

Oral Questions

as well as the CSA provide training for use on the mobile satellite system. It goes on and on.

What companies in Canada want is advice, assistance, network connections and the support of their government in making the sales overseas that will make them successful internationally. That is what we understand, but clearly not what the Government of Quebec understands.

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IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

Last week renovations that will cost \$500,000 started at the Immigration and Refugee Board's University Avenue office in Toronto. This remodelling, done at a time when 45,000 civil servants are to be let go, is causing outrage in the office itself. With the downsizing of the board, even more offices will be emptied. Nonetheless, expansion is proceeding.

Will the minister immediately call a halt to this incredible waste of taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. David Dingwall (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will have to take notice of the hon. member's question and get him an answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the minister of immigration.

The minister knows about this mess but as usual he has tried to pass the buck to the chair of the IRB. I have received a petition signed by 300 civil servants, many of whom work in the Toronto IRB office, demanding a halt to these wasteful renovations.

Will the minister of immigration recommend that these renovations be halted now, or will he ignore these employees like he has ignored other critical employees in the past?

● (1445)

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it should be said that no minister ignores his or her employees. In fact it could be said that the harmony between the government and the civil service has never been higher in terms of the partnership that the government has with the public service.

Second, as the Minister of Public Works said, I too will take the question as notice because I am not aware of the specifics of which the member speaks.

JUSTICE

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Today is the anniversary of the very tragic death of Nicholas Battersby in a drive-by shooting. Since then other similar incidents have occurred in our communities across the land.

Will the minister inform the House of the steps the government has taken and is planning to take to make convicted young offenders more accountable for their acts?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the government announced almost a year ago, our approach to youth justice has two aspects: first, immediate statutory changes to the Young Offenders Act to strengthen it, and second, a longer term, critical reassessment of the youth justice system in general.

With respect to the first matter, last February 28 the House passed at third reading Bill C-37 which is now before the other place. It represents a toughening of the statute to deal with violence and a recognition that for non-violent crime, jail should be the last resort in favour of community based rehabilitative programming.

We have doubled the maximum sentence for first degree murder. We have provided for the presumptive transfer to adult court of 16 and 17-year-olds charged with crimes of serious violence.

In the second phase of the strategy, the parliamentary committee on justice and legal affairs will later this year commence a comprehensive review of the Young Offenders Act, travelling across Canada to listen to Canadians about other improvements that can be made to the statute.

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[Translation]

PROGRAM FOR OLDER WORKER ADJUSTMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, the fiscal arrangements provided for in the POWA agreement expire on March 31 of this year. The Quebec Minister of Employment, Louise Arel, has informed the Minister of Human Resources Development of her willingness to renew the current fiscal arrangements pending a review that would make the program more equitable for workers.

Can the Minister of Human Resources Development tell us what his intentions are regarding the renewal of the agreement with Quebec?