

Oral Questions

British Columbia as it is in Newfoundland and as it is here in Ontario.

I take this opportunity to tell the hon. member that during the last 18 months this government has made a number of significant changes in the way we retain agents in the legal profession to do work for us. They are changes that are very much in line with the principles he has described.

For example, there has been a significant decrease in government expenditures on agents. Spending was reduced by 25 per cent in 1994 compared to 1993, when the other government was in power. The number of agents was reduced over the country from 550 to 400. Agents have been replaced by staff counsel—

The Speaker: A brief question, the hon. member for Kootenay East.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that an experienced undercover officer has said that this is a complete and utter farce. He has said that this is a definite blow to drug enforcement in the area we are talking about.

Did the justice minister have any prior knowledge of the excessive contributions to the revenue minister in the election campaign prior to making that decision?

The Speaker: The question is out of order.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

AIR NAVIGATION

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Transport Canada is about to sell the air navigation system to a non-profit organization. The minister indicated that the organization would not be subject to all provisions of the Official Languages Act. Quebec air transport associations have warned the minister against a possible deterioration of French-language services, as they feel that his plans do not do enough to guarantee the use of French in Quebec airspace.

What does the minister plan to do to ensure that French language services are maintained in the air navigation system, thereby fully meeting the demands of Quebec air transport associations which have expressed concern about the fact that the minister may not be imposing adequate requirements?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we intend to table before this House a bill to authorize the commercialization of the air navigation system. I can assure my hon. colleague that every provision of the Official Languages Act currently applying to this system will be maintained in the new structure.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I hope this goes for the Magdalen Islands and the Lower North Shore of Quebec as well. So, to prevent a decrease in French language services in Quebec airspace and ensure honesty on the part of the future air navigation system operator, does the minister undertake to submit to public scrutiny, at the Standing Committee on Transport, the whole process and the English only charter drafted in secret by his department for the new non-profit organization?

Hon. Douglas Young (Minister of Transport, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that, as I have repeated time and time again, every existing provision aimed at protecting the interests of people who speak either official language of Canada will be maintained in the new organization.

As far as ensuring that all views are represented and that all concerned can be heard, we will certainly see to that. I would like to point out that it is practically unheard of to have the support of every sector in the air industry, as we do for commercializing the air navigation system in Canada. I hope that my hon. colleague will come forward with any suggestion he may have, because we intend to have a totally transparent process.

* * *

[English]

STUDENT EXCHANGES

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development.

It is critical in an increasingly global economy that the Canadian workforce become more knowledgeable about other cultures. Student exchange programs and recognition of international credentials could facilitate the acquisition of this knowledge.

What action has the government taken in this area so vital to the economic and social well-being of Canada?

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for his question. I know he has worked very hard to improve Canada's recognition of foreign credentials.

I am very pleased to report to the House today that the Minister of Human Resources Development, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, this morning at a conference in Alberta on NAFTA announced the establishment of a three-year program for North American mobility in higher education. The program will involve approximately 60 Canadian institutions and the private sector. Thanks to this program, 400 students will