

in funds, which was recommended by the committee, to take effect at the end of December of last year? More important, will the government now accept the unanimous recommendation of the standing committee and renew this program which is so vital, so important for the equality of all Canadians?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, the standing committee brought forward some very good recommendations which the Minister of Justice and ourselves have been examining very carefully and giving very proper consideration.

I will say that the letter that was sent out by the Canadian Council on Social Development under the signature of Mr. Hunsley I find to be very unhelpful and very unacceptable. It is ill-timed and ill-advised. We are giving very active consideration to the program, and that is a positive signal. At the appropriate time when I have had a chance to receive the required approval of my colleagues in government, we will be making an announcement on the program.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hunsley did not have much choice. The government is not funding the program. It is being shut down and the employees are all being laid off. That is a lack of leadership by this minister.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is directed to the Prime Minister. Since 1978, the Court Challenges Program has been in place to help official language minorities clarify and defend their language rights before the courts. Considering the existing tensions around the issue of language minorities in Canada, I would ask the Prime Minister, who has defended the rights of language minorities in Canada in the past, why he has yet to announce an extension for a program that is so important to Canada?

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, I am certainly well aware of this dimension. I realize the program was very effective, but, as I said quite clearly, we examined the recommendations of the Standing Committee, a number of which did agree the program has been very effective. I have already had a

chance to discuss the matter with my colleague, the Minister of Justice, and as I said before, this whole issue is now being examined very carefully by the government, and an announcement on the subject is expected very shortly.

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• (1530)

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Bob Horner (Mississauga West): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Solicitor General. It concerns the wearing of turbans by Sikhs in the RCMP.

My question is very simple. When will this decision be made, and is the Solicitor General willing to give us his decision today?

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Blais (Solicitor General of Canada and Minister of State (Agriculture)): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I am also concerned about this question. I already mentioned that I met groups from the Sikh community last week. I will also be meeting other groups, probably next week. In fact, we are in the process of deciding exactly when we are to meet during the next two weeks. Initially, I thought people should have some time to try and reach a compromise agreeable to both parties. However, no compromise was it seems that has been possible. I will nevertheless continue consultations for a few weeks more, and the government should be making a decision in a matter of weeks, as soon as we have finished our round of consultations.

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[English]

COURT CHALLENGES PROGRAM

Mrs. Christine Stewart (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State and again refers to the Court Challenges Program.

The Court Challenges Program currently heads a schedule of cases going before the court. The firing by the Canadian Council on Social Development of the staff has created a lot of ambiguity in that program and has fractured the administration.