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Friday, December 2, 1994

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 2, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

(1005)

Prayers

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, this is a very sad day for us here in this House. One of our own is ill. I hope that our colleague, Lucien Bouchard, will be in your prayers today.

The third measure that we do not object to is the one that permits a tax deduction for contributions into mine reclamation funds by businesses in the mining industry in the year in which these contributions are made. Such funds are used to cover the costs incurred when mines are shut down.

However, as a spokesperson for seniors' associations and organizations in Canada, I have undertaken to ensure that the social programs review not be reduced to simply making cuts across the board in programs designed to protect the disadvantaged, and the aged in particular.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

The Bloc Québécois denounces the fact that, over the next three years, the federal government will take half a billion dollars from seniors with this reduction in the age tax credit.

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from December 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-59, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and the income tax application rules, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The National Advisory Council on Aging reported the following regarding the personal disposable income of the elderly: in 1989, the average income of unattached senior citizens 65 and over was \$16,316, as compared to \$23,080 for their counterparts under 65. An unattached senior citizen is a person who lives alone or in a household in which he or she is related to no other member of the household.

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you will understand that having just learned of the sudden and dreadful illness that has afflicted our leader, we are all, and particularly those of us who are members of the Bloc Québécois, deeply saddened, not to say in shock. I can only hope that the Leader of the Opposition will make a speedy recovery.

In 1992, the average income in unattached senior citizen households was \$18,434, whereas that for other unattached persons was \$25,039. Nearly 21 per cent, or 625,000, of Canadian senior citizens are considered as low income. The percentage of low income elderly is always higher than in the general population.

The Bloc Québécois is opposed to Bill C-59, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Application Rules, because of certain measures it introduces. We are not, however, opposed to the following provisions of Bill C-59. First, the permanent renewal of the provision under which money accumulated in an RRSP can be used to finance the purchase of a first home. Second, the measure increasing the value, in many cases, of the charitable donations tax credit. The Bloc Québécois is in agreement with this last measure, as it recognizes the contribution made by charitable donations to the well-being of the community.

On March 9, I rose in this House and asked the Minister of Human Resources Development this question:

By making alarming statements on the old age security system, is the minister preparing to hit seniors with a considerable cut in their old age security pensions?

At the present time, taxpayers are entitled to a tax credit equivalent to 17 per cent of the first \$250 of charitable donations and a tax credit equal to 29 per cent on charitable donations over \$250. The bill before us increases the total value of the tax credit for charitable donations, while lowering the threshold from \$250 to \$200.

By way of an answer, the Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification simply said that he wanted to "ensure that there will be a stable, effective, fair, honest system for seniors in the future and to make sure that this country can pay for it".

Allow me to wonder about the meaning of the word "stable" used in his reply in relation to seniors, as some tax provisions in Bill C-59 create a climate of insecurity for seniors.

Government Orders

On September 28, I asked the Minister of Human Resources Development another question concerning programs for seniors:

Does the minister still intend to slash programs for seniors in order to finance other federal government programs?

The minister's reply was this:

Mr. Speaker, it never was our intention, it will not be our intention, *la réponse est non*.

The next day, September 29, I rose again in the House of Commons to say this to the Minister of Finance:

The Minister of Finance turns a deaf ear to public opinion and is using current consultations to deflect any questions. Senior citizens have often saved for years to have a decent income in their old age—

The government wants to change the rules in the middle of the game. Although the minister has been stalling for several days, he will have to make a decision. Seniors hope he will select the only fair option: no taxation of RRSPs.

Bill C-59 clearly penalizes those most in need. Seniors have worked hard all their lives. We should be grateful to them for being pioneers.

In the last budget, the federal government decided to reduce the age credit. All taxpayers aged 65 and up can apply for a tax credit equal to 17 per cent of \$3,482 at the federal level and to 20 per cent of \$2,200 in Quebec. This credit is non-refundable, that is, it applies to the tax payable and there can be no refund on the excess portion.

(1010)

The credit reduces federal income tax by about \$610 a year for all seniors who have to pay income tax. In most provinces, including Quebec, this credit also reduces provincial income tax. The combined reduction of federal and provincial income tax averages about \$950; in Quebec, it is about \$1,050: \$610 in federal tax and \$440 for Quebec.

The change made by the latest budget would reduce this credit for seniors whose net income exceeds \$25,921, the current threshold for other income-dependent credits. This threshold will be indexed to the annual increase in consumer prices over 3 per cent. The credit will be reduced by 15 per cent of an individual's net income over \$25,921 and will be completely eliminated when his or her income reaches \$49,100.

This measure will be phased in over two years. In 1994, the reduction will be half the amount calculated and the total reduction will apply starting in 1995.

According to the finance department, this measure will affect 800,000 out of 2.6 million seniors, including 600,000 seniors whose income is between \$25,921 and \$49,134 and 200,000 whose income is over \$49,134.

Although the finance department estimated that the credit cost the federal government \$1.3 billion in 1991, the expected

savings are as follows: \$20 million in 1994-95, \$170 million in 1995-96 and \$300 million in 1996-97.

By tightening the program conditions for seniors, the government is just lowering their income and making them feel insecure.

Furthermore, the government still stubbornly insists on penalizing seniors by proposing to install voice mail systems to answer inquiries from seniors. On May 10, I asked the minister responsible for seniors about using voice mail to answer inquiries from seniors. The minister simply told us about how fast the proposed service was. I explained that many seniors were reluctant to use this type of service, as the representative of the seniors' federation said clearly on their behalf. At the beginning of the period when we present petitions, I will have several petitions to table on this subject.

On May 11, 1994, I raised the issue again by asking this question in the House:

—why does the federal government insist on attacking senior citizens, considering that most of them find it very difficult to deal with a system that is so impersonal?

The minister's response was both disarming and unacceptable. He said that the program would be more efficient and personalized, and that it would provide better service to seniors. The implementation of a centralized telephone answering system using voice mail to answer every request for information from seniors regarding government services will have a major impact on the quality of services provided to these people.

The Liberal Party was the first one to oppose cuts affecting programs for seniors. The government did not keep its promises. After targeting the age credit, cutting into old age pensions, scaring seniors with the announcement of a review of the Canada Pension Plan, the government now has the audacity to try to tax RRSPs. Every available source of income for seniors will be adversely affected and the federal government does not guarantee anything any more to people who saved money throughout their lives to have decent retirement incomes.

This fear among seniors is prevalent right across the country. I recently met with a delegation representing various associations for seniors, and I was told about their concerns regarding the government's proposed cuts to seniors' programs. I am referring more specifically to the old age pensioners' association, which was represented by its president, Mr. Grabke, its director of public relations, Mr. Ben Swankey, and its chairperson, Mrs. Marjory Kingsbury.

(1015)

This association is the oldest organization in English Canada and has nearly 10,000 members in about 100 groups throughout British Columbia.

Government Orders

The position of the seniors in these groups was expressed as follows by their representatives.

[*English*]

“The position of seniors is that our generation made a lifelong contribution to building our country and we believe strongly that Canada should continue to provide a measure of security for seniors in their declining years”.

[*Translation*]

On December 1, here on Parliament Hill, I also met representatives of the coalition of seniors for social equity. The association which has a membership of about 500,000 senior citizens, submitted a brief on the income of seniors: Myth or Reality. The coalition expressed the need for wide ranging consultations and planning, involving both government and seniors groups, before any changes were made in the old age security program.

Mr. André Lécuyer, a spokesman for francophone seniors, stressed that it was important to give people time to plan and adjust to changes in the system. According to Mr. Lécuyer, the public had been led to believe that the government could save more money than it does now, by cutting income security programs for seniors.

The spokesman for the coalition and president of the Federal Superannuates National Association, Mr. Claude Edwards, said during this press conference that they were not prepared to sit idle at a time when the very foundation of their superannuation plan was cracking. He said it was like buying insurance during one's working life and, upon retirement, being told by the insurance company that the policy had been cancelled and the money was no longer available. Why tax seniors?

And what about family trusts? According to some tax experts, wealthy Canadian families use family trusts as a special tax planning tool. Assets in trusts are not subject to capital gains tax for several decades, which means that these families are able to protect part of their family inheritance from one generation to the next. The family trust system introduced in 1972 by the Trudeau government, provided for the disposition of assets in trust after 21 years, which means in 1993, for instance, in the case of trusts created before 1973.

The Bloc Québécois has nothing against the principle of family trusts but objects to their use as tax shelters. For instance, the Bloc Québécois objects to the carrying forward of capital gains tax to the next generation. Furthermore, we want the government to reveal the figures on the value of assets and family trusts and the amount of tax revenue lost by deferring capital gains.

Why is the government so hard on the most vulnerable in our society who have worked all their lives and deserve a decent quality of life?

Bill C-59 is unacceptable in its present form because, as a result of certain measures introduced in this bill, the most vulnerable in our society will be penalized.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a sad day for parliamentarians, a sad day for Quebec and a sad day for Canada. Our thoughts today are with our hon. colleague, the Leader of the Opposition who is courageously fighting a very serious personal battle. I wanted to begin my comments by letting him know that our prayers are with him, his family and his children. All Canadians are with him.

(1020)

I am pleased to join in the debate and to support Bill C-59. There are several aspects of the legislation and how it relates to our overall tax system that deserve comment and clarification.

Let me emphasize that our government knows full well Canadians believe taxes are already too high and we agree with them. That is why our priority objectives are to stimulate economic growth while putting in place real fiscal discipline. It is this double-barrelled thrust that will ultimately allow us to reduce taxes in the years ahead.

Let us remember that the tax deficit relationship is a two-way street. Every dollar of deficit borrowing we accept today will axiomatically lead to higher taxes tomorrow. Every dollar we can trim from the deficit, preferably through spending cuts but also through tax measures if need be is a step on the road to keeping the tax burden down.

That is why our government's 1994 budget was in many ways a tax reform and a tax reduction budget. It included measures to eliminate loopholes and increase tax system fairness and equity. It also committed to direct action to bring down unemployment insurance premiums which is a payroll tax that acts as a real barrier to new job creation.

It was also a tax reduction budget because of the firm commitment made by the Minister of Finance to cut the deficit to 3 per cent of the economy in three years. Again, let me make this central point. Fiscal discipline is the key to long term tax reductions in two key ways.

Obviously the less we have to borrow the less we have to repay the loan and its interest, but there is another important dimension to this process. Controlling government's appetite for debt is our fundamental tool for getting interest rates back down. Lower interest rates mean lower carrying costs on our \$500 billion debt. Again that means fewer tax dollars we need to spend.

I understand the concern some Canadians may feel about measures that add to tax revenues today in order to let us cut taxes in the future. We know the tax fatigue felt by so many. That is why the 1994 budget undertook a program of net spending reduction over three years. That is the most significant of any budget in a decade.

Government Orders

Over 80 per cent of the net fiscal improvement delivered by the 1994 budget over three years comes from spending cuts. In other words there are \$5 of spending cuts for every \$1 of revenue increase.

There is another aspect of our approach I must highlight. The net savings of \$17 billion we will achieve in spending cuts comes after paying for our new initiatives. Some \$6.7 billion in current federal program spending was reallocated to encourage growth, create jobs and to fund new priorities.

So far I have touched on the broad budgetary context of Bill C-59. Now let me comment on some of the specific aspects of the legislation and how it relates to the tax system and to other issues.

Clearly the most contentious part of the legislation is the measure to subject the age credit to an income test. Let me remind hon. members how this will work. Under the existing tax system Canadian seniors 65 years and over are eligible for special tax relief in the form of an age credit. It results in a combined federal-provincial tax reduction of about \$950 per year. It is critical to note that under Bill C-59 individuals with net incomes below \$25,921 will retain their full credit. That represents three-quarters of all seniors; 2.6 million seniors will not be affected.

But what about the 800,000 seniors who will feel an impact? Like our tax system itself, the effect will be progressive. For individuals with net incomes above the threshold, the age amount will be reduced at a rate of 15 per cent of their net incomes exceeding \$25,921. The threshold will be indexed.

(1025)

The bottom line is that most of those who will be affected will continue to receive partial benefits. In fact, only about 6 per cent of seniors, some 200,000, will no longer receive benefits because their incomes exceed \$49,134, the threshold at which the benefits will be exhausted.

Let me just step aside for a second and give a context to that threshold. In 1992 only 10 per cent of all Canadians filing tax returns had incomes over \$50,000. I should also point out that the reduction will be phased in over two years. For 1994 the reduction will be one-half of the amount otherwise determined. As well, the age credit will remain transferable to a spouse.

Let me now turn to the measures in Bill C-59 to eliminate the \$100,000 lifetime capital gains exemption. As was said in the House yesterday, this exemption has been subject to much criticism. It distorts the tax system, totally exempting certain gains while taxing others. It also gives our tax system the real sense of being inequitable because it mostly benefits high income Canadians.

Let me highlight just one aspect of the dilemma. In 1992 there were some 12,000 Canadians out of the 19.4 million tax filers

who earned \$50,000 or more yet paid no income tax. A wide range of allowable tax deductions and credits made it possible for these people to eliminate their tax liability. Figures show that over 4,700 people in this group, some 40 per cent, used their lifetime capital gains deduction to reduce their tax payable.

I am not suggesting that those Canadians did anything wrong. But there is a real public policy problem, a philosophical wrong at work when millions of less affluent taxpayers see those well-off individuals escape taxation completely.

The bill will be an important step in helping to restore Canadians' faith in tax equity. It will help prevent some people from feeling any justification for their tax evasion, an important goal when the Auditor General reports billions of dollars of unpaid taxes.

The issue of tax system fairness and the ability to avoid taxes leads me directly to other measures of Bill C-59, those related to the corporate sector. There are many Canadians today who feel that the business sector receives preferential treatment compared to the individual taxpayer.

It is worth noting that people often focus on the corporate income tax and do not recognize the many other taxes that businesses must pay. They include provincial corporate income taxes, capital and insurance premium taxes, payroll levies such as UI premiums, Canada and Quebec pension plan contributions, workmen's compensation premiums, and municipal property taxes.

In fact in 1993 Canadian corporations paid some \$51 billion in such taxes, about \$21 billion to the federal government and \$30 billion to the provincial and municipal governments. That being said, the perception of corporate welfare bums still remains in many minds. People still read of profitable corporations paying no tax. They believe there are still too many loopholes and deductions that are not justified given our serious national debt problem.

Bill C-59 takes new steps to reduce deductions and eliminate loopholes that were clearly violating the spirit of a fair tax system. For example, the bill will reduce the tax deduction for eligible business meals and entertainment expenses from 80 per cent to 50 per cent. This measure will make the tax system fairer by helping to ensure that all businesses, large and small, pay an appropriate share of tax. It also better reflects the element of personal consumption that we believe is inherent in such expenses.

(1030)

I should reiterate a key point made by the government's opening speaker. This measure is consistent with recent reductions of business meals and entertainment expense deductions in Ontario, Quebec and the United States.

Government Orders

The legislation also proposes to restrict the use of certain tax shelters. These are ones where limited or passive investors in a partnership have been able to claim tax deductible losses and/or to receive cash distributions that actually exceed the cost of their investment.

Similarly Bill C-59 will also curtail the use of the tax avoidance technique known as a purchase butterfly. Let me remind members of how this flighty corporate provision has functioned.

Current federal tax rules permit corporate property to be divided pro rata among its shareholders on a tax deferred basis. This assists the splitting up of a corporation so that the shareholders can continue to carry on separately the corporation's business.

In recent years, unfortunately, the rules have been used to avoid or defer tax on the sale of corporate assets. In May 1993 the government introduced rules to curtail cross border purchase butterfly transactions. Bill C-59 proposes to modify these rules and extend them to all purchase butterflies.

The final measure I want to highlight is the proposal to make large private corporations ineligible for the small business deduction. In today's new economy small business is the major job creator. It is a sector that deserves effective targeted support.

Unfortunately under the existing rules this support was also going to larger firms, companies that do not have a reasonable claim on the limited public and taxpayers' purse.

The small business deduction recognizes the special financing difficulties and higher capital costs faced by the vital small business sector. The deduction lowers the basic federal tax rate on the first \$200,000 of active business income of Canadian controlled private corporations from 28 per cent to 12 per cent, a reduction of 16 percentage points.

This lower tax rate provides small corporations with more after tax income for reinvestment and expansion. Regrettably under the current rules, some very large corporations are also obtaining this benefit. The proposed rule changes will make large corporations, those with taxable capital of \$15 million or more, ineligible for the small business deduction. As well, the rule changes will reduce the deduction for corporations having taxable capital between \$10 million and \$15 million.

Let me acknowledge that Bill C-59 will not in itself resolve Canada's fiscal problems nor restore equity throughout the tax system. Those are the goals that will only be met by consistent, continuous effort, effort our government is committed to delivering.

Bill C-59 does take valuable steps in both directions, measures to broaden the tax base for fiscal renewal and even more important, measures to improve the fairness and efficiency of the tax system itself. On both counts it deserves the full support of the House.

As I said, Bill C-59 in itself is not going to change or fix all our problems. We do need a continuous and consistent effort to deal with the deficit and the debt.

I want to spend the remaining moments of my time to review very briefly some of the initiatives that the government and the finance minister have brought forward in preparation for our next budget.

On October 17, 1994, the finance minister came before the finance committee of the House of Commons and outlined the framework for economic policy. I want to remind hon. members of the first principles that the finance minister articulated for all members.

(1035)

He said: "First, we have one overriding goal as a government, that is jobs and economic growth. Second, good economic policy and good social policy are one and the same. Third, a country that is to continue to care for its citizens must be a country that can pay its bills, and, fourth, we need to create a new infrastructure for a Canada of ideas and innovation". Finally he said that government itself must change. A government cannot or should not do everything. Responsibility should lie with those who are best able to do the job.

We have had changes in the world economy. We are now in a strong economic recovery. Jobs are being created. The job crisis is not just about a recession or a cycle. It is a global epidemic. The world economy is truly integrated. Trade barriers are now gone. Communications are instant. Transportation is efficient. Markets never close and of course information technology is exploding. All this spells competition and opportunity. To be successful we need to upgrade our skills to fit a knowledge based economy. In addition we must reform our social and income support programs upon which so many Canadians have become dependent.

The fiscal track we have been on is unsustainable, not because of ideology but because of its mathematical reality. The only answer to our job dilemma is sustained substantial economic growth. That growth requires improved productivity in terms of ingenuity, better management and paying attention to the common sense workers.

High productivity increases incomes and contributes to a higher standard of living for all Canadians. To improve our productivity we must also improve our skills.

During the social program review and in the budget review it has become clear that we will and we are reviewing all programs. Rather than trying to fix everything by ourselves we are also trying to facilitate solutions in partnerships with business, industry, and Canadians at large.

Government Orders

We must also continue to clean up federal regulations which cost businesses billions of dollars. We must create a healthy fiscal and monetary climate. We must restore our fiscal health and deal with the deficit and the debt. As we know the debt is growing faster than the economy and that is unsustainable. As the finance minister and the Prime Minister have told us on so many occasions, our goal is to balance the budget.

As an interim target the government is committed to reduce the deficit to 3 per cent of GDP by the 1996-97 year. We are going to hit that target.

Finally let me highlight the principles guiding our choices in the 1995 budget as represented to the finance committee on October 18. He said that deficit reduction is an integral part of jobs and growth strategy. Fairness, and I stress fairness, is paramount so the most vulnerable in our society will not be left behind. Deficit reduction must be selective and strategic, reflecting clear priorities and not simply a mathematical across the board approach.

Budgetary action should weigh on the side of cuts and expenditures and not increased taxes. Economic assumptions must be prudent to stimulate confidence that deficit targets will be achieved.

We have \$120 billion that the government spends on programs, one-third of which went to individuals in the form of elderly or UI benefits, transfers to Indians or to the Inuit. Twenty-five per cent of transfers were to other levels of government, ten per cent to business subsidies, international assistance, et cetera, and nine per cent to defence. All aspects of our program spending will be reviewed.

This is the commitment of the government. This is the direction established by the 1994 budget. This is the direction supported by Bill C-59.

(1040)

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise for debate on Bill C-59, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and the income tax application rules.

Before getting into my speech, I want to say that I am deeply concerned for the health and welfare of the Leader of the Opposition as I know all my colleagues are. I want him and his family to know that our thoughts and prayers are with him through this ordeal. We sincerely wish him the very best.

I am going to speak against the bill today for reasons I will talk about later. I would like to first summarize the bill. As I do that I will point out the positive and negative aspects as I see them. I will outline why I will not support the legislation. Then I will briefly talk about what the government should have done instead of putting these changes in place.

To summarize, the bill has 12 main points. First is the elimination of the \$100,000 lifetime capital gains exemption. I believe this is the most significant change in the bill. I will discuss it later.

Second, it extends employee benefits to include the first \$25,000 of life insurance. Reform supports this measure. I support this measure because it harmonizes employer funded plans with private plans.

The third aspect dealt with in the bill is the age tax credit. It reduces the amount of credit based on an individual's income level. It provides for income testing which I believe is something we need in this tough financial crisis we are facing right now. It provides a clawback of credits that begins at \$26,000 and ends at \$50,000 when the credit is fully clawed back. We support this measure because it moves away from universality, benefiting those most in need. This is something we have to move to in the times we are in.

The fourth aspect is extending the homebuyers plan indefinitely for first time buyers. While I support this to some extent I do have some concern with it. It is discriminating against second and third time buyers and so on. One thing I do not like to see in the income tax system is measures that encourage and give special preference to one group and not to others. While I support the idea and think it will be productive, I do have some concerns for these reasons.

Fifth is the area of charitable donation tax credits. It lowers the threshold at which the tax credit is calculated. The amount is now 17 per cent of the first \$250 donated and 29 per cent for anything over \$250. The change lowers the threshold for the 29 per cent benefit to \$200. This is an acceptable change.

The sixth change is a reduction in the business meals and entertainment expense allowance from 80 per cent to 50 per cent. I support the elimination of this measure which I believe has been a subsidy to business to some extent. I believe the meal allowance is due to some extent at least a double-up on an expense that would normally be there in the life of other individuals who are not carrying out business. I agree with the lowering of this level to 50 per cent from 80 per cent.

Seventh, in terms of tax shelters and partnership interests, it requires limiting the amount to passive partners. It really deals with the issue of using partnership interests for tax shelters. I believe this change will correct a loophole that Reform has seen and we support it for that reason.

Eighth, the device of corporate recognition closes tax loopholes. This loophole has allowed capital gains on disposition of corporate assets to be avoided in certain circumstances. Because it is being removed we support it.

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(1045)

The ninth measure, the investment in research and development tax credit, reduces regional disparity in certain credit schemes and distortions in the tax regime. Because it removes these disparities in the distortion we support it as well.

The tenth amendment is the expenditure limit on scientific research and development. It prorates the expenditure limit for a Canadian controlled private corporation and is based on the corporation's business limit for the year. It seems that it would make sense although we have some concern about that as well.

The eleventh measure reduces the small business deduction available to Canadian controlled private corporations with taxable capital over \$10 million but under \$15 million. These changes ensure that only small businesses can avail themselves of this deduction which was intended for small business in the first place. At least it is moving the deduction toward the more common or more accepted definition of small business. We support the measure for that reason.

The final change is to the mine reclamation fund. This results in lower taxes and provides for environmental clean-up. It is something that Reform expects in any business venture. Part of the business analysis before start-up should involve environmental reclamation in the case of mines or should involve figuring the cost of putting the environment in as near to the original condition as possible. Reform supports that.

Why does the Reform Party not support the legislation? The main reason is that the \$100,000 capital gains tax exemption is being removed. This is a serious impediment to the build-up of wealth in Canada. To me that is a large concern.

Yesterday and the day before I attended a conference in Toronto. It was called Hitting the Wall and was sponsored by the Fraser Institute. There were speakers from several countries who were seized very much with the situation in countries like Canada that had refused to deal with the situation until it became a crisis.

One of the things that was talked about at the conference was the fact that it is very important to have savings in a country, especially a country like Canada that is seriously facing the very real possibility, in fact probability according to these speakers who had lived through this in other countries, of Canada being cut off in terms of bond issues to other countries.

It is a very real possibility. I will talk a little later about how the different speakers dealt with this issue and their thoughts on it. If there comes a time, and I believe there will come a time, that Canada issues a bond and there are no takers, we have a crisis. Our savings in Canada have been declining. It used to be that the United States had the lowest percentage of savings in the OECD countries. Now Canada has surpassed the United States in having the lowest savings level in the OECD. The United

States which is notorious for having low savings now has been outstripped by Canada in winning that honour.

When the time comes that we have no takers on our bonds from outside the country, we will then we have to rely solely on Canadians to finance any additional debt and to finance payments on our present debt. What does it mean if savings are decreasing? It means there is that much less money available to finance the new debt and the new money that Canada has to borrow just to continue to keep the country operating. Therefore there is less money available.

Speakers at the conference made it known that it gives us less margin to react come the time when our bonds will no longer be accepted. There were speakers at the conference who deal in offering and buying Canadian bonds. One individual worked for a Japanese corporation. When asked he said that his corporation probably would continue to fund Canada's debt through bonds, but not because Canada is a good risk. In fact this gentleman said very clearly that Canada is a very bad risk. But his corporation will continue to buy bonds because Canada will pay the risk premium that is necessary for its investors to be willing to buy them.

(1050)

Another reason is that the proportion of Canadian bonds held by this huge bonding company, of which this gentleman is the chief economist, is 3 per cent of its portfolio. Because of the high risk premium, in other words the high interest rates Canada must pay to maintain this foreign debt, this company will continue to finance these bonds for now.

However this gentleman said there could well come a time when the financial situation will be so bad that Canada will not be able to fund our debt from without. It could be very soon. That is why it is extremely important we have savings in the country to at least tide us over until we can make some kind of an arrangement with the International Monetary Fund to deal with the crisis, get some intermediate funding and work out an arrangement to work through the crisis which is caused by debt that is out of hand and government spending which is out of hand.

At this conference several things came across very clearly. First, most of the speakers at the conference said that Canada is in a very serious situation right now. Two of the speakers said they thought government would not deal with the problem. In other words they said Canada will hit the wall. It means that our economy and this country will go into a crisis situation. We will not be able to obtain financing from outside the country.

Both of these speakers were very clear in saying that it does not have to be like that, but that history has shown that is what happens. The history of Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Chile, Mexico and New Zealand among other countries has shown this. These are countries that had well developed economies, much like

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Canada's. However history has shown that governments in well developed countries will not deal with the problem.

Two speakers said we are going to hit the wall, our economy is going to collapse. Most speakers said we do not have to. The telltale time will be the finance minister's next budget. If he comes out with a budget that cuts spending, that will lead to a balanced budget in a very short time, then we will avoid this crisis.

These speakers were not confident that will happen. They said we certainly can avoid it. But this next budget is the last chance. They made that very clear.

One speaker told a story about our finance minister. He said our finance minister had gone to the doctor because he had a serious hearing problem. The doctor said: "Your hearing problem is directly related to the fact that you are drinking a little too much. You have to cut your drinking down and that will fix the hearing problem". The finance minister went away and came back several months later. The doctor asked: "Have you quit drinking?" The finance minister said: "Yes, I have. I did quit drinking but I found that what I was drinking was much better than what I was hearing, so I started drinking again".

I hope sincerely that is not the case, that is not the way the finance minister will react to this crisis and that he will come down with the budget we need next February. It is our last chance to avoid this crisis.

Increases in taxation will not solve the problem. A decrease in government spending will. This is our last chance. Let there be no doubt about it.

(1055)

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45(6), the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, December 5, 1994, at 6.30 p.m.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent that the vote be further deferred from Monday until Tuesday at 5.30 p.m.

The Speaker: Members have heard the hon. member's suggestion. Is there unanimous agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to Statements by Members pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—French River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind hon. members and all Canadians that, as citizens of Canada and citizens of the world, each and everyone of us is responsible for protecting our precious natural heritage and for transmitting it to future generations.

[*English*]

Each year the Environmental Achievement Awards recognize the special contribution Canadians have made toward protecting and restoring the integrity of our natural environment.

[*Translation*]

The 1994 winners of the Environmental Achievement Awards, the finalists and the candidates, are an outstanding example of how we all, individually or as a group, can make a difference.

[*English*]

Special congratulations are in order, Mr. Speaker, for yourself and all the employees of the House of Commons. The House received an Environmental Achievement Award yesterday, recognizing its environmental leadership within the federal government for its program "Greening the Hill", an initiative designed to incorporate environmental considerations into its daily operations.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IRVING WHALE

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recently, *Le Radar*, the Magdalen Islands newspaper, published an editorial that was very critical of the Minister of the Environment for her attitude to the refloating of the *Irving Whale*. The barge is lying on the bottom of the sea between the Magdalen Islands and Prince Edward Island, with three million litres of oil in its hold.

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The people of the Islands are alarmed at the prospect of this very risky operation to refloat the barge, especially since two sea birds were recently found covered in oil, on the beaches of the Islands.

The Regroupement des Madelinots has demanded that the Minister of Transport reconsider the decision to refloat the barge and adopt a safer method, consisting of pumping and refloating.

Why is the government so reluctant to listen to these people who are afraid that an ecological disaster could threaten the fragile ecosystem of the Islands? What is it waiting for?

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Ed Harper (Simcoe Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to express the deep concern of all members of the Reform Party for the current health crisis the member for Lac-Saint-Jean is facing.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife and family as they deal with this serious situation.

We want our colleagues in the Bloc to know that we share their concern for the health of their leader. While we do not share the same political views, there is no question of the member's sincerity and dedication to his cause and those who support him.

Good health and a loving family are far too often taken for granted as we deal with life each day. It is the suddenness of something like this that serves to remind all Canadians of how fragile our hold on good health really is.

We in Reform wish the member for Lac-Saint-Jean a speedy recovery so that he may return to his family. We look forward to his return to the House.

* * *

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Justice for making good on the government's promise to fight crime with tough gun control legislation.

The vast majority of my constituents of Parkdale—High Park welcome mandatory prison sentences for those who commit violent crimes with a gun. We welcome mandatory jail terms for those caught in possession of stolen or restricted firearms. All Canadians are pleased to see that gun smugglers will serve up to 10 years.

Tougher gun control is just one part of the government's commitment to safer streets and safer homes. Personal safety is in everyone's interest. If this legislation will save one life it will be worth the time, the effort and the cost of the program.

* * *

GUELPH POLICE CHIEF

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the city of Guelph has made history. On November 29 the Police Services Board announced the appointment of the first woman to head a city police force in Canada.

I join my constituents in congratulating Lenna Bradburn on her appointment. Ms. Bradburn becomes police chief at age 34. She is described as extremely intelligent, extremely innovative and extremely productive. She was chosen largely because of her innovative ideas on strategic planning and community policing.

On December 19 Lenna Bradburn becomes chief of police and will lead Guelph's 142 officer force for the next five years. The city of Guelph and the residents of Guelph—Wellington welcome Chief Lenna Bradburn and wish her much success in this challenging position.

* * *

AWARDS FOR BRAVERY

Mr. Jack Iyerak Anawak (Nunatsiaq, Lib.):

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Inuktitut.]

[English]

I would like to take a few moments today to recognize some very courageous people in my constituency. Earlier this month they were honoured with the NWT Commissioner's award for bravery.

Moses Aliyak of Rankin Inlet received the award for bravery at the highest level for rescuing his wife and nephew from a polar bear attack.

Three Cambridge Bay residents, Peter Evalik, Richard Evalik and Grant Corey, also received the award at the highest level. They saved the lives of two women in a burning house by crawling through heavy smoke to find them and get them to safety.

Dennis Klengenber and Kevin Niptanatiak of Coppermine received letters of commendation for rescuing each other after their snow machine broke through the ice near the mouth of the Coppermine River.

With great pride and admiration I salute these heroes of the north.

* * *

[Translation]

BLOOD SYSTEM

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some important aspects contained in the report of the panel of experts

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on the safety of the blood system in Canada were revealed yesterday after being leaked to the press.

Several complaints and fears expressed by a number of groups were confirmed in the report. The experts noted a manifest lack of consistency in the work done by Health Canada's Bureau of Biologics, which is responsible for controlling the quality of blood products and facilities at the seventeen transfusion centres of the Canadian Red Cross.

This proves how reluctant the Minister of Health is to take the present situation seriously. The minister prefers to let the provinces take the blame for this mess and, instead of doing what she is supposed to do, has tolerated these lax procedures at the Bureau of Biologics. It is high time the minister acted responsibly and tightened up the standards and their application.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in July of this year an RCMP officer in my constituency caught Ian David Martin crossing into Canada illegally.

This 200-pound man lunged at the officer, knocking her down and wrestling away her service revolver. Just before he could shoot the officer a private citizen by the name of Klaus Soth stopped his car and intervened. Though threatened with death he bravely continued to reason with the assailant until they could both escape. Subsequently the criminal torched the police car, causing \$41,000 worth of damage.

For these grievous crimes he received a slap on the wrist of 15 months. He may be paroled by Christmas. Mr. Martin also had a smuggled .357 magnum revolver on his person.

If the government would have followed Reform's prescription a year ago and put in place automatic sentences for the commission of crimes while using a gun, this dangerous man could have been put away for years instead of months.

Our current system mocks justice and declares open season on police officers by allowing criminals to act with virtual impunity.

* * *

(1105)

SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has launched the first ever comprehensive review of social security programs.

To say the least, this has been long overdue. Canadians realize that the social safety net no longer meets the needs of those in need. Not enough emphasis is placed on ending the cycle of dependence on poverty.

This is particularly true in Atlantic Canada. That region desperately needs better access to higher education and training programs to help people get jobs that last.

Atlantic Canada has a seasonal economy. Agriculture, tourism and fishing are our largest industries and will remain so for a long time. In redesigning the unemployment insurance program and other social programs, I urge the minister to remember the seasonal foundation of our economy.

I am confident this government will design a package that will help us move beyond a seasonal economy and that seasonal workers will not be left behind.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 16, 1992 I had the honour of introducing in the House two very important bills. Bill C-365 considered crossbows dangerous weapons and recommended that they be prohibited. Bill C-366 sought to prohibit the sale and use of replica guns that might be mistaken as a real weapon and used in crime.

These bills came about as the result of major crimes in our community. On behalf of the victims of these crimes, in particular Patricia Allen's family and friends, I want to congratulate the Minister of Justice in committing this government to taking action on the banning of these two items.

The people in my community are solidly behind the minister's bold, progressive and dynamic approach to addressing the issues of crime and community safety.

I would also like to take a moment to thank my former staff member, Mike Bonser, who worked very hard on these two bills, and my current staff for their continued support and hard work. As members know, an MP without staff is like a bird without wings. I thank all MPs' staff for making our job a lot easier.

* * *

SOCIAL PROGRAMS REVIEW

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in October the Minister of Human Resources Development released a discussion paper entitled: "Improving Social Security in Canada". This document outlined the government's options for improving Canada's social programs.

To ensure that the people of my Dauphin—Swan River riding had input into the changes being made, I sponsored four public forums as part of the public consultation process. I am pleased to report that the forums were a complete success.

The participants represented a cross-section of the riding. The discussions were thoughtful and constructive. A variety of very good ideas were brought to the table. Today I will be providing the minister and the standing committee with the report that summarizes these very valuable ideas.

I strongly recommend to all members of this House who have not yet met with their constituents about this important issue to do so.

* * *

THE DEFICIT

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are demanding that the government increase its efforts to reduce the deficit. We must cut the deficit now while the economy is still expanding. The government does not appear to be listening, but maybe it will listen to the latest news.

The International Monetary Fund is also disappointed by the government's deficit reduction targets. A confidential IMF report said that it would be appropriate to plan on the basis of a more ambitious medium term target in the 1995-96 budget, with a view to accelerating fiscal consolidation the next few years.

Along with the IMF, market watchers are becoming uneasy with the federal government's 3 per cent target. Last month witnessed the largest sell off of foreign held Canadian securities since the eve of the Charlottetown accord.

When will this government get the message that 3 per cent is not enough? The debt clock today is \$540,471,337,554.19.

* * *

NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY WEEK

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind all Canadians that this week is National Road Safety Week. It is important that all motorists in this country realize the importance of safe driving.

[*Translation*]

Last Monday, I had the misfortune to be involved in a traffic accident. I emerged with a broken nose, a few bruises and a good scare. The woman driving the second vehicle was also slightly injured.

I can tell you that the fact that I was wearing a seat belt probably saved my life. There are far too many deaths in Canada. A number of lives could be saved simply by the use of seatbelts.

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(1110)

It is my keen hope that this message will be heard by the public and that National Road Safety Week will be a reminder to motorists that safety on the roads is in their hands. I repeat my message: we must all be on our guard when driving.

* * *

[*English*]

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has indicated his desire to enact stringent gun control measures that will primarily affect law-abiding citizens and will do little to address the criminal use of guns.

I fully support several measures which call for increased penalties for the trafficking of illegal weapons and certainty of sentencing for weapons offences. However, I caution the Minister of Justice to bear in mind that of all homicides committed between 1961 and 1990, less than 1 per cent were committed with legally owned handguns. As a result the registration of all firearms will be of little value in attempting to reduce crime and it will be the law-abiding citizens who will bear the brunt of this legislation.

The reality is we have a serious crime problem, not a serious gun problem. The principle of the protection of life and property of every Canadian citizen must be the number one priority when considering all legislation pertaining to our criminal justice system. I trust the Minister of Justice will bear this in mind.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the member for London West was asking a very serious question of the Minister of Justice about violence against women and I quote: "Most of the violence women experience is in their homes and at the hands of men they know. What measures is the minister taking to protect women from violence?"

A male member from the Reform Party clearly shouted out: "Give them .32s," a shameful display of disrespect—

The Speaker: My colleagues, this matter was dealt with yesterday on a point of order. At that time I heard both sides. I would say that this statement is coming back on a point of order that I declared closed. This statement is out of order.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval-Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Lucien Bouchard, our leader and our friend, is right now engaged in a human drama, the intensity of which we can scarcely imagine. We are powerless before this tragic event and must rely completely on medicine and on providence.

But we want him to know that we are all with him in spirit, that our thoughts and our energies accompany him. All the members of this House, and the members of the Bloc Québécois in particular, wish to express their support to his family, especially his mother, his wife Audrey and his two children, Alexandre and Simon. Lucien Bouchard is a man who has devoted all his energy and all his talent to the cause of the people of Quebec and today, in his personal struggle, the people of Quebec are behind him.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

(1115)

[Translation]

MIL DAVIE SHIPYARD

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the acting Prime Minister.

The board of directors of Hibernia has really thumbed its nose at the Prime Minister—a move with very serious political consequences—by refusing his request to review its decision to award a contract without tender to Saint John Shipbuilding. In doing so, the Hibernia board is maintaining its original decision which violates all the rules for awarding contracts.

Does the acting Prime Minister maintain the position of the Prime Minister, who said that the contract should not have been awarded directly to Saint John Shipbuilding?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, before answering the hon. member's question, let me say that our thoughts and prayers go out to the Leader of the Opposition and his family. We pray that he will recover and regain his health. I think that I speak not only for my colleagues but for all Canadians.

[English]

I was in agreement with what the Prime Minister said when he made the remarks quoted by the hon. member. I continue to be in agreement with those remarks.

However, after the announcement of the consortium yesterday that they had acceded to the request of the government to review

their decision but after doing so had decided to maintain their original decision, we sought legal advice. I say with some regret that the advice was that the government does not have the legal means to do anything to change that decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while everyone, including the Minister of Natural Resources and the Prime Minister, admits that MIL Davie was wronged by this appalling decision and that the Hibernia consortium is making a mockery of the established rules, does the government now intend to intervene directly so that justice and equity prevail?

I recall that there were two bidders. When one of them cannot fulfil the contract, usually the second one is called on. Will the government put sufficient pressure on the board of directors?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, MIL Davie was not the only one wronged by this decision. I think that all other shipyards that could have bid are in the same position. That is why the government, in light of the report from the Newfoundland-Canada Offshore Petroleum Board, asked for a review of the initial decision.

I am sorry to say that based on the legal opinions we have received we cannot insist that the call for tenders be reissued. I must add that a general review of all the economic spinoffs in this area is already in place. The government will take this situation into consideration to see what changes must be made in future to avoid a recurrence.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us recall the facts. The Canada-Newfoundland board said that only MIL Davie was wronged. First, no other shipyards were mentioned. Second, all the shipyards could bid. When Hibernia called for tenders, only two shipyards bid, Marystown and MIL Davie. Normally, the second one is called on if the first is not up to scratch.

Remember that before he left for Paris, the Prime Minister clearly instructed Hibernia to review its initial decision, which he termed unfortunate. How does the acting Prime Minister explain that, although his government guarantees 50 per cent of the Hibernia project and is investing more than \$3 billion in it, it cannot make the Hibernia consortium respect its decisions and those of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I said that not only MIL Davie but also the other shipyards were wronged by the decisions in question because all the other shipyards did not have a chance to bid on the work which was taken away from Marystown.

(1120)

Second, my answer was given in light of the fact that the previous Conservative government had passed a bill on the Atlantic Accord which does not give the present government the power to have the contract in question reopened. I am sorry but that is why the government is reviewing the whole program of economic benefits to be certain that the situation will not recur.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind the Acting Prime Minister that the Bloc Quebecois was the only party to vote against the Hibernia legislation; the current government voted in favour.

The Hibernia consortium, heavily subsidized with billions of dollars from taxpayers in Canada and Quebec, was denounced last week by the Canada–Newfoundland Board for violating the terms of the plan for awarding Hibernia contracts. By renewing their decision, probably with the agreement of the representative from Petro–Canada, 70 per cent owned by the federal government, the members of the Hibernia board of directors continue to deny justice to the MIL Davie shipyard.

Is the government aware that by not immediately demanding the cancellation of the contract awarded to Saint John Shipbuilding, it is condoning another decision that discriminates against the MIL Davie shipyard?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the advice I received, the government does not have the power to have the contract in question reopened but, because it wants to ensure that MIL Davie and all other shipyards are treated equally in this matter, the government has asked the consortium to review its decision. We regret that the consortium has decided to maintain this decision. As I just said, that is why we will undertake a full review of this system of economic benefits and do what we can so that this situation does not happen again.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, the government has no power to act, but it has the power to sink billions of dollars into this project.

Are we to understand that the government's refusal to take immediate action in this matter is intended to doom the MIL Davie shipyard and to satisfy its little Liberal friends in the maritimes?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that in this difficult situation the hon. member can do nothing but try to sow dissension and ill will between various parts of Canada. I think it is shameful that he misuses this serious situation in this way.

Oral Questions

This government wants to treat all involved in a fair and equitable fashion: MIL Davie, the shipyards in Atlantic Canada and everyone else concerned, and that is the way we have been acting. We have used the powers we have and unfortunately they do not extend to having the whole thing reopened. However, we are reviewing the whole process to try and make sure that this unfortunate situation does not happen again.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the report of the special joint committee on Canada's defence policy has been generally well received. There has been virtually unanimous support for the recommendation to constitute a standing joint committee on defence to monitor progress on defence department programs. I have been unable to find any reference to this committee in the white paper.

I ask the defence minister, is this an oversight or has the government decided to exclude Parliament from defence matters?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we deliberately did not address ourselves to this particular question in the white paper because this is really a matter of negotiation between the leaders of the various parties and in the other place. That is something my colleague, the House leader, will obviously take into consideration. However, that is not within the ambit of defence policy.

(1125)

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps this falls into the same category, but I think the minister should address it.

The committee report also recommended that except in extraordinary circumstances Canadian forces commitments for overseas tasking should not be made prior to a debate in Parliament.

Canadians want to know what is involved and want to have more opportunity to express their opinions before our forces are committed overseas. The government has been better than the previous government, but Rwanda and Haiti had in fact been decided before they were brought before Parliament.

Will the government reconsider and commit to incorporating this parliamentary process?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member has answered his own question, if I may say. The fact is this government has had debates on our peacekeeping engagements and I am sure the Prime Minister will continue to do that in future.

Oral Questions

In terms of the flexibility of having those debates, that is really up to the Prime Minister and the government generally. Again it is a representation that I am sure we will consider.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we would very much like to see a commitment by the government to bring this to pass.

The military training assistance program is one in which foreign military personnel are trained in concepts and procedures by our military. Unlike Canada, foreign military officers are often directly involved or very influential in their governments.

In the white paper the government has committed to expand this program. While the training is done by the military the results support foreign relations, international trade or it could even be called foreign aid. The committee recommended that that defence dollars be spent only on defence.

Will the minister confirm that the costs of the MTAP will not come out of the defence budget.

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they do come out of the defence budget now and they obviously will in the future.

I beg to differ with my friend. We believe that the bilateral assistance that we give to members of other armed forces is consistent not only with our foreign policy, but is an aspect of defence policy. That is something we will continue. In fact, in the white paper we do announce a decision which was communicated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday in Brussels to his colleagues to reduce our commitment to the NATO infrastructure budget so that some of those funds which now do not come back to Canada, because Canada has given one of the largest shares and has probably the lowest payback, will be used for bilateral training at our Lester B. Pearson Peacekeeping Institute in Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, involving specifically those countries in the Partnership for Peace Program from eastern Europe.

* * *

[Translation]

BOSNIA

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The war is more intense than ever in Bosnia. After the visit of the UN Secretary-General to Sarajevo ended in failure, Bosnian Serbs took more peacekeepers hostage in a raid in Croatia. They are pursuing their assault on Bihac and continue to block humanitarian relief convoys. It is even reported that, today, they fired missiles on Sarajevo.

Does the minister confirm these reports? And can he give us an update on the situation in the former Yugoslavia, especially as the conflict may well spread to Croatia now?

[English]

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not get any dramatically different news from the former Yugoslavia today than we got yesterday except that there are some hopeful signs. Some convoys, I believe involving British and Dutch, have been allowed to proceed. So they are not being detained.

Discussions are under way concerning our Canadian peacekeepers that have been detained. As I have said publicly, those people who are detaining them from the Bosnian—Serb side are not unknown to our forces. There is a good rapport between them. While it is obviously becoming much more worrying and frustrating for everyone concerned, especially the families, we have no reason to believe that the situation involving our own peacekeepers has deteriorated substantially.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the contact group is scheduled to meet today in Brussels to develop a new diplomatic approach. Can the minister tell us what Canada's preference would be in terms of such an approach and whether or not he supports the idea that was put forward, to let the Bosnian Serbs form a confederation with Serbia?

[English]

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gets a little out of my realm. Perhaps my colleague, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who is here, would like to address it subsequently.

(1130)

As far as we are concerned it is time to take a fresh look at negotiations for a settlement in the former Yugoslavia. Obviously the settlement the contact group came up with earlier this summer is unacceptable, at least to the Bosnian Serb side.

We need some fresh thinking. Whether or not Canada is part of the contact group we are kept informed. We have indirect input. I hope that Canada can play a more prominent role in bringing the various points of view together in the coming weeks.

* * *

BUDGETARY POLICY

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party has been saying that the deficit should be eliminated during this term of Parliament but the Minister of Finance has said it is unrealistic.

Oral Questions

In the finance hearing, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Business Council on National Issues, the C. D. Howe Institute and others have said that we should balance the budget within the term of this Parliament.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does he believe this is realistic at this point in time?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to be committed to its deficit reduction target. Its interim target is 3 per cent of GDP in the third year of its mandate. It is definite. It is clearly the Minister of Finance's response to this. It is clearly on the agenda and we will certainly make that target.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the pillar of the Liberal Party is the red book. On page 20 of that book it says that there will be a balanced budget, but it also says that it is unrealistic to do it five years. It is time the government puts on the table what is a proper time line. Could the minister indicate to the House when the budget will be balanced?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interim target is within two years now. It is important for the government to meet its targets on a year by year basis.

It is important to restore the confidence of the financial markets in the ability of the government to meet its targets. There is no point in putting forward a target that is unreachable such as the Reform Party has done in the past. It is important to put forward targets that are reachable and attainable to ensure we have the financial market's support.

That is what we are going to do. We are going to reach our target of 3 per cent of GDP in the third year. Then we are going to go on to a balanced budget.

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[*Translation*]

DEFENCE POLICY

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The minister tabled yesterday, and rather hastily, his white paper on defence, which is in fact a botched job, a spur of the moment job, a paper characterized throughout by a backward-looking vision and lacking any real, meaningful direction.

Does the minister not realize that the hurried tabling of his white paper has deprived the government of practical proposals with respect to NATO, NORAD and the UN and thus provides no real vision of the future?

[*English*]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot

believe the hon. member made this assertion. I can only assume he has not read the white paper. As has been pointed out by the critic for the Reform Party, the white paper has been very well received.

As to the timing, we always said we would try to table the document before Christmas. We are cognizant of the fact that going into the holiday season people are preoccupied with other matters and we wanted to give Parliament and Canadians a good time to reflect on it.

Again the hon. member is indirectly reflecting on the work of the special joint committee on defence. I know his party had a dissenting report, but there were three other parties including a party not represented in the House officially, but represented in the Senate—which shall remain nameless—that all agreed with the report. We have taken the core of that report, almost all the recommendations, and we have embellished them. I believe that if the hon. member reads the document he will see it does set out a clear vision for defence policy in the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, knowing that the development of any defence policy is really only possible when it is keyed to a clear foreign policy, how can the minister suggest and maintain that he has a clear vision of the future, when his white paper was tabled before the government even had the chance to announce the new thrust of its foreign policy?

(1135)

[*English*]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): It is true, Mr. Speaker, that defence policy is to some degree an instrument of foreign policy but not exclusively so. There are constitutional requirements made of the armed forces which do not fall into the foreign affairs category. The whole question of protecting Canada offshore, around its coasts, aid to the civil power, are domestic considerations to protect Canada's interest.

With respect to the substance of the question on why we have done this now as opposed to doing it jointly with a foreign policy report, the government felt that with all of the rapid changes, especially reductions, being faced by the armed forces we owed it to all those in the forces, both civilian and uniform personnel, to give some clear indication of where we are going as quickly as possible, but also to set in motion some of the equipment purchases for which we have a dramatic need.

The defence white paper and its security review coincide with the recommendations of the joint committee on foreign policy, the joint committee on defence policy and was developed in conjunction with my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is quite comfortable with it.

Oral Questions

From the point of view of Canada's security policy we feel it is quite appropriate to table the document at this particular time.

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HEALTH CARE

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Minister of Health.

The Reform Party is committed to ensuring that every Canadian citizen receive essential health care services in a timely fashion regardless of income. The presence of private medical clinics would allow this by decreasing waiting lists and decreasing pressure on the public system.

Why is the government exercising the archaic Canada Health Act and threatening to penalize Alberta for trying to provide better health care for all of its citizens?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the meeting of November 28 the Minister of Health advised that she would be providing a clarification of our interpretation of the Canada Health Act to all provinces in the very near future.

The minister has repeatedly maintained that the Canada health system is the best system in the world. The rest of the world envies our system. We invite the province of Alberta, like the other provinces are doing, to continue to protect and develop this wonderful system.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we used to have the best health care system but tragically we do not any more. I hope no one in the House has to find that out.

Private clinics exist in Alberta, Ontario and the rest of the country. Why is the government threatening only Alberta for this by cutting transfer payments and not Ontario?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Secretary of State (Parliamentary Affairs) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has repeatedly stated in the House that a broad consensus exists on the need to regulate private clinics to ensure there are no financial barriers to access any necessary medical services, and the minister invites the Alberta government to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. In spite of the disastrous state of public finances, the Minister of National Defence has drawn up an extensive shopping list. Indeed, he wants to buy new armoured personnel carriers, new land helicopters, new

remote controlled weapons, and even new submarines. Yet, the white paper tabled yesterday does not include any concrete measure to eliminate the waste of some \$100 million disclosed by the Auditor General in his recent report.

How can the minister explain that his white paper totally ignores the Auditor General's recommendations and that his department still does not implement better management practices to cut spending and save money?

[English]

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member has read the report.

The white paper talks about improvement of administrative practices, of saving money, of privatizing certain functions such as maintenance and things of that nature, all of which have been advocated by the Auditor General over the years. In addition, administrative measures have been announced recently that are ongoing and meet the Auditor General's requirements.

(1140)

On the question the hon. member raises about a so-called shopping list, the fact is, and let us be frank about it, we are either in the defence business or we are not. If we are in the defence business we cannot have our armed forces personnel ill equipped. There is agreement both in the parliamentary committees and across the country that we have to equip our armed forces better.

In the case of the armoured personnel carriers I do not think there is any argument that these are justified. In the case of helicopters we always knew that the search and rescue helicopters would have to be replaced. It is a civilian role, not purely military.

As to the question of the helicopters on the ships that is something that was recommended by the special joint committee and something we can fully justify.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister, who was described last week as the minister of waste by the Auditor General, justify that his white paper contains none of the Auditor General's recommendations, whether on the reserve army—which, incidentally, is the most costly in the world—, on the deplorable management of capital assets, or on the procurement programs of the defence department?

[English]

Hon. David Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only person who has ever called me the minister of waste is my wife and that has to do with the fact that I need to lose a few pounds. The running around we are doing in budget preparations and with the white paper will achieve that objective.

Oral Questions

From cover to cover we talk about doing business differently in the armed forces. We talk about ending project management. We did in the last budget. We talk about buying equipment off the shelf. We talk about contracting out to the private sector a number of functions that are already being performed internally. We think we can do them much more cheaply. We have even mused about privatizing the operation and maintenance of the search and rescue function with Department of National Defence crews.

If the hon. member reads the report over the weekend I do not think he would ask this type of question on Monday.

* * *

CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be in Budapest next week to attend the Conference on Security and Co-Operation in Europe. What does Canada hope to accomplish at this summit, in particular concerning the crisis in the former Yugoslavia?

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the upcoming CSC summit in Budapest is to enhance security and respect for human rights in Europe.

Canada would also like the summit to broaden the CSC's capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts, notably by giving it the ability to establish or monitor peacekeeping operations. The conflict in former Yugoslavia, including recent events in the Bihac area of Bosnia will be of primary concern to the heads of state and government.

In support of an eventual comprehensive political settlement to the conflict, the summit could and should offer CSC expertise in areas such as human rights, elections monitoring, the protection of minorities, arms control, and confidence building measures.

Canada's voice at previous summits, conferences, and general meetings has always been listened to and highly respected.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice and relates to a recent directive given by the Canadian Human Rights Commission to its tribunals.

Apparently they have been ordered to hear four complaints of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, three of which pertain to same sex spousal benefits.

Why has the minister allowed such a directive when the legislation to amend the act to include sexual orientation has not even been introduced in the House, never mind been approved by the will of the people? Is this just another example of ignoring the genuine concerns of Canadians, including some members of his own party?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should understand that the human rights commission is an independent body which is not under the control or direction of the government or any minister thereof.

(1145)

The commission is obligated by law to make up its own mind based on its own investigation and the exercise of its own independent judgment with respect to those matters to refer to tribunals for hearing. We would not want it any other way. There must be independence.

While she may ask me as the minister responsible to the House for the Human Rights Act and its administration to speak to matters of structure or of the human rights system, I do not direct the commission in what decisions to make or what matters to undertake in terms of hearings.

Mrs. Sharon Hayes (Port Moody—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that response. I do feel the minister has made it clear he is convinced that there is wide support for this issue.

I challenge the minister today, as he is unwilling to challenge the Human Rights Commission, will he not agree if he thinks there is so much support to allow a free vote on this issue so that the real will of the people on this issue can be expressed?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a separate question and I understand it is separate. I am prepared to deal with that as a matter for which I am responsible, that is to say whether the Human Rights Act should be amended to add certain words. That is my responsibility.

We are dealing with commitments made by the Prime Minister and by me, not so much based on polling for support but based on principles and what is right, on fundamental justice.

The amendment which is under discussion has to do with adding sexual orientation as a ground on which discrimination is prohibited. I would have thought that on that principle, that is to say whether discrimination should be prohibited against somebody only on the basis of their sexual orientation, there is not much debate.

Oral Questions

On the subsidiary questions, separate questions, of whether there should be same sex benefits or whether there should be this or that form of marriage, those are entirely separate. We are not proposing any amendments to deal with those. We are talking about discrimination and it is on that issue I would have thought there is not a great deal of controversy.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence. The minister's new procurement policy, which consists in buying equipment already operational and available on the world market, will have harmful consequences on the Canadian defence industry.

In his white paper tabled yesterday, the minister recognizes that it is vital to promote defence conversion, but no concrete solutions are proposed.

How can the minister explain that his white paper does not contain any concrete initiatives on defence conversion, given the clear commitment made in the red book?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Industry, will talk perhaps on a supplementary on the matter dealing with conversion specifically as announced in the white paper.

With respect to the capital purchases that we have announced, we do have in Canada the capacity to build armoured personnel carriers. One company has served the Canadian and foreign markets quite well, the General Motors diesel division in London, Ontario. Many components are built across the country including in the member's home province of Quebec.

In terms of the helicopters, I have to emphasize that while this could in all likelihood come from external sources, much of the work with respect to avionics, electronics and integrated systems probably would all be done in Canada because anybody who wants to sell to a country like Canada equipment of such cost knows that it is in the best interest of being competitive to source a lot of that work in Canada. I do believe that the equipment purchases will not have the effect the hon. member says.

Finally, with respect to the submarines, I covered that yesterday. This is simply a matter of exploring whether this is a good deal for Canada. That question will be looked at very carefully before a decision is taken.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister did not answer my question. I hope his wife will remind him of that.

(1150)

Does the minister not realize that the existing defence material program, DIPP, of which only a part concerns defence conversion, is clearly insufficient, and that he must show leadership with his colleagues from Industry and Public Works to implement a true conversion strategy for that industry?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is very hard to figure out what the Bloc wants.

First, one member tells us not to buy military equipment because it is a waste, and then one of his colleagues says that we must save the defence industry.

[English]

It is always a little hard for me to understand quite where this party is coming from. Its two wings do not always beat at the same pace.

The fundamental issue that we need to deal with is the use of the existing program DIPP as a defence conversion program. As the hon. member knows, of the 41 applications approved by this government under DIPP so far 39 have been for civilian or dual use purposes. Clearly that has been the key tool in assisting industries in their defence conversion.

More important, and I have said this repeatedly and I hope other members understand how important this is, the government's strategy in helping the Canadian industries in all sectors is not to throw money at them. It is to provide them with the strategic advice and assistance that will enable them to be competitive in the world markets. That is the key to their success.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the end of the 30-day discussion period between the U.S. and Canada on proposals made by the U.S. department of agriculture that all Canadian grain shipments to the United States must go to a feed lot, a feed mill or an end user and require an end user certificate.

What have we heard from the minister of agriculture on this issue? Silence.

My question to the minister is what action has the minister taken on this issue which is a direct violation of the August 1 Canada-U.S. grain pact on wheat which specified that neither country would introduce any new trade restricting measures until the deal's one-year term ended?

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the member across the way, he should get his facts straight. The United States has not yet made its decision on whether it is going to put end use certificates in place.

Oral Questions

We have expressed to the United States our views on that. It knows our views and we will await its action as far as end use certificates.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as I expected, the minister has done absolutely nothing on this issue. The United States has not made the decision yet therefore it is not urgent.

Why has the government done nothing? I would expect that the reason is that it could be wanting to protect the Canadian Wheat Board at the expense of farmers. For the Canadian Wheat Board end user certificates only involve slight inconvenience, while for the farmers it will put an end to their market in the United States.

Why has the minister once again chosen to avoid the real issue which is reform of the Canadian Wheat Board, a change which he has acknowledged farmers want, by letting American foreign policy solve the problems for him here at home?

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I again remind the hon. member that the United States has not yet made the decision that he would obviously like it to make. It should be pointed out that he has made that assumption and western wheat growers and farmers should note that.

I repeat, the Canadian government and the minister have made our views very clear to the United States as far as how we would view its imposition of end use certificates. That discussion will continue and we will await its reaction to our views.

* * *

[Translation]

INCOME TAX

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are concerned about the tax loopholes which make it possible for the rich to invest in order to avoid paying taxes.

(1155)

[English]

My question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Can the minister tell my constituents what he is doing to ensure that all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his concern on this very important issue.

The Minister of Finance and I issued yesterday a press release outlining changes to the tax system that will plug loopholes with respect to tax shelters. We are particularly concerned that there are many people who are taking advantage of what were originally set up as legitimate opportunities in high risk areas.

They are now taking these opportunities simply to avoid paying taxes.

For example, we have uncovered tax shelters where no business activity was being undertaken and the only thing the individual received in return for their investment was a brochure; that is, the only thing other than a tax benefit of substantial proportions.

We will continue to make sure that the tax system is fair for Canadians and we will make changes as necessary to make sure that all Canadians pay their fair share.

* * *

[Translation]

DEFENCE POLICY

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his white paper the defence minister claims that he is going to save \$7 billion over the next five years. Yet the minister is planning to buy numerous helicopters, submarines and a good deal more. In short, the Department of National Defence is embarking on an unjustified equipment purchase program which will be the source of additional waste.

Since today's international context does not justify new capital expenditures, how can the defence minister explain, in view of the present fiscal restraints, the planned purchases listed in his white paper?

[English]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has always been in the capital program of national defence spanning a 15-year period the need to replace certain types of equipment. Those allocations were made.

Over the last number of budgets, including those of the former government, \$21 billion has been cut off the projected expenditures for national defence, including a lot of the capital program.

We announced yesterday that we will be cutting \$15 billion out of the capital program over the next 15 years for planning purposes. With respect to helicopters, I am surprised that the hon. member would make the assertion that we do not need to replace helicopters when he knows that the Sea Kings and the Labradors are coming to the end of their life.

Even if he does not agree that our state of the art ships and our refurbished destroyers should not have combat helicopters on board, surely he, from a province that has a coastline and uses the search and rescue facility, has to agree that the Government of Canada will be committing a grievous error if we did not make provision for new equipment even on the search and rescue end which is purely civilian.

*Routine Proceedings***JUSTICE**

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Ian John Hutton has been serving a life sentence for murder at the Archibald Centre halfway house in Vaughan, Ontario.

He failed to return to the facility on November 28 and a Canada-wide warrant has been issued for him. Can the Solicitor General explain why a murderer who is classified on CPIC as being violent and an escape risk is serving time at a halfway house?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to get the fullest possible information on this and give it directly to the hon. member. She has raised a serious question.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jim Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great news for all Canadians when more and more working men and women find meaningful employment in this country.

The number of Canadians unemployed is still too high but it is below 10 per cent for the first time in several years in Canada.

In examining the employment figures, has the secretary of state for finance a breakdown of the numbers and has he determined how many of the new jobs are worthwhile, rewarding and full time jobs as opposed to part time jobs?

Hon. Douglas Peters (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is good news for Canada. This raises to over 400,000 the number of new jobs that have been created in this country this year alone. All these jobs are full time jobs. Indeed, last month there was a growth in employment of some 95,000 new jobs. All those were full time jobs. There was an actual drop in part time employment.

(1200)

I remind this House that a Prime Minister of a previous government said we would not get the unemployment rate below 10 per cent this decade. The Liberal government brings in next decade's unemployment levels this year.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***HIBERNIA**

Mr. George S. Rideout (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period dealing with questions on Hibernia there was a request to table the report of the Canada—Newfoundland Off-shore Petroleum Board.

I have the pleasure to deliver, in both official languages, the report as well as, in both official languages, a copy of all the contracts that have been given to the province of Quebec in relation to the Hibernia project.

* * *

*[Translation]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to certain petitions.

* * *

PETITIONS

SENIORS

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, this petition comes from the Association féminine d'action sociale du Québec. It is signed by 437 petitioners.

They urge Parliament to press the government not to go ahead with its voice mail project for the elderly.

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Jean Payne (St. John's West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw to the attention of the House a petition signed by residents of the regions of St. Mary's, The Capes and Whitbourne area in the province of Newfoundland in the riding of St. John's West. I fully support this petition which reads as follows.

"We the undersigned residents of the province of Newfoundland draw the attention of the House to the following: That there is a severe unemployment problem in this area of our province causing great hardship to many residents. Therefore, your petitioners call upon Parliament to provide emergency response funding to provide employment in the short term to alleviate this hardship".

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce three petitions today. The first one asks Parliament to ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously. I support that petition.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition prays and request that Parliament not amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way which would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships or of homosexuality. I agree with that petition as well.

Routine Proceedings

PRICE CONTROLS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have presented a petition of this sort. In the third petition, 70 petitioners from across Canada ask the present government to institute price controls to include housing rental, hydro, heating, food, phone, UIC, et cetera.

I understand their motive, but I do question the reasonability of that particular petition. I am happy to present it on their behalf.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present to Parliament a petition signed by 130 people in the Red Deer and surrounding area.

My constituents express their grave concerns with section 241 of the Criminal Code and the issue of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

(1205)

The petitioners humbly pray that Parliament not repeal or amend section 241 of the Criminal Code in any way to uphold the Supreme Court of Canada decision of September 30, 1993, to disallow assisted suicide or euthanasia.

GUN CONTROL

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from persons all across the province of British Columbia containing 196 signatures. The petitioners request that Parliament refuse to accept the hon. Minister of Justice's anti-firearms proposals and insist that he bring forth legislation to convict and punish criminals rather than persecute the innocent.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I too would like to present three petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first one is that Parliament act immediately to extend protection to the unborn child by amending the Criminal Code to extend the same protection enjoyed by born human beings to unborn human beings.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, requests that Parliament not amend the human rights code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, or the charter of rights in any way which would indicate societal approval of same sex relationships.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mrs. Daphne Jennings (Mission—Coquitlam, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition asks that Parliament ensure that the present provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada prohibiting assisted suicide be enforced vigorously.

RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present three petitions today on behalf of my constituents of Dauphin—Swan River.

The first petition containing 451 signatures is from the RMs and towns of Grandview and Gilbert Plains calling upon Parliament to urge the government to take action on construction of an all-weather gravel road through the west end of the Riding Mountain National Park. This road connects the communities of Grandview, which is my home town, and Rossburn and contributes to stimulating a stagnating agricultural economy by promoting trade, tourism, social and cultural exchanges.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has 138 signatures. It is asking, first, that Parliament continue to reject euthanasia and physician assisted suicide; second, that the present provisions of section 241 of the Criminal Code of Canada which forbids the counselling, procuring, aiding or abetting of a person to commit suicide be enforced vigorously, and, third, that Parliament consider expanding palliative care that would be accessible to all dying persons in Canada.

RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Mrs. Marlene Cowling (Dauphin—Swan River, Lib.): The third petition, Mr. Speaker, has 350 signatures. It draws the attention of the House of Commons to the following. There is a remarkable increase in beaver numbers in the Riding Mountain National Park. These beaver are causing extensive damage to land which is located near the park.

My constituents ask this Parliament to urge the government to take action toward developing beaver control methods within the Riding Mountain National Park.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to present a petition from Little Britain, Ontario, constituents of mine in Cavan, Ontario, and Port Parry, Bowmanville and Oshawa.

It requests the government not to enact any further firearms control regulations or legislation or orders in council.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Boudria: Mr. Speaker, having completed the bill that was before the House this morning, I think you would find unanimous consent that we now call it 2.30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): The House has heard the suggestion of the chief government whip. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): It being 2.30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 12.11 p.m.)

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