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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 27, 1995

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 27, 1995

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1980 the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics has reported more than 100,000 charges for impaired driving in Canada every year. In 1993 alcohol accounted for one death or injury every five minutes.

Drinking and driving is the largest single criminal cause of death and injury in Canada. It is not just car related. Seventy-three per cent of all victims killed in snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle crashes had been drinking. Seventy-seven per cent of boating accidents were alcohol related.

Today I want to acknowledge the contribution made by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD Canada, which has been actively working since 1981 to reduce deaths and injuries due to impaired driving and to help the victims and survivors of such tragic senselessness.

In this regard I would like to mention Lynne and David Magee and Barbara Rintoul of Wingham, Ontario, whose sons were victims of an impaired driver. These people have taken their tragedy and in dedication of young lives so needlessly lost, channelled their energy into positive action by forming the Huron—Bruce chapter of MADD Canada.

I would like to commend them for their strength at a time of such—

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[*Translation*]

REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

Mr. Michel Daviault (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though there are no partisan signs on it, last night vandals spray painted the No slogan on my home. Unfortunately, it seems that I am not the only victim of this type of rather excessive argument from frenzied partisans. There is no question that acts

like the one committed on my property are a direct result of the excessive and intolerant comments we have heard in the past few days from spokespersons for the federalist side.

The comments by Garcia, Maciocia and others, who talk of treason and of crushing their opponents, have no place in a civilized and democratic debate. It is high time, before the referendum campaign turns sour, for Daniel Johnson to show courage by calling his spokespersons to order and clearly dissociating himself from their comments and provocative gestures. Since the Prime Minister allowed himself to say: “They will get clobbered”, it is obvious that some of his supporters are taking him literally.

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[*English*]

VIOLENT CRIME

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Jesse Cadman, Sean Simmonds, Laurie Wood, Linda Williams, Chris Lussier, Paul McDaniel, Graham Niven, Sukhjit Sangha, Pam Cameron, Mindy Tran, Melissa Deley, Melanie Carpenter and the list goes on. These are not just names. They were people with family and friends who loved and cared about them, people whose hopes and dreams and possibilities were cut short because our criminal justice system and the government’s lack of corrective action failed them.

The government allows a justice system to exist which is too lenient in sentencing convicted offenders and too generous in doling out parole. It consistently fails the victim.

Steven Carpenter, his family and supporters are calling for justice system changes. It is time the government listened to the people and did something meaningful and positive.

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[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bernier (Beauce, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as the country faces a deficit and a spiralling debt, a study by the University of Quebec in Montreal reveals that we are losing billions of dollars in tax revenue because our tax laws are so generous toward large Canadian corporations. This study, in which Professor Léo-Paul Lauzon participated, looked at 767 large corporations established in Canada and showed that our tax laws allow many businesses to pay no taxes at all despite substantial profits.

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As we are about to carry out a reform of social security, we should make fewer cuts to essential services and a few more cuts to tax loopholes of all kinds, including deferred taxes. It is high time to institute a minimum corporate tax. I hope that all levels of government will have the strength and courage to make the right decisions.

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[English]

FORESTS

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, October 12 I will be attending a ceremony in my riding of Brampton where In-Touch Graphics will announce its active partnership in the fight against deforestation in Canada.

In-Touch Graphics will commit itself to plant three trees for every single tree it uses for its printing requirements. This translates into 3,100 newly planted trees over the next 12 months.

Residents of Brampton can be proud that a local business is taking this environmentally responsible initiative. All Canadian companies that use large volumes of paper products should take notice and follow this example of good corporate citizenship.

Henry David Thoreau once wrote: "What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?" It is through responsible environmental initiatives like this one that Canadian companies can do their part to ensure that we live on a tolerable planet.

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GUN CONTROL

Mrs. Bonnie Hickey (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night St. John's City Council gave unanimous support for the government's gun control initiative, Bill C-68. City council's resolution was in response to a letter from the Canada Safety Council.

The city agreed with the safety council that the failure to pass this bill would undermine the efforts of people working in the criminal justice, safety and mental health fields.

City councillors know what the Reform Party refuses to acknowledge: the majority of Newfoundlanders support stricter gun control. As a member of the St. John's Women's Council said: "Placing restraints on weapons can only help public safety".

A number of headlines from the St. John's *Evening Telegram* also show support: "Gun control in Canada, the tougher the better", "Gun lobby scare tactics ineffective" and "A national gun registry? Of course, the sooner the better".

If the Reform Party and members of the other place truly want to represent the will of Atlantic Canadians they must support Bill C-68.

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BILL C-45

Mr. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill C-45, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Today many Canadians who have been victimized by crime appeared on Parliament Hill to voice their feelings and frustrations.

Bill C-45 is proof that the Liberal government has not forgotten them. The bill's intention is to make our streets and homes safer.

• (1405)

In our continuing efforts to strengthen penalties faced by offenders, the government has passed Bill C-37, Bill C-41 and has introduced Bill C-45.

While a strong justice system is vital in holding offenders accountable for their actions, tougher sentences and penalties are only half the solution. Prevention is the other half.

Each year Canadians spend approximately \$9 billion on policing, private security, courts, corrections and insurance.

Studies such as the one conducted by High/Scope Perry reveal that high quality active learning—

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[Translation]

BOMBARDIER

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, workers at the Bombardier plant in La Pocatière gave their president, Laurent Beaudoin, a lesson in democracy. They will not let their boss tell them how to vote in the referendum.

This was not Mr. Beaudoin's first attempt at manipulating his employees to make them vote according to his political convictions. Back in 1992, he wrote his employees a letter stating his support for the Charlottetown Accord. This action was denounced by the chief electoral officer at the time and Mr. Beaudoin was later convicted of violating the Quebec Elections Act.

This week, Mr. Beaudoin commented that Quebec would be too small a country for his business. Yet his business was born and raised in Quebec and has been quite successful there. The Bloc Québécois salutes the workers who have contributed to the success of Bombardier in La Pocatière and encourages them to remain steadfast in their beliefs. As a plant worker said, votes and work do not mix.

[English]

VIOLENT CRIME

Ms. Val Meredith (Surrey—White Rock—South Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for the third time in less than a year I rise in the House to comment on the murder of a young Surrey girl. In the early hours of September 6, 10-year old Melissa Deley was asleep in her bed, that is until Bret Neff decided to break into Melissa's house.

Neff left the house with the TV, the VCR, the family car and Melissa. Some time over the next few hours, Neff sexually assaulted and murdered Melissa.

Like Fernand Auger before him, Neff spared the Canadian taxpayers a great deal of money by taking his own life.

However we are still left with the legacy of three young Surrey girls, abducted at random by strangers from the street, the workplace and the home, sexually assaulted and murdered.

On this National Victims Day we remember those who fell prey to brutal and cowardly attacks. We must also commit ourselves in this House to ensure that Pamela, Melanie and Melissa did not die in vain.

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INCOME TAX

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been said that the only things certain in life are death and taxes. True for most of us, but not for Canadians wealthy enough to hire lawyers to concoct a tax free non-residency under the Income Tax Act, aided and abetted by the way Canadian tax law mollycoddles such tax avoidance.

By taking up residence in tax havens, wealthy tax refugees are not legally required to file tax returns or pay Canadian income tax on the wealth they have taken out of the country, and pay a much lower rate of tax on any remaining Canadian investment income. Meanwhile, they can and do spend a lot of time in Canada with family and friends and attending to business. After years of such behaviour, they can easily decide to take up residence again and benefit from things like medicare for which they have not paid.

Canadian tax refugees, like Americans, should be obliged to continue to file tax returns and pay Canadian tax while residing abroad. We should say to tax avoiders: Hasta la vista baby, but pay your taxes first. Republicans in the U.S. call such tax avoiders traitors. Let the record show that the NDP can agree with the Republicans on at least one thing.

[Translation]

*S. O. 31***QUEBEC REFERENDUM**

Mrs. Eleni Bakopanos (Saint-Denis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian finance minister described as a separatist dream the proposed political and economic union between an independent Quebec and Canada.

On December 3, 1993, the PQ leader himself raised serious doubts about the feasibility of such a partnership with Canada soon after Quebec's separation. He said that believing that, upon Quebec's declaration of sovereignty, we will be able to negotiate a multitude of economical and political changes with Canada is like asking for the moon.

The Minister of Finance is right: economic and political union will not be possible after the referendum because Quebec separatists want Quebec to separate, and our answer to that is No.

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SOCIÉTÉ SAINT-JEAN-BAPTISTE

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we learned that the following Saint-Jean-Baptiste societies have joined the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste of the Sherbrooke diocese and expressed their pride in being part of Canada.

• (1410)

They are the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste of the diocese of Valleyfield and the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste of the diocese of Quebec City, which met last weekend with the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste of Sherbrooke, in the eastern townships, and sang the "O Canada".

To all these men and women who are not afraid to show that they are proud to be Quebecers and Canadians; to all our French Canadian ancestors who built this country; to Wilfrid Laurier who, almost one hundred years ago, became the first of many Canadian prime ministers from Quebec; to my friends from the Bloc Québécois who have dreams of sitting again in this House after the next election; I want to say that, like all of you, I am very proud to be a Quebecer and a Canadian.

However, it is important that we all say no to separation.

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QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the word "confusion" perfectly describes the precautions taken by separatist leaders to package their project so as to make it as vague as possible.

As evidence of that, let us look at the findings of a poll conducted by Créatec and made public this week. Fifty per cent

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of those who intend to vote yes think that separation will only occur after the conclusion of an agreement with Canada. As for the famous June 12 agreement, only 19 per cent of the public knows more or less what it is all about.

The poll also shows, and this is nothing short of tragic, that 28 per cent of those who would vote yes believe that a sovereign Quebec would remain a Canadian province.

The whole separatist strategy is nothing but a smoke screen used to hide the real objective, which is to separate Quebec from Canada. However, Quebecers do not want that and they will vote no on October 30.

* * *

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs committed an outrageous blunder in referring to the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

What did he mean by saying that "We have not yet started killing, killing one another, and I hope that the situation of the former Yugoslavia will never apply to Canada". This statement, fraught with hidden meanings as it is, requires clarification.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian government ought to be ashamed of making such insinuations.

For this reason the Bloc Québécois most strongly condemns these absolutely thoughtless words spoken by the minister during his visit to the UN. The irresponsibility of the minister speaks volumes about the no side, the intolerance, insult and abuse the no side has to offer to the people of Quebec.

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*[English]***VICTIMS OF CRIME**

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today the voices of victims of crime are being heard on Parliament Hill.

They are calling for more than platitudes from the government. They are demanding real change to our criminal justice system. Across the country people are outraged because they believe our courts are too lenient and that parole and statutory release have become a licence for criminals to reoffend.

In Calgary where my riding of Calgary North is located, four women have been killed in the last eight weeks. As an added insult, one of the accused killers was granted bail within one week of being charged and is back out in the community.

Canadians have a right to ask why they are not being protected from thugs and criminals.

Today, citizens from across Canada have come to Ottawa to send a message to their elected representatives. Victims of crime must come first in a system where public safety is the number one priority. Reformers say Canadians expect and deserve no less.

* * *

*[Translation]***NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would it be as easy for an independent Quebec to become a signatory to the North American Free trade Agreement, also known as NAFTA, as the separatists claim?

The federal finance minister said yesterday it would not. He even warned that reopening negotiations with our American and Mexican partners would put a number of sectors of the Quebec economy in a vulnerable position.

I would also like to quote James Blanchard, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, and Sandra Fuentes-Berain, the Mexican ambassador to Canada, each of whom indicated that there were no guarantees an independent Quebec would automatically become a member of NAFTA.

They expected to keep Professor Ivan Bernier quiet by keeping his study on NAFTA under wraps, but they will not be able to do the same with everyone. As the finance minister said yesterday, it is time to get rid of this myth cultivated by the separatists.

* * *

● (1415)

REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN

Mr. Patrick Gagnon (Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the PQ Premier said in a radio interview that the National Capital Commission of Canada had sent all its employees in Hull a letter telling them not to come in on October 31 if the Yes side wins, which we know perfectly well will not happen.

Mr. Parizeau said that based on that kind of statement, they would know what to expect. After the facts were checked, the reference made by Mr. Parizeau was shown to be completely untrue, and his office even had to apologize. After the constitutional document which the PQ Premier tried to link to the Quebec Liberal Party, the Premier is back with an alleged letter that in fact never existed.

Mr. Parizeau should concentrate on explaining his separation plans to the public instead of getting involved in these exercises in scaremongering.

Oral Questions

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of the House to the presence in our gallery of members of the United States Association of Former Members of Congress and Senators who are our guests in Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[Translation]

CANADA-QUEBEC ECONOMIC UNION

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an apocalyptic speech delivered yesterday in Montreal, the Minister of Finance claimed that Canada could not guarantee its present economic union with Quebec would continue because the Americans would use it as an excuse to renegotiate NAFTA. He also contended that a sovereign Quebec would have to wait a very long time before becoming a member of the World Trade Organization, which recently replaced the GATT.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will he acknowledge that the proposal a sovereign Quebec will make to Canada for a new economic and political partnership is entirely within the spirit of the World Trade Organization treaty and of NAFTA and would guarantee American business the same conditions of access to Canadian and Quebec markets they now enjoy?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is to be an economic and political union between Canada and Quebec, that is, if Canada were to give a separate Quebec special favours it does not give other countries, the Americans and the Mexicans would insist on being at the negotiating table, just as Canada did when Mexico and the United States wanted bilateral negotiations. We said no, we had to be at the table.

Here is what Canada would run the risk of losing if it were to accord Quebec this special agreement: its agricultural policy, its cultural exemption, the Canadian Wheat Board, the financial services sector, the rules of origin for the automotive industry and, even more importantly, the binational panels protecting us against American reprisals.

As the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, Canada's exports to Quebec represent \$33 billion; its exports to the United States, however, represent \$165 billion, and Canada cannot risk

losing this. It is not because it would not want to, but because it would have too much to lose.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think we can all see that the minister is in the same apocalyptic state as he was yesterday. The minister is grossly twisting the reality of freer trade between countries by wrongly ascribing to NAFTA the power to prevent greater integration between Quebec and Canada, as the partnership in fact proposes.

Will the minister acknowledge that his gratuitous remarks are contradicted by established rules of international trade and by the prevailing custom whereby sovereign states can conclude more complex regional agreements in parallel with other agreements such as NAFTA? Will he not acknowledge that this doctrine has even been enshrined in paragraph 4 of article XXIV of the GATT?

• (1420)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as in everything else, unfortunately, the separatist movement has been overtaken by events. The GATT has been replaced by the WTO, and in article 12 of the WTO, on accession, there are no rights of succession and no principle of *status quo ante*.

The problem is that Quebec would be like any other country seeking membership, because there is no precedent. And Quebec would be put in the position of having to make huge concessions, first to become a member of the WTO and particularly to become a member of NAFTA. This is very clear.

Hon. Lucien Bouchard (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, paragraph 4 of article XXIV, which I just cited, was negotiated only last year and is currently in effect. This article provides, even in the case of a national treatment clause, for automatic exception when a parallel agreement is to be concluded between two countries, provided its intent is to free trade. The whole point was to free trade, not stop it. It is a bit odd to hear a government, which vehemently opposed free trade and us in order to prevent its passing, now citing it.

The Minister of Finance also intimated that the Americans could oppose a partnership agreement between Quebec and Canada the day after a yes vote. Will he not admit that the Americans, as reasonable and experienced individuals, will rather want to avoid any upset in the existing economic flow between Quebec and Canada, particularly because they will continue to enjoy the same conditions of trade and access to the Quebec and Canadian markets as they do now? Does he not see that any steps the Americans take will only be to calm the nervous and the emotional who want to refuse to negotiate and who prefer to see everything in terms of gloom and doom?

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than asking inflammatory questions and making speeches of this sort, he should put his cards on the table. We are talking here about the future of Quebecers. It is his duty, as one of the leaders of the separatist movement, to tell Quebecers the truth about the real consequences of independence.

If you—yes, Mr. Speaker, I am looking at you and I would much rather look at you—if you want to identify the things the Americans will attack today, and this is no figment of the imagination, they will attack agricultural policy; the dairy industry in Quebec; the cultural exemption Quebec enjoys today with regard to films, television, broadcasting, books and magazines; textiles; preferential access to American markets; the purchasing policies of the Government of Quebec and Hydro-Quebec; the binational panels. There is a whole list.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his speech yesterday in Montreal, the Minister of Finance asserted that a sovereign Quebec would have difficulty joining the World Trade Organization or WTO, which recently replaced GATT. The Minister of Finance stated that Quebec would have to stand in line behind the 32 countries that have applied to become members of the WTO.

Does the Minister of Finance admit that, under the WTO accession clause, Quebec's admission will be all the faster and easier because Quebec already meets membership requirements?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): That is the problem, Mr. Speaker. I have just read a list of Quebec practices that will not be accepted by other WTO members. That is exactly my point.

• (1425)

These practices will be challenged by the U.S., the European Community and other countries. That is why the cost of joining the WTO and NAFTA will be so high.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance does not know what he is talking about.

My question to him is this: How can the Minister of Finance claim that Quebec will have to take a number to join the WTO, when he knows—and I hope he knows it—that the reason these 32 countries are waiting for admission is because they do not have a market economy; that Quebec already meets WTO requirements; that Quebec is not too small, and that we are not incompetents either since Quebec is the Americans' eighth largest trading partner? Does he at least know this, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan have market economies and they are on the waiting list. Yesterday, Mr. Landry said that only countries from Eastern Europe were on the waiting list.

Let me tell you something: Taiwan is in Asia, and Saudi Arabia is in Arabia. I know full well that separatists need lessons in economics, but we now see that they also need geography lessons.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of Canadians have gathered on the lawns of Parliament Hill today and it is not over a concern with respect to the Quebec referendum or trade treaties that has brought them together.

It is a more fundamental concern about the safety of their children and their loved ones. These are ordinary folks and their demand is very simple. They want the government to do more to protect the lives and property of Canadians from criminals. They want the rights of victims to be placed above the rights of criminals.

What does the justice minister propose not to say but to do for Melanie Carpenter's father and all of the victims of violence who feel that in Canada the state, the law, the government, the parole board and the justice system have failed them in a tragic and fundamental way?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was my high privilege to address that rally on the lawn of Parliament Hill an hour or two ago. It was my honour to meet yesterday morning with Steve Carpenter, the father of Melanie, and with Maurice Rose whose son was murdered in Montreal.

As I told those gathered on Parliament Hill today, since I have been Minister of Justice I have made it a point to meet with victims and the families of victims of crime, not because it is easy—it is often terribly difficult—but because I believe that through the tragedy they have suffered they have something to offer. They have a perspective to offer on criminal justice reform which has helped me in my work.

When I spoke to that group today I recounted some of the things the government has done over the last 15 months. We have introduced more meaningful reform to the criminal justice system than any federal government in memory.

The leader of the third party and his colleagues want to know what has been done. Let me remind the leader of the third party what has been done often over the objection and with the opposition of the third party: meaningful amendments to the

Young Offenders Act, introducing DNA provisions under the Criminal Code, meaningful gun control, improvements to the parole system, strengthening the criminal justice sentencing process, and ruling out self-induced intoxication.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if the minister had done all these wonderful things for the victims of violence there would not be hundreds of people on the lawns of Parliament today.

• (1430)

Victims of violence listen politely to these recitations from the minister of all the things he is supposedly doing, but their greater concern is with the things the government is not doing: the failure to repeal section 745 of the code; the failure to create a registry of sexual offenders by September, as the solicitor general promised; the refusal to include real victim compensation in Bill C-45; and the absence of a victims rights package in anything the minister has presented to the House.

Besides the cosmetic changes the minister has referred to, what more does he plan to do to change the justice system so that Canada's streets are safer from violent criminals, sex offenders and murderers?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my list was not of things we are talking about. My list was of measures that have already been achieved.

Instead of just speaking about a list of victims rights, which is something the third party is fond of doing, instead of just proclaiming a bill of rights for victims which is politically attractive, we prefer to enact those rights as we have done.

If the leader of the third party does not know, let me tell him that what has been done has been to amend the Criminal Code to provide for victim impact statements wherever they are prepared; to allow for the return of stolen property; to protect the identity of victims and witnesses of sexual offences and extortion; to levy victims fine surcharges; to amend the code to permit the courts to order restitution to victims; and to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to recognize the role of victims in relation to federal corrections. This is the list of action taken in the name of victims.

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister refers to enacting rights. There is a growing conflict in the country between the rights of victims of crime and potential victims of crime and the rights of persons accused or convicted of crimes. In more and more cases the scales of justice are tipped on the side of violent criminals, sex offenders and murderers. This cannot be allowed to continue. When rights clash it is the rights of the victims that ought to prevail over the rights of the criminals.

Oral Questions

My question to the minister is on rights since he raised the subject. When the rights of victims conflict with the rights of persons accused or convicted of crimes, what is he doing to ensure that it is the rights of the victims that prevail in Canadian law?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first and most fundamental right of any victim is the same as the first and most fundamental right of any Canadian, to a fair, responsive and strong system of criminal justice. Since our first day in office that has been our focus.

Before concluding, I am constrained to observe that for a party so consumed with the rights of victims it is passing strange that it turns a deaf ear when the victims rights groups, including CAVEAT and its principal, Priscilla de Villiers, speak passionately and call for the Reform Party to support our proposals on gun control.

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[Translation]

DIVISION OF THE FEDERAL DEBT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal debt is close to \$600 billion. The Quebec government has made it clear that a sovereign Quebec would take its share of the responsibility for the federal debt. Yesterday in his speech, the finance minister, who excluded any negotiations with a sovereign Quebec, remained strangely silent on the division of the federal debt.

• (1435)

Would the finance minister agree that the federal government's enormous debt will make it incumbent on the government, in its own interest and in view of its responsibilities, to start negotiations with Quebec the day after the referendum, starting with the division of the debt?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the day after the referendum we will all continue to build Canada together, because it is quite clear the No side will win.

Am I to understand that the hon. member is repeating the unfortunate statement made by Mr. Campeau three or four months ago and this morning by Mrs. Dionne-Marsolais, that an independent Quebec will not accept its fair share of the federal debt? Is that what the hon. member is saying?

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I am not saying. I just explained to the minister, and I will repeat my explanation, to make sure he understands, unless he has no answer and that is why. I will explain.

The Quebec government has very clearly announced its intention to assume its responsibility in connection with the tremendous federal debt. Yesterday the minister avoided any

Oral Questions

questions on the subject by saying he would not negotiate with Quebec in any area whatsoever. He did not broach the subject of the debt.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that, faced with pressures from the financial community, he has no choice but to negotiate with Quebec after a win for the Yes side, because Canada is incapable—

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, during Question Period I allow as much time as I can for the questions that are put, but we go somewhat beyond the limit, even ask questions that are hypothetical—

An hon. member: The minister's speech is hypothetical.

The Speaker: We get either hypothetical speeches or hypothetical questions.

An hon. member: Ha, ha.

The Speaker: I would ask hon. members when they rise to please ask questions that are relevant to the government's administration. Now if the finance minister wishes to answer this question, he may.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer, since they have so much trouble asking questions.

If the hon. member wishes to ask hypothetical questions, we can do that too. If the debt of a separate Quebec were to triple or worse, how high would the resulting interest rates be for us Quebecers? How much would our income tax go up? What kind of cuts would we see in social services? They would be draconian.

[English]

The Speaker: I invite you to return to concrete questions and concrete answers.

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CAMP IPPERWASH

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian agenda has more to it than the referendum. Law and order are still on the decline in the country.

Not only do we have violent offenders roaming our neighbourhoods and streets, there are areas where policing has almost ceased to exist. Ipperwash is one example. Sexual assaults, firearms discharged at persons, arson, break and enter go uninvestigated. In fact Ipperwash—

• (1440)

The Speaker: I know the hon. member is having a tough time with his voice. Perhaps I can help him by asking him to put the question.

Mr. Hanger: Mr. Speaker, the list of victims is growing in Ipperwash. When will the solicitor general take action to ensure that the law is applied equally to everyone, which includes militant natives?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the approach of the federal government is that the law applies equally to everyone.

We should praise the professionalism and expertise of the RCMP when, working as the provincial police on behalf of the attorney general of British Columbia, it diffused without violence and loss of life the Gustafsen Lake situation, with the people involved being brought before the courts and facing criminal charges.

When it comes to the Ipperwash situation, that involves the application of the Criminal Code by police of local jurisdiction who, I am sure the hon. member should know, are the Ontario Provincial Police.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister should tell that to the people who live there. They have lost faith in the police, especially with the do-nothing Liberal government that refuses to act.

People are now arming themselves for protection because they have been abandoned by the federal government and fear for their lives. The minister is neglecting his responsibility to Canadians because he is catering to special interest groups.

Why is the solicitor general allowing a group of organized armed thugs to bully the federal government, the police and the people of Ipperwash?

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is not allowing any such conduct. It is certainly ready, at the request of the solicitor general of Ontario, Mr. Runciman, to provide support along the lines of the standing arrangements we have.

In the meantime this is strictly a matter for the Ontario Provincial Police. If the member does not think his Conservative friends in Ontario are doing their job, he should tell them directly.

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[Translation]

CANADA-QUEBEC ECONOMIC UNION

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance indicated that chances of an economic union between a sovereign Quebec and Canada were non-existent. He went so far as to say that, even if he wanted to, it would not be possible.

Oral Questions

My question is quite down to earth. Will the Minister of Finance come back to his senses and admit that Quebec is the second largest market in Canada, with 400,000 Canadian jobs depending on trade with Quebec, and that Ontario alone enjoys a net surplus of \$4 billion per year in its trade with Quebec?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the more reason for Quebec to remain in Canada. What I said yesterday was very clear. I did not say that there would be no trade between Quebec and Canada. What I said is that there would be no economic union between Quebec and Canada as described in the referendum question. And the reason for this is very obvious: while \$33 billion in goods are sold to Quebec by the rest of Canada, \$165 billion in exports go to the U.S., and Canada can never put this at risk.

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in light of what I said and what the minister himself just said, will the minister finally admit that an economic union is not only desirable but inevitable in the interests of both partners, Canada and Quebec, especially since he knows full well that the U.S. stands to benefit from this continued union because they will have access to the Canadian and Quebec markets under the very same terms they now enjoy?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. members are having a hard time understanding. At present, Canada is part of NAFTA. This agreement was signed and ratified. So, cultural exemptions, the agricultural policy, binational panels, all those things are already in place and Canada will continue to enjoy them.

The only problem would be if Canada wanted or agreed to negotiate an economic union. All this would then be at risk.

• (1445)

The difference between Quebec and Canada is that, if Quebec wishes to join NAFTA, this will mean no more agricultural policy, no more cultural exemptions, no more binational panels and no more procurement policy.

At present, Quebec is part of NAFTA and things are working well. If Quebec separates and then wants to join NAFTA, it will be undermining the basis of the Quebec economy. That is what I call putting your cards on the table.

* * *

[English]

MANITOBA ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX INC.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Minister of Human Resources Development has

used the unfortunate financial situation of the Winnipeg Jets to line the pockets of his campaign contributors.

The minister gave \$533,000 to Manitoba Entertainment Complex Inc. Is the money the minister gave to Manitoba Entertainment Complex Inc. in any way related to the campaign contributions its president gave the minister for the 1993 election?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would ask that in the phrasing of the question we not try to give reasons why one thing or another happens. I will permit the hon. minister to answer that question.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once you subtract the hyperbole, exaggeration and the overtone of character assassination the hon. member introduced into her question, I certainly welcome it. It gives me the opportunity to clarify a misleading story that appeared.

The best way to do that is to cite the response made by the regional director general of HRD in Winnipeg, who pointed out that this project had at stake close to 1,400 jobs potentially lost to the city, involved all three levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal, involved hundreds of representatives from the private sector, virtually all the major businesses in Winnipeg, plus tens of thousands of residents of the city, all of whom were interested in trying to preserve the jobs and the economic development. The program was simply designed to ensure that the proper diligence and feasibility was done to make sure that was a good public investment to make.

It has nothing to do with campaign contributions. The hon. member should know better than that. She should deny and retract that allegation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, even the perception of abuse of taxpayers' dollars is unacceptable. I would like to continue with my question.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1450)

The Speaker: My dear colleagues, may I caution you about imputing motives in the question. I will permit the hon. member to put her question now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order. My colleagues, as we all know, points of order that arise in the question period will of course be heard by me at the end of Question Period.

I would invite the hon. member for Calgary Northeast to put her question.

Oral Questions

I am sorry, I thought the hon. member had said she would pass. You will forgive me if I misunderstood. I thank God we only have one Wednesday every week. The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, it is Calgary Southeast, not Northeast.

The Speaker: And I apologize. Calgary Southeast.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, my question is put with sincerity and focused on the issue at hand.

Can the minister explain to the House why he appears to be taking advantage of the financial plight of a hockey team in his riding to line the pockets of his election contributors?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski—Témiscouata.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA—QUEBEC ECONOMIC UNION

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The minister ruled out the possibility of a customs union between Canada and Quebec when he said: If Quebec separates, what interest would Canada have in meeting the needs of the foreign country it would have become?

The minister knows full well that it would be in the best interests of Canada to maintain the current customs union. Are we to understand from the comments he made yesterday that the minister intends to personally set up barriers to impede the free movement of Canadian goods sold in Quebec, including controls at the border?

• (1455)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not me but the NAFTA provisions which would require that the United States and Mexico get the same benefits and privileges. Our country would be opposed, because it would stand to lose too much.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the Minister of Finance telling us that he personally wants to make life difficult for Ontario companies which, every year, sell vehicles and automotive accessories to the tune of \$1.3 billion in Quebec, for Albertans who sell us 51 per cent of their cattle production, and for his Bay Street friends who, year in year out, provide financial services worth close to \$3 billion in Quebec?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that the

Canadian government will not be prepared to do what the separatist movement is willing to do, that is to jeopardize the protection afforded to the agricultural sector, and to also jeopardize the automotive industry, the bilateral panels and the cultural exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member prepared to jeopardize the safeguards that we have put in place to protect French language and culture?

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed it is wonderful Wednesday. My question is for the minister responsible for the infrastructure program.

I continue to receive enthusiastic reports on the infrastructure program from the mayors of municipalities throughout Carleton—Charlotte. They praise the program for its assistance in completing the many projects that have benefited their communities and citizens.

Can the minister tell the House what the second year of the infrastructure program has accomplished for Canadian municipalities and their citizens?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two years since the program on infrastructure was launched with the municipalities and with the provincial governments. The program has been a great success in implementing a promise made by this party in the last election campaign.

To this point in time, of the \$6 billion originally allocated by the different orders of government, 93 per cent of it has been allocated to some 11,000 projects right across the country. Those projects are helping to strengthen the infrastructure of our local communities, attracting additional investment dollars and are putting over 100,000 Canadians to work, creating the kinds of jobs we need in this country. That is the kind of agenda Canadians want from this government.

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SOMALIA INQUIRY

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians from coast to coast to coast want to know that justice was done in the Somalia inquiry.

On Monday, former sergeant, now private, Mark Boland was denied standing before the Somalia commission. Apparently senior ranks are allowed standing because the commission may “make pronouncements that reveal their misconduct or give voice to allegations that bring discredit upon them. Lower ranks such as Boland have no need for official standing”.

Does the Minister of National Defence agree that rank should automatically grant standing, or will he accept that involvement and knowledge of the situation should be the deciding factors?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know by now that the commission is the master of its own procedure.

The commission has extensive terms of reference. I do not believe there has been any argument made by anyone as to the degree to which the commission can investigate the deployment to Somalia. It is for the commission to decide who has standing and who has not.

If an individual feels aggrieved by the procedural decisions of the commission, they have the right to recourse through legal means.

Mr. Jack Frazer (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the commission said: “Our terms of reference are very clear that it is the chain of command system and leadership within the chain of command that is to be our concern”.

Mark Boland was given orders and he gave orders. He is in the chain of command. He has knowledge that can provide connective tissue to shape the body of evidence in this case. He must be able to pose questions. The right question to the right person at the right time will reveal the whole truth of the Somalia inquiry.

• (1500)

Will the minister now intervene to ensure that Mark Boland is granted standing before the Somalia commission?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not the role of the Minister of National Defence to intervene in an inquiry constituted under the Inquiries Act.

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[Translation]

CANADA—QUEBEC MONETARY UNION

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. He appears to reject the idea of a monetary union between a sovereign Quebec and Canada. In addition, the leaders of the No side are questioning the ability of a sovereign Quebec to continue to use the Canadian dollar.

Does the Minister of Finance confirm that it is in Canada's very best interest to not only acknowledge that a sovereign Quebec may continue to use the Canadian dollar, but also to wish for this, specifically for the purpose of maintaining its value?

Oral Questions

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker, not in the least, but that is not the question. The question is this: How can it be that a Quebec desiring independence not only wishes to use the currency of another country but also is prepared to turn all of the control and influence a country must have over its monetary policy over to that other country?

This is the touchy situation in which Quebec will find itself, this is the fundamental tool it will have forgone.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Finance acknowledge that the worst thing that could happen to the Canadian dollar would be for Quebecers, who have ownership of it, who have earned it with the sweat of their brows, to decide to collectively unload the one quarter of the money supply that is in their hands, some 100 billion dollars, whereas mutual interest and common sense militate strongly in favour of a monetary union?

Hon. Paul Martin Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what would it accomplish to put Quebec in the same position as, say, France is with respect to the Bundesbank or the bank of some other country?

When Canada is in a period of full growth, if there is a downturn in Quebec, monetary policy will be set in Canada to the detriment of Quebecers.

Tell me, what point is there in becoming independent if the tools of independence are handed over to another? It is totally pointless.

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[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, despite all the rhetoric from the government about the need to cut spending at CBC, the auditor general's report in July revealed it is very fat and that there is all kinds of waste going on.

On Monday when a document was circulated around, the CBC annual report indicated discretionary spending had gone up \$50 million last year. We can imagine how ripped off taxpayers must feel.

What is the minister doing about this matter?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate our colleague for putting his first question as critic for the heritage portfolio.

The management of the CBC is now engaged in a very serious review of the financial dimensions of the corporation, as we have seen in the press. What it has in mind is to cut down on any possible waste, increase the effectiveness of the CBC and make it one of the most modern and efficient broadcasters in the world.

Privilege

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, every day CBC's ratings drop. It spends more money. The CBC president is pleading with the minister to bring in a mandate now so that he has the latitude to make the cuts he needs to make.

When will the minister show some leadership and bring in that new mandate?

Hon. Michel Dupuy (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague should know that is precisely what we asked for, a panel of three people to make recommendations on the mandate. His wish will be granted. In the meantime the management of the CBC is managing at arm's length, as we all know.

* * *

● (1505)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, as amended by the House last year, the Minister of the Environment is charged with the duty of creating a participant funding program.

Can the minister tell us what she has done so that Canadians with a serious interest in an environmental assessment can have access to funding in order to participate?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the previous Minister of the Environment, now the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who stated in the House on April 5, 1990: "The federal government has very clear jurisdiction in the area of environmental impact assessment".

This jurisdiction is not challenged and it cannot be challenged. We have gone even further in the government. We have entrenched in law the principle of participant funding. In the last fiscal year there was about \$860,000 available for the public to participate in the environmental assessment process enshrined by the previous Minister of the Environment.

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INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs has an opportunity to ease anxiety among those who believe the Indian land claims process is too slow, too complex and too uncertain.

Has the minister of Indian affairs considered the 1994–95 report of the Indian claims commission and will he respond positively to its first recommendation, the establishment of a new independent land claims policy and process?

Hon. Ron Irwin (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the highest respect for the work of the Indian claims commission. Part of our red book commitment is to make the system more efficient and more just.

The problem I have, which the member knows, is whether it should be a justice system with binding judgments or a mediation system similar to what it is now, going through the convoluted process of having first to be turned down by the Indian claims commission.

That has not been settled by the chiefs. When I have some direction from the chiefs we could certainly move ahead on the desires of the Indian claims commission.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of the House to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Vassillis Geranidis, member of Parliament for Salonica, Greece.

Some hon. members: Hear, Hear.

The Speaker: I also draw the attention of the House to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. John Efford, Minister of Public Works and Transportation of Newfoundland.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

PRIVILEGE**COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD**

The Speaker: I have a point of privilege which I will hear before the points of order. The point of privilege is coming from the Minister of Human Resources Development. We usually need notice before, but is it arising from question period?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Human Resources Development and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period the member for Calgary Southeast made some statements alleging behaviour on my part and which imputed motive, neither of which is acceptable under the rules of the House.

There can be many differences of opinion in the House and we can certainly have questions about one's actions in terms of whether they are right or wrong in a political sense.

I have been a member of the House in public life for 24 years and I never at any time had my behaviour imputed the way the hon. member suggests. I ask her to withdraw and apologize because nothing wrong was done, as she imputed, and it really requires her to clear the record.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Before I go to the House leader of the Reform Party, because another hon. member has been mentioned in the House I wonder if the hon. member for Calgary Southeast would like to intervene before the House leader of the Reform Party.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Minister of Human Resources Development, I am putting questions to the House similar to those asked of the Minister of Canadian Heritage regarding the same kinds of improprieties. The perception needs to be clarified. Therefore I will not withdraw and I will not apologize.

The Speaker: On the same point of privilege, the hon. government whip and then I will go to the House leader of the Reform Party.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I turn to section 409(7) of Beauchesne's in relation to casting aspersions on persons within the House in addition to the fact that some of the allegations made by the hon. member alleged criminal activity on the part of another person regarding the relationship between that person and a minister of the House. The combination of those two things leads me to believe the language in question was unparliamentary and must be withdrawn.

I urge Mr. Speaker to request that any such expressions, including the language used in the question referred to, be withdrawn forthwith.

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this matter of privilege I bring your attention to the question, the operative part of my hon. colleague's presentation to the House.

It was very clear in the question that the member for Calgary Southeast asked a deliberate question of whether there was a relationship between two actions. That was not inferred nor did it reflect on the minister. Before making a final decision on this, Mr. Speaker, I ask that you take this into consideration.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I put on the record of the House what the whip for the government was referring to in section 409 of Beauchesne's, which reads in part:

In 1975, the Speaker expressed some general principles in order to clarify the regulations and restrict the negative qualifications which traditionally have guided the question period.

Subsection 7:

A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it.

The hon. member for Calgary Southeast did exactly what is not supposed to be done according to these guidelines put on the

Privilege

record by one of your distinguished predecessors, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member cannot get away with an improper statement by putting it in an interrogatory fashion, and therefore she should withdraw.

• (1515)

The Speaker: Colleagues, during question period, as you have seen in the last little while, we tend to be using stronger and stronger words in putting questions but also in giving answers.

Here is what we have, I believe. We have an hon. member who, when she stood in her place, was cautioned about the language she was using in her question. I permitted the question to stand with that caution and the hon. minister answered the first question.

In my view, the second question was clearly out of order and I ruled it as such by moving ahead and not letting the minister answer.

Now this is being raised as a point of privilege. One member has asked another member to withdraw the statement. The other member has replied that she does not feel this particular statement was imputing motives.

As the Speaker, it would seem to me that the more we permit ourselves to go down this road and not frame the questions in such a way that they can be related to the administrative responsibilities of individuals, we are getting ourselves into a quagmire.

I wish there were an easy way out of this. I do not believe and I ruled that this is not a question of privilege. However, in the name of civility and in the name of good conduct in this House, may I appeal to the member for Calgary Southeast to reconsider. Although I do not believe there was any intention but even if the words carried the impugning of motives, I wonder if the hon. member might reconsider and withdraw the statements as they were made.

The hon. member for Calgary Southeast.

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question of you for clarification?

Some hon. members: No.

Some hon. members: Withdraw.

The Speaker: I have clearly ruled that there is not a point of privilege. That is my decision. However, again I appeal to the hon. member, although this question may or may not be allowed, I of course heard what the member said. Once again, in order that this House might carry out its responsibilities in a civilized manner on all sides, I would urge and ask the hon. member if she would consider withdrawing her statements or any impugning of motive. Would the hon. member consider that?

Point of Order

• (1520)

Mrs. Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to you, because this is not a point of privilege I will not withdraw nor will I retract any of my statements.

The Speaker: My colleagues, I have made a ruling on a point of privilege and that ruling will stand. I very much regret that the hon. member has not withdrawn but I am going to let the matter rest there.

I will go on to another point. If there is another point of order exclusive of this, I will hear it. For now, I would like this point to rest.

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POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Ray Speaker (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order under sections 485 and 486 of Beauchesne's with regard to unparliamentary language and also language that reflects on members in this assembly.

I heard very clearly comments of the member for Willowdale that called the member for Calgary Southeast a slimeball not only once but twice and I think even a third time across the floor of the House.

There was a lot of concern in this House by the hon. member for Burlington concerning reflections on whether a person is a male or female. This type of comment to a male would have one type of inference but to a female, it certainly has another kind of inference which I will not accept. I ask that it be withdrawn and that that member be dealt with.

The Speaker: I must say that your Speaker did not hear these words and I do not know if they are in *Hansard*. We can have a look.

Because an hon. member was named in this House and was named directly I would ask the hon. member for Willowdale if he has something to add to this point of order.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am guilty and I withdraw. I ask your advice as to what other word might express better my utter repugnance for this type of question in our House of Commons.

The Speaker: May I ask the hon. member for Willowdale this. I did not hear all of the end of it and I do not really want to hear it. Would the hon. member please just stand and withdraw? He said he was guilty. Would he withdraw the statement, just the statement.

• (1525)

Mr. Peterson: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in light of the ruling you just made with regard to the words of the hon. member for Willowdale, I would like to draw your attention to citation 484 of Beauchesne's which reads in part as follows:

(3) In the House of Commons a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections of the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case—

Mr. Speaker, in light of this citation and in light of the ruling you just made with regard to the language used by the hon. member for Willowdale, I respectfully raise as a point of order a request that you apply the same principle to the question asked by the hon. member for Calgary Southeast which in effect involves an unworthy aspersion on a member of this House.

If it is fair for the hon. member to be requested to withdraw and for the hon. member to comply, as he did with the request to withdraw the word he used, and I am referring to the hon. member for Willowdale, I respectfully submit it is equally fair for a request to be made and for the hon. member for Calgary Southeast in the same spirit of conciliation and goodwill to withdraw her remarks.

The Speaker: I had asked earlier, with all respect to the hon. leader of the government and the House, that it was an unfortunate situation that occurred in the House.

I have made a ruling on it and I will stay by the ruling. Your Speaker tries as much as possible in the course of question period to hear from all sides. Although I have ruled, I permitted the House leader to go on.

If in some way the House could draw itself away from the type of strong language that we have been using I think the House would be better served on all sides.

For now I would like to close this matter of the member for Calgary Southeast.

I have another point of order, the hon. whip of the Reform Party.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, you may be relieved to know this is a point of order on a different subject. You may not be too relieved.

The point of order is under Beauchesne's citation 317(2) which calls for an interpretation of the rules of procedures to be decided on by the Speaker.

The rule in question is Beauchesne's citation 765(3) which specifies that membership in committees is in the same proportion to membership of political parties in this House. Under this the Bloc Quebecois and Reform should each have three members on the public affairs committee.

Point of Order

I hasten to add that I am not seeking the Speaker's intercession on a matter rising in committee which would be contrary to Beauchesne's citation 168(7). What I am seeking is for the Speaker to uphold the rules of this House, specifically Beauchesne's citation 765(3). If others are allowed to ignore the rules or put an erroneous interpretation on them, which is the case here, then it makes a mockery of Beauchesne's and a mockery of this House.

I tried without success to get the two other whips and the committee on procedure and House affairs to act on Beauchesne's citation 765(3). The stand taken by both is that the chair of the public accounts committee constitutes a separate committee position. Therefore the Bloc Québécois should have four positions including the chair as opposed to the Reform's three.

• (1530)

We contend that this is an erroneous assumption as Beauchesne's 781 calls only for the chair to go to the opposition, not the official opposition. We would also cite Standing Order 106(2) which is silent on who fills the chair.

Since I have been unable to redress this grievance in committee or with the whips, I ask for the Speaker to uphold the rules of the House, specifically Beauchesne's 765(3), perhaps by using Beauchesne's 764 to communicate with the committee.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my colleague's remarks he referred to citation 317 of Beauchesne's to plead for the Speaker's intervention in the case. I should remind the Speaker that the reference to citation 317 was perhaps selective and should remind the Speaker of what it says. Citation 317(2) states:

A question of order concerns the interpretation to be put upon the rules of procedure and is a matter for the Speaker or, in a committee, for the Chairman to determine.

In other words, a reading of the complete citation tells the Speaker that this is an issue to be raised at the committee and not in the House.

In reference to the issue at hand, the membership of the committees in question, the issue was brought to the attention of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs with the hon. member pleading the case that there should be an additional member of his particular political party on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in its wisdom decided that it had been customary and agreed at the beginning of this Parliament that the party which holds the chairmanship of the particular committee loses a member able to participate in the debate because the chairman customarily, as the Speaker knows more than anyone else in the House, does not participate too frequently in the debates. That was agreed to at the beginning of this Parliament, at the beginning of the previous Parliament and the one before it.

In each one of those prior Parliaments and in the present one the official opposition, which traditionally chairs the public accounts committee, has an additional member to compensate for the fact that it loses one member in the debate.

Finally the argument was made by myself at the procedure and House affairs committee that if we add another member from another party to the public accounts committee, we disturb the whole balance within the committee. We then have to add two Liberal members to the committee to achieve the balance we must start off with under the rule invoked by the hon. member in question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will not quote Beauchesne because one can use different citations to make different points. One thing is for sure, when we conducted negotiations at the start of this Parliament two years ago and two whips ago for the Reform Party, which is now on its third whip—the government whip was not there at the time but you were—the three whips of the day, including myself, submitted various proposals on the right to speak, on question period, on members' statements and on committee membership. At that time, the Bloc Québécois even offered five vice-chairmanships to the third party, which refused them because they were not to their liking.

They have now changed their minds. Fine by me but there were nonetheless recorded divisions in each committee. Under British parliamentary tradition, a specific role is reserved for the official opposition. We are aware of that. I would point out to the hon. member from the third party that the Quebec legislature, one of the oldest in the world, was operating as early as 1791. It is one of the oldest parliaments in the world, also under British parliamentary rules.

We understood that we were the second party because we had the second highest number of members in this House.

• (1535)

If the hon. member for Beaver River could stop talking, I could conclude my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we understood at the time. Had we been the third party, we would have settled the matter very quickly by following the practices of the previous Parliament. I think this goes without saying. It was often said at the beginning that the Bloc Québécois was here to hinder proceedings. On the contrary, it is the third party, the Reform Party, that hinders the proceedings of this House with points of order, by calling into question the way committees operate. I thought that everything was clear. That party is the third party. If the situation ever changes, things will be different. It may become the fourth party but until then it is still the third party.

Routine Proceedings

In the meantime, let us apply existing rules and debate the real issues—because there are important problems in both Canada and Quebec—instead of fighting on matters that were rejected by that party two years and two whips ago.

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to clarify something in this debate since I was the whip for the Reform Party at the time mentioned by the whip for the Bloc.

I had understood that negotiations and exploration of issues between whips were confidential. Now we have the whip for the Bloc accusing and misrepresenting what those negotiations actually did. I object to that. That is not the kind of behaviour one would expect from someone of goodwill.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware because you were part of the discussions, the talk about chairmanships and vice-chairmanships of committees hinged around our contention that the Bloc was getting a disproportionate share of air time on question period. In order to quiet down those objections the Bloc made this offer of the vice-chairmanships of some of the minor committees.

In our view the air time on question period and the proportion of questions asked should not be mixed up with vice-chairmanships of committees. That was our objection at the time. It remains our objection. It certainly should not be used to suggest that we are not interested in vice-chairmanships of committees. We just do not think those kinds of tradeoffs are appropriate.

We have a situation in the House where there are two opposition parties, one of which is wanting to break up the country and one of which wants to get on with the national agenda. We think there should be fairness and parity at the very least in this situation, and that is what we are asking for in this point of order.

The Speaker: We are getting into a rather long debate. Permit me to make these comments.

The membership, as we all know, is struck by the House affairs committee pursuant to Standing Order 104(1) and it becomes a decision of the House. Citation 781 of Beauchesne's is a reference to a custom or a practice which has developed over time. It is the House that ultimately decides and that order should stand until the House decides otherwise.

Members are asking the Speaker to make a decision which would virtually override the decision made by the House. I do not believe that the Speaker is empowered to do that. The Speaker is a servant of the House.

Therefore, with all due respect, I believe that this should be left to the House affairs committee because it has been empowered to appoint the membership pursuant to Standing Order 104(1). That is where I would like the particular matter to be solved.

• (1540)

Mr. Silye: Mr. Speaker, I just want to know, on a point of order, if the barbeque is still on tonight.

The Speaker: The response is yes, and you are going to have roasted Speaker.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table in this House today, in both official languages, a number of Order in Council appointments which were made recently by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1), these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

[English]

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 22 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the following member be added to the list of associate members of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: Darrel Stinson.

(Motion agreed to.)

[Translation]

JUSTICE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another motion.

I think that you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That three members and two staff of the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs be authorized to travel to Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Sunday, October 1, and Monday, October 2, 1995, in order to participate in the Canadian Congress on Criminal Justice.

[English]

(Motion agreed to.)

* * *

PETITIONS

VIOLENT OFFENDERS

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of Surrey North.

The petitioners allude to the tragic murders of Pamela Cameron, Jessie Cadman, and Melanie Carpenter, whose father Steve is organizing the public rally outside today for National Victims Day.

The petitioners ask Parliament to call upon the government to bring forward legislation to protect Canadians from dangerous and high risk offenders.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my pleasure to present a petition from 32 petitioners of the riding of Halifax West who call upon the government not to change the present tendering process for moving in the Department of National Defence.

SEX OFFENDERS

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition signed by 138 people from the four provinces of Atlantic Canada.

Whereas the Government of Canada has enacted legislation, the charter of rights, and whereas the rights of repeat sex offenders are given precedence over the rights of innocent children as in the case of Sarah Kelly of The Pas, the petitioners humbly pray and call upon Parliament to enact legislation which would make the safety of our children a priority.

Government Orders

They request changes to be made to the charter of rights which would enable residents to be notified when repeat sex offenders are released into the community.

* * *

● (1545)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

Hon. Herb Gray (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.) moved that Bill C-45, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Records Act, the Prisons and Reformatories Act and the Transfer of Offenders Act, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move third reading of Bill C-45. This is a bill to update our corrections and parole system.

[Translation]

When I last spoke on this bill to open second reading debate, I noted that it was part of a strategic framework of initiatives that work together in order to carry out our red book agenda and demonstrated our commitment to safe homes and safe streets for all Canadians.

*Government Orders**[English]*

This is a goal this government takes very seriously. Over the past year this government has been working hard and has consistently delivered on this commitment.

We have brought forward amendments to the Young Offenders Act to respond to a number of concerns about it. Through Bill C-41 we have reformed the sentencing process by placing a new focus on better addressing public safety, ensuring more consistency in sentencing and being more responsive to the needs of victims.

We have also made a lot of headway on preparing and presenting legislation on gun control, on a new witness protection program and on DNA analysis. Also, legislation is being prepared within the government to take steps to deal with high risk violent offenders, which I will discuss further in my remarks.

There is a widespread desire to ensure that we have an effective federal corrections and parole system. This makes it all the more important for us to look closely at problems that are identified and seek concrete and meaningful solutions to these problems.

There may be some violent offenders who are unlikely to ever be able to lead law-abiding lives in the community. However, simply locking up more and more of the other kinds of offenders for longer periods of time will not achieve the long term safety of our communities that we all care about. Surely the United States experience proves this every day.

Where a sentence of imprisonment is considered necessary by the court, we must be mindful that the vast majority of offenders are given definite sentences with fixed terms. Therefore, they will eventually be released into the community. A conditional release of most offenders at a point in their sentence that is consistent with public safety, along with support and surveillance in the community during the balance of the sentence and programming while incarcerated, would appear to provide the best chance for the offender to be a stable, law-abiding member of the community. I submit that this offers the best prospects for the safety of our communities in the long term.

• (1550)

Bill C-45 is one building block in this government's response to the complex issues involved in having a criminal justice system that contributes to the overall protection of the public and the safety of our communities. Bill C-45 by itself is not the sole answer, but I believe it makes important reforms that demonstrate forward movement.

As I outlined to the House during second reading debate, the bill makes improvements in a number of substantive areas. There are situations where the protection of the public means the usual conditional release process should not apply. Therefore,

the bill strengthens the detention process by responding to concerns about the early release of sex offenders who victimize children, which in the bill includes persons under the age of 18. The law will make it much easier for the parole board, at the request of the correctional service, to keep such persons in prison for their entire sentence. Where a further offence against the child is likely, such an offender can expect to serve the full sentence in custody without any period of conditional release in the community.

I would like to reiterate that this measure is not needed because we believe sex offences against children are considered more serious than those against adult victims but because the current legislation has proven less effective in cases involving children.

The second main area of change in the bill relates to the accountability and credibility of the National Parole Board. There have been many changes in the board's operation in the past year. This government has placed an emphasis on recruiting experienced, knowledgeable individuals. I believe the government's record of appointments in the past year bears this out.

The members of the board have an extremely difficult job to do, one that few of us in this Chamber would willingly take on. I think we should recognize the challenges involved and the dedication of the members. The board makes thousands of decisions a year and sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, unforeseen tragedies in the community do occur. These are sad moments and are clearly very painful for those who are directly affected by them.

Every effort possible is being made and will continue to be made to improve the quality of the board's decision making. To support this, the board has recently adopted a code of conduct as well as performance standards. Renewed emphasis has been placed on training and evaluation.

Where problems arise and no other resolution has been successful, Bill C-45 provides for a review of the board member's performance and a process for remedial action to be taken. This amendment in Bill C-45 is there to be used where a board member's performance has clearly fallen below acceptable standards.

Frankly, I think the provision will prove to be a success if it does not have to be used. This may seem paradoxical, but I say this because if it does not have to be used it will mean that we are appointing top-notch individuals, we are providing the necessary training and support, and that corrective action is being taken before serious problems arise in the performance of board members that would necessitate use of the new procedure. At the same time, if the House adopts this measure and it is adopted by the other place and given royal assent, which I hope and expect it will, then the procedure is in the act and of course it is there to be used if circumstances require it.

Government Orders

The third area of reform in the bill is the provision relating to calculating the sentences of offenders who commit multiple crimes or who reoffend while on conditional release during the sentence period. Clearly, tougher provisions are needed to deal with these repeat offenders. Bill C-45 will help eliminate the situation whereby many such offenders may be immediately eligible for parole, notwithstanding the imposition of a severe consecutive new sentence, something that is possible under the current law.

• (1555)

Bill C-45 will cure in large measure the problem of the merger of sentences which has been raised with a great deal of concern by many organizations of the community, including police organizations. I hope this will help bring about the support of the House for this measure.

A fourth area of reform will give the National Parole Board the authority to impose residency conditions on offenders being released on statutory release who pose some risk of committing a violent offence but who do not meet the detention criteria that would, if met, allow the National Parole Board at the request of the Correctional Service of Canada to detain a person until the end of that person's sentence. This amendment was brought by the government during clause by clause study of the bill in committee in response to recommendations by the Canadian Police Association, the Stephenson inquest, and the standing committee itself.

Bill C-45 was one of the first bills to follow one of the new routes for legislation I proposed to the House as House leader and which was agreed to early in 1994. I am talking about referral of a bill to committee prior to second reading.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs devoted a great deal of time and energy to reviewing this bill. In a little over three months the committee heard from over 60 witnesses on both this bill and Bill C-41, the bill on sentencing. Those individuals who testified represented 32 different organizations, including victims' groups, police organizations, professional groups, women's groups, aboriginal organizations, as well as a range of organizations from the voluntary sector.

During both the committee's clause by clause review and the debate during report stage in the House last week, a much broader range of motions was debated than would have been likely under the system of review of a bill in committee only after second reading.

While I know that some members may have been disappointed that not all the motions they put forward were adopted, this new process allowed members to consider and discuss issues that otherwise would have simply been ruled out of order. I want to thank the members of the justice committee for their work and I want to point out that at least some of the suggestions from

members, including opposition members, have been accepted by the government.

I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks several other important legislative initiatives taken by this government to help provide safer homes and safer streets for Canadians. As my parliamentary secretary reminded the House last week, significant advances have been made by this government over the past two years to protect the basic rights of Canadians to live in peaceful and safe communities.

I want to conclude my remarks by mentioning some of the initiatives that were taken that did not need legislation to be adopted by this House.

In November of last year I announced a national information system based on enhancements to the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC. This will make more and better information available to organizations across the country to help them screen out convicted sex abusers applying for work with children. These improvements to CPIC have allowed organizations to more thoroughly screen the backgrounds of individuals applying for paid or voluntary work with children or other vulnerable persons.

This government made a commitment in the red book to help prevent the sexual abuse of children by people in positions of trust and the government has acted on this commitment. While the CPIC system is now in place, as I have said, these measures will only be truly effective if organizations working with children are aware of the changes and the need for screening in general and make use of the new system. We have a role to play in providing leadership, education and awareness to make sure this happens.

Along with partners involving the Department of Justice, the Department of Health and the Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaus and Centres, work is under way to create educational materials and to deliver training to voluntary organizations across the country on screening volunteers and paid staff in positions of trust with children and other vulnerable individuals. These measures will help us to communicate the importance of screening to help prevent child abuse. I am sure this is a goal we all share.

• (1600)

Another positive example of this kind of co-operative effort is recent work in the area of high risk offenders. In January of this year the Minister of Justice and I met with federal, provincial and territorial colleagues in Victoria to discuss the report of our task force on high risk offenders.

[*Translation*]

Not only did we achieve consensus around the criminal justice recommendations put forward in that report, we also had the opportunity to meet jointly with representatives from federal, provincial and territorial health ministers.

*Government Orders**[English]*

This allowed us to have a frank and useful discussion of those issues which crossed traditional criminal justice and mental health boundaries.

I believe we must take a comprehensive view in developing meaningful solutions to the issue of high risk violent offenders. This involves seeking effective answers which draw on the facilities of federal, provincial and territorial systems.

I think it was helpful that the task force looked at the system as a whole. It examined strategies at its front end as well as situations in which offenders are approaching release into the community. The report stressed and ministers endorsed a focus on improved measures at the front end of the system so we would hopefully have fewer problems arising at the eleventh hour when an offender is nearing the point of release.

Implementation of the report is under way and we will continue to fully involve our provincial partners.

Some of the matters in the report require further development before they can be put into operation, while we have been able to move more immediately on others. For example, I announced the implementation of a flagging system which will assist prosecutors in identifying cases which would be appropriate for a dangerous offender application.

The House will recall that if the court at the time of conviction and sentencing rules the accused to be a dangerous offender, that person can be imprisoned indefinitely. In a large country such as Canada where there is a high degree of mobility it is not always easy for a provincial crown prosecutor in one corner of the country to have all the information available which would have a bearing on how a case may be prosecuted. The flagging system which also makes use of the Canadian police information centre will help make that information link.

Similarly, a research project, the crown files project, is nearing completion. This project will provide concrete information about the factors which are significant predictors of dangerousness and which are central to successful dangerous offender applications.

The Minister of Justice and I are also working on legislative changes to make it easier for provincial crown attorneys to make more frequent and more effective use than is the case at present of the existing dangerous offender provisions in the Criminal Code. One key element involves making an indefinite sentence of imprisonment the only sentencing option for those found by the courts to be dangerous offenders. Another would provide for new expanded presentence risk assessments in place of the current requirement for the evidence of two psychiatrists, one for the prosecution and one for the defence.

Another important amendment we are working on in line with the task force report is to change the Criminal Code to create a new category of long term offender which would give the courts a new sentencing option. This would require long term supervision of the offender for up to 10 years following the end of the offender's penitentiary term.

In May the Minister of Justice and I convened a forum involving constitutional and legal experts, including those working with police and with victims groups, to tackle the matter of those offenders who remain dangerous at the end of their court imposed sentence. The forum was a productive session that is assisting us in addressing some very fundamental issues such as constitutional questions and how we identify those offenders with the greatest risk of reoffending in a violent manner.

We are working to develop further legislative action to deal with this important and troubling aspect of the matter of high risk dangerous offenders.

• (1605)

We must recognize the criminal justice system is a system. Activities and events in one part of it have a ripple effect through all the other parts.

[Translation]

More vigorous law enforcement places increased demand on courts and corrections, prosecutorial policies can direct more or fewer offenders to community or prison, the availability of community programs may determine what sentences courts view as realistic.

[English]

Actions seen as positive from one perspective may have unintended negative side effects. Clearly the criminal justice system is very complex. Moreover, the various segments which make it up come under the authority of different levels of government.

Nevertheless, it is truly one which can work best only if it is well integrated and co-ordinated. It is clear all levels of government, all sectors of the system, social policy groups, police and victims groups must work together. That is one reason last year the government created a national crime prevention council.

I believe we have made an extremely good beginning on improving the criminal justice system in the interests of all Canadians over the past few years. I thank members of the House for all their efforts on the criminal justice front and I look forward to our continuing good co-operation.

I ask that the House give full and speedy approval to the bill in this third reading debate so its useful aspects, every part of the bill, can go into effect very soon to help ensure all Canadians have safer homes, safer streets and the best possible communities for themselves and for their children.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last spring in this House we debated Bill C-41 on sentencing. That bill was given royal assent on July 13. Bill C-45 is the legislative cousin of Bill C-41; it is a logical continuation to the bill on sentencing. One cannot function without the other, without placing the cohesion of our penal justice system in jeopardy.

Bill C-41 has now become a sort of road map for judges in determining sentences. Bill C-45 attempts to do likewise for the members of parole boards. It lays out the path to take, the *modus operandi* to be followed.

Today, we begin third reading of Bill C-45, a new step toward its passage by this House. This bill is wide-reaching in that it amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Records Act, the Prisons and Reformatories Act, and the Transfer of Offenders Act.

Bill C-45 does not reform the key principles underlying the detention of offenders, and that is a great pity. Despite its obvious shortcomings, however, Bill C-45 represents at least a baby step in the right direction. The Bloc Québécois has always had protection of the public at heart, particularly the protection of child victims of sexual offenders.

That protection requires a more rigid approach to parole, to the calculation of eligibility in consecutive or concurrent sentences, and to the conditions for release. A totally new tack is needed, but Bill C-45 veers only slightly off in a new direction, far too little.

Public safety must no longer be jeopardized by efforts to rehabilitate offenders. The solicitor general has caught the germ of compromise from his colleague at justice.

• (1610)

In its red book, the Liberal government promised to enhance public safety. Bill C-45, however, remains silent on protecting a specific category of victims.

Let me explain. The bill will change the criteria used to determine whether the perpetrator of a sexual offence involving a child should serve his full sentence. At the present time, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act permits the National Parole Board to detain, until the end of their sentence, sex offenders and other high-risk offenders who are likely to commit an offence causing death or serious harm after their release.

When the victims are children, the serious harm may not become apparent for a number of years. The victim may be too young to express the impact of what was done. It is therefore

difficult for the Parole Board to prove that a child has suffered serious harm, to justify keeping an offender in detention.

Clause 42 of Bill C-45 would, in the case of a sexual offence involving a child, relieve the National Parole Board of the need to establish the presence or likelihood of serious harm. It would be enough for the Board to be convinced of the likelihood of a further sexual offence involving a child before the expiration of the sentence according to law.

In other words, if the Board is convinced that the risk is too great, the offender is kept behind bars. The burden of proof is substantially reduced.

As I said earlier, this is a small step in the right direction. However, this measure only affects sexual offenders whose victims are children.

What about adult women who are sexually assaulted? Are they not entitled to the same protection? When we talk about harm assessment, could the real harm possibly not become apparent until many years later in the case of women as well? If the individual assaulted a woman, it will be easier for him to get parole than if he assaulted a child.

The entire public needs protection, children of course, but also women, the other victims of sexual abuse. The solicitor general should reread the preamble to Bill C-72 which is about the problem created by the use of self-induced intoxication as a defence in cases of sexual assault, for instance. The victim in the Daviault case was 67 at the time of the assault.

For the benefit of the minister and those who have again overlooked women as victims of sexual assault, this is what it says in the preamble of what is now Chapter 32 of the Statutes of Canada, 1995, and I quote: "Whereas the Parliament of Canada is gravely concerned about the incidence of violence in Canadian society; whereas the Parliament of Canada recognizes that violence has a particularly disadvantaging impact on the equal participation of women and children in society and on the rights of women and children to security of the person and to the equal protection and benefit of the law as guaranteed by sections 7, 15 and 28 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*; . . . whereas the Parliament of Canada desires to promote and help to ensure the full protection of the rights guaranteed under sections 7, 11, 15 and 28 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* for all Canadians, including those who are or may be victims of violence".

That is what this government has to offer the public. Hollow sounding words that mean nothing except to Liberals suffering from acute navel-gazing.

The Liberal government says it wants to protect victims and potential victims, but when we look at the means it proposes to achieve this, we see the government still does not take this seriously.

Government Orders

• (1615)

I ask the solicitor general to go and recite this magnificent preamble to women who are victims of sexual aggression. I think he would have very attentive listeners.

What victims of sexual aggression should be getting from the solicitor general is the assurance that their aggressors will remain behind bars as long as possible and not return to haunt them through premature release.

What the solicitor general is telling them today is that they will not enjoy the protection the law should be giving them, because they were adults at the time the sexual aggression took place.

In 1994, 31,690 cases of sexual aggression were reported in this country. The victims may be divided as follows: approximately one third of them were under 12 years of age; another third were between the ages of 12 and 17. This leaves us with more than 10,000 adult victims. Are they not entitled to the same protection? Will the solicitor general finally have the courage to say that his promise of safer homes and safer streets applies to only one category of victim and not to others?

The solicitor general confided to this House on September 20, 1994, and I quote: "Turning to the bill itself, I believe it is important because it addresses significant issues of public protection in the area of corrections and parole. These are issues on which this government promised action in that same red book as part of its agenda to bring about safe homes and safe streets for Canadians. With this bill we are delivering on these promises".

When the solicitor general said his government was delivering on its promises, I wonder what promises he is referring to. Certainly not the one about everyone being entitled to the same protection at home and in the street. The government did not deliver on this promise. Bill C-45 is merely the beginnings of a solution.

I will give the solicitor general only a passing grade, because this is not the only failing of the bill.

The solicitor general promised on September 20, 1994 as well, and I quote: "We will also be making other improvements in the availability of treatment for sex offenders in the community and in prison".

In theory, gradual supervised reintegration into the community and the provision of help and support services constitute, according to some, the safest way for criminals to be released. I say in theory because, unless he agrees to undergo treatment, the offender may be a time-bomb just waiting for an early release to explode.

Another major flaw of Bill C-45 is that it says absolutely nothing about the kind of treatment individuals found guilty of a sexual offence involving not only a child but any adult victim should be given. It is wrong to say that the mere fact of making

treatment more easily available will automatically reduce the risk of repeat offences.

Let me explain. At present, section 88 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act states that treatment shall be conditional and dependent upon the inmate voluntarily giving an informed consent thereto and "an inmate has the right to refuse treatment or withdraw from treatment at any time".

The treatment referred to includes the care of a disorder of thought, mood, perception, orientation or memory that significantly impairs judgment, behaviour, the capacity to recognize reality or the ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.

In most cases, this treatment is for the very behaviour disorders that have landed the offender in prison.

• (1620)

If treatment remains elective and dependent upon the good will of inmates, those who refuse treatment are in fact refusing to change their behaviour and will not have changed a single bit by the time they are released.

The fact that Bill C-45 remains silent on this subject is disquieting to say the least. Remaining silent when it comes to tackling the real problem and boasting about keeping promises is the kind of attitude that is the trademark of this government. With respect to public safety, the solicitor general certainly did not deliver.

We have every right to wonder why Bill C-45, whose provisions affect thousands of inmates who are released into our communities, remains silent in this respect.

For example, in 1993, 10,317 inmates were granted full parole by national and provincial parole boards. Full parole is a form of conditional release, granted at the discretion of parole authorities that allows an offender to serve part of his sentence in the community.

Parole boards are administrative tribunals with powers to grant, refuse, amend, end or revoke parole for inmates.

Bill C-45 corrects a shortcoming that I have denounced several times in this House. The Federal Court has a general power of supervision over the National Parole Board. This is not enough. There was a need to develop some safeguard mechanisms within the framework of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Bill C-45 provides for disciplinary or remedial measures against commissioners who do not follow good practices with competence and diligence.

Under new clause 155.2, the chairperson may recommend that a member of the board be investigated. The investigator reports to the solicitor general and may recommend removal or suspension without pay if he thinks that the member in question is unable to do the job properly, for example, because he or she is guilty of misconduct or has failed in the performance of his or her duties.

Government Orders

The National Parole Board is an administrative tribunal with significant discretionary powers; the solicitor general had a duty to act on our repeated demands. For once, we got our message across to the other side of this House.

As for the Reform members, it does not augur well. They continue to swagger about and think of themselves as gladiators in the parliamentary arena.

It is easy to behave like a cowboy when discussing parole and conditional release. Our western cowboys do so every day with their thundering comments on sad cases which, I agree, still affect too many victims and their families. But it is easy to make political mileage at the expense of these people.

We realize that our criminal justice system is not perfect and that there will always be room for improvement. Bill C-45 is flawed in certain respects, but it is nevertheless a step in the direction which the Bloc has always advocated.

However, our reform cowboys would rather get rid of the whole system to bring justice to the victims. The wild west has a way of its own. The member for Wild Rose best exemplifies that way of doing things. During the debate at report stage, he invited the solicitor general's parliamentary secretary to visit his riding and to explain the government's ideas regarding Bill C-45. The member for Wild Rose said, and I quote: "You want to sell my people in Wild Rose all your wonderful solutions to crime? You are welcome and good luck. If you think I am loud, wait until you get out there".

• (1625)

As you can see, Reform members have innate knowledge and they know what is good for Canada. This is yet another reason for Quebecers to distance themselves. Quebec uses a different approach because it does not deal with the same type of criminals. The results conclusively show that we are on the right track and that our system should serve as an example.

In 1994, Quebec had the lowest rate in Canada for violent crimes of any category, including sexual assault, assault and kidnapping. Quebec also has the best record for other types of offence to the Criminal Code, including the violation of conditions for release on bail, crimes against public order, arson, prostitution and use of offensive weapons.

Western solutions are not adequate for Quebec. Quebecers are peaceful people. They advocate civic-mindedness, tolerance and balanced solutions to their legitimate concerns regarding public safety. Although not perfect, Bill C-45 deserves the support of the Bloc Quebecois.

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where the member who just spoke gets her information about the west. Perhaps she might want to visit out there. I live out west and I do not in any way meet the description which she has given the House. I am a little bemused by that kind of simplistic labelling. Perhaps she will have an opportunity to see other parts of the country one day.

Today we are debating Bill C-45. It has been introduced in the House, examined by a committee and is now at third reading which means that if it passes third reading it will become law very shortly. Therefore, I would like to give a bit of an analysis of this bill and whether it could be improved.

As the House is aware, the Reform Party introduced quite a number of motions to this bill, none of which were accepted by the government. Those motions in our view would have gone a long way toward achieving the stated aim of the bill which is to make our justice and corrections system more effective, particularly in protecting the public. As most members know, there have been 78 re-offences by people who were out on parole in the last year. These people have killed, terrorized and invaded the homes and lives of innocent people.

Canadians have been asking for many months that something concrete and decisive be done about this situation. Therefore, we looked anxiously at Bill C-45 to see whether that had in fact been the result of this bill. Unfortunately we find that it is not.

Bill C-45 is very technical. It has a lot of administrative details about the transfer of prisoners, the calculation of sentences and the figuring out of when people are eligible for parole and when they are not. However, there are some real flaws in the bill. It is interesting to note that the bill was floating around the Department of the Solicitor General in the last Parliament when the Tories were governing. It has now been introduced by the Liberals in a watered down version. It is not even as effective, as strong or as decisive as the original bill. We find that extremely unfortunate.

We feel a number of the provisions in this bill should have been and could have been made much stronger and given a lot more teeth. We wish the government had listened to those proposals. Unfortunately it did not.

• (1630)

For example, we talk about the detention of people who commit offences while on parole. When people are on parole, given a chance to go back out into society and be upright citizens, they have been told: "You do not have to serve the whole sentence you have been given. Now you can go back out into society". We do not have in the bill a requirement that when people abuse that privilege they have to serve the rest of the

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sentence they should have served when they were out on parole and the entire sentence for the new offence. Again they are eligible for parole on the second offence they committed when they have already abused the privileges and the opportunity they were given as parolees. We really object to that.

When offenders have shown once that they have no respect for the privilege of parole, an early opportunity not to have to serve their full sentence, why should they be given the same consideration the next time out? How many times do they have to be sentenced and not have to serve their full sentences before we start sending the message that we really mean business about people who violate the rights of others?

That was not done in the bill. It should also have demanded full term detention for all dangerous offenders deemed capable of repeating their offences.

As justice critics we visited prisons over the last few weeks to familiarize ourselves with aspects of the justice system. One of the questions I like to ask when we talk with prison administrators, representatives of guards and prisoners is: "If there were one thing you could change about our justice system, what would it be?" Quite often the answer includes some demand or plea.

Officials and frontline workers in prisons know the offenders who are likely to reoffend. They know these people. They work with them every day. They know their attitudes. They know the way they think. They know the way they operate. They know how they respond to opportunities they have been given. They say: "When we know good and well that these people will reoffend, please let us keep them off the streets and out of our communities".

The bill was a golden opportunity for the government to allow that to happen. It did not do it and it did not support a Reform amendment that would have allowed it.

There are administrators and guards in our prisons who say: "Please do not make us put these people who are a danger to society back out on the streets". Our government says that it is all right and out they go. There has to be something wrong with our justice system. It is no wonder the people who work in the system are as frustrated as the citizens and the victims of repeat offenders.

Other people have mentioned the concern in society that sexual assault is not deemed in and of itself to be a danger or to cause harm to adults. Clause 129(3) of the bill states that the parole board may order an offender not to be released from imprisonment before the expiration of his term if the board is satisfied that the offender is likely, if released, to commit an offence causing serious harm to another person or a sexual offence involving a child before the expiration of what otherwise would have been the offender's sentence.

We are very unhappy with the distinction made in this clause between serious harm to another person and sexual offence involving a child. We would have thought that offenders who were deemed to be likely to commit a sexual offence against anybody should be made, at the very least, to serve their full term. Never mind going on, as we have suggested, and being incarcerated indefinitely if they are deemed to be likely to commit a sexual offence.

● (1635)

Sexual offences against children are the only crimes that would make a person serve his full term. We just wonder about that. The government makes very loud noises about caring and compassion, particularly for women, and then it says that a sexual offence against an adult woman may not be deemed to be causing serious harm. It has to be shown that a sexual offence against an adult woman involves serious harm.

Sexual offence against any female whether she is eight or eighty is by definition a serious harm to the individual. I am very surprised the government would make a distinction and say that sexual offences against children will keep somebody incarcerated and not be too concerned about sexual offences against any other woman of an older age. I object to that and I think all Canadians should object to that. I find it a very unacceptable distinction in the legislation.

Much is made by the government side about holding the parole board more accountable. All the bill does is allow the chairman of the parole board to call an inquiry when an offender released on parole by the board reoffends. Can we imagine a chairman of the board who let an offender out who reoffended being the best person to decide when the actions and the decisions made by the parole board should be investigated? Is that not a bit like asking the fox to guard the hen house?

If we have a parole board that has screwed up, that has let somebody out who has hurt other people, should the chairman of that body decide whether the particular decision should be investigated?

One of our amendments was to mandate an investigation of the parole board decision in any case where an offender was let out into the public on parole and reoffended. Here we have a situation where only the chairman of the parole board can mandate that kind of investigation.

When Liberal members applaud the bill as putting restrictions on the operations of the parole board, the public should be aware of how toothless those restrictions really are in that the power to hold the board accountable can only be exercised by the chairman of the board. Certainly that is not what the public has in mind when it talks about holding the parole board more accountable and having its foul-ups reviewed.

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There was an opportunity in the bill to do a number of things that the public has been asking for. Yet we see that the bill has fallen far short. We in the Reform Party are in a real dilemma about the bill. The weak, almost ineffectual steps taken in the bill will not necessarily hurt anything. The government should have done much to help straighten out the system and get it more decisively and solidly on the side of making sure that our justice, corrections and parole systems really do the job for Canadians. The bill just does not do it.

What do we do? There is nothing here we could not support because there is really nothing in there at all, except a bunch of administrative add-ons that may or may not make very much difference. How can we support a bill that should have done something substantive for Canadians, for the criminal justice system and for the reforms that the Liberals are so fond of talking about, promising and saying are a piece of the action, when it just does not deliver?

On balance, when the government introduces a bill that should have done the job decisively, strongly and effectively and fails miserably, how can we support that? How can we say this is something worthy of support? We cannot do that.

• (1640)

For some of the reasons I have mentioned and some of the reasons my colleagues will be mentioning, we say to the government that the bill is not good enough for Canadians. It is not something the House should support. It is not something we can in any way suggest does the job that should be done.

We ask the government to take back the bill and give us something that does the job. Then we will support it 100 per cent.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today on the motion for third reading of Bill C-45, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and related statutes.

Recent polls and letters received from constituents indicate that crime is a major concern among Canadians today. Among other vital issues such as national unity and the health care system, individuals are greatly concerned with crime. Only matters relating to the economy and the deficit seem more important to our fellow citizens. It is clear that the government must assume leadership in this area.

We have already made a commitment to address the issue. The red book stipulated our commitment to fight crime and violence by more effective measures and social reform. Last fall the solicitor general introduced the bill as part of a strategic framework of initiatives for safe homes and safe streets for all Canadians.

I will address the second main area of change resulting from Bill C-45, the accountability of National Parole Board members. However first let me briefly explain the concept of parole.

Canada's discretionary conditional release system is based on the principle that a gradual, controlled re-entry to the community better serves the interests of public safety than does direct release. It is a way of managing with supervision and conditions the transition from incarceration to life in the community. The numbers support the principle.

Clearly the performance of the National Parole Board is only as good as the decision it makes. Consequently the credibility and accountability of the board are directly linked to the qualifications and judgment exercised by its own members and to the quality, completeness and accuracy of the information provided to the board for review. The requirement for board members to have the relevant skills and knowledge to make sound decisions is essential in order to perform their responsibilities professionally.

Board members face the difficult task of making decisions about the timing and conditions of an offender's release in a manner that contributes to the long term protection of society. It is therefore only logical that the individuals who make those decisions are chosen from the best qualified candidates.

As mentioned by my hon. colleagues, there has already been considerable progress in this area and in others. Over the last several months a number of important events and activities have taken place which have helped to shape a renewed course for the National Parole Board.

This was largely brought about with the appointment of a new chairperson, Mr. Willie Gibbs, who brought to the board impressive knowledge and experience in the criminal justice system. Mr. Gibbs was chosen after a comprehensive selection process, and a similar system is now in place for all member appointments. Already new board members have been recruited under these provisions. It should be noted also that the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs has the ability, which it has been using, to call new appointees before the committee for questioning.

Let me explain these measures in more detail. These appointment provisions include a set of revised criteria which all applicants must meet, emphasizing experience and knowledge of the criminal justice system and in particular corrections and conditional release systems in Canada.

National Parole Board vacancies are now advertised in the *Canada Gazette* and include the qualifications and abilities required. After a screening process those who ranked highest in meeting the criteria are interviewed by a committee chaired by either the chairperson or the executive vice-chair of the National Parole Board. A list of successful candidates is then submitted

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to the Solicitor General of Canada. That list is then reviewed and sent to the Privy Council Office for the final appointment.

In all regions of Canada applicants have gone through the process and new part time and full time board members have been selected.

• (1645)

The revised appointment process does not preclude the fact that current board members are competent, but it does underscore that the Government of Canada recognizes the difficulties of being a board member and ensuring the challenges are met with the kind of knowledge and competence these positions demand.

In addition to the improvements I have already mentioned, the National Parole Board adopted a code of professional conduct and performance standards to guide all board members in their duties. The specific provisions of the code of professional conduct cover such areas as promotion of integrity and independence, general conduct, conflict of interest, decision making, conduct during proceedings, continuing professional development and disqualification and reporting, to name just a few.

These standards and the code of conduct were created to better articulate board members' individual accountability as decision makers and to preserve the integrity of the board itself. They represent the members' acceptance of the highest ideals of professional conduct and the responsibility of board members for decisions that directly affect the interests and safety of entire communities as well as individual victims, offenders and their families. Most important, these high standards promote respect for the law and will help to improve public confidence.

The proposed amendments for the adoption of a disciplinary system for board members were made in order to correct a board member's performance if it has fallen below acceptable standards. The enactment authorizes the chairperson of the National Parole Board to recommend to the minister that an inquiry be conducted by a federal court judge to determine whether a board member should be suspended without pay, be removed from his or her office or be subject to other disciplinary or remedial measures. This measure is not intended to second guess board members or to respond punitively where a case has gone wrong despite everyone's best efforts. Rather, this would be a review mechanism available where a member is clearly not performing up to acceptable standards.

The solicitor general has stated that he hopes this provision will never be used. I am confident this is a hope all of us share on all sides of the House, as it will mean that the renewed appointment process and proper training are working well.

The solicitor general also mentioned the need to improve the quality of decision making at the National Parole Board. This is another area in which the board continues to adapt to changing needs to ensure the best possible decisions are made. These measures have already been implemented and I name here just a few.

First, the board has created a national training framework. Board members require comprehensive orientation and continuous and continual training and development to keep abreast of changes in law, policies and procedures, risk assessment and management and generally to improve their performance.

Second, thorough reviews of specific case audits in national investigations are used as training tools to ensure procedures are followed and duties are performed in accordance with the law. Investigation findings and recommendations may also be used in performance appraisal systems.

Third, all board members are currently subject to annual reviews of their performance. The first round of appraisals is now completed and has provided the board with an opportunity to address any weaknesses identified, provide the needed training and take appropriate corrective action in certain cases.

Fourth, a new training package is provided to board members which addresses the area of risk assessment alone. This cohesive training package focuses on how current research, theory and opinion in the human and social sciences can assist National Parole Board members in their decision making relating to risk management and risk reduction.

It is obvious that despite the most recent and precise risk assessment tools available, tragedies can and do occur. These tragedies affect all of us deeply and we must react by seeking solutions to prevent further tragedies. However, we have all come to recognize that each case represents different and often complex challenges and that even the best research can yield less than perfect predictions of reoffending. Our corrections and conditional release system is based on human assessments of fellow human beings. Even with all of the available information, predicting human behaviour has never been and will never be an exact science.

I think it is important for Canadians to have a clear understanding about the success of parole as measured by recidivism rates. A successful parole is measured by completion of sentence time without revocation of parole. Follow-up studies done for the parole board over the last few years have shown a success rate of approximately 70 per cent for full parole releases granted by the board. Studies showed that some 15 per cent of full parolees were returned to prison because of breach of a parole condition, while 13 per cent committed a new crime.

• (1650)

Primary consideration of any parole board decision revolves on the concern always for public protection. We should also note that the average annual cost to incarcerate an adult in Canada is \$46,000, while supervision of an adult in the community costs on average \$8,500 per year.

There are other areas in which we can work together to minimize the risk posed by offenders. Bill C-45, including its changes to the National Parole Board, clearly represents a step toward the government's commitment to public safety and security. The changes dealing with the National Parole Board have not been created and will not be carried out in a vacuum. They are only as good as the criminal justice system in which they operate. Every effort must be made to work in partnership with other agencies and with the communities we represent so that use of the limited government resources is maximized to ensure public safety at every stage in the offender's contact with the criminal justice system.

As the MP for London West, I have spent time in my city visiting the facilities and the people involved with our parole system. As the solicitor general has stated, the system will work best if it is well integrated and co-ordinated.

I am sure we all seek an efficient, professional corrections and conditional release system. To this end, I join with my other colleagues in the House in urging all members of the Chamber to support the amendments reflected in Bill C-45.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do have one question relating to the statistics and the demographics the hon. member has put before the House.

I constantly hear from the government, in particular in the last speech, about success rate, how successful the parole board has been and how successful the management of crime has been as far as the government is concerned. I would like to ask what the member or the government would do with the unsuccessful circumstances. For instance, I got a telephone call in my riding from a parole board member who went on and on about the 87 per cent success rate. I reminded that individual that this means there is a 13 per cent failure rate and that it is the failures that are affecting family after family.

When will the government look at the failure problem and not rely on statistics from the government department that has the problems? Those statistics are typically about success rates. Could the member please respond?

Mrs. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

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The parole system is very difficult to understand one has not been involved with it personally or if it has not been thoroughly explained.

Failures will always occur in any system invented and dealt with by humans. Unfortunately, we are not clones of one perfect being on this planet and there will be error. We have to strive to create the best system we are capable of.

The law will change and will continue to change. I do not think any of these ministers who are trying to accommodate the concern of the public and the reality of our system of justice in the country will stop providing better and better legislation as time goes on. We move forward one step at a time.

What I want to point out to the member is that what this act talks about are sections dealing with the parole decisions. It is a fact that we do have more successful interventions by our justice system with the parole system where people get conditional releases than if they just hit the wall where they are released into the public, where there is no parole given.

• (1655)

In actual fact, our success rate is much higher than if somebody comes to the end of the time they have to serve by law and walks onto the street, because there has been no management in the community with the assistance and the tools that we can provide, and this act provides, if we just say the time is up and let them go. Our success rate is better with this parole system. Fortunately for Canadians, these are the statistics and they are correct.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Osvaldo Nunez (Bourassa, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I read with great attention the speech by the hon. member. I found it interesting, especially when it comes to improving the parole board. I think there is a need to improve the way the board operates as well as the appointment process. I hope that the government will keep its word because we were also promised that there would be no partisan appointments to the IRB, the Immigration and Refugee Board, that appointments would be based on competence, but we are not quite there yet.

My question has to do with the application of this bill. Why does it not apply to sexual offenders whose victims are adult women? As the hon. member for Saint-Hubert said, last year, over 10,000 cases involved adults and not only sexually abused children.

[*English*]

Mrs. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way. I do want to address that because there is a misapprehension that we somehow care less about adult sexual assault victims. That is not the case.

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The case is that we really want an equalized treatment. Most adult women who are sexually assaulted do realize and recognize very rapidly the impact of that assault and are usually in some manner able to articulate that well. The parole board can be given information by the victim of that assault and that will be in the case preparation material. They can file materials that will help build that case. However, that is not true and has not worked for young sexual assault victims. There are many instances where young children who are sexually assaulted have great difficulty in articulating this and sometimes keep secret what happened.

In that instance, we have taken corrective action in this act. It is not to minimize assault to any person, but there is a mechanism there to prevent something that was not allowing us to realize the impact of the serious harm done to somebody.

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for the fifth time to speak on Bill C-45.

Before addressing some of the specific things that are not in this bill and were in fact refused by this government to be put in this bill, I want to talk about a couple of semi-quotes that were spoken here today.

First, my colleague across the way says we must move forward one step at a time. This is once again the Liberal way of managing, one step at a time. It astounds me that this government cannot take a bigger step rather than one little step at a time. What is the problem with this government which insists we take just a little bit at a time? A good example is the Young Offenders Act that the justice minister spoke about at noon today in front of the Parliament buildings. He expounded on how good a job the Liberals have done on the Young Offenders Act. It is a poor job. It is an abysmal failure. One only has to ask the victims of violence groups who are involved with the Young Offenders Act what they think. They will tell us it is an abysmal failure. One step at a time is not good enough today.

• (1700)

I have a couple of other comments. The solicitor general in talking to this bill said: "Sex offences are considered more serious against children than adults". Just where does a Liberal government get that idea from?

I could refer the government time and time again to cases I have been involved with relating to adults who were viciously and sexually attacked who would disagree with that comment. I know a lady by the name of Joan who is watching now. We went to court together to deal with the creep who got her. Joan is 63 years old. I do not think for a minute that Joan, who was sexually attacked, would agree that sex offences are considered more serious against children than adults. What kind of statement is that coming from any government much less a Liberal government?

The previous speaker said: "Most adults realize the effects of a sexual assault". That is some kind of convoluted reasoning to provide more impetus, something for the victims of child assault than for adults. What kind of reasoning is that? Most adults realize the effects of a sexual assault. That is a reason to downplay the effects of a sexual assault on an adult? What kind of logic do we have in this House of Commons?

They can shake their heads but we are right.

An hon. member: You're far right.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Far right, thank you.

The solicitor general talked about bringing forward the Young Offenders Act and how the government did a good job on it. He then talked about gun control, another abysmal failure of dealing with crime. We now have to realize that the largest percentage of this bill was in the House before. You may recognize it. It was brought in by that party from Jurassic Park. That goes to show us where those two parties come from, the same bent. There is no change and there is no plan.

There is going to be some accountability in the National Parole Board. When I asked my question of the previous speaker I asked it for a clear reason. It was because of the numerous discussions I have had with parole board members and my attendance at numerous parole board hearings. The difficulty I have with some of the reasoning of the government comes from the fact that it leans on success rates. Success rates, while nice, do not give any accommodation to the failure rates, the victims.

When a parole board member phones me and says they have an 87 per cent success rate, I tell them to give some thought about the 13 per cent failure rate. Those are the people coming through our doors.

Let us have a little look to see what things were put forward to the government by the Reform Party which the government said: "No, we reject that in Bill C-45". Let us see if the Canadian people would agree with this Liberal government. We said: "Why not provide for compensation to victims of crime and for medical treatment for victims of sexual assault to be paid for by the perpetrator?" Was that accepted by the government? No, indeed. Why? Ask a Liberal. If Canadians were to ask the people on this side of the House we would say there is more to the problems of a victim than just room and board payback.

• (1705)

This is the government that still gives old age security, CPP, guaranteed income supplement and GST rebates to inmates. The government is still intent on saying it can now introduce a 30 per cent charge for room and board. Come on.

We talked about no statutory release for violent offenders. Would the government go along with that? No, it would not. What is wrong with no statutory release for violent offenders? The government knows darn well that the greater percentage of inmates will reoffend when they get out. If it does not believe

that through statistical data it should ask the wardens, talk to the inmates. They will confirm it.

We said: "Why not ensure that criminals serve their full sentences if conditional release is revoked or suspended?" What is wrong with that? The Liberals do not agree. In other words, if an inmate gets out on unescorted temporary absence and reoffends he is hauled back in. His parole is revoked but he is entitled to apply and gets back out on parole. If these people are getting out on parole, perpetrating the same or similar crimes, do you think they have been rehabilitated? Do you really think it is a wise idea to allow them to apply for parole again? My goodness.

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask that the hon. member please direct his remarks to the chair. I would be most obliged if he would do that.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong with this kind of thinking. In one particular parole board hearing I was at, an individual was before it for a revocation of his parole. He was a fraud artist. What was he doing? He was setting up his next scam while on parole. What happened? His parole was revoked. Is he entitled to get back out? Yes, indeed. He can apply again for parole.

Something has to be wrong somewhere if the government cannot acknowledge the fact that there has not been rehabilitation, that this individual will reoffend and that it is not healthy for the victims to allow him out. That does not seem like such a difficult problem to resolve.

We said we would ensure that criminals served their full sentences if conditional release is revoked or suspended. The government said no, it cannot agree with that.

Let us talk about a child sex offender registry. We suggested that a complete registry be established. The government says: "No. Do not do that. CPIC will look after it". CPIC is the system run by the police.

• (1710)

Why can the Liberals not acknowledge the fact that everybody is concerned about sex offenders and everybody wants and should have the right to know? They should have that right.

If I am living in any community in this country, before my children go out on the street I want to know if there is a sex offender living next door. It is not appropriate simply to leave it to the police. The police are not going to sit outside this guy's door all day long.

An hon. member: They are too busy registering guns.

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Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): It only stands to reason that the police get involved with the next sex offence of that sex offender after he perpetrates the crime. The best defence for victims is to know who is living next door or down the street.

That is why people like Sandra Cunningham are leaders in this country. She was out in front listening to the wonderful words of the justice minister today. She prints the tri-cities child care guide. She prints the pictures, the MOs, the dossiers of pedophiles. That is necessary in this country.

I know there is not much agreement across the way because probably that pedophile's rights have been infringed upon.

Alan Winter came from my riding. The Liberals call these isolated incidents. I have more isolated incidents in my riding than most. At last count Alan Winter had victimized 31 children. He was incarcerated as a dangerous offender. He got 16 years. Unbeknownst to every single one of those victims he was allowed out in just over five years. Nobody knew he was out. There was no registry. I am not even sure the police knew about him. The only reason they found out is because more victims were going to lay charges against him and they said: "He is not in here any more". It does not make sense. This is not partisan politics, this is the real world. These are real, sincere problems.

Another amendment we asked for was a mandatory review of parole board decisions where a violent offender is released early and commits another violent offence during release time. That was rejected by the government.

I have spoken about Wayne Perkin in the House more than once. Motion No. 19 was very appropriate for Wayne Perkin. Good old Wayne knocked on a door in Aldergrove in my riding and encouraged the lady to go out in her garden shed to get a lawnmower. When she went in with him what did good old Wayne do? He beat her over the head with a hammer, taped her hands behind her back, injected her with cocaine and raped her. That was not sexual assault as the lawyers would call it, it was rape.

What did Wayne get courtesy of our judiciary in Canada? Six years. Her life will never be the same.

• (1715)

The parole board let him out early, the good old parole board. What did Wayne do? One would think maybe a miracle had happened and after two or three years and maybe good old Wayne turned into a good fellow. Maybe he took an anger management course. They let him out early.

Mr. Dhaliwal: Do not get too angry.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Do not get too angry? What do these people think we are talking about here? Good old Wayne went into an apartment and injected Angela Richards

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with cocaine. Is this familiar? He stabbed her 20 times, killing her.

When I was sitting in court during the sentencing I thought there was something missing in the courtroom besides the 50 of us who were allowed in crying. Where was the parole board that let him out early? Angela Richards would be alive today. The board should have been sitting there listening to the rest of us cry. Then there should have been a mandatory review. Those responsible should have been fired and taken out the door as fast as Wayne Perkin was when he was let out of prison.

What do we ask for in the bill? We would have required a mandatory review of parole board decisions when a violent offender is released early and commits another violent offence during release time. Is that too much to ask? The answer over there is no, we do not need that.

Perhaps the Wayne Perkin case was an isolated incident. The members across know it was not. For the life of me I do not understand why these backbenchers do not get on the cabinet to get its members to change their minds on some of these things.

It is like digging holes on a beach; the water keeps coming and the sand keeps filling the hole. How do we make this government listen? How many people does it take out in front of the House of Commons to put some sense into a Liberal government? Is it that it just wants a really good fight in the next election? We will see who comes out on top on this issue.

What I talked about the other night bears repeating, the mentality we are dealing with in corrections today. If I can recall all 23 reasons why it pays to be a criminal in this country I will riddle them off. We are talking about charging an inmate 30 per cent for room and board. It is not 70 per cent, not 100 per cent, but 30 per cent. They cannot have very much behind closed doors in prison.

Let us see what an inmate gets in prison and what our senior citizens or those with little or no income get on the outside. We know they get room and board. We know they get counselling, which is good. Anger management courses always work, they say. They have the right to refuse to work. They get free condoms, let us not forget that. They have the right to call their legal aid lawyer when they want. It is ironic that we have a government today that had to serve an injunction to Clifford Olson to stop him from filing lawsuits against the crown. At last count he had 30.

• (1720)

They have bleach for their needles; project bleach, as it is called in my riding. They get a one ounce bottle of bleach to prevent the spread of HIV. They sterilize their needles for cocaine intake.

Wait a minute, something tells me this is the same kind of logic we are dealing with for the parole board. There is a better way. Stop the drugs from coming into the prison. They are not allowed alcohol in prisons so perhaps they would allow the prisoners to have Diet Coke and ice cubes in the event they bring in booze. This is the convoluted logic we see.

Let us not forget any additional income an inmate may have. They get old age security. I found one individual, a double murderer, getting old age security. My grandmother would be less than pleased about that. They get the Canada pension plan, the guaranteed income supplement and GST rebates.

It is so frustrating to drive by Ferndale penitentiary, a couple of miles from my house, and see a nine hole golf course. It is frustrating when the law-abiding citizen has to go up the road and pay \$30 or \$40. I asked the warden why there was a nine hole golf course. The answer was for rehabilitation. They have to learn to get along on the outside. There is a difference. Many of us do not golf today. It is expensive. All of us have to pay for it.

If the government is trying to rehabilitate them I suggest it is going about it the wrong way. If members think this is Reform rhetoric, ask the employees of corrections. They will say some of this is a waste of time. It is not right.

When we compare people on the outside to people on the inside we wonder who is getting punished. They offer lots of taxes. They offer frustration. When we checked to see how much smokes are inside a prison compared with outside, they run anywhere from 42 cents to \$1.62 cheaper per pack.

With Bill C-45 the government is out to lunch.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the comments I have heard from the Reform member, one would think we were opening up the prison gates and letting the prisoners go free all over the country to commit murder and mayhem. What we are doing is tightening up the system, toughening up the system, having more concern for the protection of Canadians.

• (1725)

I suppose if the Reform Party members were writing this bill it would be perfect and another crime would never be committed in Canada. If Reform Party members are planning to vote against this piece of legislation perhaps they would like to explain why they want to vote against holding parole board members more accountable for decisions they make and why they want to vote against retaining people who are a danger to society, particularly a danger to children.

I do consider a crime against a child as the most serious, most heinous crime that can be committed. That is not one bit to undermine the horrendous damage done by any crime against

any person, particularly a crime of violence or crimes that violate the sanctity of the person, as sexual assault or rape does.

When added to that is the abuse of the innocence of a child, I regard that as the most horrible thing anyone can do. As a woman I well understand—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Fraser Valley West will have the right to reply.

Mr. White (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, it is not right to assume the Liberals would be opening up the gates and letting these prisoners go free. In many cases I am not sure why they would want to go free. That was precisely my point.

It is difficult to oppose at times some bills in the House. This is where I get to the problem with the Liberal government legislation. Those members come half way to doing the job and we are saying the government has to take it all the way.

What do we do? We are in a conundrum of either supporting it or saying the government has not gone far enough. The government makes it difficult in those situations to get agreement from this side. That is truly unfortunate because the amendments to the bill I mentioned were not unreasonable.

The example the member gave about a crime against a child being a more severe crime is not the point. The point is if there is a sexual crime against a child or an adult, make them both tough. Do not isolate the child. Make it child and adult. Why could the government not have done that? That is the point.

The government is taking these issues half way. If it would take them all the way and incorporate some of these things and toughen up on this crime like the people of the country are asking for, there would be support from this side of the House.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

THE UNDERGROUND ECONOMY

The House resumed, from May 18, 1995, consideration of the motion that, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the following initiatives for addressing the underground economy: (a) an enhanced information campaign to educate the public and to encourage their participation in addressing the problem; (b) a limited amnesty on interest and penalties otherwise payable when a taxpayer voluntarily de-

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clares income previously undeclared; (c) a tax credit to taxpayers on home improvements and renovations to provide an inducement to create the essential paper trail and to serve as one of the primary vehicles for the information campaign.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion put forward by the hon. member for Mississauga South regarding the underground economy. I would like to begin by addressing the thrust of his proposal and comment on its three elements, because this proposal is really threefold.

Let me say right away that we agree with the thrust of the proposal, because I think everyone agrees that action must be taken to tackle the problem of underground economy. There are all kinds of numbers being put forward and debates taking place, some excessive, some not, but the fact remains that a lot of money is slipping through the government's fingers.

Naturally, taxpayers are not the only ones at fault here. It is because the tax system is becoming more and more complex and less and less acceptable to taxpayers, to the point that they feel justified in turning to the underground economy.

Let us look at the three components of the member's motion. First, he proposes an enhanced information campaign to educate the public. I think everyone will agree with that suggestion. However, we must be careful not to end up with some complex bureaucratic structure merely to explain the harmful consequences of an underground economy.

I think the public is quite well aware of the issue. However, such a measure would certainly be useful, and it would also be consistent with the concept of the people's responsibility as citizens. As elected representatives, we all have an obligation to promote individual responsibility, and we must also serve as an example. It might be necessary to make some members and ministers aware of the impact of the measures which they take and which lead people to reject our tax system.

The second proposed initiative is a limited amnesty on interest and penalties otherwise payable when a taxpayer voluntarily declares previously undeclared income.

Our system already provides for an amnesty on penalties for voluntary disclosures. As for the interest payable, we have to be cautious. Such a measure should be of a temporary nature, should have a time limit set. Otherwise, some people might be tempted to not declare income in a given year, since they would not have to pay any interest, even if they got caught. Such a scheme would enable these people to use the money for a year or two, before the department tracked them down.

If we are to have an amnesty, it should be defined and limited in time. It would be a way to go back to square one and do things properly from then on.

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The third part of the motion is an interesting approach that should be explored. When we talk about the underground economy, what comes to mind most of the time is the construction industry. The underground economy flourishes there because regulations are so complicated. There are other consequences, but that industry is very much affected by underground activity, and sooner or later we will have to regain control over that industry because we are losing a lot of revenue. Entrepreneurs who want to operate within the law have a hard time fending off fierce competition. Just about everywhere, things are done under the table.

A tax credit for taxpayers seems like a good approach, but we should determine how far we are willing to go, how much the credit should be compared to the savings to be made by turning to the underground economy, because that is what the population will try to figure out, and how much it will cost the government compared to the revenues the tax credit will generate. If the credit is not high enough, it will not work. It will cost us more than before, and only some people will use it. But this is a good start, an approach to consider.

However, it must be done in close co-operation with the provinces, especially where Quebec is concerned. Each province may have its own set of rules for the construction industry, and the approach used must be consistent with the way tax revenues are generated in this sector.

The hon. member for Mississauga South has moved a motion which makes a lot of sense and which we will support. I would like however to address other concerns I have about the underground economy.

There was a lot of discussion in this House, in Canada and in Quebec when the GST was introduced. Many people link the increasing popularity of the underground economy with the implementation of the GST. I would like to remind everyone that the GST was not a new tax. It replaced another tax which the population did not see, because it was hidden, but the GST did replace another tax. What is new is that the GST applies to services.

When we talk about the underground economy and the taxation of services, we have a problem, because nothing is easier to avoid than a service tax. When a carpenter, a plumber or an electrician comes to your house and does not charge for his labour by the hour, it is very hard to find out whether he did or did not work or how long he worked. Ever since the government decided to get into taxing services, there is one element that is almost impossible to control because it all depends on the good faith of the public, a public that felt governments were taxing them enough already. This new tax has increased public dissatisfaction.

Oddly enough, I saw a poll when we were considering the GST—which has yet to be amended, but I will get to that—and it

seems people work harder to avoid the GST than they do to avoid paying income tax. This despite the fact that income tax rates are often 30, 35, 40 or 45 per cent, which means 30, 35, 40 or 45 cents on a dollar earned, while in Quebec, the combined QST and GST is 14 per cent. Nevertheless, people will work harder to avoid the GST because they are upset by this tax and find it very hard to accept it.

• (1735)

Much of this can be blamed on the Liberal members opposite. When the GST was adopted, they were up in arms and even made a major commitment during the last election campaign to abolish the tax. After that they said very discreetly that they wanted to replace it with something else. Once in power, they said they could not afford to forgo 15, 16 or 17 billion dollars worth of revenue, depending on the year. Something else had to be found. But how, meanwhile trying to convince people that they got rid of the tax? Voters are not easily fooled and talk about it to their members, I am sure, because these are subjects that often come up in caucus meetings, apparently. Their commitment was not met because they were forced to collect this revenue, contrary to their campaign promises.

The Prime Minister has repeated this in the House. I quote him from memory but correctly I think: "We hate that tax and we are going to abolish it". That was two years ago. In my opinion discussing a tax, replacing it or abolishing it, can take a certain amount of time from the point the decision is taken. In reality, application can take a minimum of six months, generally at least a year, due to the time needed to explain it, to have people understand it, to try to gain its acceptance.

So two years of the mandate are down now, and after three years, for it will take at least a year, there will still have been no change, because agreement with the provinces on taxation reform is not possible.

There is a problem when the government creates expectations, when it wants to make this type of changes and does not make them. That does not do anything to increase people's confidence in the taxation system, much less in those who design it and those who have to administer it. The government will have to act at some point. It is nice to have these motions, I have nothing against the member who is moving it, but he will have to exert some pressure on his colleagues at Revenue and at Finance, and on the cabinet, so that they live up to their commitment and come forward with proposals, because we have not seen anything yet.

While they are talking about taxation, I would also like to talk about something else. In Quebec, at one point there were different views of the economy, and the government of Canada was perhaps more active on the economic front in the post-war era. During the war, it had taken over a lot of taxation power from the provinces, particularly Quebec. It never gave it back.

As a result, in Quebec, we have two income tax collection systems. Revenue Quebec and Revenue Canada both collect taxes, they each have their own income tax return; every year, we must fill out two income tax returns, because taxation can be a powerful economic development tool. Through taxation, each government imposes its own vision of things, and taxpayers have a hard time sorting things out. Very few of them are able to fill out their income tax returns on their own, not because they are lacking in skills or ability, but because the returns are just too complicated. I am convinced that there are not many members in this House who fill out their returns on their own. And yet, we are the lawmakers and the ones who pass legislation and establish policies.

So there is indeed a serious problem which, over the years, has led to confrontation between Quebec and Canada because Quebec would have liked to have full control over its tax system and use it as an economic development tool. But this is not the case. I would also like to remind people who are watching us today that, not only do we have two systems, not only do we pay taxes to both Quebec and Ottawa, but there are transfer payment mechanisms to transfer money from one government to another. We send our tax money to the federal government, which gives it back to the province through transfer payments, not always in the proportions that we would like. This system is cumbersome and complicated, and requires a lot of manpower.

To conclude my remarks, since I only have thirty seconds left, I want to say that the hon. member's motion makes a lot of sense, but I would like him to remind his colleagues that they have made a major commitment and that they will have to put forward concrete proposals, hopefully before Quebecers make a decision on October 30, on what they intend to do with regard to our tax system, particularly with regard to the GST.

[*English*]

Mr. John Maloney (Erie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to address the House this afternoon on Motion No. 382 sponsored by the member for Mississauga South. I would also like to take the opportunity to commend my hon. colleague for his work in this area.

The underground economy that is the focus of this motion is of major importance and has implications for Canadians right across the country. There has been a great deal written about the size, extent, nature and causes of the underground economy.

• (1740)

As members are probably aware, estimates on the size of the underground economy vary widely, depending on the methodology that is used, from 2.5 per cent to 3 per cent of GDP to over 20 per cent. That translates into \$20 billion to \$140 billion a year.

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The greater the activity in the underground economy the less revenue is available to governments. Underground economic activity creates unfair competition for honest businesses. Jobs are lost. Therefore, honest taxpayers are forced to pay more than their fair share of taxes.

We all know that deficit elimination and the eventual repayment of the federal debt will depend primarily on long term economic growth and job creation. While spending cuts may contribute to deficit reduction, why should we continue to cut programs when the collection of legitimate tax revenue could be substituted?

We need to seek out options and solutions. It is imperative that an attack on the underground economy be part of the overall solution.

For many individuals and businesses the underground economy has become a convenient way to avoid paying taxes. When these people take their financial transactions underground they are failing to make their contribution in support of Canada's social and economic programs. These people do not pay for the services they use. Instead, other Canadians are forced to pay more.

People who deal in the underground economy may feel that their financial situation justifies their actions. It may be because it has been several years since their last raise. It may be because they feel the tax system is too complex or unfair. Or it may be just basic greed. They see cheating the tax department as a victimless crime. Let me say that, whatever the reason, underground economic activity makes victims of us all. Indeed, all Canadians are victims and this does not sit well with me.

I ask members as well as all Canadians to consider the real cost of underground economic activity. The cost is large. It shows up in reduced essential services, taxes higher than they would otherwise be, unfair competition and a reduced standard of living for the honest taxpayer.

How does the underground economy affect a legitimate business which is trying to be competitive? The Canadian Homebuilders Association is concerned. Indeed, home renovators who evade taxes have an unfair advantage over honest contractors. Honest businesses are at a competitive disadvantage because they cannot offer a customer the same deal as that offered by someone who will do the work but not collect the taxes. The end result is that the legitimate business faces unfair competition and job loss.

I ask the members to put themselves in the place of an entrepreneur who plays by the rules and who diligently collects and remits tax to the government. How would they react if they lost work because someone dealing under the table outbid them for a contract? I would certainly be upset and I would insist that the government do something to restore fairness to my situation.

We must not forget the dishonest consumer. The dishonest consumer who takes the lower price and pays cash is cheating the system and becoming a party to the evasion of taxes. These consumers benefit from the full range of government services

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but do not pay their fair share. All they have done is take part in a transaction which jeopardizes our health, education and other essential economic and social services. This is simply short-sighted and unfair. It is illegal and criminal.

The underground economy results in lost revenues for the government which, as I have said, jeopardizes essential social and economic programs and forces honest Canadians to pay more taxes.

The motion before the House is a three-pronged motion. It suggests that the government educate the public and encourage their participation in addressing the problem. I agree that Canadians need to know the facts about the seriousness of the underground economy, how it affects each and every one of us and what can be done to reduce it. I also agree that governments cannot solve the problem alone. We, the citizens of Canada, all must do our part and fulfil our responsibilities.

We must tell Canadians the facts about the seriousness of the existence of the underground economy and how they can help to eliminate it. We must address the myth that everyone is doing it. We must emphasize that tax evasion is a crime and that it is not a victimless crime, as it is often argued. All Canadians are victims. Tax evasion leads to job losses, an increase in the deficit, honest taxpayers carrying more of a burden and legitimate businesses operating in an environment of unfair competition which often leads to bankruptcy. We must stress that people who evade taxes are cheating honest taxpayers and those in need. We must publicize the fact that 14,000 calls are received by Revenue Canada each year from Canadians who know tax evaders. Many more would call if they only knew that the follow-up would take place.

• (1745)

To ensure that everyone is aware that the government is serious about prosecuting those who deliberately defraud the tax system, the Minister of National Revenue publicizes convictions for tax evasion. The increased publicity and resulting embarrassment of a fine or imprisonment coupled with the payment of taxes, interest and penalties, has had a deterrent effect.

During the past year, officials of Revenue Canada have been actively consulting with individuals and associations across Canada on the issue of tax evasion, the underground economy and smuggling. Revenue Canada has sought and received the support of these groups. With the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, for example, the department established a working committee to investigate the causes of the underground economy, examine audit techniques and identify training that would assist in tracking down unreported or under-reported income, and identify opportunities for reducing the cost and

administrative burden of compliance for businesses and individuals.

These groups are taking the message of the risks of dealing in the underground economy back to their membership. Every citizen and every business has a role to play in eliminating the underground economy. Individuals can start by refusing to deal with businesses and tradespeople who ask for cash payments. Businesses can do their part by turning down demands to do work off the books. Yes, all Canadians must do their part, individuals and businesses. Simply put, they must say no.

The second prong of the hon. member's motion calls for a limited amnesty on interest and penalties otherwise payable when a taxpayer voluntarily declares income previously undeclared. My colleague has stressed that the amnesty pertains only to interest and penalties, not to the taxes owing. The preferred approach is to encourage voluntary compliance. It does work, as 95 per cent of all revenues are collected without the need for enforcement action. Revenue Canada currently has a program in place for voluntary disclosure which would waive penalties if an official audit had not yet been initiated. However, interest would still be payable.

We must encourage an amnesty because it is very important to give underground economy operators the opportunity to come clean. We must be clear that underground economy is not normal business and that Canadians will not continue to tolerate dishonest business practices at their expense. Here is a chance for the business person to come out.

The third prong of my hon. colleague's motion is a tax credit for taxpayers on home improvements and renovations in order to provide an inducement to create the essential paper trail and to serve as one of the primary vehicles for the information campaign. By offering an input tax credit for the GST paid on home improvements or renovations, the taxpayer would be required to submit the original invoice as part of their income tax return. The objective would be to create a real paper trail in an area of abuse with which most people are familiar. It is a good vehicle through which we could educate the public on the crime and discourage action under the table. It would also help to support the honest businesses that are prepared to provide an invoice.

I have spoken to the people of my constituencies about the underground economy. Those who follow the law and pay their taxes do not like having to pay higher taxes because others are trying to cheat the system. Entrepreneurs who are trying to make an honest living say they do not like being at a competitive disadvantage from businesses and tradespeople who ask for cash payments to avoid paying tax. My constituents are also worried about how lost revenue is affecting the government's ability to maintain the social and economic programs so important to our well-being.

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I will support my colleague's motion. I want to see that all legitimate taxes are collected so that the honest taxpayer does not have to bear the burden of both higher taxes and lessening of programs. The underground economy is not the norm and it is not acceptable to Canadians.

Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as I start to make a few comments about this bill, I would first like to recognize the hon. member for Mississauga South, who proposed this motion. I would like to acknowledge the fact that it is aimed at correcting a serious problem we have in our country, which is the evasion of taxes, specifically the GST.

As the GST is such a magnet for all of the discomfort and discontent with the tax system in the country, it is not seen by the ordinary citizen as theft. It is not seen as stealing from each other by evading the GST.

• (1750)

I think the hon. member opposite has brought to the House a very important consideration. The social contract we all have is based on the premise of fairness, that we are all going to pay our fair share and that we will do so more or less willingly, provided everybody else is paying a fair share.

When we combine the fact that the GST is such a horribly unpopular tax with the fact that the average Canadian is just barely getting by and does not like to pay the tax in the first place, there is very fertile ground for tax avoidance. When people avoid paying taxes that are legitimately owed it means that somebody else is carrying their load, and that is just not right.

I want to commend the member opposite for bringing this motion before the House. Members know, but for the sake of Canadians who are watching I should point out that a motion brought to the House will not bind the government in any way to act on it. It is really just a means of trying to get the attention of cabinet and say that this is something we should do. Although it is votable, it is not binding. I am sure the hon. member would like to see it binding, but it just plain is not.

There are many things that happen in politics in the House and outside the House that are not binding, such as promises that are made during election campaigns. During the last campaign, members will recall members of the Liberal Party made a lot of hay out of the fact that they were going to get rid of the hated GST. As a matter of fact, I recall specifically being ridiculed on a campaign platform by my Liberal opponent because I said we could not possibly get rid of the GST without replacing it with another tax. The GST generates \$18 billion in revenue. We just cannot say poof and it is gone. We have to deal with reality.

Here we are a couple of years later and the GST is still in place, still being corrected. That brings me to the problem we

have in supporting this bill. We have to do more than just cure the symptom; we have to cure the cold.

We are in complete agreement that the GST has led to a burgeoning underground economy. Simply offering a limited amnesty is not of its own accord going to bring people back to the market. Advertising or letting people know that avoiding the GST or working underground is in fact stealing and is not something that should be condoned in our country would be a very worthwhile thing to do, with or without any of the other items in this bill. It would not hurt to use some of these Dr. Feelgood ads that are running across the country right now to say that if you are working in the underground economy you are stealing from your neighbour.

As earlier speakers have pointed out, how would you like to be in the renovation or construction business competing with and losing jobs to somebody who is constantly being paid under the table?

I had some extensive renovations done in my home a year ago. Just try to get them done and pay the GST. It is not an easy chore. There are quite a number of people in the construction and renovation business who will not do any work if it requires receipts. This is not to mention all the service industries that work under the table. We all know it exists.

The problem is that it is like a speed limit on a highway. You are tooling down a highway at 110 kilometres an hour and for no apparent reason the speed limit is 80 kilometres an hour and there is a radar trap there. Well, citizens will go wherever it makes sense. The reaction to the GST was a visceral reaction to the taxation levels in the country. That more than anything else is the reason people are not paying the GST. It is not seen by the ordinary Canadian to be a crime.

• (1755)

Rather than tinkering with this, rather than treating the symptom and not curing the cold, I would ask the hon. member opposite to give thought to joining with other colleagues in the House in a bipartisan approach to see if we cannot do something about the underlying problem in the tax system, which is a disincentive for reinvestment. My hon. colleague for Mississauga South well knows—far better than I because of his experience as a chartered accountant—what a disincentive it is for people in our country to reinvest profits. That is a much bigger problem than the GST problem.

My specific objection to this bill is not the thrust of the bill, which I think is honourable and in the right direction in saying that people have to get out of the underground economy. My objection is not to the limited amnesty, which would give people the opportunity to get out if they have become involved in the underground economy. While we would offer them a carrot, we should also offer a fairly substantial stick.

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I do have a problem with the notion of offering a tax credit to people for renovations. We might be able to square that circle and address that problem if for instance we were to allow people to use an RRSP to do a renovation, just as they can for buying new homes, depending on the equity level in the home, but only if they bring in a qualified receipt showing the GST. That would then ensure the public purse does not get hit twice, once for the RRSP and again for the tax credit. What about the people who might do it themselves, or whatever?

I do not think we should be giving tax credits to induce people to obey the law. People should obey the law because it is the right thing to do. The advertising should be there, amnesty as the carrot, and a substantial stick for breaking the law. This is not to induce people to do the right thing because we are going to pay them to do it. They are going to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do and because the underground economy is no longer seen in the community as tolerable.

I would reiterate that the Liberal government promised to get rid of the hated GST. When I go out to buy my next article at the store I am pretty sure I am going to be paying the hated GST, which is two years after the fact. I would be very surprised if in the life of this Parliament the GST is gone.

Mr. McCormick: You will be surprised.

Mr. McClelland: I would be very surprised and delighted. Members opposite say that I will be surprised. I take that as a reaffirmation of the promise made during the election to get rid of the GST. We heard it here first. Once again the Liberals opposite are affirming their promise to get rid of the GST.

We should hope that perhaps the way they will do it is to get behind the notion of a flat tax and work with us and other parties, with members opposite like the member for Broadview—Greenwood, who has been working at developing a notion of the single tax for years. Finally it seems like this might be the opportunity. Let us put all of our energies together to cure the cold and not the symptom.

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I address the House today on Motion No. 382 introduced by the member for Mississauga South. My hon. colleague has done a great deal of study on the underground economy and I acknowledge all the work he has put into this.

I have given this matter considerable thought because many of my constituents have been directly affected by the underground economy. They are people who operate legitimate businesses. They have told me how their businesses are being hurt by the so-called under the table entrepreneurs. They want the government to do something about the problem before it is too late. These so-called under the table entrepreneurs are not the entrepreneurs I grew up with and started businesses with.

The greater the activity in the underground economy the less revenue there is available to governments. Underground economic activity creates unfair competition for honest businesses. Jobs are lost and honest taxpayers are forced to pay more than their fair share of taxes. For many individuals and businesses the underground economy has become a convenient way to avoid paying taxes, to not pay their fair share.

• (1800)

When these people take their financial transactions underground they are failing to meet their contribution in support of Canada's social and economic programs. These people do not pay for the services they use. Instead other Canadians are forced to pay more.

I ask all members, as well as all other Canadians, to consider the real cost of underground economic activity. The cost is large. I believe it is phenomenally large. It shows up in reduced essential services, taxes being higher than they should be, unfair competition and a reduced standard of living for the honest taxpayer. If every Canadian paid their fair share everyone would pay less. We have heard this before and we have to think about it to realize how we can all gain in this situation.

How does the underground economy affect the competitiveness of legitimate businesses? Many groups have talked to us. A major group is the Canadian Home Builders' Association. It is very concerned. Home renovators who evade taxes have an unfair advantage over honest contractors. Many small, legitimate businesses in my riding of Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington are being threatened by others operating underground.

Right from the start honest businesses are at a competitive disadvantage because they cannot offer a customer the same deal as offered by someone who will do the work but not collect the taxes. The end result is that the legitimate businesses face unfair competition and many jobs are lost.

My hon. colleague for Mississauga South has put forward new specific approaches in the motion to address the underground economy. He is offering a limited amnesty on interest and penalties when a taxpayer voluntarily comes forward in an effort to crack down by engaging more investigators on a contract or commission basis. People will hear that this message is for real and people will come forward.

This phase will continue as long as there is a favourable payback. We have to let the public know that when they patronize the supplier with a cash price without an invoice they are actually condoning fraud, and that by refusing to do business with those who do not give invoices they also help the business of honest taxpayers.

Turning to an input tax credit, this offer for GST to be paid on home renovations would be required in a very simple process. The taxpayer would submit the original invoice either as part of his or her tax return or by separate filing. The objective is to create a real paper trail. We all know about this area of abuse and it is time we recognized it.

A tax credit would be a good vehicle through which to educate the public on the crime and to discourage under the table action. A taxpayer would help to support honest businesses that are prepared to provide invoices.

Revenue Canada's voluntary disclosure policy allows individuals, partnerships, corporations, trusts and non-profit, charitable or other organizations to come forward to correct any deficiencies in any reporting to the department. The policy operates on a simple premise: When a disclosure is made voluntarily before the department has started an audit or other enforcement action, no penalties or other sanctions such as a prosecution for tax evasion will be imposed.

The taxpayer will only have to pay the amount, either taxes or duties owing, plus interest. This is fair since the interest reflects the true value of the money and the fact that those who have not paid their taxes on time have had the use of these funds.

Revenue Canada under its voluntary disclosure policy generally takes a responsible approach to collections. Arrangements can be worked out so that taxes owing to government are paid in a manner which does not cause undue hardship for the taxpayer.

Persons can make a voluntary disclosure by contacting any Revenue Canada office directly or by having their accountants or lawyers do it for them. A disclosure will be considered voluntary as long as it is made before Revenue Canada has started an audit or other enforcement action.

• (1805)

In my experience we get what we pay for. When we go underground to provide services or when customers accept underground services, we can expect lower quality work and lower quality materials because those businesses do not have to comply and will not comply with industry regulations.

As well and most important, consumers do not get the protection and the guarantees they would otherwise have if they had an authorized purchase order and/or an invoice. When the customer goes underground as well he or she has no recourse and no protection.

A little over a year ago an elderly woman in a village near my home was visited one day by three gentlemen in a pickup truck. They knocked on her door and said they knew that the winter had been severe. They wanted to check out her home in case they could do any little touch-up jobs for her and save her a lot of

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money. They spent half an hour wandering around her home in a village originally called Rogues Hollow, no pun intended.

They knocked on the door after they inspected the home and said: "The winter was very severe. There are a lot of problems with your back wall. Bricks are coming loose. Your chimney is ready to fall down. We have an estimate here for you; it is \$6,200. If you pay us in cash, I have these professional men available who will do the work now. We can do the job for you today for \$3,100". It is a true story. They did \$300, \$400, \$500 or \$600 worth of work that morning and she paid them the \$3,100.

She was sick the next day. She phoned me at home. What can I do? It was in cash. Do we have to get hurt time after time, especially seniors, to see that these are not business people but crooks?

Hon. members opposite spoke about the most hated tax in Canadian history and how it has added greatly to the underground economy. I agree that when the GST arrived on the scene the underground economy exploded. Small businesses such as the retail business my wife Rita and I operated face the burden of more paper jungles. Our ministers have told us that when they change the GST there will be less involvement, less paper and less work for small businesses. I eagerly await that and will gladly remind my ministers.

My colleagues opposite have spoken of the GST. Small businesses are finally being recognized by the government. The Liberal government recognizes that jobs will come from small businesses. Recently the Minister of Industry announced micro-loans of less than \$5,000 for small businesses. They will make a great difference. We can encourage businesses to come out of the closet and become legal or legitimate businesses.

The motion before the House suggests the government educate the public and encourage its participation in addressing the problem. I agree that Canadians need to know the facts about the seriousness of the underground economy and what can be done to reduce it. I applaud the member for Mississauga South for his efforts to stimulate discussion on the issue. I urge members of the House to carry the message back to their constituents and I will to mine. I urge members to talk with their constituents about the underground economy, its seriousness and how it can be reduced.

I also agree that governments cannot solve the problem alone. We must all do our part and fulfil our responsibilities. I urge all members to support Motion No. 382.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York—Simcoe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Mississauga South for bringing an important issue before the House which demands the attention of members on both sides. The seriousness of the underground economy cannot be understated.

Private Members' Business

I am sure other members have talked to constituents about how difficult it can be to compete with those who deal in the underground economy and who insist on being paid cash. The greater the activity in the underground economy, the less revenue there is for government.

Underground economy activities create unfair competition for honest businesses. Jobs are lost and honest taxpayers are forced to pay more than their fair share. The government is committed to ensuring fairness in the tax system and has a strategy in place for ensuring compliance with the law. In November 1993 the Minister of National Revenue announced a series of measures to address non-compliance underground economic activity and tax evasion. The department has strengthened its ties with the private sector and the provinces.

• (1810)

During the past year Revenue Canada has consulted with more than 240 groups, which has helped the department to define its strategies, identify areas of non-compliance and explore measures for improving compliance.

Co-operation arrangements are in place with all the provinces. This has led to joint audits with the provinces, the sharing of audit strategies, training material and expertise. The department has strengthened its ability to identify non-filers and non-registrants and has increased and targeted its audits to focus on areas of high non-compliance.

The construction and home renovation sectors are being paid special attention. Revenue Canada officials in their consultations with industry and trade representatives have been told how revenues and jobs are being lost. Consumers lose out. They forfeit any guarantees of a quality product backed by a reputable firm. Workers seeking steady, secure employment are also cheated.

The government has taken steps to respond to the needs of an industry battling under the table entrepreneurs. The reason is straightforward. No business that plays by the rules should have to face unfair competition from those that do not. The honest taxpayer should not be disadvantaged by those who are cheating.

Revenue Canada has put special audit teams in place to look into transactions. The department examines the classified ads and visits construction sites in search of information that will help identify non-filers and non-registrants. With information from the financial records of lumber yards and building supply companies Revenue Canada can verify that the people who purchase construction materials are paying the tax they should on the work they perform.

There is also follow-up on leads from private citizens which often include individuals who are unhappy with the work they

paid for and who could not get their cash contractor to respond to their complaint.

Revenue Canada has been working with the Ontario Association of Lumber and Building Supply Dealers. The association has agreed to display in its member stores a flyer which emphasizes the pitfalls for consumers when dealing under the table.

The department is involved in ongoing consultations with the Canadian Home Builders Association. Specifically Revenue Canada and the CHBA have established a working group to co-ordinate efforts to address the underground economy in the home renovation business. The working group considers how the CHBA and its local associations can assist Revenue Canada to identify those businesses involved in under the table activity. The CHBA and Revenue Canada can work together to ensure Canadians are aware of the risks associated with dealing in the underground economy. Consultations between the department and CHBA are taking place at the local and national levels.

The February budget measure for a reporting system for payments to subcontractors in the construction industry is a direct result of consultations with representatives of the construction industry. The measure and others in the budget reinforce the government's commitment to a fair tax system and a level playing field for businesses.

Revenue Canada is now discussing with representatives of the industry and trade associations as well as professional accounting and legal associations how the reporting system should operate and what other measures might be taken. The government wants to improve compliance in a way that does not increase the burden and cost of compliance for business.

The motion of the member for Mississauga South contains a proposal for a tax credit for home improvements and renovations as a way to create a paper trail. I support the intent of this proposal. It is something the government might wish to look at but it must be recognized that there would be a cost associated with its implementation.

Revenue Canada already reviews records of GST rebates paid out for substantial renovations along with provincial sales tax credits to ensure that proper deductions and claims have been made by taxpayers. This paper trail is very helpful.

• (1815)

I thank the member for putting forward the motion allowing us to debate an issue of key concern to Canadians.

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to make a few comments on Motion No. 382 as sponsored by the member for Mississauga South. I congratulate my hon. colleague on this initiative first and foremost.

The issue that is the focus of this motion is of major importance to all Canadians right across the country. For many individuals and businesses the underground economy has become a convenient way to avoid paying taxes, not paying their fair share.

People who deal in the underground economy may feel their financial situation justifies their actions. It may be because it has been several years since their last pay raise. It may be because they feel the tax system is much too complex or unfair. It also may be basic greed. They see it as cheating the tax department, a victimless crime.

When these people take their financial transactions underground they are failing to make their contributions in support of Canada's social and economic programs. These people do not pay for the services they use. Instead, other Canadians are forced to pay more.

Each time someone participates in the underground economy, money to help pay for programs such as health care and education is lost. It is revenue that may never be recovered.

Whatever the reason, underground economic activity makes victims of all of us. The cost shows up in reduced essential services, higher taxes than would otherwise be the case, unfair competition and a reduced standard of living for the honest taxpayers. This is simply unfair and shortsighted.

The motion before the House suggests the government educate the public and encourage their participation in addressing the problem. I agree Canadians need to know the facts about the seriousness of the underground economy and what can be done to reduce it. I also agree governments cannot solve the problem alone. We must all do our part to fulfil these responsibilities.

The government has recognized that solutions to this problem and others now facing Canadians cannot be found in isolation. We must understand the problem and its consequences. It is for this very reason that in November 1993 the Minister of National Revenue made education a fundamental element of his action plan to address the underground economy.

Officials of Revenue Canada have been actively consulting with individuals and associations right across Canada. These groups are taking the message of the risk of dealing in the underground economy back to their membership. Every citizen and every business has a role to play in eliminating the underground economy.

Individuals can start by refusing to deal with business and trades people who ask for cash payments. Businesses can do their part by turning down demands to work off the books.

To ensure everyone is aware the government is serious about prosecuting those who deliberately defraud the tax system, the Minister of National Revenue is publicizing convictions for tax evasion. The increased publicity has been a deterrent and has had an effect.

Private Members' Business

The number of voluntary disclosures received by the department where people come forward to voluntarily correct their tax affairs has doubled in the past year. In addition, the number of referrals received from people each year providing the department with leads on potential tax fraud has risen by some 19,000.

• (1820)

As members of the House are aware, Canada's tax system is based on taxpayers voluntarily filing and paying their taxes. A voluntary self-assessing system is the most effective way for a government to collect taxes owing.

A cornerstone of a sound tax system is the reality and perception that everyone pays his or her fair share. It does not ask for any more or any less, just everyone's fair share. The underground economy undermines the fairness of the tax system.

Regardless of its size there is no disputing the underground economy exists and that it exacts a toll on Canadian society from unfair competition for honest business to taxes higher than they would otherwise be for honest taxpayers, to business closures, to unemployment and to lost revenues which government uses to support Canada's social and economic agenda. It is a problem we cannot afford to ignore.

I am confident, however, that we are making progress in dealing with the underground economy and other forms of tax evasion. I applaud the hon. member for Mississauga South for his efforts to stimulate discussion on this issue. I certainly solicit the support of all members of the House to support the motion.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too compliment my colleague from Mississauga South for bringing forward this initiative on an issue which is important to all Canadians.

One principle Canadians want in their tax system above all is fairness. Everybody should pay their fair share.

The underground economy has increased the burden on those law-abiding taxpayers who voluntarily report their income honestly every year. The underground economy has a certain segment of our society saying it will carry on business and benefit from the economy of the country but it will not contribute to it.

It hits us in a number of ways. People who do not report income from jobs they have performed obviously avoid paying income tax on that revenue. They avoid paying the GST and provincial sales tax on the work they have performed. All governments lose when that happens and all Canadians lose.

Private Members' Business

We have only to sit in the House every day to hear the tremendous financial pressures on the government and on all Canadians. We know we are in a period of finding any way we can to save on expenditures. It is leading to some very difficult decisions which will not necessarily help the economy or our standard of living. However, we know they are necessary because for a number of years now there has been a serious imbalance between what we have to spend and how much we are taking in.

This motion goes to the heart of how much we are taking in. While there may be disagreements about the extent of the underground economy and the amount of money being lost by unreported income, nobody can deny it is substantial and that it has grown dramatically in recent years.

What is it costing us when people are not paying their fair share? We have all heard from constituents who are worried about the future of our health care system. We hear about waiting lists at hospitals. We hear about pressures to close hospitals. Certainly that is very much an issue in Ontario today and in the national capital region.

• (1825)

We hear about reducing the benefits to people who are unemployed and need the assistance of the unemployment insurance system. We hear about a reduction in the money available to those in need to survive through difficult times. We hear about less services being available to support children in our community. We hear about less resources being available to fulfil a major role that Canada has always played in the world in terms of international development. It goes on and on.

This motion gives a committee of Parliament the opportunity to examine how we can bring this under control. There are people who are making money in the economy and cheating their fellow Canadians by not paying taxes on that income. How can we get those people back into the mainstream of society, contributing what they should be contributing so that others do not have to pay more than their fair share? This would make it

possible to carry on doing for Canadians those things that are important to the building of a prosperous and sane society.

We all know people who have had work done around their homes. I recently had some work done and as a member of Parliament I insisted on an invoice and that the GST was documented. However I can understand someone who has had their income frozen for the last five years, or perhaps had their income drop because they have moved to another job which pays less, or perhaps is unemployed and has to get some necessary work done, would look for the best possible bargain to get the cheapest possible price, even if they suspect that the person doing the work is not paying the taxes and, therefore, is not paying their fair share of being a member of Canadian society. This motion offers an opportunity.

I want to pay tribute to a constituent of mine who brought a suggestion to my attention a couple of years ago which I have been promoting with the Ministers of Finance and National Revenue. The idea is to give homeowners an incentive to ensure that anybody doing work around their home is part of the economy, is contributing, is paying the taxes on that work. It could come from a number of ways.

This motion gives an opportunity to a committee of Parliament to look at a variety of means by which we can start to ensure that the vast majority of Canadians who are honest—and our tax system is really based on honour—and abide by that system are not penalized to the benefit of the very few who choose not to pay their fair share.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hour provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. Pursuant to the Standing Orders, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 6.30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)

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