

Multiculturalism

constitution, which I understand the minister just stole from a spokesman for our party. We are talking about a special act. The way this government moves leaves a lot to be desired. It is very well for the minister to stand up and be so oratorically brilliant, which has not moved me one bit.

It would be very easy for the minister to get the consent of his colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, to bring in this one very simple immigration matter to give it some credibility. That is what I am asking the minister. I appreciate him saying that we can amend the constitution. When is that going to be? I want concrete action now. The minister talks about a special act or special acts. When will that occur? I want action now. Surely the minister can consider with some sympathy the submission which I am making at the moment. In this way he will have credibility. If he does not accept it, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect and in light of the great love I have for my colleague, I believe he will have destroyed his credibility. He should take concrete steps immediately and at least start with the Immigration Act.

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member is deeply concerned about the credibility of myself as a minister, and of the department or Directorate of Multiculturalism, I am sure he could take many positive steps to assure that particular desirable objective. I would appreciate any support that he could offer. But it would seem to me that the hon. member ought to be as much concerned about substantive achievements to ensure the well-being of the ethno-cultural communities and that they are brought fully and equally into our society as he would be about the symbolic matter to which he seems to be attaching so much importance. If we were to put the words which the hon. member has in mind into the Immigration Act, I do not think it would make one iota of difference in terms of the application of that act. I think the hon. member would recognize that—

Mr. Alexander: I do not.

Mr. Cafik: You may not recognize it, but I thought being a lawyer you ought to. In any event, it seems to me that when we look at the increase now of about 28.8 per cent in multicultural budgeting this year in a time of restraint, the hon. member would recognize that indicates in itself the sincerity with which we address this important question. I would think the ethno-cultural communities are prepared to accept delivery of hard facts and programs for their benefit as evidence of our credibility rather than the pious words of any hon. member who is locked in to such symbolic gestures.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. If we have another question, I think we ought to keep it brief.

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the minister which he should be able to answer briefly. He is speaking here of a budget of \$50 million over five years. That means there will be an average budget of \$10 million a year. He goes on in his

statement to indicate that the budget in this election year will be \$10.196 million, higher than the average. Taking account of inflation which this government has not quite wrestled to the ground, that means, given an aggregate of \$50 million over a five-year period, there will be a diminution, a winding down of the expenditures contemplated by the Government of Canada on multicultural activities as we move farther away from election year. Will the minister of state tell the House of Commons what calendar the government contemplates for the winding down of the expenditure on multiculturalism, which is spelled out in his statement?

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I would be very glad to reply to that question. Perhaps the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) might have a look at this statement again, read it, and find out what in fact it really says. He will note that within some of the paragraphs in the statement we talk about budgeting through the cultural agencies as well, which amounts to roughly \$2.5 million a year, which is over and above the \$10 million. This means that the over-all budgetary projection within the cultural agencies and within the program itself, all directed toward multicultural programs, will be in the neighbourhood of \$65 million within the next five years. There is no projection for decreases in funding whatsoever; there is a significant increase.

I would also point out there is some concern about an election year. If the opposition think that our programs are so desirable and so attractive that it worries them that they are brought forward at this time, all I can say is we accept the compliment. When the question is raised of why now, I would draw to the attention of hon. members that the fiscal year ends at the end of this month, and we are talking about budgeting for the next fiscal year which begins in just a few days. It is for that reason, and for the reason that I want to be courteous to members of the House of Commons, that I draw to their attention what the programs and priorities of the government are for the forthcoming year. That is the hard reality of the timing at this particular moment.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, that is really quite an incredible statement, even for the minister. If he is at all consistent I suppose we will expect that each of the other ministers of the Crown, however many there are—

Some hon. Members: Sixty-two.

Mr. Clark: —will be getting up before the House rises for Easter to spell out the increases that they contemplate. Just so I can be clear on what the minister is saying, may we have a brief, unequivocal commitment by the minister that he can answer yes or no—is the minister giving us a commitment now that it is not the intention of the government to reduce the expenditure on multicultural activities in any of the subsequent years in the five-year period? Yes or no?

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite acceptable for the hon. member to put the question, but not really to direct how it ought to be answered. I would say that in terms of our commitment to multiculturalism it is ongoing, it is larger than