

Oral Questions

I have total respect for francophones outside Quebec, and this government continues and will continue in the future to protect their interests.

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect and affection for my Italian fellow citizens, but that is beside the point. I am not talking about minority language groups. I am talking about the Canadian duality.

I want the hon. minister to tell me whether he is stating government policy or not when he portrays the French Canadian community as nothing more than a minority like any other minority. I put the question to him.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said earlier. The francophone minority outside Quebec is part of one of this country's three founding nations, namely the francophone community, the majority of which is represented by the Quebec government, and the minority by the government of Canada.

That is my position and it reflects that of the government on this issue. The question was about representation at the constitutional table, and my answer was that it was not a matter of numbers. But I will say again, that I never comment on newspaper articles, and that is not about to change.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Denis wishes to ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for exceptionally allowing a second supplementary question.

The question of my colleague, who is probably the greatest expert in this House on such issues, was to find out from the minister whether or not he was misquoted. If he was, it is easy, let him tell us; if he does not believe he was misquoted, let him say so. But given the emotions aroused, there is enough emotion in this country and in my province, which is also his. This has nothing to do with our respect and friendship for our friends of Italian origin.

We want to know if from now on the French Canadian community is to be considered as one minority among

many others. That is what my colleague asked. This article stirred emotions and the minister must tell us whether or not it represents his views and that will allay our concerns about it.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I must repeat what I said before.

The French-speaking community, whether it is in Quebec or not, is one of the founding peoples of this country. As such, it has a special status compared to other communities which are not called founding nations of Canada. As a majority, it is represented by the Government of Quebec in Quebec and as a minority, by the Government of Canada in the other provinces. Therefore it is up to the Government of Canada to fulfil that responsibility and role in the constitutional discussions and that is the position which I defended.

I have a great deal of respect for my colleague, who rarely asks questions and when he does, it is because he has some concern, I think. Therefore I repeat as honestly as I can that the French-speaking community, wherever it is, is a founding people of this country and as such, depending on its situation, must be defended accordingly. That is exactly what I did, and I will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

AIR ONTARIO

Mr. John Manley (Ottawa South): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Just over three years have passed since the tragic Air Ontario crash at Dryden, Ontario. The government has had the report of the commission of inquiry in its possession since last week.

Why has the government not tabled this report in the House of Commons? What is it that the government is trying to hide from the people of Canada?

Hon. Jean Corbeil (Minister of Transport): We have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker. The document will be officially presented to the government within the next few days. As soon as it is presented to the government by Judge Moshansky it will be tabled in this House.