

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 8, 1990

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE STATUS OF DISABLED PERSONS

SECOND REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE—GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Hon. Gerry Weiner (Secretary of State of Canada and Minister of State (Multiculturalism and Citizenship)): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to table, in both official languages, as well as on audio cassette—I believe this is the first time this has ever been done in the House—the government's response to *A Consensus for Action*, the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons.

[*Editor's Note: See today's Votes and Proceedings.*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Point of order, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Secretary of State wanting to create a precedent in tabling a cassette. Does that mean that that document officially becomes part of the official report of the government in response to that committee? Does it mean that that cassette is available to all Canadians, if they require to see it? Does it mean also that it is available to members of Parliament if they would like to hear this cassette?

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for raising the point of order because it does allow us to flag what we are doing here.

What we are dealing with is a report in response to the committee of the disabled, and so this particular vehicle we are using opens up that report to some of our disabled Canadians and gives them an opportunity to hear for themselves the report that was tabled in the

House, something that is a little unusual and something that I think all members of the House would be happy to hear.

• (1110)

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, we are trying to deal with a particular problem here, that of a visual handicap. I take it also that the audio is available, but is it available in Braille for those who cannot see, for example? Have we made sure that we have not excluded any group?

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his intervention and can confirm to him that, yes, it is available in Braille and that we will be providing the other vehicles whereby we make sure that all of those people who suffer from different handicaps have the opportunity to see or hear the government response to this particular report.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the minister that this is indeed a very thoughtful and a very encouraging initiative. To seek clarification, when reports are tabled in response to committee reports, that would mean, then, that multiple copies are available for people who are interested. I take it that if a large number of Canadians want to seek access to the video, then multiple copies will be available for people.

Mr. Cooper: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that, and, of course, within reason. We do not want to produce more than is necessary, but we certainly want to meet the needs.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my colleague did raise this point of order. I think it is a good time to draw to all members' attention that when sending out parliamentary reports to our constituents, we forget the blind who cannot read our reports.

In my last householder, I put a little sentence in there asking constituents who know of people who cannot see, to send those names, addresses and telephone numbers to me—with their permission, of course—so that we can send these people a cassette of the parliamentary report. I think with the tabling of this document, we are setting a new precedent so that we will not forget any of the handicapped across Canada.