

*Revised Statutes***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***REVISED STATUTES OF CANADA, 1985 ACT**

MEASURE TO ENACT

Mr. Speaker: I am informed that apparently there is unanimous consent that this matter be referred to Committee of the Whole. Is that the understanding of the House?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada) moved that Bill C-94, an Act to bring into force the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985, be read the second time and referred to Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this Bill, an Act to bring into force the *Revised Statutes of Canada, 1985*, concerns the current general revision of the Statutes of Canada, the first since 1970 and the sixth since Confederation. It gives Parliament's sanction to the new *Revised Statutes*, which reflect the law found in the public general statutes of Canada on December 31, 1984.

The contents of the *Revised Statutes* were approved earlier this year, in accordance with the Statute Revision Act of 1974, by the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General of this House and the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs of the Senate. Both committees approved the revision and recommended that this Bill be introduced. The committees made several other recommendations relating to future revisions and recommended, as well, the inclusion in the present revision of the Geneva Conventions Act. That Act had been omitted from the revision, although it would have remained in force as law, by the Statute Revision Commission as being an Act not of current general interest. Following the recommendations of the committees, that Act is now included.

The Bill before us deals with technical subjects such as the coming into force of the *Revised Statutes*, the repeal of the statutes they replace, and the rule that the revision does not change the substance of the existing law. The Bill also provides for the preparation of the supplements to the *Revised Statutes* containing the Acts passed since the end of 1984, in a version adapted to numbering and terminology of the statute revision. Finally, it contains transitional provisions deeming references to the old law that are found in the present text of the Acts passed after 1984 and of existing regulations to be written as if they were references to the revised law.

What these technical provisions do not highlight is the advances the revision will make to important areas of government policy to which I wish to draw the attention of the House. These are advances in the area of accessibility of the law and in the area of equality of and respect for both official languages.

Respect for the law depends to a great extent on the accessibility of its text. As all Hon. Members know, it is not always easy to piece together the present text of a frequently amended Act by consulting the last *Revised Statutes* and what has become, since the last revision in 1970, nearly 20 volumes of subsequent legislation. I therefore decided to publish, beginning with this revision, a loose-leaf edition of the Statutes of Canada that will be updated regularly. Bound volumes will also remain available.

[Translation]

Let us now deal with the Government's second objective which in this case relates to the official languages.

Until about the mid 1970s, that is long after the previous revision, federal laws were drafted in English, more often than not without any consideration for the genius of that language. Thanks to a qualified and mostly bilingual staff, lawyers and draft revisers seconded by a linguist, the Commission prepared a new or almost new French version of the 200-odd laws which most needed it. Needless to say, this was the best time to standardize the wording and improve the text coherence.

[English]

The present statute revision has greatly improved the two versions of most public Acts. I am confident that, with the statutes henceforth available in both an updated loose-leaf edition and the yearly bound volumes, the quality of the presentation of federal legislation is now approaching what I believe to be the quality of its substance.

Hon. Bob Kaplan (York Centre): Madam Speaker, I am happy to indicate first that indeed the Government has unanimous consent of the House to proceed with this Bill in all three readings in one session and to refer it to Committee of the Whole.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General at the time when reference was made for the Bill, in its course as required by the statute through which the Bill has been brought forward, to be brought before our committee. It came before our committee, and we had an excellent briefing. Mary Dawson, to whom I want to pay personal tribute, was the chief person responsible for the drafting. It was good to see her. I had some professional relationship with her when I was Minister and she was doing drafting in the Department. I was glad to have her there to answer questions and to see that effort had been made to use this occasion not only to bring forward the legislation but to make improvements to it to which I want to refer.

However, one must begin by wondering why it took so long from the last revision, all the way from 1970 to 1985, to bring forward this legislation. Although I did not press the officials to give us the explanation of why it took 15 years to do something in principle which perhaps should be done every 10 years, probably the reason was that they were very busy in the 1970s and the 1980s with the Liberal Government which was always needing important legislation from them on an urgent