

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, could the minister tell the House when this four-year old promise will be kept?

[English]

Hon. Pauline Browes (Minister of State (Environment)): Madam Speaker, the export water policy that the Government of Canada has pursued is in place. There was a bill brought forth prior to the 1988 election concerning legislating water export. That is being worked on at the present time in order that we may bring that forth in the form of legislation.

I might add, Madam Speaker, that in relation to the various industries that are at the St. Lawrence, we are planning a green plan enforcement package very soon and that will be very beneficial in terms of the St. Lawrence action clean-up.

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[Translation]

CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Madam Speaker, in this morning's *Gazette*, we read that the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs suggested that a federal referendum might be useful if one of the provinces held its own plebiscite on a matter that did not reflect the views of the entire country.

My question to the minister is this: It is clear that Bill 150 and the Quebec referendum on sovereignty would not reflect the views of the entire country. Would the minister agree that he tipped his hand and made it abundantly clear that a federal referendum would be a frontal attack on Bill 150 and, above all, a denial of Quebec's right to self-determination?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that if a referendum is held at the national level, it will be held to protect the interests of Canada as a whole and to allow Canadians to express their views on the basic issues in our country.

What we are talking about here, Madam Speaker, is a commitment by our government to table in Parliament a bill that would allow the federal government to hold a referendum.

I have made it clear many times that such a referendum, if it is held, would not impose on any province an opinion or position that is not shared by that province. I think that is clear, and in fact it is elementary.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Shefford): Madam Speaker, the Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs knows his history, and he knows that the same comments were heard in this House in 1942. Does he not see a parallel between his referendum initiative and the federal betrayal of April 27, 1942, when this Parliament passed the plebiscite legislation that imposed conscription on Quebecers against their will? Would he not agree that we have reached a similar crossroads? Doesn't it bother him to become an accomplice of the Leader of the Opposition?

• (1200)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (President of the Privy Council and Minister responsible for Constitutional Affairs): Madam Speaker, I think this shows the opposition the hon. member is losing confidence, when he feels he has to use scare tactics here in the House. This is not history but a distortion of history, and we want to avoid any distortion of what the future holds for Canadians.

I think the best way to protect Canadians is to work together, but the best way to keep Canada together is to recognize the right of Quebecers and Canadians to make their own choices and to be told the truth and not misinformed.

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[English]

SMUGGLING

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

An internal report of the RCMP informs us that smuggling into Canada, particularly at Akwesasne, will reach \$500 million this year.

When will the government start taking this issue seriously? What does it intend to do to end this terrible practice which causes so much damage to my constituents and several others?

Hon. Doug Lewis (Solicitor General of Canada): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my friend's concern about the issue of cigarette smuggling. The RCMP and customs