

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, that is one of the more rapid policy changes we have seen. It certainly does not reflect the trust us approach we heard from the Prime Minister yesterday on the lobbying issue.

In committee a couple of days ago the member for Saint-Denis was saying that many voters are too illiterate to be able to get their names on voters lists and referendums. We believe that Canadians are well informed and should be consulted.

It has been the position of this party in the past that on constitutional issues there should be national referendums. Quebec's separation would be—

**The Speaker:** I would ask that the hon. member put his question forthwith.

**Mr. Harper (Calgary West):** Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister agree that Canadians should be consulted by national referendums on major constitutional changes, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, when we debated this question under the previous government I was the one who proposed the national referendum which led to the vote on the Charlottetown accord.

There is a law on referendums but it is not an instrument we use for every question. I believe that the fundamental responsibility in democracy lies with members of Parliament to stand and vote representing their people.

If the hon. member does not have enough confidence to use his own judgment and wants a referendum on everything, if he does not have the guts to make up his mind and cannot stand the heat, then he should get out of the kitchen. We are here to make decisions and we will make them.

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• (1140)

[Translation]

**RECYCLING**

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of the Environment. In a report published last week, Statistics Canada announced that Canada was one of five countries with the highest waste production per capita in the world. Subsequently, the Minister of the Environment said that she considered introducing an environmental tax next fall if negotiations on waste recycling between the provinces and the private sector were not successful.

In dealing with this problem, does the minister intend to launch a national waste tax program or would she let each province develop its own strategy?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, in the announcement made following the meeting of the Council of Environment Ministers held in St. John, New Brunswick, three weeks ago, it was agreed unanimously to develop a specific strategy that would be in place at the next meeting.

Obviously, waste collection is a provincial responsibility, and any action plan that results from our meeting in November 1994 will have to be implemented by the provinces.

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of the Environment stressed the importance of harmonizing policies in Canada. Are we to understand, considering the government's poor record on federal-provincial agreements and irrespective of the outcome of negotiations between the provinces and the private sector, that the federal government will go ahead this fall with a national waste recycling policy?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to my answer to his first question, I thought I made that clear. This is not a matter of the federal minister imposing her own solution. This was a unanimous decision made by all environment ministers at the meeting in St. John. We identified a problem, and we wanted a harmonized solution.

We followed the path described by my colleague, Mr. Chrétien, the environment critic, who stated at the beginning of his mandate that the environment was not a provincial problem but one that went beyond provincial boundaries and was shared by all Canadians. What I throw in the water in Ontario eventually arrives in Quebec, and that is why we want a harmonized policy.

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[English]

**PAROLE**

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Middlesex):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Solicitor General.

Many people in my riding of London—Middlesex are greatly concerned with the reintegration of repeat violent offenders into our community. The parole system is our only mechanism to return offenders to the community with controlled supervision and support, however it is not without some flaws.

Could the minister inform the House of the steps that will be taken to improve our current system of parole?