

Oral Questions

• (1430)

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa Vanier): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. Canadians have reason to rejoice. The Supreme Court of Canada has handed down an historic judgment, which confirms that language minorities have the right to manage and control education in the minority language and the institutions that dispense that education.

Mr. Speaker, minority groups now have a decision by the Supreme Court that confirms they have rights. However, these rights will be more or less respected depending always on the generosity of the provinces.

Considering the reluctance of certain provinces, including Alberta, to recognize the rights of the franco-phone language minority, I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the federal government intends to do to ensure that these provinces are generous, open and obliging towards their language minorities. What will the government do?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, the government promised to raise the question of minority language rights in general at the first constitutional conference after the ratification of the Meech Lake Accord.

This commitment was repeated several times, in the Speech from the Throne, for instance, which identified language rights and strengthening the Charter as the government's constitutional priorities, once Meech Lake was ratified.

[*English*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. The Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed today that minority language parents should be granted management and control over minority language instructions and facilities.

Many provinces have still to accept minority language groups and their right to educate their children in their language. As spokesperson for the Government of Canada, will the minister tell us whether the Government of Canada will convene a federal-provincial con-

ference to which all premiers will be invited to discuss this question which is very important to Canadian unity?

Hon. Kim Campbell (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada): Mr. Speaker, as I answered the hon. member, the government is committed to dealing with this issue on a constitutional basis. I would also point out that I would expect that the governments of the provinces of Canada will abide by the law as it has been articulated by the Supreme Court of Canada.

I have not had a chance to examine the decision in its details, as it was just released today at noon, but the Government of Canada is ready to collaborate with the provinces and territories so that they can give effect to the decision of Supreme Court of Canada in the most appropriate way.

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[*Translation*]

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Douglas Young (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, recently, the Minister of National Revenue stated that businesses that will have to collect the GST should start registering next month with his department.

Could the Minister of National Revenue explain why businesses in Canada have to register to collect the goods and services tax, although the bill has yet to receive the approval of the Parliament of Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Otto Jelinek (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should know, the Auditor General on numerous occasions, including in his last report, stated that the GST must receive the priority and resources required to ensure the successful delivery of this major government initiative prior to the implementation of such legislation.

We would be irresponsible if we were not moving forward and giving Canadians the opportunity to register early because there are numerous benefits. Registration will be done on a voluntary basis up until Royal Assent is given some time later in the year, hopefully.

In the meantime, those companies which we are urging to register will be able personally to begin to claim for federal sales tax credits and will get information on how to collect the GST, keep records, file returns, obtain refunds of federal sales tax including the inventory of resale of December 31, 1990, what options are available