

That is from the *Citizen*. Another one:

The Progressive Conservative Government has introduced a new Official Languages Act to near-universal acclaim.

Official Languages Commissioner D'Iberville Fortier, Ottawa's independent bilingualism watchdog, called the changes "magnificent" and said the great majority of his recommendations had been included.

Liberal spokesperson Jean-Robert Gauthier said the Act appears to be thorough, solid and carefully crafted.

I take that from that great journal, *The Toronto Star*.

[*Translation*]

The new text, which replaces the 1969 Official Languages Act, was applauded by all major groups and individuals directly affected.

The Liberal and NDP opposition parties, the Official Languages Commissioner, the *Fédération des francophones hors Québec*, Alliance Québec, as well as the co-chairman of the Joint Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on Official Languages have stated that they agree to a large extent with the Bill—

The Liberal spokesman, Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier), stated that the Bill represents a new step forward, that it has "more teeth" than the previous legislation and that it meets most of his expectations. (*La Presse*)

[*English*]

To continue:

A new Official Languages Act that requires the federal government not just to protect official language minorities but to promote the vitality of their community life was met yesterday with a hallelujah chorus of approval... Commissioner Fortier's assessment—"A very fine piece of work—a major step forward"—captured the gist of the comments.

That is from *The Gazette*. I could go on and on about the kind of response we have had to this legislation.

Of course it is our intention, in conjunction with the House's agenda, to bring this matter forward so the Hon. Member will have an opportunity to praise the Government for at last coming to terms with official languages in a fair and equitable way, unlike the way it has been dealt with by previous Liberal Governments. I understand the Hon. Member will be doing that because I am sure he cannot in all conscience change his position from that which I quoted in the newspapers.

Mr. Gauthier: Did you hear me this morning? I said bring it on.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The fact is this debate is a reflection of the lack of leadership in the Liberal Party. Given the pressing issues facing us, which obviously cause some discomfort to the Liberal Party, they bring forward this rather silly motion. The point is there is a proper way to bring these matters forward. It is traditionally a matter of negotiation between the House Leaders to determine an appropriate time. The opposition Parties have to give some consideration to co-operating with the Government rather than constantly delay and filibuster. They have done that not only with respect to the legislation I

Supply

have mentioned, they did it over the Christmas recess to make sure no legislation got through, because of their curious opposition to things such as free trade and Bill C-22 and the refugee legislation, which is much overdue.

As I said, the commentary I read aptly demonstrates the fact that the official languages Bill respects the Constitution, and renews the Government's commitment to this policy by providing a legislative framework which is as fair, reasoned and balanced as it is forward-looking. It reflects both Canada's linguistic reality and its aspirations. It also complements the commitment to Canada's linguistic duality intrinsic to the Meech Lake constitutional Accord. I firmly believe that Bill C-72 will ensure greater linguistic justice, equity and opportunity for all Canadians.

I continue to prepare the ground for the next steps in the process of enactment of this legislation. Officials in my department have been active in explaining a number of essentially technical points, pursuing concerns that came up during the general reaction following the introduction of a Bill, or that have been raised in further consultation and information sessions with the office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Canadian Judicial Council, the Conference of Canadian Court Administrators, and various minority language organizations. We have reviewed matters raised in correspondence with provincial attorneys-general. We are continuing discussions with the two territorial Governments with a view to the best means of assuring the advancement of Canada's official languages.

As I noted in reply to previous questions from the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier, this is a Government that believes in communication, consultation and co-operation. We believe these things are essential to ensuring the continued progress, understanding, acceptance and development of official languages policy in this country. This is particularly true in the important field of the administration of justice for which I have responsibility under the Act.

[*Translation*]

When I undertook to continue the consultation process with the provinces to achieve the Canada-wide proclamation of Criminal Code Part XIV.1 on the language of the accused, I was aware that it would not be easy to guarantee not only the co-operation of the various jurisdictions involved but also the availability of the technical, human and other resources required to reach that objective. Still, with the support of my colleague the Secretary of State and the interest shown by most of the provinces concerned we were able to report significant progress in that field.

Right from the day I was appointed Minister of Justice I thought that equity made it imperative for any person accused of a crime in Canada to be able to claim the linguistic rights guaranteed under the Criminal Code. As a matter of fact, pursuant to the Charter of Rights, Parliament and the provincial legislatures may take measures to advance the