

[Translation]

### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

STATUS OF FRENCH LANGUAGE—REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT INTERVENE

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** In the absence of the Solicitor General, Mr. Speaker, I will direct my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. The media have reported this morning that “there is a running battle between Anglophones and Francophones in the RCMP”. On several occasions I have warned this Government that the RCMP was sitting on a powder keg in the area of official languages.

In a recent letter to Commissioner Simmonds, the Commander in chief of the RCMP in Quebec wrote: “The feeling expressed is one of rejection of the Francophones on the part of the Anglophone majority.” A little further, he wrote: “Francophones’ participation in the RCMP is marginal.”

Instead of allowing this situation to deteriorate, what is the Government going to do today to rectify it?

[English]

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, this is a matter that falls under the responsibility of the President of the Treasury Board. He is not in the House today. I would be pleased to take the Hon. Member’s question as notice and bring it to the attention of the Minister early next week.

[Translation]

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

**Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier):** Mr. Speaker, it is not the first time. We have brought this situation to the Government’s attention for at least the past four or five months. We have insisted that this is a dangerous situation. Committee members from the Government side even have emphasized that an explosive situation exists within the RCMP. Highly serious comments have been made about this by Hon. Members from both sides of the House. What is the Government going to do today? Will it give the House the assurance that it will put an end to these utterly unacceptable situations which exist within the RCMP?

[English]

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, I understand very clearly the concern the Hon. Member has expressed. He knows very well that the President of the Treasury Board is very concerned about this matter and is very much seized with the issue. He is working on a response to it, and I am sure that when he is back in the House next week he will be able to make some comments in response to the concerns the Hon. Member just raised.

### Oral Questions

#### BANKS AND BANKING

CHARTERED BANKS’ INTEREST RATES—SPREAD BETWEEN BANK AND PRIME RATE

**Mr. Reginald Stackhouse (Scarborough West):** Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday’s welcome drop in the bank rate has meant that as of this morning—

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stackhouse:** To that good side there is also a flip side. The spread between the bank rate and the prime rate is one-quarter of a percentage point wider now than it was a few days ago, and more than two and a half times wider than it was a year ago. The implications of this are obvious and serious. In view of all this, what moral suasion or other action is open to the Government to induce the banks to narrow the spread between these two rates in order to bring greater benefits to Canadians?

**Hon. Michael Wilson (Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member has observed, the bank rate is at the lowest level it has been in 13 years.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre):** That will obviously lead to more housing starts and more job creation and it is clearly the result of the economic policies that this Government has followed and will continue to follow, to ensure that this record is continued.

The Hon. Member has pointed out that the spread between the prime rate and the bank rate has widened. I should point out that today’s rate is about average or perhaps a little higher than average, but the spread has been between one-quarter of 1 per cent and a little over 2.5 per cent in the course of the past little while. We are watching this and hope that competitive pressures in the market-place will respond by narrowing that spread. It is something on which we are keeping an eye, and I very much appreciate the Hon. Member raising the question.

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#### VIA RAIL

NEED FOR NEW PASSENGER CARS

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Finance is meant to be helpful to the Minister of Transport, VIA Rail, and all of Canada. Every year for nine years now, announcements from six or seven successive Ministers of Transport have been made about the ordering of new passenger rail cars. I have been advised repeatedly that the road-block is the Department of Finance and the Treasury Board. Will the Minister of Finance see to it that funds are appropriated immediately on a staged basis for the immediate ordering and purchasing of at least 130 new rail