

because of the Government's inability to deal with the economy?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has shown more judgment and more intelligence than the Hon. Member in analysing this situation.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: They have indeed mentioned the severe impact of the recession, but they have not tried to tie it to any particular Government or any particular Party. They know that the recession which we have seen has been international.

Mr. Wilson: Come on, give the people credit for more intelligence than that.

Mr. Lalonde: They know that there are 35 million people unemployed in the industrialized countries at the present time, and they have put their representations and their views with a much broader perspective than the narrow, partisan view of the Hon. Member.

I can tell him that I have had many meetings with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We have already in operation a number of measures and programs. It would be very helpful if the Conservative Opposition, in particular, were to pass the Small Business Loans Act—

Some Hon. Members: Call it, bring it on.

Mr. Lalonde: —and the Small Business Grants Act, and support what they have asked for. The Conservative Opposition has been dragging its feet on that.

Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Bring it on. We will debate it.

Mr. Lalonde: I can tell him that in my discussions with the CFIB I have examined with them further steps that could be taken in order to help small and medium-sized businesses. If the Conservative Opposition can pass the economic business before this House—

Mr. Nielsen: Bring it on.

Mr. Lalonde: —I will be very happy to introduce a budget which will come to the help of business in this country. I hope by then that the Conservatives will be less hypocritical about it.

Mr. MacDougall: Madam Speaker, my question is again directed to the Finance Minister. We are 24th out of 24 in OECD. I say to the Minister, bring the Bill on; bring the Bill on to the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

[Translation]

BILINGUALISM

INQUIRY RESPECTING AMENDMENT OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

Mr. Louis Duclos (Montmorency-Orléans): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State. In his annual report for 1982 published yesterday, the Commissioner of Official Languages states the following about the language of work in the Federal Public Service:

There can be little real progress on language of work while the legal basis and exact scope of this right remain in question—

In view of the accuracy of the assessment by the Commissioner of Official Languages, could the Minister tell the House whether the Government plans on proposing amendments to the Official Languages Act in the near future to specify the executory nature of the right to work in the official language of one's choice as recommended last June by the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons on Official Languages?

Hon. Serge Joyal (Secretary of State): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform the Hon. Member that we have been working for some time at the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada on updating the official languages policy statement which my predecessor made public in 1977. As soon as the Cabinet has approved the revised policy, it will be made public. I suppose that it will then be referred to the appropriate Parliamentary Committee so that it may call witnesses, debate the matter and make appropriate recommendations. I share the concern of the Hon. Member and I believe that it is time to review and update the provisions of an Act which has served Canada well up to now and must continue to do so in the future.

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GOVERNMENT AID

CANADA-QUEBEC AGREEMENT—NEED PROGRAM—REQUEST THAT FUNDS BE SPENT IN QUEBEC

Hon. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Employment and Immigration, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister of Canada. Since the Canada-Québec agreement on the \$220 million promised under the NEED program has hit a snag with respect to Quebec's municipalities since Quebec intends to exercise its jurisdiction in that area, could the Right Hon. Prime Minister give the House the assurance that the \$170 million earmarked for the Province of Quebec will be spent in that province, as originally intended?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Yes, Madam Speaker, although we regret that the Péquiste Government rejected an agreement we thought would be acceptable to them