

Oral Questions

It is in our interest to resolve those problems. It may be that from time to time it will be appropriate to take the litigation response and at that time we would look at the appropriate nature of funding.

I believe there are other ways of assuring that there is input from people and from groups, that feel politically disadvantaged in expressing their concerns about our laws and policies as they relate to the charter.

I repeat again my concern that the provinces have not participated in this. Their laws and policies are also subject to the charter and there is no jurisprudence that they have supported to help clarify those principles which would be to the benefit of all of us.

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[*Translation*]

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, the government is not going to win any prizes for popularity if it keeps arguing its case the way the Minister of Justice is doing now. Federal assistance and the courts are the only recourse we have in Canada to help linguistic minorities defend themselves: Anglophones in Quebec and Francophones outside Quebec. This is the only level of government that has the generosity and the will to support us. So don't tell us you are going to transfer this to the provinces. Why did you take a leaf from Preston Manning's reform program, which aims to abolish bilingualism and multiculturalism? Why did you do that?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, I thought the hon. member might have wanted to rise in the House to congratulate us on creating the new Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship for the purpose of defending the interests of all Canadians and promoting Canadian citizenship. We have a program that works very effectively for official languages and for all groups across this country. Our colleague, the Secretary of State, administers this program very well. If we continue to work with these groups, we will do everything we can to help those that are in a minority situation.

[*English*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, there are still three provinces where it is difficult to obtain a trial in French. There are still six provinces where it is next to impossible to convince the authorities to give the minority groups control of their schools.

I ask the minister, in all honesty, how can the government in times of crisis in terms of constitutional matters abandon the rights of minorities guaranteed in the Constitution of this country?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, we have never abandoned the rights of the minorities. Our citizenship means equality for all, and I am going to continue to defend vigorously the minority communities from coast to coast as I do all the people in our diversity.

This particular program which was for the preparation and defence of these test cases under the language and equality rights of the charter was intended to provide a solid base of jurisprudence. After hundreds of cases one would imagine that we now have that base of jurisprudence.

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ATOMIC ENERGY

Mr. Ross Harvey (Edmonton East): Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister of energy and the parliamentary secretary to the minister of energy, I have a question for either the acting minister of energy or, in the alternative, the Minister of State for the Environment.

This coming year another \$177 million will be added to the \$2 billion in artificial life support that has kept Atomic Energy of Canada Limited wheezing along for the last 10 years.

My question is either to the acting energy minister or the Minister of State for the Environment. Given the fact that AECL has made only one new sale in that entire \$2 billion decade, why does this government continue to insist on force-feeding even more taxpayers dollars into this dead horse?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should have known from his House