

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 21, 1974

The House met at 2 p.m.

[English]

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

TABLING OF ANNUAL REPORT OF COMMISSIONER FOR YEAR  
ENDED MARCH 31, 1973

**Mr. Speaker:** I have the honour to lay before the House copies of the third annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages for the year ended March 31, 1973.

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[Translation]

## PRIVILEGE

MR. CAOUCETTE (CHARLEVOIX)—VETERANS LAND ACT—  
EXTENSION OF APPLICATION PERIOD

**Mr. Gilles Caouette (Charlevoix):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege prompted by the successive and contradictory statements made by the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald) in the last few weeks. On March 7, he said to the House that he had no intention of reviewing the possible extension of the deadline applicable to the Veterans Land Act and I quote his own words:

In the circumstances, adherence to the lending deadline specified in the act will not represent a denial of benefits to any veteran.

A few lines above that, he clearly stated, and I quote:

I am of the opinion, therefore, that veterans sincerely interested in obtaining VLA benefits for the purposes contemplated by the act have had ample time in which to do so. Virtually every veteran—

I skip a bit of his speech and come to the sentence that I read a while ago.

After the non-confidence motion moved by the official opposition, the minister said, as is reported on page 434 of *Hansard* for March 12, 1974:

For many months now, together with the officials of my department, I have studied very closely the possible implications of such an extension.

And a bit further on, he added:

—I wish to further emphasize that I am quite prepared to take another look at this whole question in light of the plea made today. If, after looking at all the evidence, I can conclude that the deadline should be extended, then I would be prepared to so recommend.

Yesterday, the minister repeated this same statement in committee. Today, following a letter which I wrote to the minister on February 13, 1974, once again about the Veterans Land Act, the minister gave me the same explanations that he had given in his first speech on March 7, when he refused to consider an extension for the application of this act. Moreover, the last paragraph of the letter dated March 20, 1974 that I have received from the minister reads as follows:

I thank you for having written to me since it has given me an opportunity to review with you the various provisions of this act, and particularly to explain to you why the date of March 31, 1974 will—

There is no supposition. He says “will”. This is clear enough.

—will put an end to the applications made by veterans eligible for obtaining loans to buy a property.

**Mr. Speaker,** I protest against such a reply which is completely discriminatory and which contradicts the statements made yesterday and on March 19 by this same minister.

I should like to obtain today from the minister either a statement or a revision of the letter which I received today, stating exactly what he intends to do, in order that he stop playing politics on this issue.

● (1410)

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Caouette) raised a question of privilege and submitted to the House that the minister had made statements the hon. member thinks are inconsistent. The Speaker has no other responsibility than determining whether there is a prima facie question of privilege which later on could be submitted to the House in the form of a motion. I cannot conclude that the circumstances described by the hon. member for Charlevoix warrant a debate under Standing Order 17. I call the hon. member's attention to citation 113 of the fourth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, and I quote:

A question of privilege ought rarely to come up in Parliament. It should be dealt with by a motion giving the House power to impose a reparation or apply a remedy.

The hon. member for Charlevoix may have a grievance against the minister, but I suggest that he could raise the matter during the proceedings, either in the House or in committee, or ask an oral or written question. I repeat that I do not think the rules or practice of the House allow to settle a matter by raising a question of privilege.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

First report of Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs—Mr. Jerome.

[Editor's Note: For text of above report, see today's Votes and Proceedings.]