

Canadian Heritage Languages Institute Act

almost cynical or, I should say, almost a desperate attempt by this Conservative Government to gain credibility, to appear to be concerned with environment and with health. It is an attempt, in a way, of a blue chameleon trying to change its colour into green.

In any event, to conclude, I am sure Canadians will not be fooled by this Government's sudden decision in its sudden conversion to the environment in a crass manner which evidently is intended to garner votes.

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the announcement that the removal of lead from gasoline will be speeded up. It is something for which I have called for some time. Previous environment critics for the New Democratic Party caucus have called for it and, of course, environmentalists have called for it for a very long time.

I think that there is an easy, broader lesson to be learned. Reference has been made to the fact that experts have only recently found out that low levels of lead can be very harmful, particularly to the development of children. Yet, we have other environmental hazards which we are still seeing accumulate, on the basis that low levels are not harmful to health. I think that emissions of NOx, for example, are continuing to go up even with improved standards. There is still going to be an increase.

The Government has announced that low level radiation is not a health hazard. We wonder how many lives have to be lost and how much illness there has to be before the lesson is truly going to be learned that we have very serious environmental problems.

I welcome the announcement. It is high time that we move on leaded gasoline. It is particularly a problem in my area, an urban riding which has lead in the soil that is being removed. It has been a local problem as well as a national one. It is only one very small step, and it is an important lesson that we have to stop pollution. It is very, very significant in all areas of life, and it is still not being acted upon.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE LANGUAGES INSTITUTE ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Jake Epp (for the Secretary of State of Canada) moved that Bill C-152, an Act to establish the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute, be read the second time and referred to a legislative committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-152 and to open the debate on behalf of the Government. I am sure that it would be appropriate, Mr. Speaker, to let you and Members of the House know why I am standing in

this place this afternoon instead of the Hon. Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Weiner). I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you and Members would appreciate that this is one of the holy days of the faith that the Hon. Minister observes. For that reason he has asked me to make a presentation on behalf of the Government, and I am honoured to do so. I know that Hon. Members opposite will understand why he is not here.

Some two months ago, this House gave its unanimous consent to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and on July 21, Royal Assent passed this historic Act into law. I think all Members, and especially Government Members, are justifiably proud of the co-operation and consensus which turned this piece of Canadian legislation into the first law of its kind in the world.

This afternoon, in introducing for second reading Bill C-152, an Act to establish the Canadian Heritage Languages Institute, I believe it is a further demonstration of the viability and of the life that comes not only from the Multiculturalism Act but which is Canada.

Others Members of the House and I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that you have worked strenuously over the years in the field of multiculturalism, both as a Member of Parliament, as an active member of an ethnic group in Canada, and as a former Minister. I hope that you, as well as other Members of the House, feel that this is an important milestone in some of the work that you have done as well.

• (1520)

The Bill before us has its roots in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act and in the multiculturalism policy of Canada. This Bill gives expression to Section 3, subsection 1 of the Act, which states that it is the policy of the Government of Canada to preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French. This Bill also gives specific recognition to sections of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act which commit the Government to facilitate the acquisition, retention, and use of all languages that contribute to Canada's multicultural identity.

This Bill is another concrete example of our Government's resolve to meet the challenges of our evolving multicultural society which we set out in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. Last year, the former Secretary of State, the Hon. David Crombie, announced the Government's intention to establish a national heritage languages institute in Edmonton. He commissioned Dr. Henry Kreisel of the University of Alberta and Dr. Michael Batts of the University of British Columbia to conduct a study on the best way to meet this commitment. The Bill before us today results from that cross-country process of consultation and assessment.

Dr. Kreisel recommended that the federal Government establish an institute to foster and further the learning of heritage languages, an institute that was described as without walls, an institute that would serve the needs of all those active in this area. The report recommended that the institute reach