations for service to the public. Those have been examined by the standing committee and referred back to the minister. One hopes that they will soon be in operation. But the government still has not provided us with the draft regulations relating to the language of work in the federal government or to equitable participation by English and French speaking Canadians in the Public Service of Canada. We are still waiting for that.

The former commissioner, Mr. Fortier, spoke out strongly demanding those regulations time and again.

The new commissioner will also have to deal with the attempt by certain groups in Canada to dilute and to step backward with respect to our policy on official languages. There are even rumours today that the Spicer commission next week will recommend a weakening of the commitment to official languages or a stepping back with respect to that policy.

I must remind the House, Mr. Speaker, through you, that this attempt—and this was even discussed at a behind the doors conference of the government—to move to a sort of Swiss model in Canada is totally out of context and ridiculous for Canada where we have a million francophones living outside of Quebec, more francophones living outside of Quebec than there were francophones altogether in 1867 at the time of Confederation, and 700,000 to 800,000 anglophones living in Quebec.