

Oral Questions

A decision has not yet been finalized on this issue. As soon as it has been, obviously we will make the appropriate announcements. I can assure my colleague that a great deal of work has gone into this. I recently met with my new committee on social change and asked it, not to examine whether we should change the policy, there has been some misinterpretation about that, but if a decision is made to change the policy how we can make sure that it is implemented most effectively.

I think that is the kind of thing that my hon. colleagues and others would applaud. It is the kind of leadership we will need to take to ensure that any change is implemented effectively.

Mr. John Brewin (Victoria): Madam Speaker, the minister clearly avoided the opportunity to make the commitment to this House today that the policy was going to be changed before the new year which she made before the committee.

This House can take it therefore that the minister has backed away from the word she gave to that committee. I ask the minister and her colleague the Minister of Justice how they can continue to sit in a government that practises systemic discrimination against gays and lesbians in one of the major public institutions of Canada.

Hon. Mary Collins (Associate Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Status of Women): Madam Speaker, as I advised my colleague and as I have indicated in the committee, there are many different aspects of this question that have to be addressed. I indicated that I hoped we would have a decision before the end of the year. That decision has not yet been finalized. As soon as it is my hon. colleagues will be advised as will other members of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We will finish with one question from the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park and one question from the hon. member for Halton—Peel.

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SLOVENIA

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

As she knows, on December 2 Canada recognized Ukraine as an independent state after 80 per cent of the Ukrainian people voted in support of the independence. Slovenia declared its independence on June 25 after 93 per cent of Slovenian people voted in support of independence in a free and democratic referendum. On October 8 Slovenia began issuing its own currency and passports, and on October 26 the last Yugoslav federal army soldiers left Slovenia's soil and Slovenia is now in full control of its borders and defence.

I would like to ask the minister, in view of Slovenia's *de facto* control of its own country, is she prepared to recognize Slovenia as an independent state?

Hon. Barbara McDougall (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Madam Speaker, as I told the Slovenian foreign minister while he was here, and we had a very illuminating meeting which was very helpful to me, recognition will come to those Yugoslavian republics wishing it. The question is how to receive it and when.

The difficulty is that with the nation in a state of war at the moment it is important that all parties negotiate the solution together in terms of the republics and their relationship with each other.

We want an end to the bloodshed. That is our first and most important priority. We also are very active in promoting a UN peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia in which we have said we would take an active part. Our efforts are directed toward that end and will continue to be. However, to recognize independence at this time in our view would fundamentally alter the nature of the negotiation process or the potential for a negotiation process and would suggest that the negotiation process may not take place.

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TRADE

Mr. Garth Turner (Halton—Peel): Madam Speaker, the future of the North American free trade deal looks somewhat cloudy after the American decision to pull back on talks. It is my understanding that Canadian officials are continuing to work with their American and Mexican counterparts.

My question is for the Minister of International Trade. If the Americans do shelve their participation, will Canada continue to be part of the negotiations? I want to