

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Apart from the anxiety this has caused Canadians generally, it also is of great concern to the thousands of loyal employees of the revenue department who traditionally protect the confidentiality of tax information. I should like to express, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Beatty:** Mr. Speaker, this is painful.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Beatty:** What is surprising is not how much I know as an individual, but how little the minister knows as the minister.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Beatty:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister this one simple question which I think he can answer with a yes or no. When he was made aware of that this morning, and Mr. Templeton and Mr. Berton have indicated they contacted the Prime Minister's office to alert him of the fact that they were going to be making this revelation, did the minister not today contact his officials to find out how it is possible that an individual could simply call up a number of a government office, request information and have it handed over to him? That does not require an investigation by the Mounties. Can he not answer that?

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that the hon. member has the ability to repeat the same question three times. I would like to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I have been in good discussion with officials of my department, and in good discussion with my cabinet colleagues, including the Acting Prime Minister, and you can rest assured that the situation is in good hands and is being investigated by the RCMP, as I mentioned a while ago.

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**THE MINISTRY****ACCEPTANCE OF PRINCIPLE OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY—  
GOVERNMENT POSITION**

**Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Hastings):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Prime Minister. In view of the extraordinary statement made by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs last night in Montreal, dealing with matters that came within his jurisdiction when he was solicitor general, is it a principle accepted by the members of this present government, as it has been accepted by members of every other government that ever served this country, that a minister accept the full responsibility for the actions of those who work for him in his department and in affiliated agencies, and does not whine publicly about his ignorance of matters with which, if he had been doing his job properly, he would have been thoroughly familiar?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Jean Chrétien (Acting Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the rules of ministerial responsibility are quite clear and, as I said earlier, the matter which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has been referring to is only an incident which took place here when he answered a question and subsequently had to rectify his answer because he had not been made aware of all the information regarding this case. This kind of thing happens from time to time when we are not fully aware of a case or when the information does not concord.

After all, what matters is that, in all circumstances, the minister and the government took their responsibilities. That is why, if there were some mistakes in the past, we sincerely hope that the McDonald Commission will help us find a better way to ensure our national security objectives and place the RCMP in a position where it can always serve the best interests of all Canadians.

*[English]*

**Mr. Hees:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Acting Prime Minister to clarify this whole matter for the House and the country and not wait for what may be months before the McDonald commission gets around to this matter. Will he have his colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, take the first opportunity, preferably today, of making a forthright statement to the House as to exactly what he did say? If this government does accept a principle like that accepted by all governments in respect of ministerial responsibility, will the Acting Prime Minister have his colleagues in the present government start acting like men instead of weasels which hide behind the coattails of responsible civil servants?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

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*[Translation]***FISHERIES****POSSIBILITY OF RE-ESTABLISHING ATLANTIC SALMON FISHERY**

**Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Fisheries and the Environment. In answer to the request of fishermen from eastern Quebec and much of the Maritimes, does the minister intend in 1978 to re-establish salmon fishing which was abolished some seven years ago and, if so, could he outline briefly the conditions by which the fishermen who are interested in that kind of fishing will have to abide?

**Hon. Roméo LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries and the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, as I said previously in answer to a question from the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi, we intend to open the salmon fishing season in the Atlantic for a short period of time, surely shorter than before prohibition six years ago. Details on that are being discussed