

*Adjournment Debate*

I would like to know if this government has any political will to deal with this issue which has been dragging on for several years now. I know that I have the support of members in this respect and that they are fed up with excuses and explanations which do not hold any water. I am told that we have the Official Languages Act. What good is a legislation that is not enforced? What good are all our laws if nobody has the guts, the will to enforce them?

**Mrs. Nicole Roy-Arcelin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question asked by the hon. member, on March 8, about the right of the francophone minorities to manage their own educational institutions.

The federal government has always supported, in a very concrete way, official language minorities, especially in the area of school management.

The government provided funding, in several provinces, to working groups made up of people involved in education, including representatives from minorities. These working groups have studied school management by minorities. French-speaking communities have welcomed the reports tabled by these working groups.

Moreover, the memorandum of understanding signed by the government in 1988 and the bilateral agreements with the provinces and territories have given official language minority groups easier access to education in their own language.

Supplementary agreements with several provinces, including Saskatchewan, have filled specific or appropriate needs.

As she already mentioned several times, the Secretary of State of Canada has discussed with her Cabinet

colleagues a package of measures to help provinces set up school management by minority groups. Talks are continuing, and we expect to start, in the next few weeks, actual negotiation with the provinces.

The Secretary of State submitted to her cabinet colleagues a proposal to renew the Official Languages in Education Program. Pretty soon, we will be starting discussions with the provinces, which should lead to a new Protocol and new agreements.

Let me remind the House that education is a provincial jurisdiction. The federal government has always clearly shown the provinces its willingness to help them fulfil their constitutional obligations. But the provinces have to provide appropriate structures for official languages minorities to manage their own educational institutions.

In that sense we welcome the decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada last week, on March 4, three years after the Mahé decision.

While reinforcing the previous decision, the Supreme Court decision adds more elements which provincial governments will have to consider when they prepare school legislation. The federal government will have to be convinced that provinces abide by these principles before supporting any school management program.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois):** Pursuant to Standing Order 38(5), a motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The House adjourned at 6.22 p.m.