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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 2, 1998

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CALGARY DECLARATION

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to address Motion No. P-22 which reads:

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, polls and correspondence relating to the Calgary Declaration.

As the motion outlines, in any fundamental democracy it is key that anything governments do with public money or anything governments endeavour to do be made public through access to information to almost anyone who would like to see the information.

There are three key elements that I would like to address in the House today regarding this motion. I will outline them before I begin my speech.

There is the key issue of transparency. Governments need to make more of an effort to become transparent. In addressing this motion it is important to talk about the issue of transparency.

The second issue is federal-provincial relations. In the House we have heard many different points of view on federal-provincial relations. How we enhance and balance those relations is fundamental when heading into the new century. I would like to address the issue of federal-provincial relations and what the government claims could be unfortunately hurt by making more documents public and by making people more aware of what the government is doing.

The third issue is how this will impact unity. There are many issues right now. The Quebec election is taking place. There are different points of view from different provinces when it comes to what direction Canadian unity should take and what sort of changes should be made in the federation.

What this motion tries to address will fundamentally impact the direction of unity in the country. In the long run, if we follow the direction of this motion it could enhance unity by following the two key elements of transparency and federal-provincial relations.

In addressing the issue of transparency I want to say that there has been widespread public disillusionment with governments. Generally, Canadians feel that their governments are trying to hide a lot of information that belongs to them.

• (1110)

Unfortunately, because of different things we have seen in the past, especially with the APEC scandal and other scandals of this government, there has been more and more public disillusionment with the way governments operate.

If we look fundamentally at this motion, all it is trying to do is make federal government operations more transparent. There is nothing wrong with that. Most members of the House would agree that it is in the best interests of governments to become transparent. They definitely should make the public aware of the sorts of things they endeavour to take part in and make available documents, reports, minutes of meetings, memos and anything else that should be made public.

We can especially point to the issue of the Calgary declaration. The public is skeptical. They really do not know what the federal government's role is within the Calgary declaration. Obviously it was a provincial effort. All of all the premiers of the country came together to suggest issues of positive change in the direction of unity.

However, the federal government has a role to play and has taken a role in that process. It is very important to make what its role is public. The issue of transparency is fundamental in trying to regain public confidence in governments and in the way they operate. I believe that is the crux of this issue.

Given the times we live in and the fundamental skepticism about politicians there is no reason for any member of this House to oppose this motion.

Private Members' Business

The second thing I want to address is the issue of federal-provincial relations. I have heard government members in their debate on this motion so far say that transparency would harm the government's ability to conduct federal-provincial affairs. As a member of this House and as a participant of democracy that is very confusing for me. As I mentioned earlier, when I look at the opportunities for governments in this whole direction of being more transparent and trying to enhance federal-provincial relations, the best way to do that is to make public and include the public in the endeavours the government chooses to take part in.

When one looks at the alienation that exists in this country between the provinces and the federal government there is no better time to change the direction of that public opinion by making government operations more transparent and by sharing information with the public.

Alas, we know what the government's stand is on trying to deal with the regions and the provinces. We have seen so many cases where it does not respect democracy and does not want to enhance its relationship with the provinces. We seen that most recently in the case of Alberta with its Senate elections. People in that province who are trying to change the way democracy works have gone ahead with an election process, trying to make the federal-provincial system of Senate representation work much better. They have been thwarted in that process. There is no direction on the part of government to try to enhance relationships between the provinces and the federal government.

We have also seen that on other issues concerning parliamentary reform. Many people in this country want changes, but we tend to see over and over again the heavy-handed governing strategy of this government and that unfortunately creates alienation between the federal and provincial governments.

The argument that the tabling before this House copies of documents reporting on meetings, notes, memos and correspondence relating to the Calgary declaration will harm the government's ability to conduct federal and provincial affairs is absolutely ludicrous to assume. Because we have not made a lot of these things public is the reason we have harmed provincial-federal relationships to begin with.

The official opposition, in its new Canada act, has outlined ways to specifically address provincial-federal tensions. One of the best ways to do that is to make governments more transparent and to address the fact that we need to make anything the federal government does more transparent. This would allow a relationship to develop between the provinces and the federal government, and the government has failed miserably in doing so. I encourage the government to consider that because there is nothing to hide and there should not be anything to hide.

• (1115)

The final point I want to address is the impact on unity. When it comes to the whole issue of the Calgary declaration, the initiative

of the provincial premiers, there is definitely a will for change in the country. There is definitely a will to address this age old unity problem with some new solutions.

I mention the new Canada Act. The official opposition has made that public. We encourage debate on that. We encourage people's feedback on that. We feel it is important that the public gets involved with important issues that will fundamentally change the future of the country. Why do we not see that sort of effort and will on behalf of the government?

One of the questions raised with this motion is how on earth as democratic representatives we can argue against making public any sort of reports, documents or memos pertaining to the Calgary declaration which could fundamentally affect the future of the country. It is a wonderful initiative on behalf of provincial premiers trying to evoke change.

I would like to summarize that if the government were interested in democracy, if it were interested in freedom and if it were interested in allowing positive change to take place in the country, it would make an effort to make its dealings more transparent. The government should want to make an effort to make provincial-federal relations more transparent and more effective. It would make it easier for for them to work together and for the provinces to deal with federal problems and vice versa. To be able to deal with the Calgary declaration in the way the motion says the government should allow unity and the future of unity to be debated openly. That should be encouraged.

All of us in the House should support the motion.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being able to rise in support of the motion moved by my esteemed colleague from Calgary West and seconded by my learned colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona. It is an important motion that reads:

That a humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, polls and correspondence relating to the Calgary declaration.

This is a very sensible motion, as my colleague said, calling for transparency with respect to an important development on the national unity file. It is particularly important because several times my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona has risen in his place to ask members of the government cabinet at question time what exactly they plan to do, if anything, to consult Canadians on the Calgary declaration.

I believe the maiden question put by my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona in this place last year related to that point: what, if anything, the federal government was doing to consult Canadians

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about the Calgary declaration given that at least nine of the ten provincial governments engaged in fairly exhaustive and in depth consultation processes.

Unfortunately we have yet to receive, notwithstanding several efforts, a clear response to that very simple question. It seems the federal government has no plan to consult Canadians about the future reform of the federation and potential amendments to our Constitution.

We find this very worrisome. If Canadians have learned one thing over the past 15 years of politics surrounding national unity and the Constitution, it is that a behind closed doors top down approach to constitutional reform is rejected out of hand by Canadians.

We saw this in the approach the Liberal government took to the repatriation of the Constitution and the adoption of the charter of rights in 1982 by limiting debate to a small circle of political elite within the government. That decision did not carry the support of the majority of Canadians in a majority of regions. It ended up helping to create ongoing constitutional discord because it did not embrace the heartfelt concerns of Quebecers with respect to repatriation.

• (1120)

Similarly in the efforts made by the federal government in 1986 through 1990 to adopt the Meech Lake accord we saw the same kind of top down, secretive, behind closed doors, executive federalism. It was elite brokerage politics which left ordinary Canadians on the outside of the information loop and left politicians alone on the inside. This led to enormous public cynicism about the Meech Lake accord, which ultimately was its undoing.

That in itself led to a revival of separatist sentiments in the province of Quebec, which then led to the sad history of the Charlottetown accord in 1982. The then federal government finally realized that leaving Canadians on the outside of the process and maintaining secrecy about negotiations and consultations on unity and constitutional reform was no longer acceptable. That question was put to Canadians in the referendum held in October 1992. We know of the remarkable historic result. Canadians overwhelmingly rejected the jerry-built approach to special status in constitution making and interest group politics found in the Charlottetown accord.

We started this process once more with the Calgary declaration. Nine of the ten premiers gathered in good faith in Calgary in the summer of 1997 to examine ways to once again begin as a federation to talk about the need for reform of our constitutional framework to include all Canadians, including westerners and Quebecers. The premiers came up with the five principles of the Calgary declaration as a framework for discussion. They encour-

aged their various legislatures to engage in an exhaustive process of consultation.

All those provincial governments went to their constituencies. Through a variety of techniques which included public opinion polls, focus groups, town hall meetings, information circulars, surveys, brochures, Internet sites and special committees, each provincial government reviewed the input from the public and each premier reported back to their fellow premiers.

We had the beginning of a bottom up process for reform of the federation and the Constitution. Unfortunately no similar effort was undertaken by the federal government. When my colleague for Edmonton—Strathcona asked the government whether it intended to engage in such consultations in the province of Quebec, the answer was no. There was no such plan.

We as the official opposition assumed the responsibility to consult with Quebecers. We mailed an information circular on the Calgary declaration to a quarter of a million homes in the province of Quebec seeking input on the declaration. We conducted a poll and held public meetings. We generally did whatever we could within our limited resources to get public feedback.

This is why we have put the motion before the House. We feel the government has been cavalier and indifferent at best to the Calgary declaration, which by no means is perfect. It includes elements of deep concern to many Canadians. Many people are concerned that the unique characteristics clause may be some day interpreted to confer special legal privileges on a particular province.

Notwithstanding, most Canadians support the general direction of consultation, the principle of equality of provinces under the law and the principle of rebalancing powers as the premiers further manifested in their social union agreement in Saskatoon earlier this year.

• (1125)

The motion comes before this place simply to ask the government to show the House and to show all Canadians what, if anything, it has done, said and thought about or how it has consulted Canadians in the way of public opinion polls and other mechanisms with respect to the Calgary declaration.

It is important. This should not just be regarded as some sleepy motion. It is critically important that we get the process right at the front end, that we do not once again find ourselves as a country in the backwaters of the constitutional elite brokerage deal making that occurred at Meech Lake and Charlottetown. It is absolutely critical that we know exactly what the Government of Canada has done, said and plans to do with respect to the constitutional future of the country and reform of the federation.

Private Members' Business

While speaking to the motion I would also point out it is unfortunate, in seeking access to critical information of this nature, that increasingly Canadians and parliamentarians find the legal framework for access to information far too inaccessible. The Access to Information Act passed in parliament in the 1970s has become a joke in terms of guaranteeing real access to government information. It is well known that the bureaucracy has learned how not to comply with the spirit of the act but has managed to twist the letter of the law to its advantage to keep secret government information which should be public.

It is not just a partisan opinion that I express. Some members of the government opposite, including the hon. member for Hamilton—Wentworth, have put forward a comprehensive private member's bill before us to completely overhaul and reform the access to information law so that it will once again put Canada on the leading edge of governments with respect to openness, transparency and accountability. This is an important principle. As someone who used to work at an advocacy organization seeking information on government spending I can say that time after time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry but the member's time has expired. I have been trying to get the member's eye for the last two minutes.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the motion has come back on the order paper. When it was introduced into the House I was at home awaiting the arrival of my new daughter and was unable to speak to it. I thank the member for Simcoe North, the former parliamentary secretary to the minister of intergovernmental affairs, who stood in my absence and responded on behalf of the government, and the member for Vancouver Quadra who also spoke to the issue.

In trying to respond to the comments that have been made, and certainly the comments that were made when the House was previously seized with the matter, it is important for us to reflect on a couple of points.

I am in my 11th year as an elected person. I spent two terms in the provincial house and I am now in my second term here. It has been my experience—and I think this experience holds in most walks of life—that we do our best work and create the best results when we work together, when we work in co-operation, when we attempt to put aside some of our differences and work on behalf of the best interests of the country and the people we serve.

Nowhere is this more important than in the issue of constitutional reform which affects every person in the country. It is an issue that must be considered very carefully. Each decision we make will become part of the structure of the country for a very long time.

• (1130)

It is not a process to be entered into lightly and I certainly do not hear members opposite suggesting that we should. The important aspect for me is that it is a process that needs to be entered into co-operatively. It is a process that is entered into when people are sitting down, not to fight about their personal differences or their broad political differences, but to look at ways in which they can produce something that is truly in the best interests of Canadians.

Having said that, I am a little surprised by this motion. It is said that if the policies or actions of the government cannot be attacked, then attack the process. Unfortunately, recently in this House when members cannot attack the process, they attack the person.

We have seen a lot of debate in this House in these last few weeks, certainly since we came back into this House in September, that has little to do with reality, little to do with actions of individuals and a lot to do with an attempt by members of this House to personally discredit and attack individuals. I find that extremely distasteful. In the two speeches that were just made I have heard the words "secrecy", "behind closed doors", "talked down", "ramming things through".

What is the government's response to this motion? It will produce all the papers. That was the government's response before it was debated in the House. There is no secrecy here. There is no attempt to hide anything.

An hon. member: Where are they?

Mr. Reg Alcock: Ask for them. A member opposite asks where are they? The point is that we moved to this debate before anyone asked for the papers.

An hon. member: Not true.

Mr. Reg Alcock: I am sorry. I do not want to be like our NDP friend on the plane who chooses to share all conversations, but there were conversations which took place that I was a party to.

The government has said from the beginning that we do not have any objection to sharing this information. I would suggest on issues such as this one in the future that if there is a concern, if there is information members opposite want, and I am not saying all information will be shared automatically, but the information will be shared. I am certain there will be policy issues and information that will come forward at times between the government and others where it will be difficult to do that.

On this issue, I would advise members that if they want information from the government, perhaps the first approach would be to call the minister and ask if they could have it. If members get told no, then they have the option of going the freedom of information route and all this information would have been received that way, or members could come to the House.

Private Members' Business

To start at the top simply uses a lot of time that could be spent elsewhere and produces no advantage, no additional result, particularly when members have been told they would get the information. One has to wonder why members came into the House to do this. Is it because they really want to get the information because they are concerned about transparency or is it because they want to create a straw man that reinforces the image members want to create regarding secrecy and lack of accountability? Members want to run against that.

I would argue frankly that it is the latter. I would feel, if I were allowed to feel things around here any more, that that was probably an abuse of the time of this House. More importantly it is an abuse of the process that we have to create if we are going to create the kind of constitution we all want.

What is the official response of the government to this motion? This comes from the speech of the member for Simcoe North. The government agrees to follow up on this initiative. The member in saying this has said his prediction is that the government will vote down this motion. Why are these polls being held back? Why are we not being apprised of the situation? The government's response is "Sure. If you want them, you have got them".

An hon. member: Give them to us.

Mr. Reg Alcock: The member says to give them to him. Let me read the motion: "That a humble address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, polls and correspondence relating to the Calgary Declaration". We have agreed to do that.

• (1135)

An hon. member: I expect that tonight.

Mr. Reg Alcock: It takes a few days to pull it together. Under freedom of information I think the departments are given 40 days to prepare it. When it comes before the House all documents have to be put together. Those that are not originally in both official languages have to be translated before they can be entered into the House.

All of that information will be produced.

In terms of the comments that were made by the member from Calgary about the government's supposed concerns about the Calgary declaration, let me read what the former parliamentary secretary of federal-provincial relations said when he spoke on this motion in the House: "The Calgary declaration is based on seven principles that are completely"—completely, not partially, not maybe, not sort of—"in line with our government's national unity policy. It highlights our country's diversity".

How that can be twisted into some other government playing games with the Calgary accord or not supporting the Calgary accord is a little difficult to figure. The point I would like to make is that if we are truly going down the road to changing, rebuilding, restoring confidence of Canadians in our constitutional framework and we are truly going to rebuild this framework, maybe we should begin that process by trying to work together on it rather than simply making it one more straw man that arguments are created about. I do not know how that assists the process.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in a democracy in order for people to make decisions, they need information. For the member opposite to give the impression that the government is forthcoming and free in sharing that information is totally hypocritical and totally false. One of the biggest problems I face as an MP is the fact that I cannot get information in a timely fashion. It is a very serious matter which needs to be addressed by this House.

The main point is that if the elected representatives of the people of Canada are to be effective and make proper decisions in a democracy as we pretend to have here, we need to have that information. It needs to be forthcoming. I have had a lot of experience in the last five years where that information has not been forthcoming.

We have an issue here regarding the Calgary declaration, or separation, or the Quebec issue, whatever the label is, where that information is not forthcoming. This issue gravely affects the country and for the government not to be producing all of these things is very serious. The government pretends it is but it is not.

I have had information denied to me regarding positions that this country has taken at the United Nations and the government continues to stonewall. It continues to deny us the information as to what it is saying and doing internationally. I cannot understand why it does not share this information. The government shares it all over the world. It shares it with people from other countries, many of them dictators and people whom we may not even agree with. The government is more open with those people than it is with the people of Canada.

We have a very serious problem here, especially in parliament. When we are dealing with issues here we need information and I hope that information will be forthcoming.

Another example is my experience with questions on the Order Paper where we specifically ask the government for information in relation to a certain matter. The government is supposed to answer within 45 days. I have yet to have an instance in which it does answer within 45 days. We sometimes have to wait a year, even longer. This is unconscionable.

Private Members' Business

The people of Canada ought to be aware of the fact that one of the biggest problems I face as a parliamentarian is the fact that I cannot get proper information in a timely fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): According to Standing Order 97(2), it is my responsibility to interrupt debate for right of reply. The government has the first right of reply and seeing no one standing, the hon. member for Calgary West, the mover of the motion.

• (1140)

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not 100% sure whether this is a point of order, so I look for your wisdom on this. I would like to suggest to the House that the motion be amended by adding after the word—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry, but on a motion to amend at this point, we are just about to put the question after the right of reply. I cannot receive an amendment on a point of order.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Since we have allotted the time until 12 o'clock in which to debate this motion and everyone will be sitting here doing nothing if we do not continue the debate until 12 o'clock, I would like to seek unanimous consent that we allow this motion to be further debated for the next 20 minutes and if necessary, the amendment be allowed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the amendment one of my colleagues was trying to move was to make sure that the papers would be tabled in the House no later than February 1.

The reason is that an election in the province of Quebec is happening as we speak and in less than a month there will be a new government chosen to represent the province of Quebec. In this whole issue of federal-provincial relations it is important that the federal government comes clean on what it has as documentation with regard to the Calgary declaration. It is only fair that it does so in a timely fashion so that it can be taken into account by the electorate of the province of Quebec.

The question really lies with what was the federal government's role in the Calgary declaration, what was its position and what type of backroom negotiations, deals, polls and whatnot did it conduct

with regard to the declaration. That is what this motion fundamentally speaks to.

There is a will for change in this country. One of my other colleagues mentioned that. The Reform Party obviously has a will for Senate elections. The Bloc has a will with regard to a change in the nature of the relationship between the provinces and the federal government. The NDP wishes to abolish the Senate. The Progressive Conservatives in this House have a will for change with regard to their own leadership.

This really is about consultation and whether or not the federal government has engaged in that and what it has done with regard to that in the Calgary declaration. It is one of the reasons we wanted to see these papers.

The last time this type of thing was done with regard to constitutional papers was with the Charlottetown accord in 1992. The opposition at that time went on a fishing expedition and found a goodly amount of information with regard to what the government was up to on the Charlottetown accord.

As to the issue of transparency, as I said before, in a month there will be a new government in the province of Quebec. We will find out what the people of Quebec decide with regard to their future. If the federal government has nothing to hide, it should be willing within a month to provide the information so that the people in Quebec know what position the federal government was taking in secret and in public with regard to the declaration. This amendment that we were trying to put through was so that the reasonable portion of the time line would be respected.

I have been told that the government should provide these types of documents within 90 days, or three months, call it what you will. I wanted to make sure that the government was held true to that and if we could speed up that process we should endeavour to do so. In that way everyone would know what the federal government was up to on this.

An hon. member: It would be a first.

Mr. Rob Anders: That is right, it would be a first.

I will touch on a couple of other things just to wrap up this debate. I want to see the Liberal government operate and come forward with these documents in a timely fashion.

In the red book in 1997 the Liberals promised that any future debate that puts into question the continuing existence for the unity of Canada would be characterized by clarity and frankness. In that spirit, the Liberals wrote it themselves by their own hand, by their own pen. In the red book of 1997 they said they wanted to have clarity and frankness, and that is what the opposition is demanding on this.

• (1145)

There was not clarity and frankness with regard to provision of documents. In 1992 with regard to the Charlottetown accord the government at that time said that one of the considerations that had to be taken into account was the potential for causing great damage. The member for Wentworth—Burlington brought up that issue. If the federal government were forthright and had no difference between its public and private position there would be no potential for causing great damage. I think we all want to see that.

I want to touch on the whole idea of co-operation. When I brought this motion forward I had a flurry of calls from the government asking me to pull this motion because it did not want to provide the papers. It said I should do it through an access to information request which means that I would get fewer papers. The government asked me in a flurry of activity in the 48 hours before the motion was put to pull it.

The government said it had the documents. I said if it had them it could provide them and it refused to do so. That is why I let the motion go forward and now that is why we ask for them.

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I seek the unanimous consent of the House to consider an amendment to this motion which would specifically address some of the concerns that were voiced by the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): An amendment to a motion cannot be raised on a point of order. When we got into the right of reply the debate was ended. After the right of reply it is the responsibility of the Chair to put the question forthwith.

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the wisdom you have given me. What I am seeking is simply the unanimous consent of the House to consider a motion. I am not at this point putting forward the motion, I am just asking the House to consider an amendment to the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We will allow the hon. member for Calgary Centre to ask the House for unanimous consent. Just so we are clear, the member for Calgary Centre has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion seeking to move an amendment. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There is not unanimous consent. The question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to suspend the House until noon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11.50 a.m.)

• (1200)

[Translation]

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 12 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PERSONAL INFORMATION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House resumed from October 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-54, an act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the motion that the question be now put.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to again intervene on behalf of the Bloc Québécois on Bill C-54, the Personal Information and Electronic Documents Act.

Right at the start, the Bloc Québécois had to remind this House that, when it comes to protecting personal information, Quebec's law has for some time been unique in North America.

Quebec had a law protecting privacy in the public sector as far back as 1982. The federal government and the provinces later enacted similar legislation. In 1994, long before the federal government had envisaged doing so, the Quebec law extended the protection of personal information to the private sector. Once again, Quebec was the first jurisdiction in North America to do so.

Quebec's privacy laws were adopted to ensure respect for major fundamental rights provided in international instruments such as

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the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantee the right to privacy.

These international instruments were reflected in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, which was enacted in 1975, and which was in fact the first law dealing with the right to privacy.

I remind this House that section 5 of the Quebec charter, enacted in 1975, provides that "Every person has a right to respect for his private life". This implies of course that governments must pass laws to protect this right, including against any misuse of personal information.

The Quebec act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector is rather similar to the directive from the European Union on this issue, which is also a leading-edge document. This means that Quebec and the European Union are the jurisdictions that are most respectful of the right to privacy when it comes to the protection of personal information.

As for Bill C-54, which is now before us, it is in response to numerous commitments made by the government to enact a federal law to protect personal information in the private sector, which comes under federal jurisdiction.

However, the title itself shows a will to reduce the level of protection that the legislation should provide, since it reads an act "to support and promote electronic commerce". This means it is first and foremost an act to promote electronic commerce. Then comes "by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances" only "by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions".

Indeed, the title already tells us about the limits which the government wants to impose on the protection of personal information that may be used or collected by the private sector.

So, this bill is not an act to protect personal information but rather an act to manage the use of personal information in the sole area of commercial activities. Unfortunately, Bill C-54 is another bill whose core is to be found in a schedule and one that restates guidelines originally developed at the OECD and embraced by standards organizations in Canada. This is a bill whose schedule, which is its heart, its core, is written in the conditional.

• (1205)

One has to take a close look at this bill and its schedule to notice that the so-called requirements are in fact written in the conditional, which means that for all intents and purposes these requirements are really only suggestions or recommendations being made to those who hold personal information and should ensure its best use.

In fact, in considering the bill, under paragraph 5(2), every government institution is required to specify the identified purposes to the individual from whom personal information is collected, but subparagraph 4.2.3 of the schedule states, and I draw members' attention to the use of the conditional here, that the identified purpose should be specified at or before the time of collection to the individual from whom the personal information is collected.

Two subparagraphs further, subparagraph 4.2.5 of the schedule states—and again I draw members' attention to the use of the conditional—that persons collecting personal information should be able to explain to individuals the purposes for which the information is being collected.

So, it would seem that the purpose of Bill-54 is, through watered down obligations written in the conditional, to promote electronic commerce by making the right to privacy in the private sector a secondary consideration. Worse yet, the Bloc Québécois believes that, in some instances, this bill will restrict the rights Quebecers currently have under legislation passed by the Quebec national assembly.

Under section 17 of Quebec's protection of personal information legislation, an Eaton employee in Montreal is entitled to see his personal file, even if it is kept in Toronto. However, with Bill C-54, he would not necessarily be able to view his file, because his request would be subject to legislation that ignores the right to privacy when the access to information request is made under labour relations provisions and is not of a commercial nature.

One of the weaknesses of this bill, and we have pointed this out in the last few days, is that clause 27(2)(b) gives the Governor in Council excessive powers that should never be given to a government and that should be spelled out in the bill if there is really to be any respect for the fundamental right to privacy.

The bill relies on the voluntary CSA code. This code is mentioned in the preamble to the schedule. But those with primary responsibility for protection of personal information were not impressed.

We gave an example that is worth repeating today. The access to information commissioners for Quebec and for British Columbia were quite critical of this code and argued that it did not go far enough and did not provide optimal protection.

• (1210)

In his 1997-98 annual report, the Quebec access to information commissioner said that going along with this proposal, the CSA standard, would be a step backward from the current situation in Quebec as far as protection of personal information is concerned. The British Columbia commissioner made similar comments.

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In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois feels that Bill C-54 makes this a long and complex procedure that will do nothing to protect the legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry but your time is up.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak once again to Bill C-54, because it represents a missed opportunity by the federal government and the Minister of Labour to assume the leadership role announced on a number of occasions.

It is surprising that the thrust of this bill is not the protection of personal information and privacy. As we look into it, we realize how different it could be and in fact how much work went into making it different.

I would be amiss if I did not mention that the Minister of Justice had announced at an international conference he would be tabling a bill on the protection of personal information. We understand it was the upcoming OECD conference that pushed the government into action. Unfortunately, this haste caused it to circumvent the federal-provincial consensus reached. The consensus was on harmonization.

It is important to note that, for a long time, it was hoped in Canada—and it was the wish expressed by the former privacy commissioner, Mr. Grace—that protection of personal information in the private sector would be voluntary.

When privacy commissioner Bruce Phillips was appointed, and after he himself had tried to provide for a voluntary arrangement that would adequately protect the public, he said, in his 1997-98 annual report, that he had reached a different conclusion.

I quote:

The past seven years have brought one signal change: that is in my views on how best to face the mounting challenges to preserving privacy rights. My first annual report expressed a scepticism about the need for stronger privacy laws and "some hope yet for the path of voluntary action". That hope did not long survive.

By 1995, I confessed "Reluctantly and by stages" to having concluded that "voluntarism is inadequate". I pressed for both federal and provincial action to bring the private sector under the umbrella of privacy laws.

This evolution in thinking occurred partly (but not entirely) because of the inadequate response of the private sector. Other important influences were at work. These include growing government and private sector exchanges of information, privatization of government operations with the resulting loss of existing privacy information—

Something the Bloc Québécois has often pointed out.

—and the developing European Union common data law which risks restricting information flow to countries with inadequate private standards—of which Canada is one.

The preparatory work done by Mr. Phillips, the commissioner, and by the provinces and the federal government was based on harmony and dialogue.

• (1215)

However, we have no choice but to deplore as strongly as we can the fact that Bill C-54 and particularly clause 27 not only have the federal government establishing a lower national standard, but also give it the outrageous power to decide whether the Quebec legislation applies to Quebec, and when, because they give the federal government the power to decide to what type of organizations and activities the provincial legislation applies.

This is totally unacceptable and incomprehensible, particularly in the case of Quebec and in light of the comments made by the privacy commissioner. Quebec has had a law since 1994 to protect not only commercial information, but also the numerous exchanges between businesses, associations, and so on, a law to protect privacy and personal information.

As it now stands, the federal bill restricts in many ways the scope of the provincial act. Some of the conclusions stated in the Owen report were reaffirmed by the task force on the future of Canadian financial services. The Owen report also recognizes that the Quebec act currently applies to all businesses in the province.

Mr. Dubreuil, a constitutional expert, was asked what would happen if the constitutionality of the provincial legislation was challenged. Mr. Dubreuil stated twice that the Quebec law would survive such a challenge. That means that this law applies now not only broadly to all businesses on Quebec soil, but it protects the rights of Quebec citizens when information about them is used elsewhere.

The same report notes, and I quote Richard C. Owen: "National institutions across the country will have to come to terms with these provisions"—the ones in the Quebec law—"when personal information is sent outside Quebec. In practical terms, this means that they may be required to not send personal information about residents of Quebec, unless measures meeting the requirements of the law throughout Canada are met".

That means Quebecers are protected beyond the borders of Quebec. Now what happens with Bill C-54? This bill has the power to regulate all transactions outside Quebec. It will also have the power to regulate transactions of businesses in Quebec under federal jurisdiction.

There is at least a third matter of concern: the influence of the federal bill, which recognizes the CSA code in the schedule, on future jurisprudence as it applies to the meaning of the Quebec legislation.

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• (1220)

This is a clear collision of what I might call Quebec and Canadian cultures. The effort in Quebec and elsewhere before was focussed on harmonizing the two. It might be advantageous for Canada, but this was not what the federal government chose.

This government chose to deprive Quebecers of the rights they enjoy under their law. It chose to not give Canadians equivalent protection. It chose to include the schedule in the bill, the CSA code.

This code, which businesses have agreed to apply, is a good one. However, the code is unclear. It errs seriously in the matter of requirements concerning the consent businesses must obtain so people will know what information about them is being gathered and how it may be used.

For us and for all Quebecers—since the Quebec legislation was recently revised by the Liberals and the PQ—Bill C-54 is unacceptable.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, needless to say, I take great interest in joining with my colleague for Mercier at third reading of Bill C-54 to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected. I will not read the title in full.

In my opinion, the primary purpose of this bill is to promote e-commerce. If there is time, and if the government and public servants are so disposed, an effort will be made to protect the personal information that has been gathered using the increasingly sophisticated electronic equipment available on the market.

Bill C-54 contains a number of shortcomings. Primarily, this is an extremely fragile and confusing piece of legislation that is liable to interpretation and to problems in determining divisions between the provinces and territories and the central government. This bill hands discriminatory power to the governor-in-council, or in other words the cabinet. What is more, the commissioner has no real power. Finally, this legislation will interfere with the Quebec legislation which has already been in place since 1982 and which has been reinforced in order to protect personal information not only in the public sector, in publicly owned corporations and in government, but also in the private sector.

For all these reasons, therefore, the Bloc Québécois will most definitely object to Bill C-54, to which we are speaking this afternoon.

In this context, there is danger that the bill will limit Quebecers' right to privacy, and no certainty that it will be capable of meeting the expectations of Canadian consumers.

Since ensuring homogeneity across Canada in the protection of personal information would appear to require the harmonization of

legislation, one might well have expected the federal government to at least take some of its inspiration from what has been going on in Quebec for the past four years, from our experience with the protection of personal information. But it did no such thing.

• (1225)

Privacy is a fundamental right. The experts equate the right to privacy with other human rights such as the right to equality and justice.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations over 50 years ago and to which Canada was a signatory, states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. It also states that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation.

Privacy is also protected in Canada, although only partially. This protection is not specifically included in the Charter, but that is how the courts have interpreted two important sections of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, sections 7 and 8.

I will take a moment or two to read these sections. Section 7 reads as follows:

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice".

Section 8 provides as follows:

"Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure".

This brings me to what happened a scant year ago in Vancouver, when the Prime Minister was host to APEC leaders. One of these leaders was Suharto, a head of state who was trampling the most elementary human rights within his own country.

While some 200 students demonstrated across from where the area where the meeting was to take place, the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister himself issued no-nonsense orders to the RCMP to clear the area by 4 p.m. We all saw what happened. The duty RCMP staff sergeant gave orders to the demonstrators, students aged 17, 18 or 20 years old, several of whom were accompanied by their father or mother.

Imagine being with your daughter, who is exercising her civic right here in this country to express her dissatisfaction with our Prime Minister for showing so much deference to a dictator like Suharto. This same Prime Minister then asks the police to give a warning, but 20 seconds later, the police go all out, using what our PM referred to as civilized methods, that is pepper spray. The next day, the Prime Minister mocked us by saying he only used pepper in his soup.

How do you expect our privacy rights to be respected in a country where even our civic rights are not respected? In this respect, I had the opportunity and pleasure to meet Roch Gosselin

from East Angus Sunday morning. This middle-aged man was proud to tell me he got arrested, not under this government but under another Liberal government that was in office in 1970, when the current Prime Minister was a very high-ranking member of the cabinet that passed the War Measures Act.

• (1230)

Nearly 500 arrests were made among the Quebec elite, often without just cause. Roch Gosselin, of East Angus, was one of those who were detained for a dozen days without knowing why. His only fault was to want to give his children and grandchildren a country: Quebec. Like Pauline Julien, he was jailed.

Today, the government is apologizing profusely, but the same men and women are now sitting across the way and proposing Bill C-54 presumably to protect our privacy, our personal information. They want to see this legislation passed. Why do they not tell us the truth this afternoon? Why not say that the primary purpose of this bill is to promote the sale of electronic products?

Roch Gosselin is a distinguished citizen in his town of East Angus, yet his civic rights were trampled. He was jailed. What did the current Prime Minister, the member for Saint-Maurice, do when in cabinet at the time? Again, he mocked us.

In a free vote, this government refused to fund the legal representation of financially challenged Vancouver students by renowned lawyers. An artist slated to receive a \$10,000 prize from the governor general, has agreed, and I congratulate him on this, to donate his prize money to the student legal representation fund.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Madam Speaker, we are continuing a very important debate on Bill C-54, the purpose of which is to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information.

It will be recalled that the government introduced this bill last week, and everyone in this House, except the Bloc Quebecois, seemed to expect it to move rapidly along, like a hot knife through butter, more or less. Fortunately, that was not how things went. Fortunately, the Bloc Quebecois pointed out some of the shortcomings and serious problems in Bill C-54, and once the House was aware of these, it was able to engage in a more thorough debate.

The Bloc Quebecois is pleased to have been able to make a highly significant contribution to this examination, one which is all the more significant because we are well placed to judge the enormous shortcomings in the bill, since we in Quebec have legislation for the protection of personal information in the private sector. That legislation has been in place for the past four years and has proven itself.

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There is always room for improvement in any legislation, of course, but ours is a serious act, one with muscle, one that is useful in defending people against intrusion into their private lives.

The bill we have before us now, however, unfortunately lacks muscle. It is a bill without sufficient regulations and provisions to really protect the public. All that it does contain is a number of precautions and covers, very often in the conditional, things that should be done, with no obligation to comply. People can opt out. Where e-commerce is concerned, merely having a few obligations is really very weak.

That is not the worse thing, however. In some ways, this bill is undermining what Quebec has so wisely accomplished. We in Quebec find ourselves trying to move ahead up an escalator, while the federal government is trying to make us go back down. The bill is a serious step backwards.

• (1235)

I will give a few examples. Paragraph 5(2) of the Privacy Act, which governs the public sector, provides that:

5.(2) A government institution shall inform any individual from whom the institution collects personal information about the individual of the purpose for which the information is being collected.

This is the legislation governing the public sector, federal institutions. Now, this government is going to treat the private sector differently.

Clause 4.2.3 of the schedule to Bill C-54 reads as follows:

4.2.3 The identified purposes should be specified at or before the time of collection to the individual from whom the personal information is collected—

Clause 4.2.5 of the schedule provides that:

4.2.5 Persons collecting personal information should be able to explain to individuals the purposes for which the information is being collected.

Here we have two conditionals, two clauses in the schedule that are not obligatory and easily ignored. The identified purposes should be specified to the individual. They should be, but if they are not, it is not a serious matter.

What kind of legislation is this? The bill says “should” but failure to do so is not serious. Who will comply? Nobody, obviously.

Later on, the bill says:

Persons collecting personal information should be able to explain to individuals the purposes for which the information is being collected.

It says “should be able to explain”. This is wishful thinking. If the person is unable to explain, too bad. The public will provide information but will not know for what purpose. There is no obligation to explain. The public is not entitled to know.

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The person should be able to explain, but may not be able to or does not feel like explaining and, whoops, the law becomes null and void.

These are two simple and clear examples, but they show that this law lacks vigour and teeth. It renders no service to the public. It is essentially a useless law.

However, there is worse. Bill C-54, in some cases, will restrict the rights of Quebecers, rights they enjoy under provincial legislation. Under the Quebec law, someone working for Eaton's in Montreal is entitled to see his personnel records, even if they are kept in Toronto. Section 17 of the Quebec legislation provides for this.

Under Bill C-54, this same employee in Montreal will now no longer have access to his records, because Bill C-54 makes no provision for the right to privacy in connection with a request for access under labour relations laws or when, in any case, the request for access is not of a commercial nature.

Quebec spent a lot of money on parliamentary commissions, hearings, receiving memorandums and legislation that is solid and respects individuals' right to privacy. It cost money. Today, and for a week now, what have we been doing? We have been trying to save Quebec, because the federal minister is trying to undermine what it has done.

In other words, I am being paid at the moment not to improve the situation, but to prevent its deterioration. If Quebec were a sovereign state, if it made its own laws—in fact it already has a law to protect personal information—I would not be here trying to defend its legislation. Federalism is not just a question of profitability and non-profitability. It is also a matter of respect for the decisions made by citizens, in a legitimate and democratic fashion.

This bill will undermine a Quebec initiative, an important right for its citizens, in this era of telecommunications and at a time when electronic commerce is expanding. This makes no sense, but I have no choice. In fact, this is not the only bill that puts us in such a situation.

• (1240)

For example, I can think of the young offenders bill, which was introduced by the Minister of Justice and which includes measures that are totally opposite to Quebec's successful initiatives. Sometimes, we Quebecers look at what is going on and it makes us feel sad. However, when we get here, we feel much better.

There are some things that we in Quebec do very well. The protection of personal information is ensured in a very adequate manner. The same is true regarding the rehabilitation of our young offenders. It is in Quebec that the youth crime rate is lowest and that rehabilitation measures are most successful.

It is so because, for over 25 years now, we have had a youth protection branch that has constantly been improving and providing really useful services. But the federal Minister of Justice introduced a bill whose content contradicts Quebec's successful initiatives, a bill which will lead us to the abyss where the other provinces already are when it comes to young offenders.

Again, I am looking forward to the day when Quebec becomes a sovereign state so we will no longer have to try to save what is working well in Quebec and prevent Ottawa from imposing lower standards. Indeed, Quebec's sovereignty looks more and more like the solution for our province.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-54. As I told this House previously, this bill is about a fundamental value in our society, namely the protection of privacy.

It has an impact beyond this chamber. This morning, there was an article in *Le Devoir* entitled "Increasing Pressure for the Protection of Consumers' Privacy". It discusses the threats to our privacy and the need for consumers to be informed of their rights.

It also discusses the bill we are debating today, emphasizing that the federal legislation will be imposed on any province that has not passed its own legislation in this respect within three years.

The need for a bill protecting personal information and privacy is not new. Most provinces have already passed such legislation. The federal government is the one dragging its feet when it comes to taking its responsibilities and introducing a bill governing federally regulated businesses.

In fact, we expected this government to draw on existing provincial legislation to bring forward a bill that is coherent, effective, clear and in harmony with provincial jurisdictions. Unfortunately for all Quebecers and Canadians, this bill is wide off the mark.

Instead of protecting privacy as it should, this bill only protects the right of large private businesses to make profits with as few restrictions as possible. This is unacceptable. The federal government must go back to the drawing board as soon as possible. It must introduce a bill that really deals with the protection of privacy.

If it is not yet convinced of the urgency of the situation, it should contact the president of the Quebec Commission d'accès à l'information, Paul-André Comeau. It will see that the Quebec government receives 2,000 calls each month from people concerned with the protection of their privacy.

The Liberal Party is fuelling the cynicism against politicians by using this empty and confused initiative to try to convince our fellow citizens that it is concerned with the protection of privacy. But it does not say it introduced a bill that is simply in favour of

commerce, a bill that is only based on voluntary compliance by businesses as far as protection of privacy is concerned.

• (1245)

This bill is full of loopholes. It leaves many sectors without any protection. This bill is filled with ifs and whens and shoulds. This means the government says to large businesses they should, if possible, be concerned with the privacy of their clients. I insist on the word should because this is exactly what we have in this bill.

This situation is unacceptable. First of all, I would like to stress the fundamental nature of the right to privacy. Others have spoken of this before me, but I am returning to it because, with this bill, the Liberal Party is putting the right to make a profit before the right to privacy.

The experts equate the right to privacy with other human rights such as the right to equality and justice. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations 50 years ago and to which Canada was a signatory, states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. It also states as follows:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation.

In Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms also impacts on the protection of privacy, even though this is not specifically in the charter. In Quebec, as members are aware, this right to privacy is explicitly recognized in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, which was enacted in 1975. There is nothing ambiguous about section 5, which says, and I quote:

5. Every person has a right to the respect of his or her privacy.

This right is also recognized in Quebec's Civil Code, and my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry, who is very knowledgeable in the law, can tell us that I am right. This right is indeed recognized in chapter III of Quebec's Civil Code entitled "Respect of Reputation and Privacy", and I quote:

35. Every person has a right to the respect of his reputation and privacy. No one may invade the privacy of a person without the consent of the person or his heirs unless authorized by law.

It is crystal clear: respect of privacy is a fundamental right that is recognized internationally, as well as in Canada and in Quebec. It is wrong for the federal government to introduce a bill that does not protect this fundamental right.

As mentioned in the article published this morning in *Le Devoir*, the situation in Quebec in this regard is particularly exemplary. The Government of Quebec is the only government in North America that has passed legislation protecting personal information in the public and private sectors.

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Furthermore, many experts say that Quebec's law, which applies to the private sector, is one of the best in the world. It is a lot better than the federal bill that applies to the public sector only.

It is surprising in this context that the government did not draw on Quebec's legislation. It would have achieved two objectives at once. First of all it would have ensured consumers would have top-notch protection. It would also have avoided all the inevitable loopholes and pitfalls of unharmonized federal and provincial legislation.

This leads us to believe that the real objective of this bill is not the protection of privacy, but a vague exercise in public relations. The government would like to use this bill to show that it responds to the public's concerns. This, however, is totally false.

The bill does not meet the expectations of the people of Quebec who want their privacy protected. Instead, it serves commercial interests.

Even Canada's privacy commissioner notes that the working document proposed by Industry Canada and the Department of Justice focuses more on commerce than on protecting privacy.

• (1250)

In conclusion, one simply needs to compare the titles of the two acts. Quebec's act is entitled "An Act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector", whereas the convoluted title of the federal act reads as follows:

An Act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances—

The Quebec act is clearly more strict and more comprehensive, in terms of its format, definitions, clarity and because of the power of order given to the commissioner. It is for these reasons that we categorically reject Bill C-54.

The federal government refused to follow the example of the Quebec act, even though it is recognized as a model in this area. This does not come as a surprise, because Quebec's act is aimed primarily at protecting citizens, whereas the federal government's bill is essentially intended to please big corporations.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today especially as I have not seen you in a while.

For those watching us on TV, I am the member for Québec East. My riding is close to Quebec City. One of the most beautiful ridings in Quebec, it encompasses L'Ancienne-Lorette, Duberger, Les Saules, Vanier, Saint-Odile, Lebourgneuf, Neufchâtel, Les Méandres, Loretteville and the Huron village. I invite anyone following this debate and recognizing me as the member for

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Quebec East to write to or even call me if they have any comment regarding what is being said in the House today on Bill C-54.

As my colleagues said repeatedly, this bill is weak and does not meet the population's needs. I have grave concerns regarding this bill because times are changing. We are living at a time when communications are very quick. My old communications professor, Marshall McLuhan, coined the phrase "the global village" to stress the extent to which we are increasingly close to one another.

This is not the only problem. Today, in the late 1990s, on the eve of the 21st century, there are significant changes in the way trade is being conducted around the world. This morning in the Quebec daily *Le Soleil*, I read that there was less competition among Canadian firms. For instance, Loblaw's is in the process of buying Provigo, a Quebec company. There are also the proposed bank mergers. Several of these developments are a sign of things to come that might not necessarily be good as mergers reduce competition and choice, often resulting in more expensive services and products.

Moreover, when companies such as banks and multinationals become very powerful in today's electronic era, they might use personal information in a way that might be harmful to individuals. This is a real danger and the thrust of the debate surrounding Bill C-54.

We wish the federal government were aware of its responsibilities. Unfortunately, such is not the case, as the labour minister and members across the way readily acknowledge. The way Mr. Chrétien has been behaving during the "Peppergate" events in Vancouver, showing a total lack of respect for the most basic democratic principles, is a case in point.

• (1255)

It is not surprising that the current government is putting forward a personal information protection bill that is, for all intents and purposes, weak, inefficient and contrary to another right which has become fundamental these days, the protection of personal information.

This is in fact becoming an urgent and important right given the changing world economy. It has also been recognized by the privacy commissioner, Bruce Phillips, who used to be a reporter for CTV, if I am not mistaken.

Let me quote what he had to say about some of the elements of personal information:

[*English*]

"The myriad of transactions that involve personal information about identifiable individuals that take place without their informed consent constitute the disregard and destruction of a treasured human right on a massive scale. These are good descriptions".

[*Translation*]

What he is describing in rather complex terms is the right to the protection of personal information.

[*English*]

"In the new information age we will respect each other as individual human beings".

[*Translation*]

This is what the commissioner had to say. Basically, he wants the government to respect the individual. This is elementary, but we found nothing comforting in Bill C-54 as introduced by the Liberal government.

In fact, this is a bill Jean Charest, in Quebec, could very well support, because it puts corporate interests before the public interest. Jean Charest has recommended to Quebecers changes that would give priority to corporate interests over public interest, that would destroy much of the work done by the current government at the expense of individuals. Bill C-54 is the kind of legislation Mr. Charest would support.

The Liberal government's Bill C-54 even undermines Quebec's existing legislation. It must be recognized that Quebec has been a leader in a number of areas. For instance, our elections act is among the best in the world. We have passed farming legislation.

We have even carried out an enviable reform in the health sector that is a tribute to the courage of the present provincial government. Well I remember watching Marc-Yvan Côté, the health minister in 1990, as he introduced his proposed health reform on television. The bill for this reform would have been \$650,000. Ultimately, nothing was done, for the other government took over.

The present provincial government has passed a number of laws, including one on the protection of personal information. Quebec passed this law in 1994. It is just one of many examples.

It proves that the present government in Quebec, with its open-minded and progressive bills, is on top of things. This particular law is one of the best, if not the only one, of its kind in North America, requiring that personal information be protected in the private sector. The federal government's Bill C-54 would be a step backward from the legislation passed by Quebec in 1994.

• (1300)

In other words, Bill C-54 is, once again, a step backward. One of many. The Prime Minister and this backward-looking Liberal government really lack the strength to bring in any forward-looking bills.

Perhaps we should support those who are calling for the Prime Minister's head. For instance, this week, *La Presse* wrote that it was time for the Prime Minister to make his exit. The *Toronto Star*

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has also called for his resignation, as have the *Globe and Mail* the *Gazette* and the *Edmonton Journal*.

Last week, there was a chorus from numerous English-language dailies—not known for their separatist views—all after the Prime Minister's head because he does not respect fundamental rights in this country. One good example of this lack of respect is Peppergate, but there was also the Somalia scandal and the ensuing attempted cover-up.

It is not therefore surprising that Bill C-54 is so wishy-washy, weak and contrary to the interests of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate very much having the opportunity to say a few words regarding Bill C-54, which I suppose is a serious attempt by the government to modernize legislation in recognition of the fact that Canada is entering the digital age. It is an effort by the government of the day to provide a regulatory environment that will enhance electronic commerce and ensure that electronic commerce flourishes in our country.

I want to acknowledge that when we look at the advances countries have made in electronic commerce, Canada has in fact played a leadership role in this respect, certainly as far as public policy is concerned. I noticed with interest just in the last six months the number of new publications that have come into being regarding various areas of this phenomenon called e-commerce.

If one was to identify the specific purpose of Bill C-54 it would be to create a legal and regulatory framework for electronic commerce by introducing measures to protect personal information in the private sector, by creating an electronic alternative for doing business with the federal government and by clarifying how the courts assess the reliability of electronic records used as evidence.

There are a number of important issues that are attached to this legislation. Let us first look at the implications of electronic commerce itself. I suspect that most Canadians are unaware at this point of the effect that e-commerce will have on their lives in the very near future. The growth of electronic commerce is expanding arithmetically in such a fashion that it will be doubling, tripling and quadrupling in the weeks and months ahead.

Let us look at some of the larger Canadian firms. I will not mention any specifically because I suspect that at this point this is relatively privileged information. However, we have been told by a number of the larger firms in Canada that now a significant amount of their purchasing is done using e-commerce. That has done away with a whole number of what we would normally refer to as middlemen: the wholesalers, the retailers, the shippers and all sorts of others who would normally be part of a commercial

arrangement between, let us say, a manufacturer and the eventual purchaser of goods.

Some of the larger firms have indicated that they now purchase over 85% of their annual goods using this type of method which, I guess if we were to extrapolate this in the long term, means that we will see, as the result of e-commerce, hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear.

• (1305)

They will not disappear over the next 10 to 20 years, they will disappear over the next 10 to 20 months as firms introduce electronic commerce as a way of purchasing their supplies and realize the financial benefits attached to using e-commerce. I suspect a lot of people are going to make a lot of money by simply introducing this to individuals firms. A lot of firms will save a lot of money directly, but the fallout will be that hundreds of thousands of existing jobs will no longer exist because they will be made redundant as a result of electronic commerce.

In my previous comments to the House regarding Bill C-54 I detailed how this process would work. I will not repeat that, but I will say that since I made those comments I have spoken with a number of individuals who are presently involved in setting up electronic commerce facilities in various businesses. They tell me that this is going to—and I use the term advisedly—revolutionize the retail sector. That is actually a euphemism for wiping it out. Modernize, revolutionize and major change are other ways of saying that whole sectors of the retail sector of our economy will be eliminated. This will take place very quickly.

We could consider, for example, a business such as a travel agency. Travel agents should probably start looking at college and university courses for a new career because electronic commerce is pretty well going to make them redundant. People who are in the brokerage business advising clients, particularly low and middle income clients, with respect to their stock portfolio should probably look at another career option because this type of electronic networking will simply do away with the need for these folks in our society.

One can lament that, but I think it is fair to say that we are not Luddites by definition. We acknowledge that e-commerce is with us. What is crucial is that we understand the incredible impact it will have on our society economically, particularly when it comes to jobs, in the next little while.

Normally many of us think that in another decade or two we will see major changes. I wish we were talking about a decade or two, but we are probably talking about a year or two. This will result in huge and major changes to the way business is conducted in our country. I do not think that we appreciate the impact which electronic commerce will have.

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I know this is a modest effort by the government to move in the direction of ensuring privacy.

Just the other day I walked into a store in the city of Ottawa. I made a purchase and they asked me to sign a little screen. I asked why I was signing the screen. They said that once they had my signature I would not have to sign anything any more when I made purchases. I did not think that sounded like a good idea. I would just as soon be on record as having made a conscious decision every time I made a purchase. I refused to sign the screen, but the reality is that presumably people are signing these screens and their signatures are on record. Once a signature is on record in one place, I suppose it could be moved very quickly to other locales. I use this as a practical example of how privacy will be affected as a result of these moves toward a digitalized economy.

It is fair to say that in our society there are a number of organizations which have attempted to protect human rights in our country. The right to privacy, for example, is a human right just like the right to equality and justice. The United Nations universal declaration of human rights, which is celebrating its 50th year this year and to which Canada is a signatory, specifies that everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person and that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy—family, home or correspondence—nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation.

Obviously our concern about privacy is very serious.

• (1310)

I could go on and on to make the point. However, what I am going to say in closing is that I do not believe our privacy is adequately protected by this legislation. When this bill moves to committee this will be a crucial part of the inquiry that needs to take place. We will need to have a sufficient number of witnesses come forward to convince the parliamentary committee that privacy has, in fact, been dealt with adequately in the legislation.

I want to indicate that a number of individuals representing groups have come forward in support of the general thrust of the legislation in principle, but, on the other hand, they have gone out of their way to point out a potential flaw, and that is the right to protect privacy, not only in the legislation, but in the attached regulations as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will allow me, first of all, to greet the great many people from my riding of Repentigny who are watching us.

Yesterday, a very important event took place in the riding of Repentigny in this busy and eventful month of November we are having in Quebec this year. This event was the convention to

reconfirm our current MNA for L'Assomption, Jean-Claude St-André, as the official PQ candidate.

I can see that I have the unanimous consent of the House to extend our congratulations to him. Even the hon. member from northern Ontario agrees. There is therefore consent to allow me to extend our congratulations to the current and future member for the riding of L'Assomption.

Having said this, it is my pleasure to now turn to Bill C-54, that members of the Bloc Québécois and others eloquently criticized, to show why the bill, as it stands, should be opposed.

As an introduction, I shall discuss the origin of the bill and why we must debate it today. I can see there are members who want to hear the rest of my speech and hear why Bill C-54 is before us today.

Let me read the title of the bill, which, as the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve pointed out, is quite convoluted. It reads as follows:

An act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act.

This is all one sentence: I did not omit anything. This is how the title of the bill reads. The title says it all: we are definitely facing a very convoluted bill, as I said.

But where does it come from? It is the government's response to requests from several groups across Canada. It is a commitment the federal government made to introduce legislation on the protection of personal information in the private sector. This commitment was first made by the Minister of Justice in 1996; he then promised a bill to protect privacy.

The Minister of Industry made that commitment his own—as they often do things twice over—when he responded to the recommendations of the information highway advisory committee.

Following these two commitments, documents were drafted. And last January, both ministers released a joint working paper entitled “The Protection of Personal Information: Building Canada's Information Economy and Society”.

In total, the working group created to examine the issue received 90 briefs. Almost all of these agreed that legislation was needed to protect privacy in the private sector. Thus, we were expecting good news when Bill C-54 was introduced.

Almost everybody stressed that the protection of personal information voluntary code developed by the Canadian Standards Association was a good start, but that it was a minimum and should be reinforced.

• (1315)

The protection of privacy is recognised as a fundamental right. Sections 7 and 8 of the Canadian Constitution refer to it indirectly. Section 7 deals with the right of everyone to life, liberty and security of the person. Section 8 protects Canadians against unreasonable search.

As for the Quebec Charter for Human Rights and Freedoms enacted in 1975, it is very clear. Its references are not indirect. The Quebec 1975 Charter reads as follows: "Every person has a right to respect for his private life". So, from a legal point of view, there are not too many problems with its interpretation. I repeat: "Every person has a right to respect for his private life".

As you can see, Quebec has been a pioneer with regards to the protection of private life in this sector. It is the only jurisdiction in North America that has passed legislation to protect the private life of its people. For four years now, this legislation has been covering all aspects of human activities, commercial as well as others.

I want to remind you of an act protecting private life that was enacted in 1982, and of an act amending it that was passed in 1994. In 1982, an act for the protection of personal information in the public sector was introduced. The federal government and all provinces all passed legislation in this regard. Then, in 1994, an act extended the protection of personal information to the private sector. It already exists. In Quebec, we have been dealing with this protection of private life process for several years.

The Bloc believes the federal government should have used Quebec's experience as a model not only because it is recognized internationally, but also because it is essential that all laws passed in Canada and in the other provinces be compatible with one another for the greatest benefit of the citizens of Quebec and Canada.

Compatibility of federal and provincial legislation, or their harmonization, does not seem to be a priority for our friends across the way. One has only to look at the Young Offenders Act, at the Tobacco Act, and now at the Privacy Act. Compatibility of federal and provincial legislation probably comes in tenth place in the order of priority of our Liberal colleagues in the government.

Why harmonize legislation when one has the big end of the stick, as the Prime Minister of Canada would say? All we have to do is wave the stick, and the others will have to respect our opinion.

This bill, which was eagerly awaited by everybody, is too weak and too soft for us to accept as it now stands. What are these weaknesses? I will mention a few.

Most of the measures concerning the protection of personal information are not in the bill itself, but in the schedule, where the Minister for Industry has decided to introduce word for word the

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standard personal information protection code developed by the Canadian Standards Association. This code was judged to be utterly inadequate by the federal and provincial personal information protection commissioners and by all consumers groups.

The Minister of Industry could have used the Quebec Act Respecting the Protection of Personal Information in the Private Sector as a model. I am sure that he could have followed the exact wording of that legislation without fear that Mrs. Louise Beaudoin, Quebec's minister of culture, would ever claim copyrights for the use of that sensible and reasonable act.

By choosing to apply without change the CSA standard, the government revealed that it was opting for permissiveness instead of the full protection of Quebecers' and Canadians' privacy. Among this bill's several loopholes is the fact that the annex contains eight clauses using the conditional tense.

Clause 4.2.3, for example, reads: "The identified purposes should be specified at or before the time of collection to the individual from whom the personal information is collected—"

• (1320)

Clause 4.2.5 reads:

Persons collecting personal information should be able to explain—

Clause 4.5.2 reads:

Organizations should develop—

Clause 4.5.3 reads:

Personal information that is no longer required to fulfil the identified purposes should be destroyed, erased, or made anonymous—

The worse is the default consent. In the area of personal information, informed consent is a basic principle where there should be no ambiguity. However, the voluntary code says that that consent can be obtained by default.

That means that if someone does not check the box indicating that he or she does not want his or her personal information to be transmitted, it will automatically be. That is what is called default consent.

In concluding, I will say that for these two reasons and all the others that my colleagues discussed so eloquently, we must oppose Bill C-54 as it was introduced in this House.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to join my colleagues in addressing the bill before the House.

Protection of privacy has always been a major concern of mine. I was involved in the labour movement for many years before going

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into politics. I remember that when I was a member of the CSN, the organization's offices were searched by police. I saw police officers open books and carelessly search everywhere. To me it was a breach of privacy, of the collective life of our union. They searched our offices, our work spaces.

I have always been very much concerned by this question of privacy and this is why I have decided to rise today to address this bill. In my view, there are in fact a lot of enforcement problems.

As my colleagues have already mentioned, it is very important to recognize that there is a difference between the situation in Quebec and what goes on in the House of Commons.

There is a tremendous difference just in the titles of the two acts. The Quebec act is entitled "An Act Respecting the Protection of Personal Information in the Private Sector".

The title of the federal act is:

An Act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances—

The difference is quite apparent just in the two titles. The title of the provincial act emphasizes the importance of protecting personal information in the private sector. We are debating a bill whose purpose is to promote electronic commerce and allow for its greatest possible extension and, incidentally, to protect personal information and privacy.

As we can see, the federal government is not seeing exactly the same goal as the Government of Quebec, which was primarily to protect personal information.

If we talk about protection of individual rights and respect for privacy in relation to the economy, since this is the true title and the true purpose of the bill, we have to wonder how the Liberal Party is protecting privacy in relation to economic liberty.

For instance, if we examine the behaviour of this government on the international scene, we realize that human rights often come a distant second behind economic expansion. I remind the House of what happened recently with the APEC. It has been in the news a lot, lately. Which was given greater priority, respect for democratic rights truly or the unreasonable demands of Suharto, a dictator?

A bill like this one does nothing to calm our concerns. The government says that it will promote electronic commerce but, since there may be some problems, that it will also try to protect privacy. It is not easy to trust this government about the issue of privacy in relation to the economy.

As my colleagues before me pointed out, this bill is flawed. Furthermore, the schedule will, in my opinion, be a source of problems in terms of application. Too much is written in the conditional. In my opinion, lawyers will have a field day with this bill because of the use of the conditional.

• (1325)

Lawyers are very happy with this kind of bill, as they are most of the time with federal bills, because this government's issues and federal bills are put completely within the realm of the courts. Very often, lawyers are the first ones praising this approach.

With all due respect, we should understand that this is the way lawyers earn a living. They prefer the adversarial approach, because they can go in court and defend their clients as effectively as they can. I do not deny this.

We should ponder over bills such as this one and others that have been put before the House and who involve a greater role for the courts. It is inappropriate for the government. It seems to be saying: "Listen, if you are not satisfied with this bill or the existing law, just challenge it before the court".

People then have to pay huge legal costs, whereas the government has its own army of lawyers in the justice department and elsewhere. The government also has the money to pay lawyers to refute the arguments of any Canadian citizen who is seeking justice.

If private confidential information is disclosed in an electronic business deal and the whole legislation, in particular the schedule, is in the conditional it will be difficult for someone to say: "My private life has been exposed by this electronic commerce with which I disagree, and I would like you to protect me".

We can see on which side the government will be. It will simply say: "Dear sir or madam, we are sorry, but your point of view is not in keeping with ours, and if you're not satisfied just sue us". And then we start a legal saga which, too often, requires the taxpayer to pay sums of money he cannot afford, which means the government wins by default.

Let us take, for example, the Henry VIII section which in my opinion is absolutely terrible. You will remember that Henry VIII could, by decree, order that anyone in England be beheaded. Fortunately Henry VIII no longer rules because if he did it is quite likely that 45 heads of Bloc Quebecois members would be rolling on the floor of the House.

But it is the same system because these people will be able to change the rules simply by Governor in Council decision, which means cabinet decision, and this in my opinion is a huge problem. Who is lobbying the government? Associations for the protection of private life? Consumer associations? I think not. Then, who is lobbying the federal government? It is the huge corporations, the big banks, all the people who have money and make billions in profit.

If they think that some aspects of the schedule or the legislation do not suit their purpose, they will tell the government: "We are financing your party—we know how it works—our big corporation is financing your party so we do not want any interference with our

electronic commerce". Then they will ask the government to change the regulations. And we know what will happen.

The Bloc Quebecois is quite secure because we are funded by the people. We get \$10 or \$15 in rural areas, in small towns. Our hands are not tied unlike the government in front of us.

Government members have some obligations, because any major corporation that contributed \$25,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 to their party and now wants to engage in electronic commerce will say to the minister "Look, Sir, can you talk cabinet and the governor in council into making changes to the regulations, because I have a small problem here that is costing me approximately \$100,000 or \$200,000 a year?"

What will the government do? Once again, it will bow down before big business, and those who defend private rights and the right to privacy will end up empty-handed, as they usually do under this government.

• (1330)

Members will understand that it is very hard to support such a bill. I urge government members who still have some conscience left to vote with the Bloc Quebecois and to ensure that priority is given to privacy over all-out economic expansion, total freedom for big business.

I urge all members to vote with the Bloc Quebecois, in other words to defeat this bill.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The question is on the motion that the question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Call in the members.

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And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The chief government whip has requested the vote be deferred until the end of Government Orders tomorrow. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas, and more specifically to the amendment now before the House, which calls on the government to go back to the drawing board, to put it simply.

This piece of legislation has a laudable purpose. However, the means to implement it are appalling, and that is why the Bloc Quebecois is asking the government to go back to the drawing board.

This bill, whose purpose is to define the legal framework for the establishment of 28 marine conservation areas, including eight in Quebec, each representative of the ecosystems identified so far in Quebec and in Canada, follows up an international commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Bloc Quebecois supports this research, undertaken at the instigation of the World Conservation Union. It supports the environmental approach underlying this bill. However, the Bloc wants to forcefully state its disagreement with the means used.

• (1335)

The Bloc Quebecois wonders why the federal government did not draw on the agreement reached on the creation of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park in Quebec, which called for the cooperation, on an equal footing, of two governments in their respective jurisdiction and which even led to Quebec passing a legislation similar to the federal law, showing the respectful cooperation on the part of both governments.

The Bloc Quebecois was totally in agreement and urged adoption of this bill because it is the way to proceed where shared jurisdictions are concerned. Quebec is willing to co-operate, as it has shown with phase III of the St. Lawrence Action Plan, but for the bill to state as a prerequisite for the federal government's involvement in the management of marine conservation areas that title to the lands to be included in the marine conservation areas be vested in Her Majesty in right of Canada is unacceptable.

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This means that, instead of co-operating to ensure that in difficult circumstances, riparian communities take part in the preservation of those marine areas in the river, in the gulf and in the estuary, the federal government is saying that this land must belong to it, or else.

For it, the implementation of the international agreement, its commitments are more important than the fact that this land that would become federal is most definitely located in Quebec waters.

It is a change from what we hear constantly repeated here, for example in the flattering record the Prime Minister presents and the progress he supposedly made in his relations with provinces, including Quebec. This government action is possible only if the concerned aquatic territory in Quebec is declared federal.

This is an authoritarian and disrespectful way of acting that, ultimately, would not be efficient. How can one imagine that not only coastal populations but also every stakeholder in Quebec will co-operate if this bill becomes law? We hope very much that it will be withdrawn and reworked. How can anyone imagine that it could lead to a co-operation of various governments instead of creating an institutionalized conflict due to the federal government's arrogant attitude, saying there will be work only if the marine conservation areas are federally owned?

This bill contains other major problems. Overlapping is one that can certainly not be overlooked. This time, overlapping jurisdictions would not be provincial and federal governments, but different federal departments. This could be pretty funny. I hope the Royal Air Farce will examine this issue. They could also look into other matters, there are lots to choose from.

• (1340)

There are three federal bodies. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has marine protected areas and regulations. There is Environment Canada, which has marine wildlife reserves and regulations. Finally, there is Heritage Canada, which has marine conservation areas and its own regulations.

One would think that these three federal organizations would talk to each other, would find a way to co-operate with the provinces, including Quebec, particularly since this is going on at a difficult time for people in the maritime provinces. Indeed, the coastal communities who rely on marine resources, on fish, are very disturbed and live in fear, if not in poverty.

How can we expect to have the freedom of mind that is necessary to look at the ecosystem from these various perspectives if the workers who have lost their jobs do not know what their status will be in two or five years? More importantly, these people do not know if they will have resources to live on. The fact that they live in such insecurity is evidence that something is wrong.

Three federal organizations are looking after the ecosystem and the fishery, but what about the men and women who need to earn a living, who are faced with an employment insurance reform whose effects are being felt more and more? As we know, things will get even worse in the spring, but these people are already experiencing the adverse effects of the employment insurance reform, at a time when the government has an enormous surplus, which makes it all the more painful for them.

There is overlap among the federal departments, which, through numerous consultations with the public and departmental interventions, can do nothing but foment exasperation and anger. The context needed for these commitments by Canada is the total opposite.

We share these commitments, but we say that if the government is serious, if it wants to progress, it will have to create, with the provinces, the conditions that will enable stakeholders and the public to become involved in a task that will fall to them in the end.

It is good news to hear that the St. Lawrence is not as polluted as we thought. That is what a study revealed two weeks ago. It is good news, but we know that our problems are not over and that the protection of ecosystems and marine areas requires public involvement.

• (1345)

I cannot help but underline how shocking it is to see that, far from honouring its commitment in this regard, the federal government persists in acting in a unilateral and authoritarian way toward the provinces, particularly Quebec, so it can put the word "Canada" on every little marine area, instead of collaborating with Quebec and creating the conditions required to work with the public.

Despite all its sweet talk to Quebecers, with Bill C-54, this government actually decides when the Quebec legislation will prevail and, with Bill C-48, it says it will not become involved in the conservation of marine areas unless its ownership is recognized.

This is the mark not of a centralizing government but of a government which denies the very existence of the provinces, which wants to take over the areas under their jurisdiction. In doing so, the government wastes not only money but also energy and hinders the co-operation needed.

This government sang the praises of renewed federalism. If there is a new way to make federalism evolve, it will be found in these bills because we rely not on the press releases which supposedly explain the meaning of the bills, but on the text of the bill itself. It is our responsibility. Indeed, whatever a minister may say about his intentions, he will have to act according to the law.

Our responsibility is not to say “My God, the minister has good intentions and would never do such a thing”. We cannot do that because the minister may change his mind anyway, even if he had the intentions which he said he had. We cannot do that because this government could decide otherwise. The government may change and, anyway, legislation is interpreted not according to news releases but according to what is written in the act itself.

We know that the supreme court, particularly in the two successive decisions from Justice Laskin and Justice Dickson in a case whose name I hope I can remember before the end of my speech, is interpreting provincial jurisdictions in a way that is increasingly eroding them. Our responsibility is to ensure that, if governments have other intentions, they spell them out in their legislation.

This is why, for both Bill C-54 and Bill C-48, if ministers have in mind something other than what appears in the legislation, we ask them to withdraw and rewrite them. We know that even with amendments the spirit of a bill will not change. Our amendments were rejected often enough for us to know that, in the future, to change the spirit of the bill, we must ask that the bill be withdrawn and rewritten in such a way that the interpretation given will really be the one used in enforcement of the legislation, and not only in the news releases.

• (1350)

I urge my colleagues opposite to read the bills drafted by their government instead of just relying on the news releases. They will understand why we are against Bills C-54 and C-48. What matters is the text.

I remember instances where the Minister of Finance introduced new wording for his budget implementation bill, telling us that the original text should have read that way. These things do occur. The Minister of Finance did so and, in so doing, he confirmed that we were right in our interpretation. However, it took some reporters to understand it the same way we did.

Unfortunately, all bills do not get the same attention from reporters in the House who are simply not enough to cover everything that is going on here. We sincerely regret it because we could certainly see changes in behaviours and different ways of writing if the public understood better what is happening. We cannot say that a text means one thing when in fact it means the opposite. This is true of bill C-54 and it is also true of the spirit of Bill C-48.

I suggest that the minister go back to the drawing board and I can assure her that, as was the case with the development of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, the Bloc critic concerned, the member for Rimouski—Mitis, will do her share.

In light of the intensity of her speech, I am sure she will. However, if she does not agree with the bill, it would be a lot more

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difficult to support it and to enforce it afterwards, a situation that I hope will never happen.

At this point, we are still confident because we believe in the set goal, but we are forced to realize that we were often disappointed. This is in fact the reason why bills C-54 and C-48 reaffirm the necessity for Quebec to achieve sovereignty.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is only recently that I have become interested in this bill. There are some aspects that I understand, some that I do not. I will ask my colleague to shed some light on this for me.

I believe that the bottom of the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf are within Quebec's jurisdiction. I believe that the British North America Act clearly states that the bottom belongs to Quebec and is within its jurisdiction. Even if it wanted to, Quebec could not sell it to anyone, let alone the federal government.

Yet, if I understand correctly, the purpose of the bill before us is to have the federal government take over these areas in the river and in the gulf, on the grounds that they are wildlife conservation areas, which contain shellfish, plants and algae it wants to protect. And in a way expropriate from Quebec.

I believe this is unconstitutional. I believe that the federal government has no right to do so. Why then is it proposing legislation that clashes directly with the Constitution?

I would like my colleague to shed some light on this for me.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague will agree with me that I am not the greatest expert on this bill. What I understand is what I read.

This issue of expropriation is not mentioned. However, it is clearly stipulated that the schedule cannot include the names of marine areas. Clause 5(2) reads as follows “An amendment to Schedule 1 may be made only if the Governor in Council is satisfied that clear title to the lands to be included in the marine conservation area is vested in Her Majesty in right of Canada—”

• (1355)

This can be interpreted to mean that the federal government is reserving the right to force any province to transfer an area in the river, the gulf or the estuary. Otherwise, the area in question could not be included as part of the action taken to comply with the international agreement.

There is something in that logic that does not ring true. As I said, it does sound arrogant and even somewhat mean, because we have made our support for compliance with this international agreement known. However, we will not be able to support it if we have to give up the title to some areas, which is something we do not have

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the authority to do, anyway. Quebec does not have the right to transfer these titles to the Canadian government.

Once again, this is a very strange piece of legislation, which is why we are asking the minister to withdraw the bill and allow the committee to reconsider the issue.

The Speaker: There will be six minutes left for questions and comments when we will resume after question period. It being almost 2 o'clock, we will now proceed to statements by members so that we can have a little more time afterwards.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RON GAUDET

Mrs. Claudette Bradshaw (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Ron Gaudet, President of the Greater Moncton Economic Commission, who was recently named economic developer of the year by the Economic Development Association of Canada, a 400 member association.

As president and CEO of the Greater Moncton Economic Commission for the past four years, Mr. Gaudet has seen our region through some difficult times and has played a major role in revitalizing our economy.

Under Mr. Gaudet's presidency the greater Moncton area was named one of the ten best cities in Canada in which to do business for three years in a row.

[Translation]

Mr. Gaudet has greatly contributed to the economic growth of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe. On behalf of the people of the Greater Moncton area, I thank him for his dedication to the economic development of our community.

[English]

On behalf of the people of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe I congratulate Ron on his much deserved reward and thank him for his dedication to the development of our community.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian farmers are facing a cash crisis and although there are many factors contributing to their financial plight, the greatest challenge faced by our farming communities is to overcome Liberal arrogance, apathy and inaction.

With world commodity levels bottoming out, it is obvious that Canadian farmers are suffering the ill effects of the Asian flu. For example, first estimates for 1998 suggest that the drop in farm income will be 40% across Canada with the worst hitting the prairie provinces.

Yet in their time of need Canadian farmers hear too little too late from the Liberals. The weak willed government simply restates that regular income stabilization schemes like NISA and crop insurance will pull farm families through.

The government has abandoned farmers, abandoned those who put food on our tables and therefore abandoned an essential element of Canada, our farming communities. It is time for Canadian answers and action, not indifference and denial from the government.

* * *

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the National Art Centre's production of *The Bush Ladies: Life in the Backwoods of Upper Canada* was a fine contribution to Women's History Month.

This show stitches together the written witness of four Canadian pioneer women, Catharine Parr Traill, Susana Moodie and Anne Langton, who all lived in Peterborough riding, and Anna Jameson.

Their record of life in Upper Canada is a tribute to their cohorts and an inspiration for all Canadians.

Catherine Parr Traill, a writer and botanist, is the most famous of them. Her book *The Backwoods of Canada* is a literary and scientific account of her first three years in Canada. Her sister, Susana Moodie, is best known for her book *Roughing it in the Bush*.

Peterborough's tradition as a home for literary women has continued through talented authors like Margaret Laurence and recent winners of governor general's awards.

● (1400)

Each summer this tradition is celebrated by the Literary Festival of the Village of Lakefield which I encourage all members to attend next year.

The contributions to our country of these four special women were most worthy.

* * *

ABORTION

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the outrage of many North Americans concerning the brutal and senseless shootings of Canadian abortion providers and the recent murder of American Dr. Barnett Slepian.

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There have been four shootings in the last five years in Canada and the U.S., all occurring on or close to Remembrance Day.

Since 1997 the RCMP has been co-ordinating a national task force which is investigating the shootings. This task force includes members from the Hamilton-Wentworth, Vancouver and Winnipeg police forces as well as the RCMP, and now the FBI.

The Department of Justice's resources are being made available to the task force as are the services of the Canadian Police Information Centre and Criminal Intelligence Service Canada.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Chief Kenneth Robertson and the international task force for providing advice and assistance to physicians who are concerned for their safety.

Police believe there is someone out there who can provide information. They are urged to call the task force through their local police department.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GALA DE L'ADISQ

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to join with all Canadians in heartily congratulating all of Quebec's artists who participated in yesterday's 20th anniversary gala for the Association du disque et de l'industrie du spectacle québécois.

All this talent on a single stage speaks eloquently of the excellence of their work. The prizes awarded these artists is undeniable proof of the public's appreciation.

Congratulations to Kevin Parent and Bruno Pelletier, who each won three Félix awards.

Congratulations to the groups Dubmatique and Lili Fatale, fine representatives of the next generation of musicians in Quebec.

Congratulations as well to renowned performers Linda Lemay, Lara Fabian and, of course, Céline Dion, who hosted the evening with panache.

And congratulations to all the others who, for lack of time, I cannot name.

Canada may rightly be proud of these musical talents and the recognition they are given by their fellow citizens and by audiences worldwide.

[*English*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the launch of MADD Canada's annual Red Ribbon Campaign against impaired driving.

Impaired driving kills almost 2,000 and injures nearly 100,000 Canadians every year.

Impaired driving is a senseless tragedy as well as a 100% preventable crime. I salute Mothers Against Drunk Drivers for their tireless work.

I also salute my colleagues in the Reform Party for their fight against impaired driving. As a result of this fight, for the first time in 13 years the justice committee must now take steps to strengthen the laws that prohibit impaired driving, this senseless crime.

It is incumbent on every member of parliament to join this fight. I plead for their support to pressure the government to take leadership against impaired driving.

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[*Translation*]

ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN QUEBEC

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, come November 30, Quebecers will be expressing loud and clear their love for Quebec, a Quebec within Canada.

On November 30, Quebecers will say in no uncertain terms that they will not tolerate the scorn in the words of the acting PQ premier, Lucien Bouchard, who said that Jean Charest did not like Quebec.

On November 30, Quebecers will vote Liberal because they have had enough of referendums, which have cost more than \$400 million to date. They have had it with talk of separation and the words of Lucien Bouchard, who says Canada is Quebec's arch-enemy.

On November 30, Quebecers will vote for Jean Charest, because they know Canadian federalism will be improved with him and, in Abitibi-Est, with Lionel Brochu.

* * *

QUEBEC PREMIER

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the premier of Quebec accused the leader of the Quebec Liberal Party of not loving Quebec.

In doing so, Lucien Bouchard is insulting all Quebecers who do not share his views. In fact, with this statement he is finally putting

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thoughts he has had for some time into words. The sovereignist leader is cultivating division by insulting all those who believe Quebec should remain within Canada.

The PQ leader has decided to stir up dissent—let him go ahead and do so!

Quebeckers will have a chance on November 30 to give him a frank answer by voting Liberal, by backing Jean Charest.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

UNITED ALTERNATIVE

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last May the Leader of the Opposition invited supporters of different federal and provincial parties to come together at a national assembly to discuss forming a united alternative to Liberal misgovernment.

A poll released just today adds strength to this initiative by offering proof that Canadians want a strong united alternative to the top down, tax and spend, soft on crime, Ottawa knows best mentality of this increasingly arrogant government.

According to the *National Post-Compass* survey, 36% of Canadians would vote for a united alternative for fiscal and social responsibility, democratic accountability and strengthened unity through rebalanced powers. Add to this base another 30% of Canadians who say they will consider voting for a national alternative that shares their values and this spells big trouble for the Liberals who won the last election with only 38% of the vote and lost it in nine out of ten provinces.

That is why I wish once again to extend to all Canadians, especially my friends in the Conservative caucus, an invitation to join like-minded Canadians in helping to shape a broad political movement that can govern Canada leading into the 21st century.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that this finest of countries, Canada, is far from heaven on earth for its aboriginal people. According to a Department of Indian Affairs report, the living conditions of on-reserve Indians are comparable to those of the people of Russia, Brazil, Mexico and the third world. According to the human development index for status aboriginals, Canada ranked 47th of the 174 UN member countries.

To top off this already bleak picture, regrettably, over half of Canadians believe that there is no difference between their living conditions and those of the aboriginal people.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is urging the Canadian government to act promptly and energetically, not only to improve the living conditions of aboriginal people, but also to change the social perceptions of which they are victims. This is an urgent matter.

* * *

QUEBEC ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois must not feel like the odd man out any more. Indeed, over the weekend his colleague from Rimouski—Mitis also stated that a vote for the PQ was a vote for a referendum, but she specified the timeframe.

As for the Quebec Premier, he made himself very clear this weekend when he said anyone who does not share his views does not love Quebec. On November 30, Quebeckers will have an opportunity to let everyone know how much they love Quebec by voting in favour of keeping Quebec within Canada, that is by voting Liberal.

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[English]

COLUMBIA

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the civil service strike in Columbia started on October 7, nine more trade union leaders have been murdered, bringing the total to 2,700 trade union activists and organizers killed since 1987.

The death toll alone in the past three weeks includes Hortensia Alfaro Banderas, the president of the nurses union; Macario Barrera Villota, the president of the teachers union; and Jairo Cruz, the president of the local branch of the United Workers Centre. Others include Hector Fajardo Abril, Hernando Hernandez, Gabriel Alvis, Jesús Baldivino, Jesús Bernal and Jorge Luis Ortega Garcia. Nine more martyrs for the national trade union movement, nine more murders for the international right wingers of the world who would rather kill than share their hoarded wealth.

It is only tyrants who fear the labour movement. Canada should condemn Columbia in the strongest terms possible for failing to protect the right to organize and the right to free collective bargaining.

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HOUSING

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interim report of the Toronto mayor's homelessness action task force reveals that in Toronto alone about 3,000 individuals stay in shelters. In addition about 37,000 are on a waiting list for subsidized social housing. An additional 40,000 are spending more than half of their income on rent or living in extremely precarious housing.

The situation in other Canadian cities is also serious. It has been described by municipal leaders as “a national disaster”.

Evidently this is an issue requiring urgent and immediate attention. Federal and provincial assistance is needed in the form of funds toward the construction of social housing units so as to provide a home for the homeless.

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[Translation]

TWENTIETHANNIVERSARY OF ADISQ

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, ADISQ, the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo, celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Molson Centre, in Montreal.

During this time, ADISQ, which works on behalf of Quebec's popular music industry and whose existence is proof of the industry's vitality, spared no efforts to promote Quebec's talent and have it recognized.

• (1410)

The Bloc Québécois is proud to have worked closely with ADISQ to have neighbouring rights recognized in the federal legislation on copyright.

We hope the federal government will soon include the rights of creators and performers, as part of phase III of the review of the Copyright Act.

Culture has always been a priority for the Bloc Québécois, and for the Quebec government, as demonstrated by the commitments it made yesterday.

Long live the ADISQ gala, and congratulations to the winners and to all the nominees. Each and everyone of them contributes to the vitality and the richness of Quebec culture.

* * *

[English]

LOBSTER FISHERY

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has stated that he accepted all the conservation harvesting plans proposed by Nova Scotia lobster fishermen for 1998 and 1999. What he has not stated is that these plans have been changed.

The discussions with fishermen promised an evenly implemented across the board plan to double lobster egg production. The minimum carapace size would be increased to 3 8/32 inches. Egg-bearing females would be v-notched and females with a carapace of over 5 inches would be released. This was supported

because it was seen to be applied evenly across all lobster fishing areas.

We now learn that this is not to be the case. In short, once again this government has been advised by fishers to apply one set of conservation measures. The rules have been ignored, their advice has been ignored and another set of measures has been applied.

For instance where fishers share a line, between district 33 and district 34, they are so close together that the buoys entangle. How does it expect one side to obey conservation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

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DOWN'S SYNDROME

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 1 to November 7 is National Down's Syndrome Awareness Week. Each year communities across Canada officially recognize this week and host a variety of events.

Down's syndrome is a chromosomal disorder which affects one out of every 700 children born in Canada. This disorder causes delays in physical and intellectual development. The actual cause of Down's syndrome is still unknown.

During this special week the Canadian Down's Syndrome Society will be conducting a public awareness campaign to focus attention on the unique abilities, strengths, and contributions of Canadians with Down's syndrome.

In my riding, the Lambton, Middlesex and Wallaceburg Associations for Community Living are part of the national non-profit charitable organization whose mandate is to enhance the quality of life for all individuals with Down's syndrome.

* * *

YEAR 2000

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government claims most departments will be ready for the year 2000, but only most departments. What does this mean?

Nineteen departments are identified as having mission critical systems. These are systems where a problem like the Y2K bug will directly affect the health, safety, security and economic well-being of Canadians. These systems keep track of food inspection, security intelligence, air navigation, weather forecasting, search and rescue, and the pension plan.

Will the computer programs be ready for January 1, 2000? Hardly. In fact, recent government surveys show that the Department of National Defence is not ready for the year 2000. If our defence systems fail, the lives of Canadians could be at risk.

Oral Questions

Canadians need to know how serious the Y2K problem is. It will affect our daily lives. The question now is how will we be affected? The government's repeated comments about making the necessary efforts are not realistic or responsible. Is the government too far behind to catch up? When will we know?

The government has done too little too late in addressing this urgent situation. So much is at risk, the government should be ashamed of itself.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the thousands of Canadian men and women who risked their lives to secure our freedom.

Veterans continue to help improve the quality of life of Canadians. In my riding of Cambridge, the Preston, Galt, Hespeler and Ayr legions donate thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours to our community each year.

As Remembrance Day approaches, I would ask all Canadians to reflect on the sacrifices of Canadian veterans and thank them for their continued contribution to our daily lives.

To all of those men and women, thank you for your courage, dedication and love of country. God bless you all.

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YOUTH CRIME

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want action and are tired of rhetoric from a Liberal government that is soft on youth crime and light on legislation.

Since the April 1997 justice committee report on the youth criminal justice system, the Minister of Justice has repeatedly told Canadians that we would be seeing new legislation in a timely fashion.

Behind closed doors last December in Montreal with her provincial and territorial counterparts, the minister promised a draft bill by next year's meeting.

• (1415)

On May 13, 1998 the justice minister finally broke free from her bureaucratic masters and told the House of Commons that she would be introducing a new young offenders bill this fall.

At last week's meeting with provincial and territorial governments the Minister of Justice broke that promise. She had no draft legislation and no commitment for legislation this fall; just more vague promises.

If the Minister of Justice cannot be trusted to keep her promises on this legislation, why should she be trusted to introduce any legislation that truly addresses youth crime?

I urge the minister to show that her word means something and introduce new youth justice legislation this fall.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister admits that he wants to skim money from the employment insurance fund, money that is not his, but there is one small problem: it happens to be against the law.

The Prime Minister has ordered the finance minister to meet in private with the Employment Insurance Commission to get it to change the rules without public scrutiny or debate.

Why this hush-hush meeting to change EI? Is the Prime Minister actually ashamed, as he should be, of what he is doing?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary. We are very pleased with our record in EI.

When we took office in 1993, EI premiums were at \$3.07 and going to \$3.30. We froze them. Since then we have reduced them every year to \$3 to \$2.95 to \$2.90 and to \$2.70. We will continue those reductions in EI premiums.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister was scheduled to meet with the Employment Insurance Commission on November 13. Today we are hearing that the minister wants to delay his EI announcement until after November 30. Employers and employees must now wait until after the Quebec election to learn how much they will be ripped off in EI overpayments.

If the finance minister's EI changes are not bad news for workers and businesses, why is he waiting until after the Quebec election to make his announcement?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very simply, every announcement the government has made on EI premiums has been welcomed by employers and by employees and they will be in the future.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will tell you who will not welcome this announcement. The largest number of Canadians paying employment insurance are the poorest of the working poor, Canadians earning less than

Oral Questions

\$10,000 a year. Literally two million of them will get hit by the Prime Minister's EI changes. [Translation]

Why is the Prime Minister picking on the poorest Canadians for this employment insurance tax grab?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find this new found concern for the poor a little unusual coming from that leader.

If he has such profound concern for these people, why did he not support our bill last year when we cut 400,000 low income Canadians right off the tax rolls? Why did he not support the \$1.7 billion we gave to the child tax benefit to help the poor working families?

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we would have done one better. We would have taken a million families off the low income rolls, giving them a tax cut.

The employment insurance is the worst kind of tax because it hits the working poor the hardest. It does not make any sense. These people are being gouged by the Prime Minister and the government.

According to the chief actuary of the plan, every worker should get \$350 back and small businesses should get \$500 back for every worker they employ.

In all seriousness, why is the Prime Minister punishing the working poor?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I again find unusual what the Reform Party is saying because in securing the dividend of January 1998, last year, the Reform Party urged the government to use the EI surplus to pay down the debt.

In Fresh Start the Reform Party said we should only cut EI premiums by 28% and cut them for the employers only.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, workers and employers should be paying lower premiums. Four years ago the finance minister said:

There is nothing more ludicrous than a tax on hiring. But that is what high payroll taxes are—they affect lower wage earners much more than those at the high end.

• (1420)

Four years ago the Liberals had an excuse, that they were running a huge deficit. That was great then. What is their excuse today?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the excuse is very simple. If we were to cut payroll taxes to the extent advocated by hon. members opposite we could very well be in a deficit, and we will not do it.

HEALTH

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is responsible for what is happening in health care after cutting transfers to the provinces in that area by 35%.

Yet now it is about to announce, in the next budget, the creation of a new health program, even though all the premiers would rather have a transfer payment refund.

Will the Minister of Health confirm that the government is about to repeat the same mistake it made with the millennium scholarship fund by unilaterally creating a new health program, using money that comes from cuts in basic services?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already stated the government's intention to reinvest in health care, but the member will have to wait for the budget to get the details.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's intentions are really something we should be talking about, because it has demonstrated a real obsession with visibility by creating the millennium scholarship fund.

In the area of health care, should the government not give priority to efficiency by respecting provincial jurisdictions rather than by being concerned only with visibility?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are currently having discussions with my provincial counterparts regarding ways of improving the health care system.

However, I can tell the member that the most important thing is to recognize health as a priority, which we have done. As the Prime Minister himself has said, we intend to reinvest in that area, and we will do it soon.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every government in Canada is having serious trouble as the result of the cuts made by the federal government, which created its budget surplus by cutting health care transfers.

Why is the federal government not facing up to its responsibilities when its cuts to Quebec amount every year to half the salaries of all the nurses in the Quebec health care system?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the cuts ended 18 months ago, and we increased transfer payments by \$1.5 billion over the past year.

We have already started re-investing and we intend to continue.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, cuts re-occur every year.

Why is the health minister trying to make us believe that cuts in health care are hurting only Quebec when the provincial ministers meeting in Saskatoon all unanimously agreed that the federal government must re-invest in health care as a priority.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, and it is clear, we have started re-investing.

We increased transfers by \$1.5 billion 18 months ago. For us, the whole issue of health care is a top priority, and we intend to keep on re-investing in it.

* * *

• (1425)

HEPATITIS C

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is dragging its feet on the hepatitis C issue. Victims have been waiting for their money for seven months, but the disease does not wait. It progresses.

What is the minister waiting for to show some leadership? Is he waiting for the victims' lives to be at risk?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated some leadership with our position. A year ago, we initiated a process with the provinces. Then we presented an offer, with the provinces, to settle all pending court cases. The lawyers are now discussing the details, and we should have the results soon.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister tries to tell us that he cares about hepatitis C victims, but where are the results?

There have been seven months of delay, seven months of disappointment and seven months of hardship. Not one victim of tainted blood has received one red cent of compensation. Is the minister content with this lack of progress, or will he admit that his process has failed to deliver results?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those who have suffered by virtue of being infected with hepatitis C through the blood system in the period in question are represented by legal counsel. Those legal counsel are in the process of negotiating with the government details of the offer we have made to settle their claims. Those discussions continue.

Indeed, as I understand it, there are also separate and accelerated discussions for those in urgent need to identify people who are in need of immediate payment. We hope soon that there will be

agreement on how to determine those individuals and deal with those cases very quickly.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, last week the government appointed 12 directors to the new CPP Investment Board. Directors Mary Arnold, Dale Parker, Joseph Regan, Richard Thompson and board chair Gail Cook Bennet have all made substantial contributions to the Liberal Party either personally or through their own companies.

Is this another example of Liberal political interference in the Canada pension plan? Are Canada Pension Plan Investment Board seats for sale by the Liberal Party?

The Speaker: The question as it is phrased is out of order, but I will let the member go to his second question.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, five of the twelve members of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board are significant Liberal contributors. In fact 42% when only .2% of adult Canadians contribute to the Liberal Party. The board also includes a defeated Liberal MP.

Will the government end the political interference and restore the credibility of the Canada pension plan by ensuring that the parliamentary process of review occurs with every appointment to this important board?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every one of the directors was selected by a joint federal board. They were not appointed unless they had provincial approval.

If the member has a difficulty, maybe he should take it up with the provinces.

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GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, maybe they were smoking a joint. Maybe that was the problem.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I know the hon. member is going to ask his question now.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, just over a month ago we had the Prime Minister in Saint John saying there would be no more new spending for the Liberal government. Yet the estimates have just come out and they reveal that the government has gone on a spending spree with billions of dollars in new spending.

• (1430)

In fact the government at this point is \$4 billion over budget.

Oral Questions

Why has the Prime Minister broken his promise of no new spending?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only new spending in the tabling of the estimates was \$628 million for the Pacific salmon fishermen and the post-TAGS program. The others were expenditures that were already announced in the previous estimates.

I would like to know what the hon. member is against. Is it the payments to the British Columbia salmon fishermen? Is it the payments to the people who were affected by the ice storm during the winter? Were these the payments that came from the increased health payments?

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the minister what we are offended about. We are offended about the \$4 million going to the millennium arts project and the \$3.2 million going to the Senate. I am sure that is what Canadians want to hear.

A few weeks ago we had the finance minister saying we have to be concerned because we have worldwide turmoil. We have to be prudent.

Does the minister think it is prudent to give \$4 million to the millennium arts project and \$3.2 million to the Senate? Is that what the minister thinks?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the total amount given for the millennium which is \$145 million has been set in previous estimates. The member could easily have picked up the amount at that point and made his comments on it. I will repeat my comment.

The really large amounts in the estimates are transfers to various parts of the population that found themselves in difficulty, the salmon fishermen, the people affected by the ice storm and the increase in payments to the health transfers. Are these the payments my hon. colleague would like to see decreased?

* * *

[Translation]

PRATT & WHITNEY

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for Industry.

Last Friday, after meeting in Longueuil with Pratt & Whitney officials, who announced 900 layoffs, the Minister of Industry said that he was pleased with the \$100 million increase in the Canada technology partnerships program to allow the aerospace industry to maintain its technological advance and to continue to create high level jobs.

Can the Minister of Industry assure us that he will do everything in his power to ensure that Pratt & Whitney continues to do research in Longueuil?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said to journalists that this is a very important program. This \$150-million program was introduced in the 1996 budget. We have now increased funding to \$250 million so far, and Pratt & Whitney has received the largest share of this program.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that 100 Pratt & Whitney engineers will be transferred to a sister company in the United States to work on a new model being funded by the U.S. defence department.

Technology partnerships Canada is not a subsidy program, it is a repayable investment program.

What is the Minister waiting for to take action?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the member recognizes the difference between a subsidy and an investment program. This is very important because not all members of Parliament understand the difference, but she does.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. John Manley: Furthermore, I would say I am confident that with the development of our aerospace industry here in Canada, we will soon rank fourth in the world. I am sure that our level of employment in this industry, and also at Pratt & Whitney, will increase.

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[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, hep C victims of tainted blood have not received anything from this government's compensation package and the reason is that the lawyers are haggling.

Why does the health minister not take his responsibilities seriously? He should grab all those lawyers, lock them up in a big room and say do not come out until we have a compensation package. Look after the victims.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to an earlier question, I understand parties are communicating. They are discussing elements of the offer governments have made to resolve the claims.

● (1435)

Progress is being made. In particular, attention is being focused on those in most urgent need so that they can be provided with the help they need as soon as possible.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that they have not met for three months.

Oral Questions

If this minister had presented to the Canadian public a proper compensation program there would be no need for all these lawyers, no haggling, no delays.

Why does this minister not stop acting like the chair of the Canadian Bar Association and act like he was in charge of our health care system?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suppose we could have dictated unilaterally what people would receive. Former governments have done that. It does not take into account the needs of people.

Instead, what we have under discussion with those who were infected is customized relief to look after their individual circumstances. That is the way this government does business, not decreeing in some arbitrary fashion but talking in detail with those who are affected to find out how we can best serve those needs. That is the way we think we should do business.

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[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the meeting between provincial and federal justice ministers made one thing clear. The minister is trying to keep western Canada happy by toughening up the Young Offenders Act, while letting the provinces think they can adopt Quebec's approach.

When will the minister realize that the only possible solution to youth crime in Canada is for the present act to be left alone and all the provinces to follow Quebec's approach?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my provincial and territorial colleagues and I had a very good discussion last week in relation to the reform of the youth justice system.

Coming out of that discussion are four things the provinces put on the table. First, they want a flexible regime. Second, they want additional resources. Third, they want a balanced regime. Fourth, they want additional consultations.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, Quebec's youth crime rate is among the lowest in North America, proof that the Young Offenders Act is working very well in Quebec.

How does the minister explain that such is not the case in the rest of Canada, in the English provinces?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my provincial colleague Mr. Ménard, the attorney general of Quebec, had the opportunity to share with his colleagues from across the country the approach taken in Quebec and its success.

All ministers around the table concluded that what is important and the challenge for me is to ensure there is sufficient flexibility within any reformed youth justice system to accommodate different approaches.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what planet the health minister lives on, but the rest of us know what is going to happen.

If these lawyers and lawsuits go to court because of government inaction, lawyers are going to get the money that should be going to the victims of hepatitis C. That is simple.

Why is the health minister determined to put the earnings of lawyers above the health of victims?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was precisely to avoid people having to go to court and the expense of litigation that governments got together and made the offer we have.

Now the parties have those details under discussion, how can we best accommodate the needs of the people who were infected. Let us let the parties work it out. They have been making progress.

What we can do is let that process continue. It is in the interests of the victims.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the truth is while the minister is dickering around on this people are dying. That is the truth.

The AIDS tainted blood compensation package was administered quickly because it was done without a horde of lawyers who had their noses in the trough.

Will the health minister stop trying to act as the fundraising director of the Canadian Bar Association and—

The Speaker: If the hon. minister wishes to address that question he may.

* * *

[Translation]

APEC

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the next APEC summit is to be held in mid-November in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

We know that the former deputy prime minister and finance minister of that country has been detained. His imprisonment, which has been strongly condemned by Amnesty International, is a clear breach of human rights in every respect.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Several countries have already expressed reservations about holding the APEC summit in Kuala Lumpur. Will the government show leadership and ask that the next APEC summit be held somewhere else?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the countries that are members of APEC have indicated their willingness to go to the meeting and will be at the meeting, in particular because of the serious issues involved dealing with the financial crisis and the impact on people in that region and around the world.

As a member of APEC we will be attending but at the same time we are taking steps to make sure there will be a very effective involvement of civil groups and public groups at that meeting to make sure the full range of opinions is heard.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs will know that Mr. Stanley Faulder, a Canadian citizen, is to be executed in a Texas prison December 10. It would appear there were irregularities in the evidence presented in the case and that Canadian officials were only notified of Mr. Faulder's situation in 1991, a violation of international convention.

What course of action is the minister pursuing to prevent Mr. Faulder's execution?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member is quite right. There is a very clear violation of the Vienna convention, which requires states to offer proper counsel support for those who are arrested.

I wrote to the governor of Texas about a year ago drawing that to his attention without any recourse. I followed up this week with letters to the governor, to the head of the pardons convention and also to Secretary of State Albright. I have also asked our officials to meet with Mr. Faulder's lawyers to see if we can join with them in submitting an amicus brief in the petition to the supreme court to ensure that Mr. Faulder's rights are properly recognized by the United States.

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP in British Columbia is facing an \$8.5 million budget reduction which means the airplanes are not flying, no overtime and no training.

What does the commissioner of the RCMP do about all this? He and his wife and a few guests take a private jet to British Columbia and attend a retirement dinner. That is just after they flipped off to England to attend more social events.

Exactly what does the solicitor general think he is doing with RCMP rank and file members, where the money should be spent on crime enforcement—

The Speaker: The hon. solicitor general.

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this kind of demagoguery is particularly unfortunate in the 125th year of RCMP service to this country.

The hon. member could well serve this country to speak of the accomplishments of the RCMP this year and not that kind of trash.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that answer is totally unacceptable to rank and file police officers in Canada.

RCMP positions are going unfilled because of these funding cuts. Detachments are being called on to stretch their resources to the breaking point. Frontline police officers are being told there is no money for standby or overtime. At the same time the commissioner and his guests jet set across the country or over to England for a photo op with the Queen.

That type of response is totally unacceptable. What kind of message is this sending to rank and file police officers?

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the trip to England was not paid for by the RCMP. What kind of message is that sending to Canada?

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now that the first round of consultations on the so-called health protection branch renewal is over, the Minister of Health should be acutely aware of the lack of confidence and trust that Canadians have in our health protection system.

The sworn testimony of scientists on the matter of bovine growth hormones only serves to further darken the cloud of suspicion hanging over the health protection branch.

Oral Questions

To restore confidence in this discredited branch will the Minister of Health now do the right thing and launch a full independent inquiry into the health protection branch?

• (1445)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member cannot have it both ways, both to criticize health protection branch for being secretive and looking only inward at itself and then to criticize the health protection branch when it goes across the country to hold public consultations about renewing itself and changing the way it does business to be more open and transparent.

That indeed is our objective, to ensure that the health protection branch does its job in a way that has the confidence of Canadians. We throw open the doors and windows, bring the public in and let them know how decisions about safety and health protection are made.

That is the point of the consultations. That is the point of health protection branch transition. It is a good process.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health does a great disservice to Canadians by not acknowledging their concerns and by not acting now to clear the air.

With over 70% of the drug approval process paid for by the drug industry itself and with growing allegations of industry lobbyists taking precedence over the public interest, there is a serious concern before the minister today.

Why will the minister not show some leadership, get his own house in order and launch an immediate independent inquiry into the health protection branch?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought the member and her party would support the government in what it is doing.

We are looking at the way the health protection branch is structured. We are looking at the quality of the personnel. We are looking at the way it makes decisions. We are looking for a way in which it can fulfil its important public function in a fashion that will hold the confidence of Canadians in an open and transparent process.

That is what health protection branch transition is all about. It is part of that process to go public, to have public consultation, to hold open meetings where everyone is present and to talk about these issues.

That is the process in which we are involved. We believe it is the right way to restore confidence in the health protection branch.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, a year ago I questioned the Liberal patronage appointment of Ron Fewchuk, the CEO of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board.

After a year of turmoil it seems the minister is about to make some changes, including the infamous Mr. Fewchuk.

Does the minister not realize that it takes more than running a bait shop to run a \$50 million operation?

Is the minister prepared to stand today, take responsibility and admit that he made a mistake with this patronage appointment?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fewchuk has resigned as president of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

I intend to seek a replacement for him in due course. I will announce that person's name to the House when in fact I have chosen such person.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, when Ron Fewchuk was appointed as the CEO of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board there was a CEO in place already. In fact, for the last year there have been two CEOs.

Mr. Fewchuk has resigned. As a matter of fact, when he gets his pink slip there is going to be a severance package paid to Mr. Fewchuk. He had a severance package when he left parliament. He had a \$100,000 salary and now he has another severance package.

Will the minister please tell us how much it cost Canadian taxpayers to have this Liberal appointment made to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Board?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member asked me a question which he knows full well I cannot answer for the reason that privacy provisions prevent us from commenting on severance packages or anything else of that like.

With respect to his comments about patronage, I can assure him that we are not following the practice of the previous Tory government which was awash with patronage.

* * *

YEAR 2000

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions.

Oral Questions

The Bank of Canada is saying it plans to print more money to deal with the possibility of excessive withdrawals from our banks brought on by the public's concern over the year 2000 bug.

Are our banks themselves fully prepared for the year 2000?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question.

I am assured by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions that they have had extensive discussions with the banks to ensure that they will be compliant by the year 2000.

Moreover, they have encouraged the banks in dealing with their customers to also pass on the message that it is critical that all Canadian businesses be compliant by the year 2000.

* * *

• (1450)

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians tune in to *Hockey Night in Canada* they notice a large Government of Canada sign on the ice surface of the Molson Centre. Those signs cost \$540,000.

How can this government justify spending over half a million dollars on these signs when the other emblem of our Canadian self, the RCMP, is not receiving enough funds?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada participates in different sports activities, whether it is Formula 1, hockey, baseball or football. These sports are sponsored by the Government of Canada. I think the member should be proud that when Canadians and the rest of the world are watching a hockey game they will see that Canada is there.

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[Translation]

FRENCH SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government took money away from Canada's francophones to reduce its deficit.

That much is clear, because between 1993, when the Liberals came to office, and the year 2000, the total official language budget of the Department of Canadian Heritage will have been reduced by 40%, which is also the case with its direct contributions to francophone groups in Canada.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage give a positive answer to the francophone groups from all over Canada, which have often

asked her to raise the amounts set aside for agreements between Canada and French speaking communities?

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as is usual with them, our friends opposite come to the rescue of Canadian francophones when it suits them.

They forget to mention the school system, the community radio stations, the expansion of the TVA television network from sea to sea and the support that the Canadian government gives to many institutions to help the French speaking community not only to survive, but to flourish.

* * *

[English]

POVERTY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Centre for Social Justice has proven that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The Centre for the Study of Living Standards has proven that economic well-being is in decline. A study by HRDC has proven that urban poverty is increasing. They all point to a critical need for government action.

Instead we hear that the government plans to address poverty by redefining the way it is measured.

My question is simply this: Is this government planning to eradicate poverty by scrapping the LICO and redefining poor people out of existence?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is very concerned about the issue of poverty. This has been demonstrated by the fact that it has committed \$850 million to enrich the child tax benefit aimed at poor children and poor families. It is devoting another \$850 million to further fight poverty.

This is proof. It is not just talk like the hon. member is doing. It is action that Canadians want and they are getting positive action from this government.

* * *

AIR SAFETY

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

In two recent airplane crashes both planes were determined to have not been equipped with emergency locator transmitters. The transportation safety board has now said that all planes should be equipped with ELTs, but the industry has responded by saying that it is going to be too expensive.

Considering that the price of an ELT is about the same price as a one-way ticket from Ottawa to Halifax, will the minister make it a

Oral Questions

requirement that all planes in Canada be equipped with ELTs so that every time a Canadian gets on a plane they will know the plane is equipped with an ELT?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member I am sure forgets that some months ago I made this assurance. In fact, the committee on air regulations has been meeting with the industry to make sure this goes into effect. There are meetings happening in the next few weeks.

I think the hon. member's point is well taken, but he is a little late. We have already announced that decision.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN MUSEUMS

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important for Canadians to have a better understanding of their history and truly live out their culture.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. What is the minister doing to encourage Canadian museums to make Canadians across the country aware of their exhibits?

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for his question.

This is a happy coincidence, but this morning the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced funding for the museums assistance program will increase by \$2 million to \$9.4 million, which will allow all museums and galleries to do more to promote our common heritage.

• (1455)

The minister also announced an indemnification program for travelling exhibitions, which would allow Canadian museums and galleries to attract international exhibitions to Canada to travel across the country without having to cover insurance costs. This will foster a better knowledge of our heritage.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of RCMP officers all over Canada and especially on behalf of those in the province of British Columbia. Why can the solicitor general not understand the chagrin, the anger and the frustration of RCMP officers when the commissioner flies out in the RCMP private jet for a retirement party while there is a cutback of \$8.5 million, there is no overtime and there are no boats and no planes? Why can he not understand that?

Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why can the hon. member across the way not understand what a discredit it is to him to taint the reputation of the RCMP based on information that is inaccurate? He suggests that the only reason the commissioner was there was for that purpose when, in fact, there was a whole series of business conducted during that trip.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-44

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with Bill C-44, the federal government is trying to put the chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on an ejection seat. According to the President of the Treasury Board, however, there is no such threat in there since the independence of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is recognized in the act.

If what the President of the Treasury Board says is right, how can he explain that the last three CEOs of the CBC and 21 well-known journalists are saying they are very concerned about the provisions of Bill C-44?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the full independence of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is guaranteed by the Broadcasting Act. However I would like to ask a question of my colleague from the Bloc. If holding office during pleasure under the federal act is so dangerous, how is it that the chairman of Télé-Québec is appointed under the very same conditions?

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN FARMERS

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in announcing a multibillion dollar income assistance program for U.S. farmers, which starts tomorrow, the U.S. secretary of agriculture said "the package will get out some real help to farmers whose livelihoods are on the line".

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food. When will this government announce a relief program that will allow Canadian farmers whose livelihoods are equally on the line to begin planning their 1999 crop instead of their 1999 auction sale?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already pointed out to the hon. member the attributes of our safety net system in Canada. There is \$2.5 billion allotted to that system.

Also of importance, as we all know, is the fact that I have called a meeting for Wednesday of the farm leaders and provincial

ministers. This will allow us to continue to plan a “coherent and clear national strategy to provide producers with security”.

The hon. member should recognize exactly what we are doing and what we are about to do because that is a quote from “A Framework for Canada’s Future”, the NDP platform from the last election.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

To follow up on my colleague’s question, I think an instrument landing system is important, particularly in outlying areas. Unfortunately, it took the Clarenceville accident to shed light on some of the deficiencies involved here.

Does the minister know that it can take months to have an instrument landing system repaired, and that meanwhile the aircraft has to do without the system? That is the unfortunate explanation for some accidents.

I would like to know if the minister intends to force companies to temporarily replace instrument landing systems that are being repaired.

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that the service period involved has been revealed. I believe in the Air Canada accident some time ago it was inordinately long.

This is one of the aspects of the regulation that will be looked at by the committee in developing the new regime under which all these planes will operate.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. According to a recent study there is a growing gap between Canada’s richest and Canada’s poorest families. By 1996 Canada’s richest families were making 314 times the average income of the poorest.

What does the minister suggest be done to rectify this situation?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, poverty is an issue that has tremendously preoccupied the government since coming to office. This is precisely why our government introduced a number of measures specifically to help these people out of poverty.

Routine Proceedings

We are putting \$1.7 billion in the national child benefit to help children in low income families. This is on top of the \$5 billion that the government is already investing toward families with children.

We also believe the best way to help people out of poverty is to help them get into the labour market. This is why we introduced the Canadian opportunities strategy to help access. We have the transitional jobs fund—

The Speaker: That will bring to a close our question period for today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 109 I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled “Capturing the Advantage: Agricultural Biotechnology in the New Millennium”, which was tabled in the House of Commons on June 9, 1998.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (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 three petitions.

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[English]

PETITIONS

MARRIAGE

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to present a petition to the House today.

Whereas a majority of Canadians understand that the concept of marriage is the voluntary union of a single unmarried male and a single unmarried female, the petitioners pray that parliament enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Prohibited Degrees Act and the Interpretation Act so as to find in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

I agree with the petition.

Routine Proceedings

• (1505)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows he cannot say that. I would invite him to comply with the rules at all times. I know he would want to do that.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions on behalf of the residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The first one is signed by 83 constituents from the surrounding area. It is on Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act, which as we all know would support that a marriage should only happen between a man and a woman.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I am pleased to present to the House is again on behalf of the residents of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

It relates to private member's Bill C-304, which is again a fundamental principle that needs to be propped up in our society. It would strengthen the protection of property rights and the Canadian bill of rights.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to present a petition on behalf of about 66 constituents of Prince George—Peace River. The majority of Canadians understand the concept that marriage is the voluntary union of a single male and a single female.

They further pray that parliament enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act and the Interpretation Act, so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female. I know I cannot say it but I agree with this petition.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has surely heard my rebuke to his colleague already. I would hope he would comply with the rules in all respects.

[*Translation*]

BILL C-36

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétién (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from several residents of the municipality of Stornoway in the riding of Frontenac—Mégantic.

Proposed changes to the calculation of the income security benefit are creating much concern and dissatisfaction among Stornoway seniors. This new bill that would base this benefit on family income will be particularly harmful to women.

We consider this as discrimination against most women. The people of Stornoway ask parliament to show more concern for the interests of seniors by withdrawing Bill C-36.

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce today, pursuant to Standing Order 36, a petition signed by many Canadians. In particular, it is signed by people from Bellefeuille and Montreal, Quebec; Thunder Bay, Ontario; and other places.

The petitioners are very concerned about the Liberal government's GST plans and the fact that it has broken its promise to eliminate the GST.

They also oppose the creation of the super tax collection agency, which is the privatization of something that is very near and dear to the pocketbooks of every Canadian. They are asking the Government of Canada to undertake a fair tax reform of the system.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition on behalf of about 7,000 constituents who are calling for a major overhaul of the tax system.

They have all probably filled out their income tax forms recently and are reminded about the goofy nature of our tax system. They are suggesting that it should be revised from top to bottom.

It is a pleasure to present the petition on their behalf.

TRADE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on an unrelated topic, the petitioners again from throughout British Columbia are calling upon the government to consider international trade agreements like NAFTA that make it difficult for governments to pass legislation to protect the health of Canadians.

They specifically imply the MMT and the PCB issues facing the government.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is signed by young people from various schools and others in the Kamloops region who are concerned about the lack of proper sentencing against people who commit offences against animals. They point out a number of offences against animals.

The petitioners feel that the judges simply do not understand that people who inflict cruelty upon animals ought to be receiving a good smack, or perhaps more than that. They do not elaborate.

• (1510)

BILL C-68

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the pleasure to present a petition from people in Minden, Kinmount, Kirkfield, Tory Hill and other places,

They are calling for the repeal of Bill C-68 to redirect the money to a more effective reduction of violent crime, improvement of public safety, more police on the street, more crime prevention, more suicide prevention centres, more women's crises centres, and other things.

RIGHTS OF PARENTS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition signed by some 32 residents of Calgary and other parts of Alberta.

They are calling on parliament to take note of the need to reform our laws with respect to child support payments and child custody to ensure that all parents are guaranteed access to their children and that non-adversarial means be used wherever possible in mediating co-parenting situations.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, question No. 125 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 125—**Mr. Ted White:**

Of the 2,224 minister's permits issued by the immigration department in 1997 to individuals who would otherwise have been inadmissible to Canada for technical reasons, the 1,797 inadmissible for criminal reasons, and the 275 inadmissible for medical reasons, could the government please indicate the 10 most common reasons for the issuance of a minister's permit for each of these three categories?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): a) In 1997, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration issued 2,244 minister's permits to persons inadmissible for a variety of reasons other than criminal or medical inadmissibility. The department does not have a list of the 10 most common reasons for which these permits were issued on behalf of the minister because data is not collated in this manner. However, the majority of permits issued for technical reasons were issued to members of the family class to allow early admission to Canada before all of the processing steps were concluded. An example would be the issuance of minister's permit to a spouse of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident who is unable to undergo

Routine Proceedings

the required immigration medical X-ray due to pregnancy. A minister's permit may be issued to allow her to be reunited with her family despite the fact she has not met the medical requirements.

In such cases, the X-ray is normally completed after the birth of the child and the processing of the spouse's application for permanent residence is then completed in Canada.

Minister's permits may also be issued to facilitate the entry to Canada of highly skilled workers or business immigrants where Canadian jobs are at stake. An example would be that of an applicant for permanent residence destined to work with a Canadian high-tech company. The worker is key to the implementation of a project or the ability of the company to honour its contractual obligations. Hundreds of Canadians will be laid off if the company is not able to bring in the skilled worker immediately. The prospective immigrant cannot be issued an immigrant visa because the medical examination or criminal or security screening have not been completed. A minister's permit may be issued to allow the prospective immigrant to enter Canada and to start work immediately while processing of the immigration application continues abroad.

b) In 1997 the department issued 1,497 permits to persons inadmissible for criminal reasons. The department does not have a list of the 10 most common reasons for which these permits were issued on behalf of the minister because data is not collated in this manner.

However, an example would be that of a prospective visitor who admits to a minor criminal conviction several years ago, such as driving under the influence, possession of marijuana, or shoplifting, but wishes to come to Canada to visit family. After determining that the individual presents no danger to the public, a minister's permit may be issued to facilitate the visit.

c) In 1997 the department issued 275 permits to persons inadmissible for medical reasons. The department does not have a list of the 10 most common reasons for which these permits were issued on behalf of the minister because data is not collated in this manner.

An example would be spouses and dependent children sponsored by Canadian citizens or residents that are found to be medically inadmissible. Minister's permits may be issued in such cases on humanitarian and compassionate grounds in order to facilitate family reunification. Departmental officials consult with provincial health officials before issuing minister's permits in such cases. Another example would be minister's permits issued to medically inadmissible visitors, including children, coming to Canada for medical treatment where the treatment is not available in the home country and the treatment has been prepaid by the visitor or the visitor's family in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas, be read a second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk about Bill C-48.

This bill is entitled “An Act respecting marine conservation areas”, and its purpose is to provide a legal framework for the creation of 28 marine conservation areas representative of each of the Canadian ecosystems. The Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park is the 29th marine conservation area, but is not governed this legislation since it has its own legislation.

Bill C-48 follows a commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada to the World Conservation Union Conference held in Montreal in 1996. At that time, as in 1994, the union passed resolutions asking all coastal nations to act quickly to put in place conservation measures for marine areas.

The year 1998 was designated the International Year of the Ocean by the United Nations. Among the most important initiatives to mark this event we should mention the World Exposition in Lisbon, Portugal and the signing of the Ocean Charter, prepared by UNESCO, in September 1997 in St. John's, Newfoundland.

The creation of marine conservation areas fulfills the objectives of many international forums and documents like the World Conservation Strategy of 1980, the 1991 report entitled “Caring for the Earth”, prepared by the IUCN, which is the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Wide Fund for Nature, which is financed in part by the Government of Quebec.

Of course the Bloc Québécois is in favour of measures to protect the environment. More particularly, the Bloc Québécois reminds the government that it supported the legislation creating the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park. Moreover, the Bloc Québécois knows that the Quebec government is also pursuing initiatives to protect the environment and sea floors in particular.

• (1515)

The Quebec government is also open to working together with the federal government, as evidenced by the agreement signed by

the two governments on the third phase of the St. Lawrence action plan.

However, the Bloc Québécois has to object to the bill before us for a number of reasons: first, instead of relying on dialogue, as in the case of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, the federal government wants to create marine conservation areas regardless of Quebec's jurisdiction over its territory and the environment.

Second, Heritage Canada is proposing the establishment of a new structure, that is the marine conservation areas, which will simply duplicate Fisheries and Oceans' marine protected areas and Environment Canada's marine wildlife reserves. In a nutshell, believe it or not, the federal government has found a way to divide itself into three components to better invade Quebec's jurisdictions.

At this stage, I would like to elaborate on our objections to this bill. First, let us look at the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park, which is a model. In 1997, the governments of Quebec and Canada passed legislation to establish the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park. This legislation led to the creation of Canada's first marine conservation area, and one of the main features of this legislation is the fact that the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is the first marine park to be created jointly by the federal and Quebec governments, without any land changing hands. Both governments will continue to fulfil their respective responsibilities. The legislation also states that the park is made up entirely of marine areas. It covers 1,138 square kilometres. Its boundaries may be changed through an agreement between the two governments, provided there is joint public consultation in that regard.

In addition, in order to promote local involvement, the acts passed by Quebec and by Canada confirm the creation of a co-ordinating committee, whose membership is to be determined by the federal and provincial ministers. The committee's mandate is to recommend to the ministers responsible measures to achieve the master plan's objectives. The plan is to be reviewed jointly by both governments, at least once every seven years.

As well, any exploration, utilization or development of resources for mining or energy related purposes, including the building of oil lines, gas lines or power lines, is prohibited within park boundaries.

Finally, by means of regulations, the governments of Quebec and of Canada will be able to determine measures for protecting the park's ecosystems and resources and for protecting the public. More specifically, they will be able to define how each category of area will be used and for how long such use shall apply.

The Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park should have served as a model to the federal government for the creation of other marine conservation areas.

Another model it could have followed is Phase III of the St. Lawrence action plan. On June 8, 1998, the environment ministers of Canada and of Quebec announced phase III of the St. Lawrence

development plan, representing a total bill of \$230 million to be shared equally by both levels of government.

One of the objectives of this action plan is to increase the area of protected habitats by 100% from 12,000 hectares to 120,000 hectares. Phase III follows on the first two phases, in which both governments invested over \$300 million.

Let us now examine Bill C-48, which unfortunately fails to respect the integrity of the territory of Quebec. One of the conditions essential to the establishment of a marine conservation area is federal ownership of the land where the conservation area will be established. This land, let it not be forgotten, belongs to Quebec.

• (1520)

Subsection 5(2) of the bill stipulates that the minister may not create a marine conservation area unless “satisfied that clear title to the lands to be included in the marine conservation area is vested in Her Majesty in right of Canada”—this of course being the Queen of England—excluding any such lands situated within the exclusive economic zone of Canada”. A highly complicated way of putting it.

It must be noted that section 92.5 of the Constitution Act, 1867 recognizes that the administration and sale of lands in the public domain are an exclusive provincial jurisdiction. In other words, the 1867 Constitution says that Quebec is the exclusive owner of its territory. There is a kind of contradiction here. As I asked earlier, is what we are dealing with here expropriation in disguise?

Moreover, Quebec legislation on crown lands, passed by the Quebec National Assembly, applies—and I invite the public to listen carefully, as well as this House—to all crown lands in Quebec, including beds of waterways and lakes and the bed of the St. Lawrence River, estuary and gulf, which belong to Quebec by sovereign right.

I am not making this up. It is there, clearly written. Quebec cannot transfer its lands to the federal government. I repeat, Quebec cannot transfer its lands to the federal government. The only thing it can do within this legislation is to authorize, by order, the federal government to use them only in connection with matters under federal jurisdiction

However, the protection of habitats and fauna is a matter of joint federal and provincial jurisdiction, and the Government of Quebec plans to establish a framework for the protection of marine areas in the near future.

According to the notes provided us by the Minister of Canadian Heritage with regard to Bill C-48, marine conservation areas are planned for the St. Lawrence, the St. Lawrence estuary and the Gulf

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of St. Lawrence. These are three areas in which the ocean floor is under Quebec’s jurisdiction.

Also, co-operative mechanisms already exist to protect ecosystems in the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park, and in the St. Lawrence River under the agreement entitled “St. Lawrence action plan, phase III”, which was signed by all federal and provincial departments concerned and which provides for an investment of \$250 million, over a period of five years, in various activities relating to the St. Lawrence River.

Why is the Department of Canadian Heritage acting with such arrogance this time, by claiming to own the marine floor where it wants to create marine conservation areas, instead of permitting bilateral agreements with the Quebec government and thus avoiding having Canada once again trample Quebec’s areas of jurisdiction?

I would like to say a word about environmental matters in the context of shared jurisdictions. Under the Constitution Act, 1867, the governments of Canada and Quebec share responsibility for the environment.

Under paragraphs 10, 11, 12 and 13 of section 91, the federal government has control over the following areas:

91. —the exclusive Legislative Authority of the Parliament of Canada extends to all Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next herein-after enumerated; that is to say:

10. Navigation and Shipping.

11. Quarantine and the Establishment and Maintenance of Marine Hospitals.

12. Sea Coast and Inland Fisheries.

13. Ferries between a Province and any British or Foreign Country or between Two Provinces.

• (1525)

Quebec’s jurisdiction is also recognized in the following sections of the British North America Act of 1867:

92. In each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next hereinafter enumerated; that is to say,

5. the Management and Sale of the Public Lands belonging to the Province and of the Timber and Wood thereon;

...

13. Property and Civil Rights in the Province;

...

16. Generally all Matters of a merely local or private Nature in the Province.

Section 92A(1) is also interesting.

92A. (1) In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to

(a) exploration for non-renewable natural resources in the province;

(b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources and forestry resources in the province, including laws in relation to the rate of primary production therefrom.

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Therefore, Quebec's Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife specifies the role to be played by the Quebec Minister of the Environment and Wildlife. Section 2 reads as follows:

2. The Minister of the Environment and Fauna ensures the conservation and development of wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Under Quebec's legislation, the minister also has authority to appoint conservation officers.

By refusing to use the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park Act as a model and by making title to the territory an essential condition for the establishment of marine conservation areas, the federal government is behaving, as Robert Bourassa used to say, like a centralizing government that wants control over everything, regardless of recognized jurisdictions.

Bill C-48 creates overlap within the federal administration itself. Through the Department of Canadian Heritage, the federal government intends to create marine conservation areas. Through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it intends to create marine protected areas. Through the Department of the Environment, it wants to create marine wildlife reserves. This means that a single site could find itself protected under more than one category.

The Department of Canadian Heritage sets out its reasons for creating marine conservation areas in the preamble to the bill. It is establishing marine conservation areas to protect natural, self-regulating marine ecosystems for the maintenance of biological diversity; establish a representative system of marine conservation areas; ensure that Canada contributes to international efforts for the establishment of a worldwide network of representative marine areas; provide opportunities for the people of Canada and of the world to appreciate Canada's natural and cultural marine heritage; and provide opportunities within marine conservation areas for the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources for the lasting benefit of coastal communities.

As for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, it is proposing the establishment of marine protected areas. However, in a discussion paper released by Fisheries and Oceans in January 1997, the purpose of marine conservation areas is described as follows:

These zones are established to ensure the conservation of commercial and non-commercial fisheries resources and their habitats, endangered or threatened species and their habitats, unique habitats, productive ecosystems and biodiversity, any other marine resource.

In both cases, we are told that local people will have a significant involvement in the establishment of marine protected areas. The Bloc Québécois wonders how many information or organization meetings local people will be invited to, serving bureaucracy instead of democracy.

As for Environment Canada, it is proposing to establish marine conservation zones, that could also be called natural marine reserves, expanding the concept of the national wildlife sanctuary beyond the territorial sea to the 200 nautical mile limit. These areas are also subject to the Canadian Wildlife Act, but require a different set of regulations.

Under these various laws, the Government of Canada is proposing to create marine conservation areas, marine protection areas and natural marine reserves. The same territory could, according to Fisheries and Oceans, be zoned in various ways and subject to various regulations. Welcome, folks, to the complex world of Government of Canada bureaucracy.

• (1530)

The minutes prepared by the Fisheries and Oceans officials following the consultation meetings on marine protection areas held by the department in Quebec, in June 1998, state, and I quote:

There is still a great deal of confusion among stakeholders regarding the various federal programs on protected marine areas—The departments concerned should harmonize their actions and co-operate to create protected marine areas.

The Bloc Québécois shares the views of those who participated in these meetings and feels that this is bureaucratic overkill that will not serve the public's interest, in the end. The existence of an interdepartmental committee of these various departments is no reassurance.

We know from experience that having a number of departments involved in the same project makes it difficult for them to work together and ends up costing taxpayers a lot of money. The government would have been better advised to have a single department oversee the protection of ecosystems and the departments concerned conclude a framework agreement delegating their respective responsibilities.

As we can see there is confusion but there is more. The bill provides that each federal department will retain jurisdiction over its own marine conservation areas. However, when the Department of Canadian Heritage deems it appropriate it may, in co-operation with the department concerned, adopt regulations regarding a marine conservation area that differ from the existing provisions.

In this case, the change agreed to between the Department of Canadian Heritage and the department concerned takes precedence over other regulations under the Fisheries Act, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, the Canada Shipping Act, the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act or the Aeronautics Act.

Briefly, I would like to add this. Consultations were held. Of all the answers given by participants and obtained by the department, only one was in French. As we do not have access to the names and addresses of respondents because this information is confidential in

accordance with the Act respecting the protection of personal information, we can only conclude that Quebec did not have the opportunity to take part in consultations.

I say this, the Bloc Québécois, on behalf of the population of Quebec, will stoutly defend the right to territorial integrity.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Portneuf for such a good speech showing how complex this bill is.

This is like shooting one's self in the foot. The member clearly showed the overlap between three departments that want to be sure to intrude into an area that is outside their jurisdiction.

The Liberals' federal government has been shouting from the rafters it has met all of Quebec's demands. In its speech from the throne it claimed it was putting an end to overlap and intrusion into areas under provincial jurisdiction. However, it has now found a way to divide itself into three components and to actually overlap itself, so as to be absolutely certain to meddle in our affairs and invade an area that comes under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the other provinces.

I would like our colleague to demonstrate how three departments overlap to be sure, in a roundabout way, to interfere in our affairs.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, the issue is this: there is a river bed along the St. Lawrence and a seabed in the gulf. Shellfish and plant life can be found there.

• (1535)

Questions will be asked: to whom do the shellfish and the plant life belong? Does Fisheries and Oceans have jurisdiction? Is this a heritage issue? Should the environment minister determine whether the river bed and seabed where the plant life and the shellfish are to be found is contaminated or in good condition? All this is done on Quebec's territory.

In other words, it is as if I were at home, on my property, and someone came to tell me how things must be done. Is my lawn in good condition? Are the ants developing well? Am I taking good care of the environment? All this, without asking my permission, without talking with me, without trying to reach an agreement, without trying to have a dialogue, without trying to agree on terms and conditions, without taking my own concerns into consideration.

What we have here an invasion of territory through legislation. There is no physical invasion, just legislative invasion. This is not the first occurrence. Let us look at the millennium scholarships, an extraordinary example.

We know that, in Quebec, there has been a sound policy on scholarships for the last 35 years. This is why Quebec students

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have the smallest debt load in Canada, about \$11,000 per person; for the rest of Canada, it is \$25,000.

Quebec made some good societal choices about thirty years before Canada did. Now, Canada takes a part of our money, about \$600 to \$700 million from Quebec, and puts it in the millennium scholarship fund to provide us with something we already had but that the rest of Canada did not have.

We often face this situation: the federal government invades our jurisdictions, duplicates the efforts, walks all over us without any concern for what it is destroying. With an attitude such as this, I am increasingly proud to be a sovereigntist and increasingly anxious for our people to say yes.

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for the quality of his research on this subject. I like to hear about the Saguenay fjord and the St. Lawrence River.

In 1984, Parks Canada and the federal government did not have one single document about the Saguenay fjord. When I was elected as a young member in 1984, one of my main priorities was to do everything I could to have the fjord included in the Canadian national parks system.

When I was re-elected, I was happy to be able to co-operate with the minister on this issue. That co-operation led to the creation of a new national marine park by the federal government. It took 14 years. Millions of dollars were invested in research. It must be said though that environmental issues were an important part of the government's agenda at that time, which led to the treaty on acid rain, the St. Lawrence River action plan and the green plan. All that to illustrate the fact that it was an ongoing concern of the government.

I can tell my colleague that the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is an extraordinary accomplishment. Not only will it contribute to the preservation of our marine resources, but it will also help bring our region to the fore nationally and internationally.

I am a little bit surprised that my colleague would want to focus on frictions between the two levels of government, because the establishment of the park, which required the co-operation of several departments at the provincial and federal levels, was a success.

Are there any documents or statements by the Quebec government or the federal government that show disagreements in the negotiations related to this bill?

I would like to be made aware of these disagreements, because the establishment of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park was a complete success. For the next hundred years, it will allow us to preserve our resources and also to be known in the rest of the

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country. Knowing that Parks Canada advertises all over the world, one can see why this is important for our region.

I would really like to know the source of these frictions between both levels of government.

• (1540)

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for this excellent question. He has given an example of exactly the right kind of situation.

The Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is a project that is working out just fine. It has been designed and developed thanks to the co-operation of the Canadian and Quebec governments. Both levels of government have passed mirror legislation to create that park. It has been a real success. That is a good approach, but the Canadian government does not seem inclined to use it again.

If it had been a disaster, I think the government would use that approach again, but since it was a resounding success, it does not want to. It does not want to copy what has been done in the past. It is designing a new system to which the Quebec government is not a party, in which it is not involved as an actor or a negotiating party. Quite differently, the feds are just intruding, and that is what is wrong.

When something is working just fine and we have a good approach, when we find the right move and the right procedure, with respect for the jurisdictions of both levels of government, co-operation and harmony, why not use the same approach? We have a good model. My colleague told us he is proud of that achievement. All of us are.

We have a good model, but they will not follow it anymore. They refuse. They are designing a new one, in which they will be trampling on Quebec jurisdictions and, through three departments, impose legislation on the marine floor in Quebec without asking for any permission, without negotiating any agreement, without asking any question. They make themselves at home.

But the Canadian government is not at home in an area of exclusive Quebec jurisdiction recognized by the Constitution.

Once again, we are going to oppose most vigorously this federal encroachment in an area that, constitutionally, is under Quebec's jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to have the opportunity this afternoon to address the House with respect to Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas. The proposed piece of legislation is designed to protect and conserve the areas of Canada's marine landscape for the benefit, education and enjoyment of all Canadians and the world.

My constituency of Fundy—Royal straddles the beautiful and scenic Bay of Fundy. The Bay of Fundy has the largest tides in the world. Many beautiful beaches have evolved throughout the Bay of Fundy region following centuries of constant pounding delivered by these often unforgiving tides. Tourists from around the globe have been attracted to the Fundy region to witness the record tides while also revelling in the opportunity to enjoy down-home maritime hospitality.

This region has also been the focus of many environmentalists who are drawn to the area to study our unique marine ecosystem and the Fundy escarpment. Like many of our local residents, these individuals are deeply concerned with the often callous indifference for our environment.

The Bay of Fundy has been the lifeblood for many of my constituents, just as it has been for my neighbours across the bay who are effectively represented by our party's Canadian heritage critic, my colleague from West Nova.

The Bay of Fundy is home to many different species of marine life. For instance, the right whale, of which very few breeding pairs exist in the world, call the Bay of Fundy home every August. For years Fundy fishing grounds supported the very prosperous inshore scallop fishery. Groundfish used to be found in abundance, helping create a very lucrative fishing industry.

Today many of the species fishermen depend upon for their livelihoods are disappearing due to overfishing. Only the lucrative lobster fishery remains. This is also threatened. From that perspective I am very concerned for the individuals from St. Martins in my riding who earn their livings by fishing.

We support Bill C-48. We feel it is time politicians started to take a leading role in helping to preserve our environment so our next generation will enjoy the scenery and the beauty that exists throughout the country. This is another reason why I look forward to the introduction of the Canadian endangered species protection act in February.

• (1545)

A lot of individuals when they talk about protecting endangered species do so in order that we can protect those for future generations. Some people believe that piece of legislation is rather complex. It comes down to a number of points.

First, when it comes to endangered species we do not kill them. We do not destroy their home and we give them a habitat in which to live. We also look after those concerned Canadians who are land owners so that we can provide them with economic instruments with respect to stewardship. Obviously when that piece of legislation comes in I will have more to say at that time.

We can only achieve the goals by taking immediate action through protective measures as outlined in this bill. Education must play an integral role in helping raise Canadians' awareness of our environment.

Having been born and raised along the Fundy shore I can certainly appreciate the importance of our natural environment and the importance this environment plays in our everyday lives. Many of my constituents depend on the ocean for their livelihoods.

Our aboriginal peoples fished these great waters long before the arrival of any European settlers. Fish were an important staple in their everyday diets. They recognized the importance of this natural resource for their survival. Even today their leaders respect and appreciate the value of maintaining a viable fishing industry. Aboriginal peoples recognize that conservation measures must be of paramount concern whenever discussions surround the allocation of fish stocks.

Deriving one's living from the oceans is a cultural way of life for many individuals on all the coasts of this great country. We depend on the preservation of this large habitat for our survival and for the survival of our next generation. It is incumbent on all to begin taking immediate steps toward protecting our ecosystem.

On this note I am also very proud of the leadership which was displayed recently in my riding near the town of St. Martins in the development of the Fundy trail parkway. In this park we have an opportunity to view the Bay of Fundy.

Through the leadership of the hon. Gerald Merrithew, a minister for the province of New Brunswick at that time, I must compliment provincial colleague Stuart Jamieson and some other stewards such as Mitchell Franklin who actually had the foresight to develop this park to view the beautiful Bay of Fundy.

Recently our coastal regions have been facing another menacing attack. This time it comes from illegal lobster fishers who have been pillaging the ocean floors almost unabated by officials of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The lucrative lobster fishery can be in danger if strong measures are not immediately taken to put an end to this illegal activity.

The Progressive Conservative Party has long been concerned with preserving our ecosystem. In 1986 the PC government approved the national marine park policy. In 1987 the country's first national marine conservation area known as Fathom Five in Georgian Bay was established.

In 1988 the government signed a federal-provincial agreement with British Columbia to create a national marine conservation area in the Queen Charlotte Islands.

On April 6, 1990 the Progressive Conservative government signed a historical and unique agreement between Canada and Quebec to create a marine park at the confluence of the Saguenay estuary in the St. Lawrence River.

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[*Translation*]

I am proud to have had the opportunity last summer to visit this park in the Saguenay fjord. I must say that this is an incredible region and a great park.

[*English*]

I am proud to say that the government and provincial governments collaborated to build such a wonderful park along the Saguenay area, Lac-Saint-Jean toward Tadoussac and into the St. Lawrence River.

We have outlined the ecosystem leadership the government at the time had. I think that is an indication of the vision the Progressive Conservative government had during its era between 1984 and 1993.

I point out some of the initiatives that were brought forth which dovetail in terms of our commitment to ecosystem development and protection and respect for the environment. Under our government in 1988 the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was brought forth by the minister of the day, the Hon. Tom McMillan and the Hon. Jean Charest.

• (1550)

During that time it was prime ministerial leadership under Brian Mulroney that developed the Clean Air Act which took on the Americans and brought forth a national accord that addressed acid rain. The same prime minister cared enough about the environment and showed leadership at the Rio earth summit with respect to biodiversity and climate change.

The commitment of the Progressive Conservative Party with respect to our national parks and our conservation areas and the environment is unprecedented.

It is important to note that although the proposed legislation is designed to establish and manage a system of marine conservation areas respective of the 29 marine areas, it does not specifically identify a precise geographic location to be protected.

These sites will have to be chosen through much consultation with members of the general public, provincial governments and obviously those individuals who earn their livelihoods from our distinct waters.

I mentioned our aboriginal peoples' dependence on these waters for their food fishery. It is important that aboriginal peoples be involved in the negotiations. With many land claims still to be resolved, it is imperative they be consulted on creating any new marine reserve areas.

There are restrictions on non-renewable resource extraction. I believe careful examination of any proposed site must be explored as to its potential for oil and gas exploration in a very sustainable way.

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Nova Scotia is finally going to reap the economic benefits of Sable gas. This economic boom would not have been possible if the Sable area had been designated a marine protected area. That is why we must exhaust all opportunities for constructive consultation sessions with all those who have a vested interest in our ocean floors.

We must immediately begin the process of identifying appropriate locations for inclusion within marine conservation areas. This bill will help provide the framework for creating these much needed conservation areas.

We are very excited about trying to identify at least 10 marine parks by 2000. I applaud the government for actually setting a goal because I fundamentally believe what gets measured actually gets done. Let us make sure we take our time to do it in a very prudent, consultative fashion and that we locate those ecosystems that should be preserved the most.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue on behalf of our critic for heritage, the member for West Nova, and to participate in this afternoon's debate.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. I also want to make it clear that the Bloc Québécois is absolutely in favour of protecting the environment and taking the necessary measures to ensure that we live in an increasingly cleaner environment.

However, the Bloc Québécois is totally opposed to Bill C-48, because it is yet another federal interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

If the government wants to create marine areas, regardless of which department does it and regardless of the names given to these areas—because we now know that three departments are interested in creating such areas—it must first appropriate the ocean floor. But the ocean floor comes under the sovereign right of the provinces.

The federal government is once again showing its bad faith. There can be no better proof. The hon. member said he visited the Saguenay—St. Lawrence park last summer. It is a beautiful park co-managed by Canada and Quebec.

• (1555)

As my colleague, the member for Portneuf, pointed out, the Government of Canada has once again interfered in an area of provincial jurisdiction in attempting to create marine conservation areas on our territory.

I would like to know whether my colleague is aware of this problem of the federal government again charging into an area of

provincial jurisdiction, and whether he does not share our impression that once again the Liberal government of the Prime Minister, the member for Shawinigan, is doing everything it can to pit the provinces against the federal government.

[*English*]

Mr. John Herron: Mr. Speaker, I think the premise of my colleague's question surrounds issues not as related to this piece of legislation as to other ones. I agree with her concerns that the government on too many occasions has interfered in situations that have provoked provinces into some very difficult positions.

In my critic's position I noticed it in terms of when the federal government chose to turn its back on the agreement established November 13, 1997. At that time it made an agreement with respect to climate change. The very next day the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources said that is not necessarily our position.

It was a provocative move what the government chose to do with respect to the supreme court. This country was actually formed from an act of will. We did not go to any lawyers, judges or courts to determine whether we should have a country or not in the first place. It was an act of will on the part of the political leadership of the day.

With the millennium scholarship fund it is clear interference with respect to provincial jurisdiction. It would be more prudent for them to actually inject the moneys into the CHST which would pay for health care, post-secondary education and social services. Those are the things where we should be working in partnership with the provinces as opposed to taking provocative steps.

With respect to this legislation there are very valuable ways we can have some very positive provincial-federal relations. We see that with respect to the park I had the pleasure of visiting this summer along the Saguenay River. It is one of the most picturesque areas of the world. There are very few fiords where people actually have access. We see it in Norway and we see it in one of God's most beautiful areas in this country along the Saguenay.

The federal government on occasion has interfered in areas where it should not have. I do not think this is necessarily applicable with respect to this piece of legislation because it is very possible to build some very positive partnerships with the provinces in protecting our marine areas with respect to having better conservation for everybody.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I also live in a riding which has an extensive marine ecosystem. I probably have ten times more coastline than highways in my riding.

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I have five Gulf Islands among numerous other islands. Those islands are all frequented by daily ferry service. I live in a very sensitive marine environment with all kinds of marine life from pods of orcas to grey whales.

We in the Reform Party also support protecting ecosystems. We want to make that very clear. We are very concerned about ecosystems and it is important that we protect them.

This legislation has all kinds of problems with it. I will focus and demonstrate to this House how this legislation is very typical of the type of legislation we see in this House. We have a hollow piece of legislation.

• (1600)

There is absolutely nothing in it. I will demonstrate that to the House with numerous specific examples which will make it very clear to see. We have a piece of legislation brought forward by the government suggesting that it actually wants to protect an ecosystem, but in effect it is hollow.

Furthermore it does not bring in other groups such as the provinces. It does not bring in the resource base to ensure that there is active participation in the management of parks and to ensure that the resources can be removed safely so that we do not trample on the rights of the people who are already there.

Members opposite do not agree with what I am saying. Let me give an example. Schedules I and II of the legislation describe the lands that are to be set aside. We have a bill that is for marine parks, the Marine Conservation Act. I ask members to get out their legislation. Schedules I and II describe the areas that we are thinking about.

However, when we look up schedules I and II we cannot find them. They are not there. This is just a hollow piece of legislation that provides broad powers to the minister. The government will decide this later.

I emphasize the problem I have with the legislation. I am a strong advocate of conserving our marine life. I would fully support legislation specifying pockets that should be set aside for marine parks. I would even go further to say that the small pockets should be class *a* marine parks that we cannot even touch. That is not what we have. We have no idea what we are getting ourselves into.

I have watched the example set by the government. The current minister of fisheries talks over and over again about his three priorities: conservation, conservation, conservation. However what happens when the actual practices come down? For example there is the Makaw whale hunt that is happening outside my riding. The minister supports the Makaw whale hunt. He is supporting the slaughter of whales in Canadian waters.

I have to question whether the government is serious when it asserts that it wants to protect our ecosystems. It can be done but this is not the legislation to do it. It is hollow.

My experiences in the House have shown that we do not have openness and transparency. The government would like to bring in legislation where all these decisions would be made by orders in council or after the fact. We have no idea. Will there be a consultation process if there is an abundance of shellfish in a marine park?

Furthermore, the only way I found out about the legislation and what the government was intending to do was through government press releases. My riding is one of the ridings that would be most affected by the legislation. I have had private meetings with the people in the bureaucracy and have asked them about it. It is only after I pursue and dig into it that I find out what is going on.

The government does not come forward and inform all members of the House, as we have seen over and over and over again with the bills that are brought forward. It operates in a vacuum, this little tight-knit group, this handful of people who surround the Prime Minister. What we have is a dictatorship.

I could go on. The legislation does not even identify which areas will be designated as marine parks. We have no idea what is happening. I know the minister has announced a couple of small areas, his wishes for marine parks, but the reality is that the legislation leaves it wide open.

There are broad, sweeping powers for the minister. We have no idea whether the provinces will have any participation in the marine parks. We have no idea whether the resource based industries in British Columbia, the fishing sector or the forestry sector, will have any input regarding how they will be affected. Both the forestry and fishing sectors are in a very difficult situation in British Columbia. I could safely say in the House, after speaking with those representatives, that they are also very strong supporters of maintaining our ecosystems. Bringing in legislation that will not consult with them to ensure that all these people can be brought on board to make sure it is done in a very economical and positive way is not the way to go.

• (1605)

It enlarges the minister's jurisdiction. There are all kinds of examples of this in clauses 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 which enlarge the minister's jurisdiction. They effectively empower the minister to designate whatever areas he or she feels fit, depending on the time. Right now it comes under the minister of heritage. She would have the power to do as she sees fit. It has raised concerns among the residents of British Columbia. Many of them are strong supporters of our ecosystems.

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They raise flags with me in discussions. They are somewhat amazed when the government comes out with this kind of legislation in flashy press releases with no substance. Then, only hours later, they find out that the minister of fisheries, Mr. Conservation, is about to allow the slaughter of whales on our beaches. Whales will be floating up on the beaches of Victoria in his riding. This has caused them great distress. He has taken absolutely no initiative to stop it. I have approached him and the Minister of Foreign Affairs with no success, asking them to lobby against the the unnecessary slaughter of the Makaw.

Even more disturbing is the Canadian government's giving the Makaw tribe permission to slaughter these whales in Canadian waters. It is absolutely unacceptable. Then the government tells us that it is bringing in marine parks to preserve our ecosystems.

I listened to the Conservative member from Nova Scotia. I agree with him it is very important that we protect our ecosystems and our marine parks. However the legislation is not the vehicle that will do that. We have a hollow, empty piece of legislation.

I question why it is there. I question what the government is doing. It imposes upon the provincial governments, as was pointed out by my hon. colleague in the Bloc, without their active participation. If we are to succeed in doing something meaningful and in providing something that would preserve some of the ecosystems, the provinces should be brought on board as effective partners and not just have a dictatorship against them.

I will conclude my remarks. This is but another example in the House of the Liberal government bringing in legislation which is absolutely hollow. It does not give us specifics. I repeat that it is not worth the paper it is written on. It does nothing to give us any specifics on preserving ecosystems, a process which I support. The government should look at the record of what it is doing and get the Canadian public to agree before it starts bringing in these types of bills.

I understand the minister of fisheries would like to designate some areas in Victoria, but he creates his own problems when he allows the slaughter of whales in Canadian waters. He should be ashamed of himself for supporting that initiative and suggesting that he also wants to come out with legislation for marine parks.

On that basis I will be voting against the legislation because it is a scam against Canadians to suggest that the government is in any way concerned about our marine environment.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment a bit and then ask the member a question.

I refer the member to section 8.(4) of the act which talks about agreements with provincial authorities. There is no forcing of

anybody to do anything. We are talking about agreements with provincial authorities and other agencies, as has been the case in the establishment of parks throughout our history. Let us not get carried away by inventing motives that do not exist.

• (1610)

The member started his speech by parrying for more consultation. There are ample elements built into the proposed legislation to guarantee consultation in designating 28 of the 29 conservation areas the legislation intends to establish. He rightfully requests more consultation. Then he said that he would vote against the legislation because it is hollow. To determine that, he referred to the annexes where the conservation areas are not listed. Of course not, because they have not been selected.

There has been a mapping out of the 29 areas in Canada representing the 29 ecological zones we wish to protect with the marine conservation area legislation. The locations within these areas have not been selected and that is the subject of consultation. Which is it? Should we decide there should be no consultation and make these decisions unilaterally? Of course not.

The government has indicated its intention once the legislation is approved to establish 10 such areas, hopefully by the millennium year, in consultation with the relevant authorities and not unilaterally as the member would rightfully object to.

We cannot possibly list them in the annexes. The member cannot have it both ways. Which is it? Does he want consultation or does he want us to go ahead and pick unilaterally? I do not think so. That is the question the member has to answer.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, we have to go back to the government's record. The legislation contains numerous Henry VIII clauses. We all know that a Henry VIII clause will allow a minister to designate new areas under the act without having to steer the amendment through parliament. That is an absolute given.

I can only go on the performance of the government over the last year and on what it has done in the House. I do not have confidence in the government at all. We have seen that dwindling among Canadians over the past month. The Liberals are going down and down and down and they know it.

That is why I say the legislation is hollow. How can we possibly sit here and believe when the minister of fisheries is allowing the slaughter of whales by Americans in Canadian waters? Those whales could potentially wash up on the beaches of Victoria. How can we expect the government to mean that it will consult with industry, the provinces and the different sectors? The government's record is dismal in this area. We have had a dictatorship. We have seen it over and over again.

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I can give them all kinds of examples. We could look at the EI fund. Every member on this side of the House has demanded consultation, and all we hear is the Liberals saying no. There are a hundred examples. The record speaks for itself. Their performance has been absolutely dismal.

They are sighing over there because they have nothing better to say. They know it. It is a fact. The legislation is very clear. It gives broad sweeping powers to the minister. We would like to know exactly what we are passing in the House before we vote on it. We will not vote on a hollow piece of legislation which will give the minister the ultimate say on where the parks are.

Let us not forget there are all kinds of resources attached to these parks. There is the fishery which the government has destroyed. The Liberals can talk to their own member from Gander—Grand Falls in Newfoundland. He has been very open in the House and is a big defender of the fishery. He will talk about how the government has destroyed the resource over the last 10 years. It has been an absolute dismal failure. The auditor general has confirmed this in numerous reports. Now the Liberals are coming out and are to be the great saviours of the ecosystems and the environment. It does not add up.

We would like to support something that would truly protect the environment and the ecosystems and would include these people in the process. This legislation clearly does not do that.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Reform Party colleague and congratulate him on seeing, as I do, the tragic aspect of this bill, with its sham consultation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Briefing sessions were held. We were told that the federal government had consulted Canadians; we read in the Minister of Canadian Heritage's notes that 3,000 organizations had received questionnaires and mailed back little scraps of paper, which were put together into a magnificent document that was presented to us in a folder. A sham consultation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Members opposite are upset because they do not like having their negligence brought to the attention of the people of Canada. It is high time that the public knew that this government is arrogant beyond all belief; it pretends to consult and spouts fine rhetoric.

I would like to know whether my Reform Party colleague also thinks that, in addition to conducting a sham consultation, this

government has gone too far with its interference in provincial jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. I think it has been made quite clear by the members of this House that in fact the consultation process—and again I will use the word—is hollow. The government can send out questionnaires, but there is nothing in the legislation except empty schedules.

The member asks whether it will trample the rights which the provinces have under section 92 of the Constitution. She makes a valid point. I think it is open for debate. I believe that the bill gives the government broad powers over our inland waters in creating parks. That, without question, I would agree is provincial jurisdiction. The only area that we may question is the waters which are shared by two provinces. That could be open to interpretation.

The waters of the Lac-Saint-Jean and Saguenay areas which I visited this summer are very beautiful. I think it is up to the province of Quebec to impose provincial legislation to protect and to choose the waters in their provincial parks. Similarly, with respect to the inland waters of British Columbia, it is up to the province of British Columbia to implement legislation.

The last thing we need is different levels of government and bureaucracies all trying to do the same thing, which we have seen over and over again in this country. It is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Again I would agree with her comments, with the exception of waters which are shared between provinces. That would be open to debate.

However, regardless of the jurisdiction, this is a hollow piece of legislation. Looking at the government's record, we have to question whether it is really sincere about actually protecting the ecosystem, considering its past performance and the fact that it is allowing Americans to slaughter whales in Canadian waters which are potentially going to wash up bloodied on the shores of Victoria in the riding of the minister of fisheries.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas, and the amendment moved by the Reform Party.

Before getting into my presentation, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Rosemont.

The purpose of the bill is to provide a legal framework for the establishment and future development of 28 marine conservation areas, including eight in Quebec, representing each of the ecosystems identified to date in Quebec and Canada.

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• (1620)

The Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is the 29th marine conservation area, but this park is not included in this bill because it is covered by ad hoc legislation both in Canada and in Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois supports measures to protect the environment. I want to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois did not hesitate to support the government when it suggested passing mirror legislation to create the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park and to establish a legal framework to ensure it would be jointly managed by the two levels of government.

Moreover, the Bloc Québécois knows that the Quebec government is launching initiatives aimed at protecting the environment, particularly the marine floor.

The Quebec government is also open to working in co-operation or in partnership with the federal government on any project designed to ensure or promote the protection of the environment, as evidenced by the agreement signed by the two governments on the third phase of the St. Lawrence action plan.

However, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against Bill C-48 for a number of reasons. First, instead of relying on dialogue, as in the case of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park, the federal government wants to create marine conservation areas irrespective of Quebec's jurisdiction with regard to the protection of its territory and environment.

Second, the Department of Canadian Heritage is proposing the establishment of a new structure, the marine conservation areas, that will duplicate the marine protected areas of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment Canada's protected off-shore areas.

The federal government, which proclaims from the rooftops that it has met all of Quebec's demands, and states in its Speech from the Throne that it is putting an end to overlap and to interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, has now found a way to divide itself into three components and to actually overlap itself, so as to be absolutely certain to meddle, in one way or another, in areas that come under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the other provinces.

One of the conditions essential to the establishment of a marine conservation area is federal ownership of the land where the conservation area will be established. Bill C-48 does not, therefore, respect the territorial integrity of Quebec and the other provinces. What is more, Bill C-48 creates overlap within the federal administration itself. What a setup!

Through the Department of Canadian Heritage, the federal government intends to create marine conservation areas. Through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it has already created

marine protected areas. Through the Department of the Environment, it wants to create marine wildlife reserves.

It should be carefully noted that a single site could find itself protected under more than one category. The Department of Canadian Heritage sets out its reasons for creating marine conservation areas in the preamble to the bill.

Heritage Canada is establishing marine conservation areas to protect natural, self-regulating marine ecosystems for the maintenance of biological diversity; to establish a representative system of marine conservation areas; to ensure that Canada contributes to international efforts for the establishment of a world-wide network of representative marine areas; to provide opportunities for the people of Canada and of the world to appreciate Canada's natural and cultural marine heritage; and to provide opportunities within marine conservation areas for the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources for the lasting benefit of coastal communities. As for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, it proposes the establishment of marine protected areas.

• (1625)

A discussion paper released by Fisheries and Oceans in January 1997, entitled "The Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas under the Oceans Act" indicates that the areas are created to protect fishery resources, commercial and others, including marine mammals and their habitats, endangered or threatened marine species and their habitats, unique habitats, marine areas of high biodiversity or biological productivity and any other marine resource.

As the result of discussions held in Quebec in June 1998 by Fisheries and Oceans on marine protection areas, the report prepared by public officials states, and I quote: "There remains a lot of confusion among stakeholders about the various federal programs on marine protected areas,"—these are not our words, but the words of government officials—"marine protection zones, national marine conservation areas, marine fauna reserves, and so forth. The departments involved should get together and collaborate in establishing marine protected areas".

Now, Environment Canada is proposing to establish marine conservation zones, that could also be called natural marine reserves, expanding the notion of the national wildlife sanctuary beyond the territorial sea to the 200 mile limit within the exclusive economic zone under the Canada Oceans Act. These zones are also subject to the Canadian Wildlife Act, but require a different set of regulations.

In short, let us summarize, because the triple federal overlap at the federal level—setting aside its overlap with provincial jurisdictions—becomes almost a federal maze where people can get lost.

Therefore, under the various laws, the Government of Canada is proposing to create marine conservation areas, marine protection zones and natural marine reserves. According to the Department of

Fisheries and Oceans, the same territory could find itself with several different zonings under different regulations that could confuse the user.

Yet, an initiative such as the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park could have been a model to follow. In 1997, the governments of Quebec and Canada agreed to pass legislation to create the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park. This resulted in the creation of Canada's first marine conservation area.

That legislation established the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, the first marine park to be created jointly by the federal and Quebec governments, without any transfer of territory. Both governments will continue to fulfil their respective responsibilities.

The federal government should have used this first partnership initiative as a model for the creation of other marine conservation areas. Instead of using a policy of openness and co-operation, the federal government has used arrogance, aggression, invasion and overlap, everything we need to make us want to leave at the next opportunity.

In conclusion, unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois will have to vote against the amendment moved by the Reform Party, because it did not identify some points that we consider really important. Our interpretation of the bill leads us to believe that the reasons it gives are unacceptable.

This bill invades the jurisdictions of Quebec and the other provinces involved, and Quebec cannot and will not operate within this system. We showed the Canadian government great openness when it came to managing the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, and we regret that the government has not learned its lesson.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to make a very specific point and I appreciate the opportunity to ask this question of the member.

I have been listening to the points that the government has been making across the way. Hon. members are always using the word "consultation". It is a word that we hear all the time in the House. "Just pass this legislation and we will consult with all of the provinces and the stakeholders" in whatever issue they are putting forward in parliament.

One of the things that this bill will do will be to enlarge the minister's jurisdiction. That should be of concern to all Canadians. Power is being taken away from the people of Canada, through

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their elected representatives, and it is being given it to a bureaucracy which will tell the minister what needs to be done.

To make my point I refer hon. members to something that I said previously. I asked some lawyers in the House of Commons to do some research for me with regard to a number of bills that were coming before the House. I asked them this simple question: "Which one of the current bills before the House of Commons takes power away from parliament and gives it to the bureaucracy?" I received a very shocking answer. They did research on six separate bills and every one of those bills took power away from parliament and gave it to the bureaucracy. In other words, the people of Canada are losing control of the agenda. That control is being concentrated in the hands of a very few.

As we look at this bill we see the same thing happening. We are losing control through this bill which seems to be so nice and so wonderful and so compassionate in expressing concern for the environment. It actually does not do anything like that.

When government members go about using the word "consultation", we have found by experience that they do not really and truly consult. They may have a dog and pony show and go around the country making it appear as if they are, but they do not really listen. What they call consultation is putting on a show, but not really putting into place what the people of Canada genuinely want.

This bill gives the people behind the scenes more control over the agenda. I am wondering if the member does not have a concern about this. I realize she is not supporting Reform's amendment, but we are very concerned about what is going on. Giving bureaucracy more power and taking it away from the people of Canada is what is going on. Once this bill is passed, no matter what the government says about its consultations and its process, it is gone forever. The next thing government members say will be "Parliament passed this bill. We have the power to do this. What are you complaining about?"

I would like the member to comment on what I have just said.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Reform member for his very relevant question which we take seriously.

Yes, we are concerned, because we fear that these consultations will be a sham. Under clause 9, the minister can consult whoever she wants whenever she wants. She transfers these duties to her staff without consulting, informing or bothering to get input from the public in general or even its elected representatives.

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We are democratically elected to this House to represent our constituents and we have to inform them. As legislators, we should also be able to represent them well.

We are shown this bill and then told: "The minister will carry out some consultations."

• (1635)

We are very concerned about this type of consultation, because, as we know, by and large these consultations always turn out in favour of the government or of the minister introducing the bill. This is why we think these consultations are a sham.

This is truly a tragic situation, because the government is trying to hoodwink us and would have us believe that the people have been consulted, when it is not so. It is also tragic because, once again, it is trying to impinge upon provincial areas of jurisdiction.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill C-48 at second reading.

This federal bill entitled an Act respecting marine conservation areas is aimed at establishing 28 marine conservation areas representative of various ecosystems in Canada. As we all know the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is the 29th marine conservation area, but this park is not included in this bill because it is covered by its own legislation.

I stress that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of measures aimed at protecting the environment. I should know since I was in charge of this issue for over a year. Also, as I recall the Bloc Québécois supported the establishment of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park. I remember it well. I believe this must be very clear; there is a difference between the bill and the marine park.

We are opposed to Bill C-48 respecting the establishment of marine conservation areas because, instead of relying on dialogue, as in the case of the marine park, the federal government wants to impose marine conservation areas, regardless of the fact that Quebec has jurisdiction over the protection of its own territory and of the environment.

Moreover Canadian Heritage is proposing to put in place new structures, marine conservation areas, that will duplicate the marine protected areas of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Environment Canada's protected offshore areas. Simply put, the federal government is using three departments to infringe upon areas under Quebec's jurisdiction.

What is more, the Bloc Québécois knows that the Quebec government is launching initiatives aimed at protecting the environment, particularly the marine floor. The Quebec government is also open to working in co-operation or in partnership with the

federal government on this, as it has done for phase III of the St. Lawrence action plan.

Why then is the federal government behaving once again as if Quebec did not exist with regard to this issue, proposing a national project that does not take into account Quebecers' wishes concerning environmental protection?

I am asking this question while knowing this approach by the federal government is increasingly commonplace. Since the Prime Minister became convinced he met Quebec's traditional demands, his government has been introducing one centralizing bill after another.

We have, in fact, several objections. In 1997, the governments of Quebec and Canada agreed on an act to create the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park. The two pieces of legislation resulted in the creation of Canada's first marine conservation area. Allow me to explain the main features of the legislation.

The Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park is the first marine park to be created jointly by the federal and Quebec governments, without any transfer of territory. The two governments will continue to fulfil their respective responsibilities. The park includes only marine areas and covers 1,138 square kilometres.

• (1640)

In order to promote local involvement, the acts passed by the Quebec and federal governments confirm the creation of a co-ordinating committee, whose membership is to be determined by the federal and provincial ministers. The committee's mandate is to recommend to the ministers responsible measures to achieve the master plan's objectives. The plan is to be reviewed jointly by the two governments, at least once every seven years.

By means of regulations under their respective legislation, the governments of Quebec and of Canada will be able to determine measures for protecting the park's ecosystems and resources and for protecting the public. More specifically, they will be able to define how each category of area will be used and for how long such use shall apply.

This first partnership initiative should have served as a model to the federal government for the creation of other marine conservation areas. There is also one other example to follow, Phase III of the St. Lawrence Action Plan, of which I shall now speak.

On June 8, 1998, the environment ministers of Quebec and of Canada announced phase III of the St. Lawrence development plan, representing a total bill of \$230 million to be shared equally by both levels of government.

One of the objectives of this action plan is to increase the area of protected habitats by 100% from 12,000 hectares to 120,000 hectares.

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Third, this phase III follows the two previous ones in which both governments invested over \$300 million.

There is something which should concern everyone in Quebec. It is the fact that Bill C-48 fails to respect the integrity of the territory of Quebec. If I may, I would like to mention six factors which show that Bill C-48 fails to respect the integrity of the territory of Quebec.

First, one of the conditions essential to the establishment of a marine conservation area is federal ownership of the land where the conservation area will be established. Clause 5(2) of the bill provides that the minister can establish a marine conservation area:

—only if he is satisfied that clear title to the lands to be included in the marine conservation area is vested in Her Majesty in Right of Canada, excluding any such lands situated within the exclusive economic zone of Canada.

Subsection 92(5) of the Constitution Act, 1867, recognizes that the management and sale of crown land are matters of exclusive provincial jurisdiction.

Third, Quebec legislation on crown lands, passed by the Quebec National Assembly, applies to all crown lands in Quebec, including beds of waterways and lakes and the bed of the St. Lawrence river, estuary and gulf, which belong to Quebec by sovereign right.

In addition, this legislation provides that Quebec cannot transfer its lands to the federal government. The only thing it can do within this legislation is to authorize, by order, the federal government to use them only in connection with matters under federal jurisdiction. However, the protection of habitats and fauna is a matter of joint federal and provincial jurisdiction, and the Government of Quebec plans to establish a framework for the protection of marine areas in the near future.

According to the notes provided to us by the Minister of Canadian Heritage with regard to Bill C-48, marine conservation areas are planned for the St. Lawrence, the St. Lawrence estuary and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. These are three areas in which the ocean floor is under Quebec's jurisdiction.

• (1645)

Why is Heritage Canada now arrogantly demanding ownership of the ocean floor in order to create marine conservation areas, rather than allowing bilateral agreements between Quebec City and Ottawa that would let Quebec maintain its jurisdiction?

The answer is that this is the new approach to federal-provincial relations. This is what they did with the millennium scholarships. It is what they want to do with new health programs and the new young offenders legislation. It is what they are doing with the personal information protection bill. And they are doing it today with this marine conservation areas bill.

This Liberal government has decided to put Quebec in its place and that is why it is ignoring the promising experience of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at this point I would rather make a comment than ask a question of my colleague, the member for Rosemont, whom I thank sincerely, especially for helping out the Reform Party colleague who is wondering why the Bloc Québécois does not support his party's amendment.

As you no doubt know much better than I, Mr. Speaker, with your broad experience and generally recognized expertise, there are different procedural tactics for delaying the passage of a bill at second reading.

First, a motion may be moved that it be postponed for six months. Second, a motion may be moved that it not be read the second time but that the objectives of the bill be referred to the committee under whose jurisdiction it comes. Third, and this is the approach of our Reform Party colleagues, a motion may be moved that the bill not be read the second time because of the absence of fundamental principles.

This is the approach the Reform Party has taken. It has invoked the absence of principles from the bill and, when I spoke last week, I was even surprised that the amendment was deemed votable. I was very surprised at this, given that our reading of the bill is not at all the same as that of the Reform Party. The principles the Reform Party is raising do not seem to us to be absent from the bill.

The fact that we cannot support the principles, which the Reform Party claims are not to be found in the bill, is the reason we in the Bloc Québécois will not be able to support the Reform Party's amendment to the effect that second reading not take place.

It is unfortunate that we could not come up with one single amendment for the opposition. We will still not support the amendment, but we will not be supporting the bill either. As all of our colleagues here have pointed out, this bill blocks any progress on environmental matters, because before we can get to protecting the environment we have to battle over who has jurisdiction here and who has jurisdiction there, when it would have been so simple to follow the example of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park.

In closing, I would ask my colleague, who was involved in environmental matters, whether he can enlighten me a bit on the differences between provincial and federal jurisdiction over the environment.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, a few months ago the federal and provincial governments together negotiated a harmonization agreement with the Government of Quebec, an agreement Quebec did not sign. Why did it not sign? Quite simply because the federal

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government refused to recognize that the environment was under Quebec's jurisdiction.

• (1650)

So long as the harmonization agreement and the bills—and I am thinking, for example, of Bill C-32, which is currently being examined and which changes the entire Canadian Environmental Protection Act, known as the CEPA—interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction, Quebec will reject such bills.

So, Quebec is clear, we will not sign a harmonization agreement so long as the federal government will not give this recognition.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, APEC Summit.

[English]

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this bill is so important I had to rise today and speak to it.

I do not often find myself in agreement with members of the Bloc Quebecois but on this particular bill they are absolutely right.

What on earth is the federal government doing dictating to the provinces what their marine conservation strategy should be? These are provincial jurisdictions. They always have been. I do not understand where the federal government gets off thinking it is going to somehow make our national unity problem easier to resolve when it keeps forever intruding into provincial jurisdictions on a more and more draconian basis.

I come from northern British Columbia. I have lived all my life there. I think I represent the point of view of most of the constituents I represent who live in northwest British Columbia. I am a skier, a boater and a recreational fisherman. I do a lot of hiking in the back country. I am a hunter. I spend a great deal of my recreational time in the great outdoors. I for one am very concerned and very interested in seeing that it is there for my children and their children, but in Canada we have gone completely overboard in pursuit of this radical environmentalist and preservationist agenda.

One of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party who spoke earlier was lauding the accomplishments of the previous government in the creation of South Moresby park in the Queen Charlotte Islands. That certainly waved a red flag in front of me. It is easy for that hon. member to pontificate on what the creation of South Moresby park meant because he lives 4,000 miles away. He is not the one who has to go out in the middle of the night when some poor family is moving out, taking everything they own in the back of a pickup.

People have been forced out of work. There are no economic opportunities left for them any more. The logging industry was shut down on the strength of a bunch of lies and half truths and mistruths on the part of the radical environmentalist and preservationist agenda.

The Queen Charlotte Islands are an archipelago comprised of two major islands. South Moresby is the large island on the south part of archipelago. In the mid-1980s radical environmentalists, preservationists and others with a hidden agenda made a concerted effort to convince ordinary decent Canadians that something which should not be happening was taking place on the Queen Charlotte Islands. They tried with the help of the media to persuade Canadians that clear cutting was taking place, the Queen Charlotte Islands were being decimated, the environment was being ruined, wildlife was being driven out and there was going to be no future if something was not done.

In 1986 the Government of Canada under Brian Mulroney and the provincial government created South Moresby park. The effect was that it stopped all logging in South Moresby. People were told that there was going to be—

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would greatly appreciate it if you could ask those members across the way, who want to talk and shout, to go and do so in the lobby.

I would like to hear what my colleague from the Reform Party has to say. If they want to shout, they should go there. There is a member there, all by himself. We will hear them less and they will be less disruptive; or else they should step out in the lobby, because our colleague deserves some respect.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We all need to be apprised from time to time of the necessity of courtesy to each other. The hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis is quite correct in bringing this to our attention.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, hopefully it will be a little quieter in here for the next few minutes.

The people of South Moresby were promised at the inception of South Moresby park that there was going to be an alternative economy for them. It would not be logging any more; it would be tourism. This was going to be the way of the future for South Moresby and the community of Sandspit. For several decades it had been a logging community employing several hundred people on a full time basis who made very good wages.

South Moresby is one of the richest, most productive forests anywhere in the world. It was taken out of forest land and turned

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into a park. Parks Canada runs that little park like a fiefdom. It limits the number of Canadians who can go into that park every year. For these bull hards down here who do not want to listen, the number of people who can go into the park is limited to under 2,000 every year.

You would have to be somebody special to get into the park, if you can afford it. It is only wealthy lawyers from Toronto and New York who can get in there. As northerners who live there, we cannot afford to go into the park because it costs so much. It is cost prohibitive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I mentioned earlier that we should be tempered in our language. I remind and ask all hon. members to be temperate in their language. As we all know, there are certain words that raise the temper of the debate to a point that it does not remain civil.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I too have heard words that raised my level of anger. I feel very passionate about this issue because it directly affects constituents of mine. People I know, people I feel for and people I care for have been displaced as a result of this. The same kind of thinking that went into the creation of South Moresby park has gone into the creation of this nonsense.

We who live in regional parts of Canada, we who live in the north depend on access to resources for our livelihoods. We have to have it. People do not go up to northern British Columbia to go shopping. They do not go to northern British Columbia to bask in the sun. They go there primarily to work in a resource industry or in some other commercial venture that is most likely there to support a resource industry or the commercial industries that support the resource industry. Everything feeds on each other; it is a domino effect.

If we are going to have an economy in northern B.C., if we are going to have an economy in regional Canada, we have to have reasonable access to resources. We have to have reasonable access to water. We have to have reasonable access to the land base. This bill is specifically designed to prevent this from happening. This bill is cobbled together by a bunch of misguided politically correct soft heads on the other side who are listening to the environmental agenda and the radical preservationists. They are not considering what the impact is going to be on ordinary Canadians.

In the case of South Moresby we are not talking about hundreds of thousands of people. We are not talking about a political voice that is going to be loud and vociferous and heard in Ottawa on a regular basis. We are talking about a community of 500 or 600 people, but that community is dying on the vine. That community has been blindsided by government. How do they feel about mother Ottawa forcing on them something they had no involvement in? They are not in agreement with it. This has been forced down their throats.

• (1700)

Frankly, I am tired of seeing the people of the north who have put everything they own, their life, their property, their future and their children's future on the line only to have the rug pulled out from under them by this kind of nonsense.

In the last parliament the government was asked to basically rubber stamp a decision that was made by the province of British Columbia. The Tatshenshini River is in the northern part of British Columbia. It is on the Yukon border. There is a copper-cobalt deposit in the Tatshenshini which is probably one of the top two or three copper-cobalt deposits ever found in the world.

I talked to one of the senior geologists at the Geological Survey of Canada who told me that they do not even know the whole extent of that deposit. Conservatively it was estimated that the deposit contained, at a minimum, \$10 billion worth of copper-cobalt ore. It was estimated that, at a minimum, it could provide 1,600 permanent, full time, year-round jobs for approximately 40 years.

The geologist I talked with said that in his experience, based on some of the further testing that was being done and some of the samples they were starting to see, this deposit could actually be anywhere up to four times as large as they had actually proven. Just consider that for a minute.

When we go to a manufacturing facility that closes down and people are put out of work, it is easy to see the sadness, the pain and the hurt because these people have been displaced. We can put a name and a face to that. However, we cannot go around and interview the 1,600 people who never got jobs up in the Tatshenshini region because of this ridiculous decision.

This government rubber stamped the NDP government's ridiculous decision to create a park by having this nominated as a world heritage site at the United Nations. I cannot fathom what was in their minds when they agreed to this.

Let me give the House more examples. In British Columbia the Fisheries Act, which is an act of this parliament, is a very powerful piece of legislation. That act states that there shall be no development of any kind on the coast of Canada that would involve any net loss of fish habitat.

If we carry that to the extreme it means we cannot walk down to the beach and kick a stone over because somebody could come along and argue that was fish habitat. If anyone thinks I am being ridiculous, let me assure them I am not. I have had meeting after meeting with constituents in Prince Rupert who cannot get access to the waterfront because every time somebody comes along and proposes to develop the foreshore, to build a dock, a berthing facility or a log dump, or proposes any kind of access to the waterfront, the first person on the scene is the local DFO biologist

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who shuts it down and says that it poses a danger and a threat to fish habitat.

Prince Rupert right now, because of the downturn in the fishery and problems in the forest industry, is looking at very serious unemployment and economic situations. Prince Rupert is not alone. The people in the larger communities in the riding that I represent are suffering and they are suffering a great deal. They are looking for alternatives. They are looking for ways to offset some of the downturns that have taken place. They cannot get access to the waterfront to do anything because DFO will shut them down.

• (1705)

I am not making this up. I am telling members that DFO will not allow a pile to be driven in the water, will not allow a dock to be constructed, will not allow somebody to build the most rudimentary access of any kind from the foreshore to the water because it might interrupt fish habitat.

Let me tell members that British Columbia is a province which has literally thousands and thousands of miles of waterfront. Let me say as well that British Columbia is a province which, outside of the lower mainland, does not have much of a population base and has not experienced much development. Really there is no threat to the integrity of the environment in British Columbia, but that is contrary to what most of the preservationists and radical environmentalists would have us believe. That is the truth.

This legislation is one more chink in the armour. It is one more step down the road.

The radical environmental agenda is becoming clearer as time goes on. These people are profoundly anti-human. These people think we are nothing better than pestilence. Some of these people have even voiced that thought.

David Suzuki, who is the founder of the Suzuki Foundation, has opined that what should take place is a mass die-off of human beings in order to preserve the environment. Can we believe that? I am not making that up.

I should point out that this environmental movement is a very well-funded movement, controlled predominately by large estates in the United States. Most of their money does not come from Canada. Most of their money comes from the United States.

Their agenda is becoming clearer as time goes on. Some of them have publicly said: "Would it not be great if human beings were all living in rural communes with rudimentary housing and no hydro-electric power?" Some of them have said that all the dams that have been created in British Columbia should be dismantled. Can we imagine that? There would be no power. There would be no means for people to generate electrical power for industrial or commercial use. But that is what these people see. That is their vision for the future.

I say that this legislation is driven by that kind of mentality. The goal is to further limit human activity of almost any kind and this is one more step in that direction. These people want to limit economic activity with the eventual goal of eradicating it altogether.

As I have already said, the environmentalists and the preservationists have been saying a lot about the environment in British Columbia and across Canada. Let me tell members that there is very little truth to any of it.

They have been saying, for example, that we need to stop logging in order to preserve habitat for wildlife. I know a little about wildlife, since I have spent most of my life hunting and fishing in the backwoods. Do members know what the aboriginal people did in this country when wildlife was becoming scarce? They went on a controlled burn. They burned the forest because they knew that a heavy forest canopy did not allow for the growth of small deciduous plants and berry bushes, the plant life that is important for wildlife to live on.

If we go into the so-called old growth areas of British Columbia, I assure members they will find very little wildlife. I can take a boat down the Douglas Channel, which is down from my home town of Kitimat, and see every place where some logger has a-frame logged old growth. There is regeneration and the berry bushes are re-appearing. That is where we would find the wildlife, the bears and the deer and the moose, because something is available for them to eat. If we went to where the old growth was, there would be nothing available for them to eat.

• (1710)

The wildlife population in British Columbia is extraordinarily strong at the present time. As much as the people who run the bear watch campaign would have us believe otherwise, I can say from living in the Kitimat Valley all of my life that the bear population in that region is as high as I have ever seen it.

When I was a kid, prior to logging in the Kitimat Valley, it would be a very rare occasion that a moose would be seen. Now that the valley has been logged and we have a nice regeneration taking place, the moose population has probably quadrupled.

When the radical environmentalists and the preservationists talk about old growth logging and how it hurts wildlife, I can say that nothing could be further from the truth. Their agenda with this bill is to further limit human activity on Canadian soil. Their eventual agenda, if this bill is adopted, is to make sure that we do not have access to the waterfront at all any more. There will be no chance to revise the Fisheries Act to bring some sense to the development of the Canadian waterfront.

I am a British Columbian. I am a Canadian and I love Canada. I would not be in this parliament if I did not feel strongly about the federation, but I have to agree with my friend in the Bloc Quebecois. This is provincial jurisdiction. Why in the name of God is the federal government getting involved? Does it not think that

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when it gets involved it puts up big red flags, not only for members in the Bloc but for members in other parts of Canada as well?

I say this bill should be defeated on its face for those very reasons.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. I have great sympathy for his objection to environmental groups. They often have agendas that have nothing to do with preserving the environment but have a lot to do with getting donations and publicity.

I know that he is a proud Canadian and that he is concerned with national values. However, I have to say to the member, as a Canadian, that there are too many examples across the country where major problems have been created in the environment because provincial governments have not acted.

In Ontario the provincial government is retreating from environmental issues in every way. In Newfoundland, for example, there are environmental problems occurring in the logging industry. If we fly over Corner Brook we can look down to see that the trees are gone. While perhaps what is growing back may be good for some types of wildlife, there still is the disruption of the natural landscape. I could cite examples right across Canada.

My problem with the member's remarks is that in siding with the Bloc Quebecois he simply asserted that the federal government has no role in the environment. I fundamentally disagree with that.

If he sets aside that criticism, upon which the Reform Party and the Bloc Quebecois are constantly together, that is, provincial power at the expense of federal power, can he tell us something about what his genuine concerns are about this legislation as it pertains to the marine environment, and not the logging industry, the mountains and the forests?

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, my first concern is that we have this legislation at all. If the member says that provincial governments are retreating, so be it. That is their right. It is not the right of the federal government to override that and say that it will step in and do it.

The provincial governments in this country have jurisdiction over the environment. The Liberal government's philosophy has been for 30 years, and it is what has led us to the brink of breakup in this country, that we have to have a strong central government, mother Ottawa, dictating to the rest of the country how it will live. I say, frankly, that is not on.

• (1715)

Does the federal government have a role to play within the environment? Absolutely. When it comes to matters of internation-

al negotiation, the federal government has a role in concert with the provinces. It also has a role in consultation and agreement with the provinces. Beyond that there is not. The provincial governments have jurisdiction. If the federal government would just butt out and leave matters to the provinces, we would all be a lot better off and the tensions in this country would start to decrease rather than increase.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member who said that the government is going too far in its efforts to preserve marine areas.

Yet the critic for his party, in his remarks at the beginning of second reading, stated that he could not support this bill because it did not go far enough, because it did not include conservation measures.

Perhaps he should check with his colleague, the critic for his party, to find out whether the bill goes too far or not far enough or whether the Reform Party opposes it as a matter of form and not reform.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, that question is easy to answer. My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands said this is a hollow bill. By hollow he meant that it gives the minister a great deal of discretionary power without specifying what that power is going to be used for and without specifying where the marine conservation areas will be, et cetera.

An hon. member: Do you want us to consult?

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, the member across asked me something. I want him to butt out. Do not tell us in northern British Columbia from Ottawa what we can and cannot do with our marine areas. We do not need somebody from the other side of Canada telling us what we can do in our own backyard. If the member would only get that message and understand that it applies to Newfoundland, Quebec and the rest of the country, the country would be a lot better off.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for our colleague from the Reform Party.

If I heard correctly, British Columbia asked the Canadian government to establish a park and the government agreed, without holding consultations. I am not sure I heard correctly on account of the noise.

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If so, I would like him to tell me, because this is indicative of something about this government that I find extremely dangerous. As members know, once bitten, twice shy, and what goes around comes around.

We know how the Liberal government operates, saying it is holding consultations but not taking them into account. We saw it when the issue of the changes to the boundaries of Tuktut Nogait Park was brought up. The government never agreed to recognize the rights that were being claimed.

So, could the hon. member tell me exactly what he said about the park in British Columbia that was authorized by the Government of Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will try to explain what happened. The federal government decided it wanted to create a national park. It asked the province for permission to do that and the province agreed to do so provided there was consultation.

There was a small degree of consultation. It was not widespread by any means. As a result of that consultation a number of very serious promises were made on the part of the federal government. There was a \$38 million fund to be established to assist in the transition to a different economy. Promises were made with regard to assisting the community in transforming from a resource based economy to a tourist based economy.

The federal government has not kept its word on any of that. It has not kept the bargain. The people hanging out to dry are the people who live on South Moresby and Sandspit on the Queen Charlotte Islands—

An hon. member: Like the Bloc.

Mr. Mike Scott: I see that blowhard from Vancouver—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Let us not get into that again. The hon. member for Wentworth—Burlington.

• (1720)

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that I have two brothers, a sister and a mother who live in Victoria, B.C. I go back and forth and have done that for the last 20 years.

I admire the province. I love the province. I love the island and I feel it is very much a part of me. When he says butt out, what he is basically saying is if you do not live in the province, you have no say over the environment.

As a Canadian I care about this country from sea to sea. It is of interest to me. I know the provincial government in B.C. now is

probably the most venal government in Canada. It is inept. It would do anything in order to get votes, including raping the landscape and raping the ocean.

As far as I am concerned the federal government is doing the right thing because if we are Canadians we should care about B.C., about Quebec, about Newfoundland. We on this side do care.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, I am genuine when I say butt out and I am genuine when I say I do not think as a British Columbian that I should be involved in dictating to Ontario, Quebec or Nova Scotia how they should handle their environmental concerns and problems.

The member is quite right. There is a very venal government in British Columbia. If it makes mistakes, it is up to the people of British Columbia to rein it in and correct it. I am confident they will do that.

In the meantime, we do not need mother Ottawa complicating the situation, intruding, intervening and dictating what should happen to B.C.'s environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, before I forget, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Témiscamingue. We will each speak for ten minutes. My colleague will speak last.

I am pleased to rise in this House to speak to Bill C-48, an act respecting marine conservation areas. As members have seen from our previous speeches, we have several reasons to oppose this bill which, once again, interferes in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

I was flabbergasted, a few moments ago, when I heard the Liberal members automatically make a connection between the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois because we were talking about respecting areas of provincial jurisdiction.

I would like them to be honest. From the beginning, they have been talking even louder than us—they are always very grouchy when we speak—but I would like them to tell us frankly and honestly that they have absolutely no respect for areas of provincial jurisdiction and that they think the simple solution to Canada's problems would be to eliminate the provinces.

In the Canadian Constitution of 1867, there are areas of shared jurisdiction, including the environment. The federal government says it must interfere in areas such as the environment because there is a problem in Newfoundland or there is a problem in British Columbia, but let us look at what it has done on its own turf. Let us look at what it has done on northern native reserves.

The environment committee visited these reserves. What has the government done? It can all be found in the committee's proceed-

ings. What has it done to protect the environment at airports and on Canadian forces bases? The Liberals, when and if they check in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, will see what the government's obligations are. They can read evidence given by federal employees and by other witnesses who have seen the federal government renege on its obligations on its own property.

It is easy to blame others and say "We must have the upper hand because we are better, more intelligent, more clever, more who knows what else, we must have the upper hand over the Government of Quebec and every other province. There are crooked trees in the provinces".

If only the government looked at its own areas of jurisdiction, it might see it has problems too. It is a lot easier to shrug off its own problems and point to the problems of other governments, claiming it will take care of them.

Unfortunately they have not stopped to think about how they could improve things. What we see today is the result of this approach. The government and the bureaucrats, who are trying to justify their positions, come up with countless new ideas

• (1725)

Contrary to what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage suggested, we are not opposed to this kind of environmental protection. We are in favour of measures aimed at protecting the environment.

More specifically, the Bloc Quebecois would remind the government it supported legislation establishing Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park. Moreover the Bloc Quebecois knows the Quebec government is embarking on initiatives aimed at protecting the environment, particularly the sea floor.

Why did we support the establishment of Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park when we now object to this bill? It is very simple, really. On one hand, there was joint action and perhaps the parliamentary secretary—I read it in his speeches—did not understand this aspect or did not want to understand it. We agreed to determine a procedure for the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park, and if we were had been offered the same procedure, the same joint action and the same harmonization, perhaps we would be talking differently.

But no, today, Liberals say "The federal government, even to establish these marine parks, will have to be the owner of the seabed". The Constitution does not allow the government to take such a direction, to own the seabed to establish a marine park. If the parliamentary secretary read his bill once again, he would probably find this clause.

Also, the problem is not only one of overlap between the federal and the provincial governments. Let us look within the federal government alone. There is a small problem. If only the federal and

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the provincial governments were involved, the bad separatists could be there to throw a monkey's wrench into the works.

We will find ourselves with three designations, three categories, namely who will take precedence, where and when. I will name them: the Department of Canadian Heritage, which was once again short on visibility, has decided, by forgetting or by intentionally omitting, to establish marine conservation areas.

At the same time, Fisheries and Oceans Canada had marine protection areas. At the same time, there were protected marine areas within a same department. We could ask this question. If there were a problem, would it be environment, heritage or fisheries and oceans that would deal with it? So, there will be discussions, task forces and probably consultations to determine who will deal with this problem.

First, leaving the provinces aside, they create a federal body to examine this problem so things can move forward once again. We are not alone in deploring this situation. I would like to quote a report from a group of officials from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans who wrote the following: "There is still a great deal of confusion among stakeholders regarding the various federal programs on protected marine areas, marine protection zones, national marine conservation areas, wildlife marine preserves —The departments concerned should harmonize their actions and co-operate to create protected marine areas."

These comments were not made by the Bloc Quebecois or the member for Rimouski—Mitis, but rather by DFO officials who were asked by a committee to write a report commenting on the creation of marine conservation areas across the country, including eight in Quebec.

We have heard time and time again that different groups had been asked to share their concerns or their views on the establishment of marine conservation areas in Canada. Actually, what happened is that Heritage Canada, very proud to be able to show that they were consulting Canadians, had 3,000 copies made of the document. They decided to go ahead and consult all the environmental groups, all the groups who were in any way concerned with the establishment of marine conservation areas. It was quite a consultation.

• (1730)

They apparently received 300 answers, which represent 10% of all the people who were consulted. Yet, when those answers are requested through access to information, one does not get 300 answers, but 73. Of these 73, one comes from Quebec and they want to create eight marine conservation areas in Quebec after telling us that there were extensive consultations.

At the same time, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was holding consultations in Quebec. They also—duplicating the efforts of Canadian Heritage—sent 650 documents to different groups about the creation of protected areas. Of 650 requests, they

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received 30 answers. This is less than 5% for Fisheries and Oceans Canada et 0.1% for Canadian Heritage.

How can we trust them when they say “We have consulted Canadians. We want to protect the environment. We know what is good for the country and we know that the provinces cannot honour their commitments under the Canadian Constitution.”

Those are other reasons why the Bloc Québécois must oppose this bill and prevent it from going any further. This bill should be withdrawn.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we listen to members of the Bloc on an issue that should be of national significance it should come as no surprise to anyone in this place that they would oppose it.

Their very existence or their very being is one of opposing anything that might in some way unite all of Canada over an issue as vital as the environment. I am not at all surprised. In fact I am prepared to acknowledge at least their honesty in saying that they want to break the country apart.

I ask the member—

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are doing our duty as any other member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That is a point of debate and the hon. member for Mississauga West has the right to make assertions which may or may not find accommodation on the opposite benches.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, it is astounding. I said I respected the fact that Bloc members were being honest. We know what their agenda is.

I ask the member who just spoke from the Bloc whether or not he feels a slight twinge of discomfort when he hears members from the Reform Party support regionalism, provincialism and anything that would allow them to oppose the government, even though the Reform Party is saying that it agrees with the Bloc.

They are in bed with the Bloc and think the environment should be left in the hands of provincial governments that have parochial interests of their own and, as my colleague pointed out, may be driven by a need to gather votes. They would hand over the environment of the country to provincial parochial politicians. I would suggest the Bloc at least has an agenda.

Does the member who just spoke not feel slightly uncomfortable finding himself in bed with the Reform Party on this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to such demagogic and terrible remarks. First, I will say to the hon. member making these ridiculous comments that the Bloc Québécois supported the establishment of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park. So we are not so bad after all.

Second, he is comparing provincial jurisdictions with municipal jurisdictions. Perhaps he too neglected to read the Canadian Constitution. Even though we did not sign it, we can read it to him. His culture is lacking, so we will improve it a bit. I will quote for him some parts of section 91.

• (1735)

Section 91 states that:

—the exclusive Legislative Authority of the Parliament of Canada extends to all Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next herein-after enumerated; that is to say,

10. Navigation and Shipping;

11. Quarantine and the Establishment and Maintenance of Marine Hospitals;

12. Sea Coast and Inland Fisheries;

13. Ferries—

That is, ferry service.

—between a Province and any British or Foreign Country or between Two Provinces.

In addition, the jurisdiction of Quebec is further recognized in the British North America Act of 1867 under sections 92 and 92A.

When a member, whether from the Liberal Party, the Reform Party, the Bloc Québécois or any other party, objects to the fact that we want to respect this Constitution, at least as long as we live within Canada, and says that a province, whether it is Quebec or any other province, only has jurisdiction to deal with municipal problems, it is a shame for Parliament, a shame for this party and a shame for Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague from the Bloc about the inference in the Liberal member's intervention.

Is it that the provinces are not to be trusted, that the people in those provinces are not to be trusted with their own environmental concerns, and that the only way we can have proper environmental legislation is for it to come from Ottawa? Does the hon. member agree that this is one of the areas that starts to build walls between people in Canada rather than unite Canada?

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, the Reform member is absolutely right. The members opposite are telling us that if a bill is good it must come from the federal government.

Well, they will have to go back to the drawing board. They should look at the Rio agreement to see if they have fulfilled their environmental commitments. If they bother to do their homework, they will realize that they cannot even manage their own jurisdictions.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to speak about Bill C-48. I cannot help but start with a few comments on what I just heard from the Liberal government and its spokespersons here today.

It is rather arrogant on their part to tell us from the outset that in the end no one is in a better position to establish high environmental standards than the federal government. This is what they said. They even went so far as to say that the provincial governments may be motivated only by electoral considerations.

What is the motivation across the aisle? What is the motivation of all those hypocrites?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pierre Brien: That is what they are. I have been in politics for five years so I remember when they campaigned across the country saying they would abolish the GST upon taking office. Since they have been here, every time I carry out a transaction—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the hon. parliamentary secretary has a point of order.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, do you agree with the unparliamentary remarks the member opposite just made when accusing members of this House of being hypocrites?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Témiscamingue knows that we cannot call other members hypocrites.

I am sorry, but I was speaking with someone else, and I did not hear the hon. member pronounce that word. I have no doubt that if he called other members hypocrites, he will withdraw that word.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, yes, indeed, I am ready to withdraw that word. I wish, however, to specify that I called no one in particular a hypocrite. If some thought the remark was aimed at them, that is their problem.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1740)

Mr. Pierre Brien: I go on.

As I was saying, five years ago, in order to get elected, these people promised they would abolish the GST in the best interest of Canadians. Five years later, I still pay GST on my transactions. Now, they say that they are better than us at representing constituents and that they can better defend the interests of constituents and citizens all over Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, I did not expect them to react that strongly.

But, let us go back to the proposal included in this bill, because it reflects what is found in many bills. We see this repeatedly in intergovernmental affair issues. The Liberals want to occupy every inch of space in the Constitution of Canada, to elbow their way in, to be more present, to interfere more in every area of provincial jurisdiction. We have seen it with the millennium scholarship fund.

I know that the government has an important financial leeway. Now that it has done it, that it has reduced its transfers to the provinces, payments to the most disadvantaged, funds for EI benefits and welfare, it becomes more present. Liberal members think they are very wise and know best what is in the interest of the people.

This debate is about marine areas. I remember hearing on the Réseau de l'information the press conference given by the Minister of Environment of Quebec and by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, regarding the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park. An agreement suitable for both parties was signed. But what is happening suddenly? Are there regrets? Is an agreement respecting both parties' areas of jurisdiction no longer possible?

To establish marine areas, the federal government will now demand ownership of the land and subsoil. They will invoke certain sections of the Constitution to extend their powers, saying that the federal government can act in the interest of Canadians, that it is a matter of good governance, setting aside the whole question of the distribution of powers as provided in sections 91, 92 and 93 of this same Constitution.

They could not care less. We heard earlier what this government really thinks. When they think something may benefit them, they could not care less about jurisdictions.

That is why there is so much overlap between the federal government and the provinces. But in this case, not only do we see overlap between the federal government and the provinces—but the federal government itself has seen a possibility to meddle in the environmental area. We do not question the objective of creating marine areas, to respect our fauna, our heritage, which is important. Nobody is against this. Can anybody be against virtue? Of course not.

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There are important things to do in this regard. Everybody agrees with the objectives. However, the approach used by the government to achieve these objectives is not working.

Two or three departments in Ottawa have seen this. All of a sudden, every one of them wants to take care of this. Heritage Canada says: "Yes. This a good idea. We will do something".

Let me quote some of the objectives the Department of Canadian Heritage has defined: the protection of natural self-regulating marine ecosystems for the maintenance of biological diversity; the establishment of a representative system of marine conservation areas; and many more.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is another department that found this initiative interesting. It has its own goals, which are to ensure the conservation of commercial and non-commercial fisheries resources and their habitats, endangered or threatened species and their habitats, unique habitats, productive ecosystems and biodiversity, any other marine resource.

This department decided it had a role to play and had to get involved in this area. It also wants to take credit for the bill.

And the list goes on. Of course, that has the Department of Environment a bit concerned. It also wants to get involved.

So, we have three departments, with different responsibilities, the departments of Environment, of Fisheries and Oceans and of Canadian Heritage, that want a piece of the action. So we can talk about marine protection zones, marine reserves or marine conservation areas. Everyone has its own name for it and everyone will have its own regulations. It will be total chaos within the federal government who, to make matters even worse, will tackle the provinces head on.

Let me ask you this: how is it that, not after hundreds of years, but only after a few months of a framework agreement with Quebec where areas of jurisdiction were respected, we are suddenly no longer able to keep going in this direction?

• (1745)

Why is that so? Do they already regret the agreement they signed? Did some of them suddenly wake up, saying: "We should never get trapped again. We should not respect provincial jurisdiction, but rather invade it to preserve our room to manoeuvre and defend the interests of the people we pretend to represent"? There is a problem.

In conclusion, I would like to come back to what was said at the beginning on the fact that this responsibility should not be left to the provinces because their motivations are purely political. Let us examine those words. What is their meaning?

In the end, they do not want citizens to put pressure on their provincial governments. I am convinced that Canadians approve of the environmental protection goals we are giving ourselves today and that those same voters are able to put pressure on their provincial governments. But in order to do so, they must know clearly whom they can talk to, instead of being told that the federal government is responsible for this area and the provincial government for that area. This creates dissension and confusion about responsibilities.

If things are clearly defined and jurisdictions are respected, citizens might understand better and put more pressure on their elected representatives. Ultimately, it is those voters who will put pressure on either level of government to make sure that they act and that our wildlife habitat is better protected and environmental standards better implemented in various areas.

It is not to the federal government, in its wisdom, to decide suddenly what is good or bad for us.

One of the things that bother them is the fact that when they attend international forums in foreign countries, they have to say that those issues come under provincial jurisdiction. They feel somewhat powerless, inferior, diminished. They do not want decentralization. They ask themselves what they can do and once they are back home, they get together. One will admit having had a problem relating to the environment, while another had a problem in another area. So they all agree that they should centralize even further.

Those people want a centralized state. No wonder we the big, bad separatists are not alone in denouncing this situation. There are also people from other political parties, with other priorities and other agendas, who do not agree at all to our cause, but who also condemn what is happening because they are committed to serving the interests of Canada, perhaps even more than Liberals, and who would like the government to respect provincial jurisdictions.

I find it very amusing today to hear members praising the government's virtues. I challenge these members to try to understand the agreement that was signed with Quebec on the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park. I am convinced that, in fact, most members do not even know it.

They should examine it, study it and ask the minister some questions, if they can get a word in during their caucus meetings. They should ask why this agreement is not being used as a model. They should take a stand, and we will see what comes of it.

We will put the bill into the proper perspective and use last summer's agreement as a model, so that we can do something lasting for the environment, something that will respect jurisdictions and serve the public's interests.

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[English]

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the people in my riding are the best ones to know what the environmental concerns in that area of British Columbia are and they are the best ones to deal with it. I find it offensive to hear members on the other side suggesting they are not capable, not to be trusted and that this must be done from Ottawa.

Does the hon. member not agree that the Liberals caved in when it came to cleaning up the litter, the refuse and the pollution from the American military installations around Canada? Does he not agree they have completely failed to perform on their commitment to clean up the Sydney tar ponds? Should they not at least clean up their own act before they start to pretend they can dictate to the rest of Canada what our environmental legislation should look like?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. These people should have a look at their own backyard first and their own jurisdictions, and try first to see what they can do there, before they intrude on provincial jurisdictions.

I also think that, ultimately, voters in affected areas are in the best position to set their own priorities. Generally, people are much closer to their provincial governments than to the federal government, and provincial politicians are much more in touch with their constituents than we are. The same holds true for municipal representatives. So we can say there are quite a few members opposite who are out of touch.

• (1750)

Voters are much more likely to put pressure on the elected representatives who are closer to them and in a better position to determine their needs. I cannot determine what is best for the people in B.C., and they cannot determine either what is best for us. I respect this type of approach.

The federal government should take a look at its own backyard. It has enough problems as it is without looking for more elsewhere. I do not want to digress, but we know that the feds have a debate on their hands about the surplus in the EI fund and the budget surpluses.

Why do these members not stand up, not speak up, not shake up their government so that it will take care of the most important priorities? No, these people are looking for jurisdictions, for squabbles between the federal and provincial governments and for senseless debates that keep us from moving forward. They really do love squabbles. They are always looking for more of them.

An hon. member: They even fight with their allies.

Mr. Pierre Brien: They even fight with their allies. It is true, I had forgotten that.

In Quebec, they even fight with their allies, which is nothing new. Then they accuse us of provocation. There is no one better than a federal Liberal to provoke fights in Canada. They are the masters in that game.

So, I want to tell the member that we share his approach, and I hope the government will finally understand. I always hope that, in a moment of lucidity, the Liberals will show some courage. They have the majority, but only by five or six seats. It would take only a few of them to make a stand. They do not realize the power they have. Wake up. You could wake up the government, make things change instead of constantly backing away and backing down from the Prime Minister. Think about your own future. Stand up.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member who spend a good part of his speech saying that the Liberals are the big bad wolves, who are always looking for squabbles.

Could he explain to the House, first, whether he too does not feel somewhat out of touch as a federal member of parliament and, second, why the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party both support the bill? They are not big bad wolves. How can he explain that?

Mr. Pierre Brien: Mr. Speaker, it is very easy to explain. There is an excellent example right now in Quebec. Like many people, we have a very hard time making the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives and we have a very good illustration of that in this case. There are many similarities between the two parties.

I must admit, however, that, in general, the Liberals are the kings of confrontation and I do not want to strip them of their title. I must give them that, but I must say that it is sometimes very hard to distinguish between Liberals and Conservatives because they so very much look alike. But in some cases, it is easier than in others to distinguish the political stripes. But let us go back to the issue at hand.

An hon. member: Let us get back to the subject.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Yes, that is it. Why would it be impossible to do what we already did once? Why would it be impossible to conclude the kind of agreement we signed in the case of the Saguenay-Saint-Laurent marine park? What is the problem? Why can we not do the same thing for the other marine areas? I would like an explanation.

[English]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Wentworth—Burlington.

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I did not intend to speak to this bill but some of the things that have been said must be challenged. I think the Canadian people should hear what is in the bill. That would be a very unusual approach to take in a debate.

I heard the hon. parliamentary secretary to the minister of heritage ask a question a moment ago to a member of the Bloc. The member asked if he felt he was a member of federal parliament. It occurred to me that Reform and Bloc members are provincial members of the federal parliament. There is quite a distinction.

• (1755)

It is fascinating to hear Reform Party members stand and defend the rights of the British Columbia government to take care of the national environmental responsibility. I understand the Bloc doing it, as I said before, because its members would separate Quebec from the rest of Canada. Are Reform members now telling us they would separate British Columbia?

An hon. member: In a minute.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: In a minute. That is the message, and the member would actually unite with these guys.

An hon. member: Not a chance.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Unite the right apparently is in some difficulty. There appear to be some good reasons we are hearing about today.

I was a provincial politician for eight years in the Ontario legislature. I fully understand the constitutional relationship between the federal government and provincial governments. I fully understand the responsibility of a provincial government to deliver services to its citizens.

We provide transfer grants. Those grants go for health care. We do not interfere in the actual delivery of health care or in the running of the hospitals. That is the responsibility of provincial governments.

There are some people in my province who might like us to interfere in education when they see the kinds of cuts taking place by Mr. Harris and company, particularly in the area of health care. They might like us to interfere but that is not the way the system works. We understand that.

An hon. member: The system does not work.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: A member of the Reform Party says the system does not work. He would simply build a bridge right through the heart of the Rockies and separate the province of British Columbia. That is the message.

The member wants all the regulatory power to be put in the hands of Premier Clark. That is what we are hearing those members say. They know what is best.

My colleague from Wentworth—Burlington pointed out that he has a mother, a brother and a sister living there. I have many dear friends in Victoria. Most of them are Liberals, he might appreciate, but dear friends nonetheless.

We have a former long time mayor who now represents his community in this place. When someone is elected on a federal agenda they are elected, it seems to me, regardless of their parochialism, regardless of their tunnel vision, regardless of their inability to understand that from sea to sea to sea there are issues of significance to all Canadians. The treatment of the environment in the province of British Columbia I believe in my heart is important to the people of Newfoundland and vice versa. The treatment of the Great Lakes, the treatment of our fisheries, the treatment of pollution, of dealing with water purification, is important to all Canadians.

The proof of that came when recently there was an announcement that water would be sold out of the Great Lakes basin to the United States. The uproar, believe me, was from sea to sea to sea.

Should we turn that decision over to the province of Ontario? Should we abdicate our national responsibility? Members in the Reform Party would probably suggest we should turn it over to the state of Michigan, given their track record and their background and where many of their policies come from.

Do a survey in virtually any part of this country and simply ask should the federal government, the national government, the Parliament of Canada, have input into the protection of the environment in this country or should we simply wash our hands and abdicate that responsibility to the provincial governments.

I heard one member talk about Tweedledee and Tweedledum. I am not sure who but I heard somebody, Bloc or Reform, say that perhaps the municipalities should be given control over this. Would that not be interesting?

I also served 10 years as a municipal councillor. I understand the role and I appreciate the role. My wife currently serves as a councillor. It is an incredibly important service to the community, but with all due respect to my dear wife, my mayor and all municipal politicians, I do not feel I would stand here and abdicate my responsibility for national programs to the municipalities.

• (1800)

How would members like to see Mel Lastman and Hazel McCallion in a two out of three mud fall, fighting over the environment? I do not think I want to see that. I do not think the national parliament wants to give up that kind of authority to the municipal level. The member opposite is shaking her head, but it was one of her own members who suggested it.

If the official opposition wants to criticize the federal government that is fine. That is its job. I understand that; been there and

done that. If it wants to dismantle it, it should have the courage. At least the Bloc says it like it is from its perspective. It wants to dismantle the country.

Do Reformers expect that we should wrap up federal responsibilities with a great big bow, things Canadians hold dear to their hearts, and turn them over to provincial politicians? If that is what Reformers want to do, they should say that.

It would not surprise me terribly, considering that they only represent two provinces and considering they do not have a seat east of the Manitoba border, that their interests might lie in the fact that Ralph Klein is the latest champion of the Reform Party and the unite the right. It would not surprise me at all. It would not surprise me considering the fact that the hon. Tony Clement, minister of transportation for the province of Ontario, sings the praises of the Reform Party. I wonder why. He might like to avoid a provincial Reform Party starting up in the province of Ontario. Maybe that is the motive. I do not know.

If there is a Reform Party in the province of Ontario running on the same side of the agenda as Mike Harris, it seems to me a lot of people would be tripping over one another because Mike Harris is already fundamentally a Reform Party member.

Mr. John Herron: No. He is one of us.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: He is not one of them. He is a Reformer. The Conservatives should be a little nervous. I hear that the venerable Bill Davis recently attended a unite the right cocktail party. I wonder if they were serving arsenic or whatever. I understand there is a move to have the Reform Party leap-frog over the Bloc to join the Tories in the unite the right, but I am delighted to hear members say that it will not happen.

We have some federal legislation. Should we turn it over to the provinces? The Fisheries Act, the Oceans Act, the Canada Shipping Act, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and the Migratory Birds Act, all these statutes are relevant to the conservation of marine resources. They are relevant to this place. It is our responsibility and the responsibility of Reformers to stand and defend the nation. They should stand and say that they will vote with the government if it means protecting the national environment on behalf of all Canadians, even though they only represent a few in a few small areas of the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard the Liberal member say in his eloquent speech that when a party is elected on a particular political platform, it must follow up on that platform. He could have talked about the elimination of the GST, pay equity, withdrawal from the free trade agreement, the elimina-

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tion of the GST on books or the end of patronage appointments, all to be found in the red book, but he simply forgot.

Listening to his speech helped me understand why people have so little confidence in and so little respect for politicians. To summarize his speech, we could say, as we used to say in the schoolyard when we were kids, "my father is stronger than yours". That was more or less the substance of his speech.

I will now try to ask a different question to the Liberal member. I will ask him what part of the Saguenay-St. Lawrence marine park agreement would be unacceptable in Bill C-48. I remind him that this has nothing to do with the big bad separatists.

• (1805)

Second, clause 5(2) of Bill C-48 reads as follows:

—is satisfied that clear title to the lands to be included in the marine conservation area is vested in Her Majesty in right of Canada, excluding any such lands situated within the exclusive economic zone of Canada.

Clause 5(2) talks about lands owned by the Canadian government but, at the same time, section 92.5 of the Constitution says that Quebec legislation applies to all public lands, including river beds.

First, how can the member explain the inability to come to an understanding on the basis of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence marine park agreement, and second, how can he explain the difference between clause 5(2) of Bill C-48 and section 92.5 of the Canadian Constitution?

[English]

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting response, the issue of my father is stronger than your father. I am paraphrasing. Perhaps it is close to what was said.

We on this side of the House are saying that our Canada is stronger with Quebec as part of it than the hon. member's country separated. That is very simple. If that is school yard bully tactics then so be it, but I do not think it is. We understand that my Canada, the Canada of people on this side of the House, is stronger with British Columbia as part of it and is stronger with Quebec as part of it.

The member opposite continues to chirp. I guess he did not have enough time to ask his question. Perhaps he has a particular amendment that he wants to make to the bill. Is he saying he does not? He is asking why it cannot be like the agreement in the Saguenay.

Why not bring it to committee? This is second reading. It will go to committee. Why not bring it to committee and take a look at some amendments? The hon. member might be surprised. If there is a way of improving the bill, who knows? We could discuss it. It could be possible.

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The hon. member wants to stand in this place and use it as nothing more than a political soapbox for the absolute display of unity between the Reform and the Bloc Quebecois that are both in their own inimitable way determined to destroy the country. The Liberal Party of Canada, the government of the country, will not allow that to happen.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I get from the member's intervention the notion that if we do not support this kind of heavy handed interventionist legislation we are somehow not patriots.

If we are truly looking to keep Canada united and strong, the federal government has to back off. If the federal government does not do that, we will lose Canada.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, the bill establishes a procedure. It is not a short term proposition. Like national parks the areas we are talking about are intended to be created in perpetuity.

It is absolutely a puzzle to me why Reformers would object to perpetuating and perpetually protection of the environment through the bill. They are using it for their own political purpose to grandstand because they only know how to be against an initiative of the government instead of trying to understand it and support it for all Canadians.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am someone who very much likes to travel in North Africa. It is a beautiful part of the world, particularly Egypt. I am very fond of the desert.

One of the most stunning adventures, if one is into the environment and into wildlife and that sort of thing, is to travel to the shore of the Red Sea and snorkel in the Red Sea, which is what I did about six or seven years ago.

• (1810)

The Red Sea is famous for its underwater marine environment. I arrived there and went swimming. There is a reef just offshore. It is quite fantastic because when looking around with my face out of water it is all desert. When I put my face in the water it was a riot of colour. There is life everywhere competing. There were fish, coral, sea fans and everything imaginable within my view. The water was beautiful and perfectly clear.

That was in one little cove that the local guides took us to. I asked to go a little way down the shore where again I went into the water and looked down with my face mask and snorkel on and there was desolation. There was nothing. Everything was totally dead. As I walked along the shore the sand looked perfectly normal, but I stepped on something soft. It was a sand coated globule of oil.

Prior to passing through the Suez Canal the oil tankers trim their tanks by dumping oil into the Red Sea. The devastation of one of the most fantastic ecosystems in the world is unbelievable. It is all

because of a weak national government which did not apply standards to the tankers moving through the Suez Canal. Egypt did not apply those standards because it needs the money. It is as simple as that.

Let us return to Canada for a moment and travel with me to Newfoundland, to Cape St. Mary's on the Avalon peninsula. I was there the summer before last. It is an absolutely splendid situation. It is a bird sanctuary. Approaching the edge of the cliffs there is a huge pinnacle a couple of hundred yards offshore. The drop is about 300 feet. Tens of thousands of birds swarm around that pinnacle. That is their breeding ground.

An hon. member: Puffins.

Mr. John Bryden: No, not puffins. On other islands along the shore there are puffins and whales, just along the east coast of the Avalon peninsula. There is wild life and biodiversity in incredible quantities.

If someone in Newfoundland decided to shoot all those birds or kill the whales found along that coast, or maybe develop the islands where the puffins breed, would the people in B.C. care? Would they be affected? I suggest that every Canadian would care if this type of environment in Newfoundland were destroyed. I would say every Canadian would care. The world would lose something but Canada would lose something most of all. Even if we do not see it and even if it is not in our province it is important to us.

I move to Lake Ontario. Just off Welland there are two ships that lie in about 500 feet of water. They are called the *Hamilton* and the *Scourge*. They are American vessels from the War of 1812 which were actually seized from the Canadians and refurbished into American men of war. A storm came up and the ships capsized and sank in about 500 feet of water in Lake Ontario.

About 12 years ago they were located and an expedition was mounted to go down and examine them. These are two War of 1812 warships that are in absolute pristine condition on the floor of Lake Ontario. They are absolutely perfect. They are a wonderful snapshot of a period in all our history that determined the future of Canada when we were under threat and at war with the United States.

The legislation covers the preservation of that type of historical situation at the bottom of Lake Ontario. It is under threat because all those artifacts on the lake floor are a tremendous attraction to scuba divers and relic hunters.

• (1815)

That is a classic case where the heritage ministry has a role in this kind of legislation. We have to protect that kind of thing. It is of interest. It is of value. People do care in British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland about that kind of archeological treasure in Lake Ontario because it is Canadian.

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Let us go to Victoria. Let us go to British Columbia and look at Long Beach for example. Long Beach on Vancouver Island is one of the most splendid marine environments we could ever hope to see. For miles there is surf rolling up. We can walk along the shore and find shells of every diversity. The waters off British Columbia are as equally famous as the Red Sea for their biodiversity. Scuba divers come from all over the world to British Columbia to dive in those waters.

The city of Victoria is noted for its very long sewage pipe which dumps raw sewage into the ocean. I would ask members on the opposite side of the House, especially the B.C. members, if they seriously want to tell me that the federal government has no role because we can trust the provinces and the municipalities. We can see for ourselves, and Victoria is the classic example, that in order to save a few dollars or perhaps to save jobs, Victoria is dumping raw sewage into the sea. And it does float back, I have to say, and all they do is make the pipe longer. That is the type of problem that exists when we leave environmental issues solely to the provinces and the municipalities.

The real thrust of my talk is that we have choices in this country. We can believe that what pulls together a country of this size and this diversity is its diversity. It is its difference in its cultures, its environment, its forests and its sheer beauty. Perhaps the fundamental difference between members on this side and members on the opposite side is that I feel very strongly that all of it belongs to me, not just what exists in my municipality which is at the head of Lake Ontario, not just what exists in my province, but the entire country.

I come from a riding near the city that had the Plastimet fire. The Plastimet company came under Ontario and municipal fire codes and environmental laws and what did we have? Hamilton had one of the worst toxic fires in this century, at least in Canada. The provincial controls were there on paper but they were not there in action.

The fundamental difference between members on this side and members on the other side is, be they Bloc Quebecois or Reform members, they do not appreciate—the NDP have indicated that they do not want to be included with the Bloc and the Reform Party and I appreciate that, and I did not notice a reaction from the Conservatives. The fundamental point is simply that the difference politically that exists in this country is exemplified by this legislation. One side wants the legislation for the entire nation and the other side does not want the legislation for provincial parochial reasons.

The Bloc Quebecois members although they do not like the nationalist component in this legislation have certainly indicated that they agree in principle with the general idea of preserving these ecosystems. I know it is impossible for the Reform Party but I

would suggest that the Bloc Quebecois remember that this is second reading, agreement in principle. Therefore support it in principle and vote with the government on this occasion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a comment on something a few members from the Liberal Party said about the New Democratic Party.

• (1820)

It is quite easy to understand why the NDP is in favour of this bill. It is simply because the NDP is a centralizing party, just like the Liberal Party. It is normal for these people to support a centralizing bill.

The previous speaker shared with us his tremendous knowledge. He analyzed what is happening in Africa, at the Suez canal, throughout the world, but I think it is time for him to wake up and realize what is going on in Canada.

I see that the Minister of Justice is here, so the member may want to listen to what I say and then ask her some questions. The situation in Canada is very complex. Let me give the example of a fisherman from the riding of Berthier—Montcalm, who wants to go fishing in the St. Lawrence River. Then the member can tell me that this whole thing they are setting up is not complicated.

This fisherman asks the province for a fishing licence. He will go fishing in a boat he has bought in Quebec and for which he has paid the federal and the provincial taxes. To launch his boat, he has to register with the federal government. Then he brings his boat to the shore which is an area of provincial jurisdiction. As soon as it is launched, the boat is in federal waters. However, the bottom of the river is provincial. The fish swimming in the water belongs to the federal, but the crab at the bottom falls under an area of shared jurisdiction.

One thing is certain, as soon as the fish swimming in federal waters is caught and thrown in the boat, it comes under provincial jurisdiction.

But as if that were not good enough, we also have federal fishing quotas. If, on top of this, it is a commercial fishery, there are federal and provincial laws and regulations on food, the environment, safety, equipment, and so forth..

The bill before us is completely flawed. As if things were not complicated enough as it is, Canadian Heritage, Fisheries and Oceans and Environment Canada will now be involved in the implementation of the bill.

Does the member who studied how things are done around the world and believes they are easy to manage in Canada not think it is not normal for the federal government to always try to complicate matters? It is creating problems where there were none.

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The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean marine park is a case in point. Why not duplicate it? No, it would be too easy. As if things were not complicated enough, as if there were not enough stakeholders in matters such as water and fisheries, now three other departments and all their bureaucrats are involved, and the provincial government has been pushed aside. We know how this works. This makes absolutely no sense.

Will the member opposite open his eyes and ears for once in his life and, when the time comes to pass the bill, will he rise and vote against the government and the bill?

[English]

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, again I detect from the hon. member's remarks that he does support the bill in principle. I would suggest to him that it is he who should be rising in support of the bill rather than the opposite. The often valid objections that the Bloc Québécois brings up should be debated in committee. If they cannot be resolved at that stage, it makes sense then to vote against the bill at third reading. When we agree with something in principle, we should support it in principle.

As for my colleague's general remarks, it seems to me that the easiest way to resolve the problem of too much mixed jurisdiction in issues of the environment, the fisheries and the coastal regions would be for the provinces to back off and allow the federal government to play its proper role in managing these resources on our coastal waters.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent to deem it 6.30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that we call it 6.30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1825)

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

APEC SUMMIT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be in the House and to see members opposite.

I am pleased to speak tonight on the Liberal government's complete mishandling of the APEC affair. I hasten to add that the handling is really the question.

Contrary to what has been stated by Liberal members, this is not an issue of partisan politics. Rather, this is an issue that involves serious questions pertaining to the responsibilities of ministers of the crown.

Canadians are deeply troubled by a Prime Minister and a solicitor general who appear to have clear disregard for their respective duties and outright refuse to be accountable for their own actions, not unlike the infamous Airbus affair which we have yet to hear the last of.

Upon assuming office ministers of the crown must swear an oath to Her Majesty the Queen to uphold responsibilities which are inherent in serving the federal cabinet. The Prime Minister and the solicitor general in particular are entrusted with very heavy responsibilities.

Canadians need to know the level of the Prime Minister's involvement in directing RCMP officers to suppress peaceful protesters so as not to offend the sensibilities of an Asian dictator. What offends the sensibilities of Canadians is not only the callous remarks of the Prime Minister and the efforts to dodge the issue that the government is engaged in, but how closely was he involved and is it appropriate that he was involved. These are the fundamental questions that have remained unanswered throughout.

Of equal importance is why did the Prime Minister and his government not simply answer questions about this matter in this House when the matter was first introduced? Instead of engaging in that, they stepped up their efforts by engaging spin doctors to deflect these questions to avoid the hard questions that were posed to them.

Sadly and to his personal shame, the Prime Minister has refused to account for his actions and the actions of his office. His government has chosen the RCMP Public Complaints Commission to investigate these allegations. Despite the commission's lack of a legal and moral mandate to undertake such an inquiry with a broad truth seeking authority or any real final say in the matter, the government has been hiding behind this.

It has recently been declared that the federal court will not be hearing the appeal that was put to it. Instead, the commission itself is going to be tasked with the decision as to whether the commission has already prejudged this matter by the chair's alleged remarks in a casino. The commission is left with the tantamount task of deciding its own fate. This has gone from the sublime to the ridiculous.

This matter has completely lost the faith of the Canadian people. This entire affair has a stench around it now that Canadians will not tolerate.

The solicitor general openly chastised the opposition members when they asked questions about this. He then went out, got on a plane and spoke about this in a very forthright way saying that

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Hughie was going to take the fall and that certain officers were going to be the fall guys in all of this.

This matter has been completely compromised by the government and by the actions of both the solicitor general and the Prime Minister. There is a blatant contradiction in what the government has asked the Canadian people to swallow, which is that they should have faith in this commission. However, when the commission asked on two separate occasions that the students be funded, the government refused. How can Canadians have faith in this commission if the government will not listen to the requests of the commission?

The member for Palliser made very damning allegations against the solicitor general and these allegations were repeated.

I suspect that we have not heard the end of this APEC matter. I am very interested to see how the parliamentary secretary will respond to these allegations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to do this in French, but I will repeat an English phrase that was used earlier.

My colleague across the way used the expression "from the sublime to the ridiculous". Oddly, that is just what I was thinking when watching the behaviour of the party over there in connection with this matter.

• (1830)

Let us have a clear understanding of what the problem is: there are incidents. A commission was created a long time ago for handling this type of problem. The case is referred to it.

First, the allegation is made that the commission does not have the power to do what has to be done. That is false, but such is the allegation, and the commission's credibility is undermined as a result. It is alleged that the Prime Minister got involved. It is alleged that the commission is a lame-duck commission. The allegations keep coming. Allegations about what happened on a plane. I do not believe my colleague was on the plane and therefore he did not hear first hand what was, and was not, said.

The underlying principle is that someone said this or that. This becomes an absolute truth. This is absolutely ridiculous. Enough to make a person weep.

Now, going further with this, who is it that is behind these allegations? Members of opposition parties. Why are they making these allegations? To defend purely political and partisan causes. And what does this have to do with reality? Nothing whatsoever.

They are not at all interested in the truth. What they are interested in is the media circus in the House around a matter that could have been settled very readily, and will be settled very readily, by an organization created for that very purpose, a commission called the RCMP Public Complaints Commission.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)

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