

Supply

The second principle to which I was referring, Mr. Speaker, is encouragement for self-reliant development and self-sustaining growth of individuals, communities and voluntary organizations whereby they take the initiative to find and maintain the resources necessary for their own survival and development.

The third principle is co-operation as a basis of a relationship between government and those involved in voluntary action in common pursuit of Canadian societal goals.

Fourth, and last, is mutual accountability of Government and those involved in voluntary action for the efficient use of public funds. These are the four principles which have been recently adopted by the Cabinet.

The next initiative which we had taken following the concern expressed in the Throne Speech of last December was to give notice yesterday in the Order Paper of a motion to appoint a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons to examine and report upon the legal framework of voluntary actions, with particular reference to the following. I am happy to quote the three objectives of the new proposals of the Government so that Hon. Members can discuss those points of concern in their further discussions. The objectives are: The adequacy of the definition of charity under the Income Tax Act to reflect current societal realities, the limits to be set for advocacy activities of charities registered under the Income Tax Act, and the appropriate nature of public support for groups which have as a primary object the advocacy of public interest.

● (1150)

[Translation]

This Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons will serve as a forum where various voluntary agencies in Canada can express their views on changes that are necessary. As the Hon. Member pointed out, it is extremely difficult to give a definition of a charitable organization, and I know whereof I speak, because of a study I am very happy to release today, a study we had done by Mr. Neil Brook of York University, in which Mr. Brook gives an exhaustive assessment of the manner in which legislation in Great Britain and the United States has addressed itself to the problem of defining what is meant by charitable organizations. I am releasing the study today so that the voluntary agencies can prepare their briefs and submissions to the Special Joint Committee, notice of which is given in today's Order Paper.

I am also announcing today the new criteria for grants and contributions approved by Treasury Board last Thursday, March 28, further to a recommendation made by the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations in its previous briefs.

I am also releasing today a study by Arthur Drache—

[English]

—on the tax status and tax treatment of non-profit organizations in order that a Bill be put before this House on the status of non-profit corporations. Those studies have been financed

through grants by the Department of the Secretary of State. The various organizations will be able to avoid a waste of money and time trying to put together that information. Those two studies are essential for the work of the special joint task force that will be established, I hope, with the co-operation of all Parties of this House.

I can announce today that the Government of Canada has approved \$200,000 more for the budget to further promote voluntary action in Canada. The criteria for the use of that additional money will be announced later today when I have the opportunity to address the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations in Canada.

Moreover, in the last year, we have been working, with the co-operation of the voluntary sector, in assisting Statistics Canada to develop a basis for data essential to understand and have a better view of the impact of the voluntary sector in Canada. A study was released last January on the economic impact, but that must be further implemented if we are to know more of the kinds of avenues, approaches and initiatives that should be taken.

[Translation]

Thus, Mr. Speaker, the Government initiatives I have just described illustrate the Government's efforts to establish a mechanism that will make it easier to define fiscal policies, that will give all voluntary agencies in Canada a chance to be heard by this Parliament, a chance to take the measures that are necessary to adjust Canada's tax structure to the need for voluntary agencies to remain autonomous and to develop, and to the general needs this country will have to cope with as a growing and prosperous society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): The Hon. Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal) mentioned the fact that he wished to release documents. Does he intend to table them now?

Mr. Joyal: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): If he does, it will require the unanimous consent of the House. Does the House give its unanimous consent to the documents enumerated by the Secretary of State being tabled now?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Agreed.

[English]

Mr. Epp: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal) whether the special task force on the voluntary sector will also be mandated to look at the whole question of what is legitimate advocacy activity for a registered charity. In response to a recent presentation that I made to the House, the Parliamentary Secretary acknowledged that the system the Government is using does not only leave many grey areas, but in fact so much confusion and doubt exist that we are hurting the registered charities very badly. Can the Minister give us some information on that as well?