



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, April 29, 1999**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 29, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### YOUTH VIOLENCE

**Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were all shocked and saddened to hear about the senseless tragedy that occurred yesterday afternoon in Taber, Alberta.

Our condolences go out to the family and friends of Jason Lang who was killed yesterday during the shootings. Our prayers are with the family and friends of Shane Christmas who remains in serious condition in hospital.

As a parent I can only imagine the terror that is felt at hearing there has been a shooting at your child's school. I can understand the pain the people of Taber are feeling today.

As a parent I insist that our schools be what we intend them to be: places of learning, places where we can send our children knowing they will be safe.

As a member of this House I am reminded that we must all work together to ensure conditions that produce such horrific violence are eliminated from our communities. As Jason Lang's father said today, "Lots of things need to be changed and lots of things need to be healed". Over the coming days and months I know that all members will work to ensure that what can be done will be done.

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### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, gas prices are getting a lot of attention these days.

The truth is Canadians enjoy some of the lowest gas prices in the world. Without government taxes, gas is as cheap as it was 20 years ago. The only thing that has changed dramatically is the amount

Canadians are being taxed at the pumps. The government is the real villain in gas pricing with over 50% of the price of a litre of gasoline going to government taxes, yet virtually none of that money is returned to my province for road infrastructure programs.

When I go into a grocery store or a restaurant I see the before tax price of the product. Why can gas retailers not do the same for their customers? Why do retailers not advertise their gasoline prices on a before tax basis so Canadians can plainly see how much of their gas dollar is going into the government's tax tank? Why are gas retailers willing to take the heat for government taxation?

Canadians need tax cuts now so they can get more distance for their dollar.

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### YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recently hosted the Prime Minister's caucus task force on youth entrepreneurship along with my colleagues from the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

The task force spent its time in Kitchener speaking with young entrepreneurs, their mentors, service providers and members of the private sector. Topics such as education, finances, resources and government support were all discussed.

Task force members visited a number of companies run by young entrepreneurs from the Kitchener-Waterloo area. We visited Joe Merlihan of the Woolwich *Observer*, Jen Herzog of Distinctive Stamp Design and John Rochetta of The Beat Goes On. In addition, some members dropped by the Business Enterprise Centre and Kor Gallery and Studios.

The young entrepreneurs we met were dynamic, intelligent individuals who have used their talents in creative and unique ways.

I commend the many young entrepreneurs from across the country who are working hard to make their dreams come true.

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### BROCK EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

**Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House that the residents of the township of Brock located within my riding of Haliburton—Victo-

*S. O. 31*

ria—Brock received a big boost with a \$168,000 federal grant from the Department of Human Resources Development.

This grant created the funding to establish the new community employment resource centre located in the Beaverton town hall. The centre officially opens its doors to the public tomorrow, Friday, April 30, 1999.

• (1405)

The task of locating a job can be very difficult. This centre will assist residents looking for employment through a number of services. These services include employment counselling, job listings, free photocopying, faxing, computer use and the listing of college and university courses offered to upgrade their skills.

The centre was created through a partnership involving the federal government, the township of Brock, Durham College and other agencies. I would like to congratulate the individuals who made this project work. This centre will be a benefit not only to the residents but also to the whole community of Brock township.

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[*Translation*]

#### NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

**Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week we celebrated the National Volunteer Week, to recognize the efforts of the 7.5 million Canadians who give generously of their time all through the year in order to help the less advantaged members of our community.

[*English*]

I take this opportunity to highlight an individual, a Canadian of Hellenic origin, who was honoured by the Quebec National Assembly with a volunteer award for her efforts and contribution over the years.

This person is Ms. Vicky Nicolakakos, a friend whom I consider to be a most deserving individual. All those who know Vicky know her commitment and her tireless efforts in responding to the needs of the underprivileged, the ailing, and the troubled of our society. She is an outstanding Canadian and a great role model for us all.

*Sinharitiria, Vicky.*

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#### VÁCLAV HAVEL

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the House has heard many great and eloquent speeches in its time. Few have been delivered with the moral authority we heard this morning.

Václav Havel is a very special individual. His conscience called on him to suffer the trials of being a dissident. A sense of duty demanded that he assume the highest political office in his country.

However, the greatest contribution he has made is to warn us that evil can only triumph when good people look away.

Winston Churchill once said that the greatest virtue was courage. The life of the man who spoke to us today is a model of courage and is a great legacy to his country.

As a member of parliament, I was also pleased to hear an echo of many values that the Reform Party stands for and why I am here. I was especially moved by his demands that we recognize that the individual, regardless of status or wealth, is more important than the state.

I know the House will join me in expressing our profound admiration to Havel the man, and our respect to the President of the Czech Republic.

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#### AQUATOX 2000

**Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, clean and safe drinking water is a precious resource which many of us take for granted.

In my riding of Nunavut, students at Netsilik school in Taloyoak, Qiqirtaq Ilihavik in Gjoa Haven and both Takijulauk and Ulaajuk schools in Pond Inlet are participating in the Aquatox 2000 program launched by Canada's International Development Research Centre. Students in a worldwide network of over 100 schools test the quality of water using very simple yet effective methods and post the results on an interactive web site.

The participants gain valuable scientific knowledge and an appreciation of the importance of water while engaging in a positive dialogue with youth from other nations committed to a sustainable future. Keep up the good work.

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[*Translation*]

#### HEPATITIS C

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, once again this government has unabashedly given us evidence of its lack of judgment and compassion. The Liberal members do not like to be told that, one year ago, all of them, without exception, turned their backs on the thousands of people infected with hepatitis C.

Joey Haché and a group of Quebec victims were here yesterday, a year to the day after the Liberals' rejection of a motion, which had the support of all the opposition parties, calling for compensation of all hepatitis C victims. They reminded us that nothing has changed in the past year, except that several hundred victims have died, without receiving any support from this government, which continues to wash its hands of them.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Health refused to meet with them and to listen to them. The Minister of Health even

refused to accept a letter one of the victims wanted to hand him. So much for Liberal attention and compassion.

The Prime Minister wonders how he will go down in history. He need have no illusions. The arrogance and cynicism of his government and himself have given proof in this instance—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

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### INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Thursday, April 29, is International Dance Day. This event invites us to understand the universality of this art form.

• (1410)

The language of dance knows no borders. It embraces all nationalities and is used for many purposes, including to express the artistic, the spiritual and the mundane.

To the first nations, dance is a vital component of their ancestral heritage. Canadian dance artists are our country's cultural ambassadors, applauded in all the cultural capitals of the world.

International Dance Day affords Canadians an opportunity to take part in activities focusing on various styles of dance and to honour our dance artists.

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[English]

### YOUTH VIOLENCE

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I express our great sorrow for the tragic shooting yesterday in Taber, Alberta.

We extend our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the two boys who were shot, to the community of Taber, and to Glenn McMurray, executive director of the Reform Party, whose nephew Jason Lang died as a result of that shooting.

I worked for many years as a high school teacher and this tragedy has affected me deeply. Next to being at home or in church, where else should young people feel more secure than when they are in school?

As the Leader of the Opposition has said, if we could legislate against these kinds of grievous acts, we would all do so tomorrow. But laws will not prevent random violence. We must look at the root problem. If we strengthen families, improve the support provided by social services and make it easier for police to do their job, perhaps troubled youth will feel that they have a place to turn before they turn to violence.

To the Langs, the Christmases and all of Taber, our thoughts and prayers are with you.

[Translation]

### ALLIANCE CONSEIL EN MARCHÉS FINANCIERS

**Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this morning in Montreal, the Government of Canada expressed pride in its involvement in the creation of the Alliance conseil en marché financier.

This organization is the only one in Canada working to promote Canadian know-how in infrastructure development and capital market regulation abroad.

The main goal of the alliance is to connect the financial world with the expertise in Montreal, a marvelous opportunity for our financial community to further expand its operations internationally.

This is another example of the Government of Canada's co-operation with Quebec's economic stakeholders. Co-operation is always the best approach to carrying out our projects.

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[English]

### YOUTH VIOLENCE

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the NDP, our thoughts and prayers today are with the family and friends of Jason Lang and Shane Christmas of Taber, Alberta. We share their grief over Jason and their anxiety and hopes for Shane and the shock that a fine Canadian community like Taber must feel at having this happen in their midst.

This event challenges us all. It should challenge the media to ask themselves whether the way in which they report such events is part of the problem. It challenges people of all ages and not just young people to treat our fellow human beings in such a way that no one feels excluded or like an estranged loser. It challenges all of us, politicians and citizens, to ask how we can free our collective psyche from the growing fascination with nihilistic violence and death that permeates elements of our mass culture from video games to music and movies.

The victims in Alberta and Colorado are like canaries in the mine. The cultural environment is toxic. Let us clean it up before it is too late.

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[Translation]

### AMATEUR SPORT

**Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage stated that everyone supported the decision to let go women's hockey coach Danièle Sauvageau, which is patently false. Once again, the Liberal member's response was a shameless denial of the facts.

*Oral Questions*

As for the hon. member for Bourassa, that staunch defender of professional sport, and feigned defender of amateur sport, his problems are far from over. While the Minister of Canadian Heritage is confirming that the recommendations in the report on the funding of amateur sport have been pigeonholed, how can he expect Hockey Canada to act on his suggestion that Danièle Sauvageau be appointed immediately as the coach for the 2002 Olympics?

According to the hon. member for Bourassa, Danièle Sauvageau was apparently let go because she was too pushy. In fact, all she was doing was claiming what was rightfully hers, and the Quebecers in the Liberal caucus would do well to follow suit. At present they are not asserting themselves enough and not assuming their responsibilities when the time comes to defend Quebecers.

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**JACQUES PARIZEAU**

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Jacques Parizeau, the new Bloc Quebecois researcher, announced this morning the holding of a Bloc forum on globalization.

• (1415)

By still toeing the line of promoting Quebec separation, the Bloc Quebecois has not in any way grasped the advantages for Quebec of belonging to the Canadian federation.

As far as the globalization of modern economies is concerned, it is in the best interests of Canada to be united in order to retain its margin of action and economic strength on the international scene.

What the new Bloc Quebecois researcher is recommending is nothing more and nothing less than the weakening of Quebec in the face of the new realities which are reducing economic barriers.

Globalization places great importance on Canadian identity and strength, for joint and co-operative efforts by all governments protect—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

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[English]

**YOUTH VIOLENCE**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to extend my condolences and deepest sympathies on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party to the people of Taber and the victims families of yesterday's tragedy at W. R. Myers High School.

The families of Jason Lang and Shane Christmas are in our thoughts today. We pray that Shane will soon experience a full recovery at the Lethbridge Regional Hospital.

The small agricultural community of Taber has suffered a tremendous shock, which has resonated across the country. Yesterday Canada lost some of its innocence. Coming so shortly after the tragic shootings in Colorado shows that our borders are not immune to random acts of violence.

The actions of this 14 year old boy should be a reflection on what more we must do as a society to prevent such a senseless act from occurring ever again. We need to come to terms with how and why this happened. For now our focus must be on those who are suffering as a consequence of this tragedy.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the phrase reduce, reuse and recycle should not apply to Canada's military. Yet that is exactly what has happened after 30 years of neglect.

Things are so bad that even the defence minister is admitting that our forces are stretched to the limit. His military emergency fund is almost dry and we are only one month into the war in Yugoslavia.

If war is not a good enough reason to increase the defence budget then what is?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has in fact increased the defence budget. This is the first time in over a dozen years that budget has been increased.

We have increased it because we want to make sure that we look after the fine dedicated men and women who serve in our Canadian forces. We have given them pay raises. We are improving their housing conditions. We are doing a number of things that improve their quality of life.

Also, the government has been purchasing the equipment and the tools they need to do the job. The people who will now be deployed to Macedonia will be taking some of our latest and best equipment, all new and all fully compatible with our allies. That will help them to do the job of peacekeeping.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, our fine dedicated men and women in the military have had \$7.8 billion cut out of the defence department since the government took power in 1993.

Now that a war is on the defence minister is surprised. He tosses back a few dollars, but he is surprised to find out we are extremely

limited in the support we could give to our allies. Our troops need money and more equipment and they need it now. We have invested \$1 billion in this budget.

Will he commit today to an immediate 10% increase in the defence budget?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are providing a very significant contribution to this allied effort.

When I talked with General Short, head of the NATO air operation, he said our pilots were first teamers. He said they were among the best who serve there. They have CF-18s that are well equipped to do the job. The equipment we are giving to our people who are going to Macedonia will be state of the art equipment.

This kind of criticism coming from the Reform Party has to be borne in mind in light of the fact that in the last election it said let us cut defence by another \$1 billion.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** No, Mr. Speaker. In the last election we said put \$1 billion extra in. In 1994 we were operating a huge deficit. That was when we said maybe some cuts would be made. Our military is doing—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

• (1420)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton North.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, our military is doing a tremendous job in spite of the government, not because of the government, and we thank it for that.

Troops are ready to leave for Macedonia as we speak. These men and women deserve to know that their government will give them the money and equipment they need to do the job over there.

The finance minister may want to answer this question because his hands are on the purse strings. Will he commit today to an immediate 10% increase in our defence budget? Yes or no.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, members of the Reform Party are very inconsistent in this matter. They try to say that they want additional money to go into the budget. I read three of their documents and I do not know what part of the word reduce they do not understand. That is certainly in fact what they were advocating.

We value what our troops are doing over there. Canadians value what our troops are doing. It is a just cause that they are involved with. We want to make sure they have the proper equipment. They do and they will continue to have it.

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is wrong. Our troops are the best in the world, but there is just not enough of them. The minister knows full well that

there is not enough of them because the government has cut \$500 million a year since it took office in 1993. Our Canadian armed forces are underfunded, underresourced and undermanned, and the minister knows it full well.

Will the Minister of National Defence stand in the House today and tell Canadians that he will go to cabinet and request a 10% increase in the defence budget? Will the minister do that now?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember over the last five years, while the Minister of Finance was bringing the fiscal House in order and we were getting the deficit under control, hearing from them constantly. They said “You can’t go fast enough. Take it out of defence. Take it out of social services. Take it out of the pensioners”. That is what they were saying over there.

We have been able to manage the situation fairly well, to the point where we will send troops over there that are well equipped and will do a good job for Canada.

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is wrong again. He knows that he cut defence spending and other programs. At the same time they have increased spending and added \$12.5 billion to program spending that is questionable in the first place in the latest budget.

The defence minister, the foreign affairs minister and the Prime Minister have positioned our troops for war. The PM has committed our troops. Is he as committed to giving them the resources they need to do the job?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am committed and the government is committed to giving them the resources they need to do the job. That is exactly what we are doing.

If hon. members opposite or any hon. member in the House would like to see what this equipment looks like, to see that it is the best possible equipment, it is just down the street at the Cartier Drill Hall.

We will have buses after question period that will take members down there. They could kick the tires and walk all over it and see that we have state of the art equipment which we are sending with our troops.

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[Translation]

## KOSOVO

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the situation in Kosovo is intolerable. At least 650,000 Kosovars have taken refuge in neighbouring countries and 800,000 others have been driven out of their homes. Infectious diseases are

*Oral Questions*

beginning to make their appearance and malnutrition is turning into starvation. Time is of the essence.

With U.S., German, Greek and UN diplomats trekking to Moscow, may we know whether the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be taking a specific proposal to the Russians in an attempt to get them to be part of a rapid end to the conflict?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is taking part in very important discussions with the Russian foreign minister, his Greek counterpart, and UN secretary general Kofi Annan. The discussions are a critical part of the attempt to work out a suitable peace accord in Kosovo, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs will continue his discussions in person with the Russian foreign minister tomorrow.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us whether the Minister of Foreign Affairs' proposal will have as its core involvement by the UN, with NATO continuing its present action, naturally, but under the co-ordination and leadership of the UN, so that the Russians could agree to such a peace plan?

• (1425)

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Foreign Affairs is there not just as a representative of NATO, but also as a representative of a country with a seat on the security council.

We believe that the UN is a very important participant in these discussions. Obviously UN participation, which would include Russia, is vital to any future solution.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we were entitled to a clear response by the Prime Minister of Canada to the call from the Deputy Prime Minister of Montenegro, who has said he is prepared to take up arms against the Milosevic regime to protect his oil reserves. The response was "so much the better".

How does the Prime Minister reconcile this very offhand remark with the statement on Kosovo he signed in Washington on the weekend, and which provides, at article 5, that any action by Belgrade against the government of Montenegro would have serious consequences?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised important questions. I would respond by saying we are well aware of the tensions in Montenegro due to the activities of the Serb forces. We are, however, looking for a solution that does not necessarily entail a military response in this situation.

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government of Montenegro wants to protect its citizens from civil war and economic collapse. It has indicated its readiness to receive foreign

observers to ensure that oil delivered to it is not passed on to the Milosevic regime.

So, instead of responding in any old which way, in the "so much the better" style, should the Prime Minister not convince his allies to try every possible way to get the Serb government to concede, while minimizing the impact on Montenegro?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are looking for the solutions needed in the context of the five conditions. This is why our Minister of Foreign Affairs is in Moscow today. We are looking for appropriate solutions in order to avoid problems for Montenegro and to ensure the Kosovars a safe return to Kosovo.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for either the Minister of National Defence or the Deputy Prime Minister.

Both will know that there has been a number of votes in the U.S. House of Representatives. One of those votes has created a situation in which it is clear that the American president would need to have a vote and the approval of Congress in order to send ground troops into Kosovo in a non-permissive way.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister or the Minister of National Defence if a similar commitment could be made here so that Canadians can know that their democracy is not inferior to American democracy, so that before ground troops would be sent into Kosovo in a non-permissive way there would be a—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know exactly what happened in the U.S. House of Representatives. I think we should be taking our own decisions in this House based on Canadian practice. That is what we have been doing.

The Prime Minister has said that if there is a matter arising involving combat activities in Kosovo the House will be consulted, and the Prime Minister will stick with his word.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the American Congress is not only to be consulted. It will have the opportunity to actually express itself by way of a vote. That is all that the opposition has been asking here for weeks.

I repeat, is our democratic culture inferior to that of the Americans? Are we a banana republic or what is going on here? All we are asking for is that should a significant decision be made we want to have the opportunity to vote on it. If the Americans can do this, why can't we?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's cousins, their examples, the labour government of

*Oral Questions*

Britain, not only did not have a vote. They did not even have a debate. We are doing a lot better than that.

We said we will have further debate if the situation changes, and if the situation changes the Prime Minister said the matter of a vote is something that can be given further consideration.

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• (1430)

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

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

Can the minister tell us if it is possible for the governments of Quebec and Canada to systematically gouge their own taxpayers with sneaky and incomprehensible tax measures?

Let us take a single parent family with two children and a total income of about \$31,000 for example. If the parent earns \$1,000 more, he or she will have to pay an additional \$1,056 in taxes. Does the minister find this acceptable, and will he wait until the next budget to improve the situation?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member must realize, I am not in a position to speak for the Government of Quebec.

As for the Government of Canada, I can tell him that not only have we reduced taxes, but in the example the hon. member has given, as a result of the last budget, a young family with two children and an income of \$30,000 will have no federal tax to pay.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is aware that at present the Quebec and federal tax systems are demotivating; they encourage people to work under the table and, more importantly, encourage the brain drain. Statistics prove this.

Can the minister guarantee us a partial tax reform before the next budget, and will he also encourage the Quebec Minister of Finance to undertake a similar process?

We must not lose sight of the fact that, in the last provincial election, 58% of Quebecers did not vote for referendum crises and existential definitions, they voted for lower taxes.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that one of the ways of attaining winning conditions for the betterment of our economy and our society is most certainly to have a working economy, job creation, and lower taxes.

It is our intention to continue to reduce taxes, as we did in the last budget and in the previous one.

As for encouraging my counterpart, the PQ Minister of Finance, I will try, but he does not always listen to me.

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[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when we asked the minister of Indian affairs in this House why there is no protection for Nisga'a women's rights in the Nisga'a treaty, the minister responded by saying that provincial laws will apply.

I would like to read to the House a quote from Dale Lovick, the NDP MLA, who stated in the April 15 debate in the legislature of British Columbia: "The Nisga'a treaty, to all intents and purposes, is silent on the issue of discrimination against women. It is effectively silent".

Why did the government negotiate an agreement that is effectively silent on the rights of Nisga'a women?

**Mr. David Iftody (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. I would suggest that the member is wrong in that interpretation of the agreement. I have a copy of the agreement here. Chapter 2, on the conflict between federal and provincial laws, it is expressly clear. I believe if the member reads it he will clearly see that the laws of general application apply, and those include the rights of women and matrimonial property.

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the hon. member read the entire treaty because he is not correct. The minister of British Columbia who was responsible for putting this agreement together, Dale Lovick, has said that this treaty is effectively silent when it comes to women's rights and women's issues. Why is this government effectively silent? Why has it not stood to defend the rights of Nisga'a women when it comes to matrimonial property?

**Mr. David Iftody (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat again that chapter 2, section 13, expressly states that where there is a contradiction between those laws, the general laws of application will apply. We have made that very, very clear. We are very firm on that position. We will act to protect the rights of women. They are protected in this treaty.

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[Translation]

**YOUNG OFFENDERS**

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, rather than try to understand where Quebec is coming from on the young offenders legislation, the Minister of Justice has stuck to the same old script from the beginning.

*Oral Questions*

Today, I urge the minister to listen carefully to my question, to give it some thought, and to come up with an answer.

How can she say that Quebec's model is not threatened, when Quebec's judges will be bound by her bill's principle of uniformity in sentencing? I would like an answer, this time.

• (1435)

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, not only have we listened to the views and concerns of Quebec, we have learned from the model of Quebec. The new youth justice legislation acknowledges diverse approaches to the challenges of youth crime. In fact, I think if the hon. member carefully reads the youth justice act he will find that there is no attempt to impose uniformity of sentencing across the country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, how can the minister talk about flexibility, her refrain from the beginning, and uniformity of sentencing, as provided for in clause 37.2(b) of her bill, in the same breath? It is one or the other.

She cannot talk about flexibility and coast to coast uniformity at the same time.

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member knows, being a former advocate himself, that a similar provision has existed in the Criminal Code for some time. I am sure he also knows that the provision of that section in the Criminal Code has not prevented regional variation in sentencing.

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**HEPATITIS C**

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, in Quebec hepatitis C victims get Interferon and the new drug Ribavirin without any problem. Now the Government of Quebec has decided that it wants to give direct aid to every single victim.

Why is this government standing in the way of those victims in Quebec?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the minister stated in the House, an offer of \$300 million has been made to all of the provinces to ensure that people infected with hepatitis C have access to the services which they require, those services which are not presently insured services, throughout the course of their lives. An offer has

been made to the minister of Quebec and the Minister of Health is hopeful that Quebec will respond to the offer that has been made.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member missed the point. People in Quebec already have those services.

We remember the excuses. There was the precedent, there were too many victims, it was going to break medicare. Now that Ontario and Quebec have both shown that those were just that, lame excuses, will this government put aside ego and stubbornness and say yes to the victims in Quebec?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just does not get it. The Minister of Health has repeated on numerous occasions that our approach has been to attempt to resolve the law suits and to do so through negotiations for those infected between 1986 and 1990. An agreement was reached in December. We are hoping that through those negotiations it will be before the courts this June and the courts will then ensure Canadians that this settlement is fair.

When it comes to those infected through the blood supply, an offer of \$300 million for services, needed medical—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Rosemont.

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[Translation]

**MILLENNIUMSCHOLARSHIPS**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the opinion on the millennium scholarships remains unanimous in Quebec. Yesterday, the leaders of the three parties in the National Assembly proposed a political solution by asking the federal government to appoint a government negotiator not involved with the foundation to permit the resumption of government to government negotiations with Quebec.

If the Minister of Human Resources Development really has the welfare of young people at heart, will he assume his political responsibilities and give this reasonable proposal a favourable response?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont for his interest in Quebec students. I can assure him that I do share his interest in our students in Quebec.

We received a letter yesterday afternoon, at the same time as the media. We will take time to consider the proposal it contains. I note that, in this letter, the Government of Quebec returns to the Gauthier motion, which was unanimously approved in the National Assembly and which recognizes that the Government of Canada has a role to play.

So, I must tell you that I am pleased—

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Rosemont.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the president of the millennium scholarship foundation set the minister straight, when he stated:

In this matter, there is management responsibility and there is political responsibility. I am looking after the management responsibility.

• (1440)

Is the Minister of Human Resources Development, who spends his time coming unstrung and hiding behind the foundation, beginning to understand that the political responsibility Mr. Monty is referring to is his own?

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, what I see is that the Government of Quebec is coming back to the Gauthier motion. I think this is much more encouraging than the right to opt out with full compensation minister Legault was still talking about last week.

What I can say is that the member for Rosemont has said “the letter talks of appointing political negotiators”. In fact the letter talks of not wanting political negotiators but rather non elected government representatives, which, obviously, takes me off the file. That is what the letter says. It must be understood, before—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PUBLIC WORKS**

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder our taxes are so high in this country. Four big-time drug dealers were caught with six tonnes of hashish in Vancouver. Their million dollar house, bought with the drug money, was seized and is now the property of the public works department.

Why has the public works minister allowed one of the dealers to rent back the house and why has he entered into discussions with the dealer to buy the house back at a discounted price?

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the specific case that the hon. member is citing. However, there is a policy that whenever we are authorized by the courts to dispose of property, it is disposed of by public tender. That is the policy.

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I think if he looks more carefully he will realize that he is aware of it.

What is so bizarre about this is that the drug dealer has never paid his \$35,000 fine for peddling six tonnes of hashish and now

the public works minister has agreed to give him \$200,000 for renovations which he says he made to the house during the time he was laundering the drug money.

Why on earth is this government giving a major drug dealer \$200,000 of tax—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Works.

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I do not know the specifics of the case. Therefore, I cannot accept the premise of the member of parliament. If his question was really serious, he could have given us notice and I would have looked at the details. I will look at the details and I hope I can provide an answer as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, April 27, Immigration Canada cavalierly returned Mrs. Isabelle Yoro to the Ivory Coast. Mrs. Yoro is in the eighth month of a high risk pregnancy.

The Sunday before, the deportation failed—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

**Mr. Réal Menard:** Mr. Speaker, the Sunday before, the deportation failed because KLM refused to carry her, deeming her condition to be too precarious.

How can the Minister of Immigration, with all the compassion for refugees she puts on when the cameras are rolling, show so little compassion toward a woman who did not represent a security threat, and who was experiencing a high risk pregnancy. The minister's actions were both cavalier and uncivilized.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what an accusation. The hon. member is making accusations without being able to verify the facts. I am greatly surprised by the attitude of the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. He knows very well that I cannot comment in detail on a specific case.

It is very clear that, when a person has made use of all the processes available in Canada, the refugee determination process, the federal court, and appeal for humanitarian reasons, then at some point the person must leave the country. If there are health considerations, a medical opinion is always sought in order to be sure the person can travel safely.

*Oral Questions*

• (1445)

[English]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Recently a documentary on television indicated that soft drink companies are beginning to lace citrus-based soft food drinks with caffeine in order to enhance consumption by young people.

I ask the parliamentary secretary whether the Department of Health, first, is aware of this; second, whether it has conducted studies on the health implications for young people and Canadians in general; and, third, what it is going to do about ensuring that the health of Canadians is not put in jeopardy?

**Ms. Elinor Caplan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and inform the House that the use of caffeine in non-cola beverages has not been approved in Canada. There has been a proposal gazetted. That is a normal part of the consultation process.

As a result of concerns that have been raised, Health Canada is conducting an extensive review of the physiological and toxicological effects of this food additive.

I want to assure the House that a decision will not be made until the results are in and the consultation process has been completed.

\* \* \*

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board keeps telling us that seizing \$30 billion from the public service pension plan is good for the taxpayers.

Will it really be so good for the taxpayers if 10 or 15 years from now the taxpayers have to dip into their pockets to cover a deficit in the plan?

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I keep wondering what the representatives of the Reform Party do with the rights of taxpayers. It was elected, it tells us, to defend the rights of taxpayers.

In this case, the surplus belongs to taxpayers because they bore all the risk. Why do members of the Reform Party, against the lawyers, the accountants, the auditor general and the editorialist of the *Edmonton Journal*, keep denying the rights of taxpayers?

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we stand up for taxpayers because the government broke its promise to cancel the GST. It dipped into the EI fund to the tune of \$26 billion. It is

now going to take \$30 billion out of the civil service pension plan. What has the taxpayer got so far? At best, they have a couple of crumbs.

How can the minister justify taking another \$30 billion without giving a tax break to Canadians?

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the proof that members of the Reform Party know they are denying and disregarding the rights of taxpayers is that they find they have to defend themselves in their questions.

If we were not right, why would they have to defend themselves like this? They defend themselves because they have been caught red-handed denying the rights of taxpayers.

\* \* \*

**DEVCO**

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister met with representatives of the United Families about the shutdown and privatization of Devco.

I am very pleased he met with them and was delighted to hear he will be discussing with the Minister of Natural Resources how the miners are being treated.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources take a small step today to reassure these women and the House, and let us know whether or not his discussions with the Prime Minister will be favourable to Cape Breton miners and their families?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our whole effort with respect to Devco is intended to be favourable to the people of Cape Breton and, in particular, the miners at Devco.

We have, through the various agencies of the Government of Canada, put together not only the Devco package but also the programming of Human Resources Development Canada and ACOA. The package amounts to \$550 million which we hope will ease the transition in what we all agree is a very difficult problem.

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the same minister.

The minister is aware that a community partnership is being put together to try to prevent the complete devastation of our island's economy. This initiative seeks to ensure miners and their families are simply not tossed on the scrap heap.

Will the government look at allowing miners to obtain pensionable credits through this community partnership?

*Oral Questions*

• (1450)

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at this very early stage of development, in terms of the concept that the hon. member has referred to, it is difficult to provide any definitive answers because the idea is so novel and really in its infancy.

With respect to the economic development package in Cape Breton and the privatization proposals for the Prince mine, we have said that we would be more than happy to consider every alternative.

\* \* \*

**NAV CANADA**

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

When Transport Canada sold the control tower in Kelowna to Nav Canada in 1996, Transport Canada revealed that it had effectively condemned the structure in a September 1989 report that said:

Immediate action will be taken to produce . . . an appropriate tower replacement.

Did Nav Canada know that it had to replace the tower when it bought it?

**Mr. Stan Dromisky (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Nav Canada is aware of the potential for sightline obstructions at the Kelowna airport.

The parking of large aircraft at the Kelowna aircraft apron occasionally obscures the tower's visibility of aircraft movements in the holding area for runway 15.

Nav Canada has successfully implemented sight specific procedures at the airport. For instance, an expansion of the apron area is to be completed later this year. The expansion will help alleviate the problem. Furthermore, Nav Canada is currently examining a proposal to use a series of video camera systems to ensure visibility of all manoeuvring aircraft.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that does not address the problem that Transport Canada itself found, and I quote:

Due to the location and the height of the control tower, portions of the runway and taxiways are not visible.

The control tower is actually 22 feet lower than the end of the runway. Nothing is going to fix this except a new tower and not band-aid solutions.

Will the minister now make safety priority number one in Kelowna, like he does everywhere else, and instruct that a new tower be built in Kelowna?

**Mr. Stan Dromisky (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester is quite aware of the fact that we have been very sensitive and have been monitoring the situation very closely.

If Nav Canada, which is responsible for the implementation of these regulations at that airport, deems it necessary after the interim measures I have already mentioned are implemented, and if they are not successful and Transport Canada monitors the situation, then I am sure further action will take place.

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**NEWBRIDGE NETWORKS CORPORATION**

**Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Newbridge Networks chairman, Terry Matthews, gave a speech recently proposing a tax break on stock options for employees of research and development intensive companies.

Can the Minister of Finance advise the House as to whether or not Mr. Matthews' suggestion is receiving consideration within his department?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Terry Matthews is a very constructive analyst and commentator on the problems and opportunities of his industry.

Indeed, as the member for Nepean has pointed out, his goals in terms of growth for his industry are similar to the governments. However, the proposal does raise certain questions. First, should we provide tax breaks for stock options for one segment of industry and not for another? Second, are tax breaks for stock options more important than personal income tax reductions?

I look forward to meeting with Mr. Matthews in the very near future in order to discuss these questions.

\* \* \*

**PENSIONS**

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has some gall in saying its \$30 billion C-78 pension raid is in the best interest of Canadians. Its idea of protecting the taxpayer is to spend the money now and have future generations pick up the tab.

If we spend the entire \$30 billion pension surplus today, who will cover any shortfall in the future? How can we deny that taxpayers will be paying the price for government mistakes again, again and again?

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member is bringing up a point that is so important. However, he misunderstands the issue. What we are doing with the \$30 billion is giving it back to taxpayers.

I will repeat this because it seems hard for the other side to understand. It is really reducing the debt by giving the money back

*Oral Questions*

to taxpayers. That is what it is doing. We are giving it back to the taxpayers because it belongs to taxpayers.

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at noon today, unions harshly criticized the dictatorial attitude of the government, which is rushing through legislation to empty out its employees' pension fund. Yet Treasury Board figures show that employees have contributed more than 52% of premiums since 1924.

Why is the government refusing to sit down with its employees and pensioners and negotiate how the surplus, which belongs to them too, should be used so that everyone is happy, as was recently done in Quebec?

**Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has pension plans that provide benefits to employees. These benefits are set out in law. The government is giving employees their benefits under the law. Employees have never absorbed any deficits, and therefore the surpluses do not belong to them.

One of the primary indications of the supreme court's thinking is a case involving the Province of Quebec, which availed itself of the surpluses in an insurance fund. The supreme court indicated the surpluses belonged to the province.

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[*English*]

**TOBACCO**

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

As the minister knows, billions of dollars in the new CPP investment fund is now being invested to reflect the TSE 300 index and that includes investment in Imperial Tobacco through its parent company Imasco. As members know, Imperial Tobacco is targeting young people, trying to addict them to cigarettes.

Does the minister agree that it is morally and ethically wrong to link, at least in part, the quality of seniors' pension plans in the future to addicting young people to cigarettes today?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has set out a very extensive program in terms of education in order to convince young people not to smoke. That is, indeed, the proper course of action.

As far as the CPP is concerned, the government has made it very clear that there will not be government interference in the adminis-

tration or, in fact, the investment. That is what all Canadians want to ensure happens.

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**DEVCO**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the pension plan for Devco miners is based on years of service plus the miner's age, totalling 75. Miners who have as many as 27 years of working in the mines but who started young will not qualify for a pension. Yet someone who is older and has only worked for 16 or 17 years will get a full pension.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources commit to providing a pension to all miners with 20 years experience in the Devco mines?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the terms that we have put forward in the human resources package with respect to Devco fully meets all of the requirements of the collective agreements that are in place with Devco's unions.

Recognizing that there are some anomalies whenever we have to draw a line in terms of pension or other benefits, we have also added to our package a severance package which is \$30 million larger than the bare requirements the collective agreement would require.

Accordingly, we believe we have a package that meets—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Perth—Middlesex.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

The opposition has been questioning the quality of our military equipment that is being sent to the area of former Yugoslavia. The auditor general also commented on this in his annual report.

Would the minister tell the members of the House of Commons about this equipment.

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question because the opposition does not seem to have it right.

We do have the best possible equipment. It is all recent vintage and all purchased within the last nine years. People are being authorized to use it for peacekeeping. We have the Coyote, the Griffon helicopter, the Eryx system and the Bison vehicles. All of them are down at the Cartier Drill Hall right now.

I invite all hon. members to go from this House after question period, board the buses and go down and have a look at the

equipment we are giving to our fine, dedicated men and women to use on this peacekeeping mission.

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### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Indian affairs continues to try and persuade us that provincial laws will apply when it comes to the rights of Nisga'a women.

I want to read to him chapter 2, section 13(a) which states:

in the event of an inconsistency or conflict between this Agreement and the provisions of any federal or provincial law, this Agreement will prevail—

• (1500)

I ask the parliamentary secretary again, why has the government abandoned the rights of Nisga'a women when it negotiated this historic treaty?

**Mr. David Iftody (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Family Relations Act of British Columbia continues to apply and will apply to those relations in British Columbia.

The member is correct when he suggests for example that the real property division as a question of matrimonial rights is not expressly written in this act. We tried to deal with that in Bill C-49, protecting those women's rights in this case in British Columbia, and he voted against them.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### AMATEUR SPORT

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, an article in *La Presse*, whose heading I cannot repeat in the House, explained that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage erred—and that is putting it mildly—on the issue of the shocking dismissal of Danièle Sauvageau.

How can the parliamentary secretary explain that, according to him, the government cannot and must not get involved, out of respect for the autonomy of the Canadian Hockey Association, when his colleague from Bourassa, the former future minister responsible for sports, would like the government to take vigorous action?

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, some team members disagree with the hon. member.

I would like to quote Thérèse Brison, who was team captain in 1998-99, and chairs the high level committee on women's sports.

### Business of the House

She supported the approach by the Canadian Hockey Association, pointing out that it was part of a master plan for the development of some of our high level trainers.

Nathalie Drolet, another member of the team, voiced a similar opinion. While recognizing Ms. Sauvageau's strengths, she added "She must give up her position for the advancement of our sport".

The government has no business selecting trainers.

\* \* \*

[English]

### PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

**Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I have always been lukewarm in the support of Bill C-55, believing it did not go far enough in providing sufficient protection for the Canadian magazine industry. We now know that it has been on the negotiating table with the American trade representatives, a very precarious place to protect Canadian culture.

The government says it is respecting the spirit of the bill, but we are afraid that there is nothing left but the ghost.

Can the minister explain how relaxing Canadian content requirements and encouraging foreign ownership protects Canadian culture?

**Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the government certainly supports the bill that is currently in the other place.

The meeting that concluded yesterday was the eighth meeting among American and Canadian officials to try to look at a number of the concerns. I would have to say there is good faith on both sides and there has been progress. Now the work of these officials will go to individual ministers and individual governments. At the end of the day, I think there is every possibility of doing the right thing for the magazine industry as well as protecting all of our important sectors.

\* \* \*

• (1505)

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to ask the government House leader about the nature of the business for the remainder of this week and the business for next week, and whether or not that business will include some legislation or some change in the standing orders relating to televised committees.

*Business of the House*

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the last item, about an hour ago I offered to the hon. member to have a meeting on this subject. House leaders will be getting together. Our staff are already working to arrange that.

Getting back to the actual government business, this afternoon we shall continue with report stage of Bill C-66, the housing legislation. We hope we will be able to complete that bill.

Tomorrow the business of the House will be Bill S-22, respecting preclearance. In order to do that, there will have to be a consent motion which I intend to propose to the House immediately after this statement.

On Monday we will have an allotted day.

On Tuesday we hope to begin report stage of Bill C-71, the budget bill.

The items that we will deal with after that would include the following: Bill C-66, which again is the housing legislation and we hope by then it will be at third reading; Bill C-56, Manitoba land claims; and Bill C-68, the youth justice legislation. The exact timing is to be determined as events unfold, that is, how quickly we can pass the bills in question.

While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, there have been the usual consultations with all the parties and I believe that you would find unanimous consent for the following, that Bill S-22—

**The Deputy Speaker:** If the government House leader could wait until I have read the message from the Senate bringing the bill to the House, which has not yet happened.

Are we concluded with the questions? The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to House business and the conduct of House business, I just want to say that I was in Toronto with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on WTO hearings. I was very disappointed to notice that in my absence the government moved closure on the public service pensions bill after only four hours of debate. That is a shameless way to conduct House business as far as I am concerned.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thought the hon. member had a question but perhaps not. The hon. House leader for the official opposition on a point of order.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, why not? If my colleague from the NDP wishes to take House time on this issue, we too would like

to say that the government is yet again calling time allocation on such an important bill. In particular—

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a point of order. The hon. member rose on a question which turned out not to be a question. Frankly it was out of order. I think we ought to move on. This is business question time and it was not a business question so we will move on.

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**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed certain bills to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I will have to explain what I am rising on. Apparently some people I consulted with may not have transmitted the message.

The bill that you just reported from the Senate was to have been reported yesterday. Apparently there was an error at some point and the message from the Senate only arrived at this House now. This means that we could not deal with Bill S-22 tomorrow and it would be delayed until Monday. This would force us to have the allotted day tomorrow, which I do not imagine many members would want.

• (1510)

Therefore I seek unanimous consent for the following:

That Bill S-22, an act authorizing the United States to preclear travellers and goods in Canada for entry into the United States for the purposes of customs, immigration, public health, food inspection and plant and animal health, as reported earlier this day from the Senate, be deemed read a first time and placed on the Order Paper for consideration at the next sitting of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in both official languages a number of order in council appointments made recently by the government.

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

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

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 11 petitions.

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*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 73rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the leaks of committee reports prior to their presentation in the House. This report results from a series of questions of privilege and points of order raised in the House in December 1998.

*[Translation]*

## FINANCE

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the sixteenth report of the Standing Committee on Finance.

Pursuant to its order of reference dated April 20, 1999, the committee has adopted Bill C-71, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 16, 1999, and has agreed to report it with amendments.

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*[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-504, an act to amend the Criminal Code (prohibited sexual acts).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this private member's bill which proposes to amend the section of the Criminal Code dealing with prohibited sexual acts committed with children or in the presence of children, and would prohibit such acts where they are committed with children under the age of 16. It would essentially raise the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years. It would also provide for a minimum sentence of five years imprisonment for anyone convicted of an offence under sections 151 and 152 of the Criminal Code.

Given the recent ruling about child pornography in B.C. and the presentation of a petition of over 100,000 signatures calling for the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society from sexual abuse, I think this House will find this bill very timely. I look forward to receiving the full support of all parties. I thank the member for Kelowna for seconding this bill.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

\* \* \*

• (1515)

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-505, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (child adoption expenses).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very please to present this bill to the House. It proposes to allow a taxpayer a deduction for expenses related to the adoption of a child.

Adoption is a gentle option to ensure that a child can be placed with loving parents. Adoptive parents often face significant costs when they embark on adoption, but out of pocket adoption expenses are not tax deductible even though adoption is a significant social contribution.

An environment where there is a mom and a dad is an environment where children thrive. Adoption is also very cost effective at a time when we are seeing so many single parents and teen pregnancies.

The bill is in appreciation for the social contribution that adoptive parents make and recognizes the inequities that adoptive parents face.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.)** Mr. Speaker, I move that the 70th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented on Tuesday, April 20, 1999, be concurred in.

*Routine Proceedings*

It is a pleasure to rise and debate the 70th report of the procedure and House affairs committee. Those who have been watching regularly on television and our regular attenders in the House realize what is happening. They realize we are debating a report from committee for quite a few reasons.

I would like to go through some of the reasons committee work, the important work of committees, needs to be highlighted during motions under Routine Proceedings. The Reform Party has been highlighting the issue for several days to point out to the government some of the failings in the democratic system and in the parliamentary system.

Why do we need to debate this committee report? I would argue that committees demand a great deal of time, money and energy from both members of parliament and from parliament itself. Yet the reports are largely ignored.

If we just take its number, it is the 70th report of the procedure and House affairs committee. It has been tabled in the House, expecting a response from the government. As is often the case, it will be ignored. There will be no earth shattering changes made to the system. There will not be a response from the government.

By and large, especially on reports from committees, the government seems to take them as something tabled at the clerk's table which goes into never-never land, never to be seen again.

A couple of examples come to mind right off the bat. I remember a unanimous report that was brought forward by the natural resources committee back in the days when I was on that committee. It was called *Keep Mining Off the Rocks*. All parties agreed to it. They came forward and made about a dozen recommendations to the government. We brought it forward to the House and tabled it. Guess what? Not one of those recommendations was followed up on.

Members of all parties on that committee did all that work. They heard all the witnesses. There were all the expenses and all the time spent, the give and take. It was the best of democracy, we would think. The voice of Canadians was represented in the committee. They did detailed work and brought forward a report. It was given to the government with a plea from all parties, Liberal, Bloc, NDP, Reform and so on. It was laid before the House and not one of the recommendations made it into government policy or even, it seems, got a response from the government.

Another example is the recent 48th report—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. member for Fraser Valley, but I am sure he recognizes the report he has moved concurrence in has to do with the selection of votable items in Private Members' Business.

I have to admit that in all the time of his speech so far I have not heard Private Members' Business mentioned once or votable items or any criteria.

• (1520)

I know he wants to address the report he has moved concurrence in. I would invite him perhaps to direct his attention to the words of the report and tell us a little about that.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I started by mentioning that the 70th report deals with Private Members' Business. I am building the foundation of why this report is an important one. I am talking about the importance of the work of committees.

This committee's 70th report is no less important than any other committee's work. A subcommittee of the procedure and House affairs committee diligently goes about its work. It sacrifices its time and energy. It calls witnesses. There is give and take in committee and again it is brought forward. I am just building the argument. The trouble is that all that work is for naught.

The work of that committee on the 70th report talks about criteria for Private Members' Business. It talks about bills being drafted in clear, complete and effective terms. They must be constitutional. They must concern matters of significant public interest and so on.

I do not have any quibble with that report. The report is fine. The problem we are talking about is that in general reports come into the House and go into a dark hole, never to be seen again.

I will continue to build the case, the background, the underpinnings of this argument. Another report dealt with was the televising of committee work. It was the 48th report of the same committee. It was a unanimous report brought forward to the House of Commons. It talked about how we got together.

I was on that committee and spent more than a month there. We listened to procedural experts. We listened to constitutional experts. The press gallery made presentations. We listened to people from the print media. We talked on and on.

The conclusions we came to were unanimous. The government whip was on that committee. The chief opposition whip was on that committee. There were 15 or 17 members from all parties of the House on the committee which brought forward this case.

As I mentioned earlier, the unanimous report, the 48th report, talked about televised committees. What has happened to it? What has happened to the televised committee report? Absolutely nothing.

Recommendations were brought forward that all of us had agreed to. They talked about the need to show democracy at work. MPs spent all this time in committee. There are committees, right now as we speak, that are diligently doing their work, the give and take in committee. Who knows about it? We cannot even get a *Hansard* from committees any more.

*Routine Proceedings*

The televised committee alternative that all parties agreed to has gone nowhere. It has been ignored by the government. It has been sitting in its hands for weeks. There has been no response. The silence is deafening.

We are talking about the 70th report on Private Members' Business today. These types of reports are abused by the government. Often they involve busy work, work given by the government to members of parliament to keep them occupied while the government does what it darn well pleases.

Nothing comes of a committee report on a good subject matter. A good mandate has been given by the House or by the committee. A study sometimes involves hundreds of thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours. It involves the testimony of witnesses, written reports, give and take, and all that I mentioned earlier. What comes of it? Nothing. It is something that keeps people busy, but it does not have an impact on this place because it is ignored by the government.

When decisions are made in committee no one even knows what happens to the recommendations. I was in a committee the other day and a parliamentary secretary, who should know better, stood and asked how we could make sure something happened to the recommendations.

I had to break the news to the poor fellow. I told him it would be tabled in the House and that nothing would happen to it. It would be tabled in the House with our unanimous support. The government would take a look at it and probably one person in one office would say "I do not like it". Then it would go into that big round filing cabinet, never to be seen again. That is what would happen to it. That is the sadness of the committee report system. That is why the 70th report, another piece of good work, is largely ignored.

• (1525)

**An hon. member:** You educated the parliamentary secretary?

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** I do not know if we can educate the parliamentary secretary, although he was shocked to hear the news that his report would never be seen again.

This report deals specifically with Private Members' Business. Even Private Members' Business is no longer dealt with fairly in committees. This particular committee, the subcommittee, is not the problem. The problem is what happens to the Private Members' Business that is generated by this process.

The 70th report talks about the guidelines and the types of bills it will consider. It chooses which ones are votable. They come into the House. We often pass that same bill. We send it off to committee, and then what happens to that bill in committee?

I have seen it happen before. People bring in a bill. It passes at second reading. All of us give a standing ovation. We do not even care what it is about, hardly, because we are so thrilled that one actually got passed in this place and that the government whip did not hammer to stop it. We finally send it off to committee, thrilled that the subject matter will actually be discussed and a private member will actually see some fruition to all labour he or she put into an idea and into a bill.

What happens to it? Let me give the House a couple of examples. The hon. member for Mississauga East had exactly that success with Bill C-251, a justice bill concerning consecutive sentencing. I was here when the bill was passed. I saw the standing ovation for the hon. member for Mississauga East. I was one of those standing. I was thrilled.

It was a great bill. I supported the bill. I thought the essence of it captured the Canadian desire to have the justice system reflect more accurately our desire that people who commit consecutive serious crimes again and again should be given consecutive sentences. I thought it was a good bill.

It was sent off to the justice committee and what happened? The Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs met on March 24, one month ago, and in three minutes eliminated every clause of her bill and voted to report it back to the House as a blank piece of paper.

Let us imagine that. Three years of work by the hon. member for Mississauga East and it was all for naught. Private Members' Business is the root of how business came to the original mother of parliaments. The hon. member brought it into the House and got a glowing standing ovation. It was sent off to committee and the committee destroyed it in three minutes.

One of the reasons they got away with that is that the proceedings of committees are not televised. Let us imagine the change in attitude, the smirks on the faces of those who eliminated the clauses of her bill, if they had to smirk in front of the television cameras for all Canadians to see. Let us imagine their attitude when someone stood and asked if they realized that three years of work by this member of parliament is being destroyed in three minutes. They should smirk then on CTV news. They should smirk then while *The National* on CBC has them covered. They should go ahead and gloat over their ability to destroy this person's bill when the television cameras are present.

They have not adopted the 48th report about televising committees. They know they can act almost with impunity because no one is there to report on them. We cannot see all this happening. Members of the public and members of parliament read about it in a paper a few days later, saddened by what went on, but no one is there under the watchful eye of the television camera to make sure they are acting democratically and properly.

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Another example is that the hon. member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge brought forth Bill C-235. This was a little different. I was as thrilled as all members and gave him a standing ovation when it passed and was sent off to committee. I did not happen to support the bill but that was not the issue. The issue was that the House should have to deal with that bill. That was the point. I do not agree with every bill in this place but the House should have to deal with them.

Instead the bill got sent to committee. On April 15, about two weeks ago, that hon. member was subjected to the humiliation of answering the question of how many years had he worked on the bill. In five minutes committee members made a blank page out of the whole thing and destroyed the bill. They nuked every clause out of that bill and will report it back to the House as a blank piece of paper and let the House deal with it.

Of course, when it comes back here, there is nothing to deal with. It has all been eliminated in committee. There is nothing we can do. It is a complete waste of Private Members' Business time. It is a complete waste of the committee's time. It is a complete waste of the democratic process when a mockery is made of it by handling important Private Members' Business in this manner.

● (1530)

I again refer to the 70th report, which is what we are debating at this moment. The 70th report lays out the criteria for important Private Members' Business. It tells members how to get a bill approved, how to move it through the system and what kind of bill will be approved. When the member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge brought that forward, jumped through all the hoops, made the case, got the approval of the House and did everything that the report demanded, what happened? It was sent off to committee, only to be seen again as a blank piece of paper. That is unbelievable.

The 70th report, as good as it might be, is no good to anyone because that is what happens to Private Members' Business.

The fourth point I would like to make as to why we need to debate this report from the committee is that we need to report this in the House at this time because no one else will ever see what the report is about. Reports are tabled routinely during Routine Proceedings day after day: the 50th report, the 60th report, the 70th report. I do not know what number we are up to today. The report is simply tabled, and that is the end of it. It is gone. It is worse than cyberspace. We cannot even press the undo button. It is gone, never to be seen again.

Most Canadians have no idea of the important work of committees. They are not televised. For some reason the Liberals will not allow them to be televised. They are not reported. We have to choose this type of venue to debate it because there is no other way

of bringing this important committee work to the attention of the Canadian people. The House is televised and that is why we have to do it here.

Would it not be better to televise the committee hearings and let Canadians make their own judgment about what goes on in committees? They can watch their MPs at work. I am not simply talking about a big committee like finance, which will spend \$600,000 or \$700,000 touring the country on a prebudget propaganda tour. What about the other committees, the good committees which deal with agriculture, transport, public works, scrutiny of regulations and all of the things that go on behind the scenes? All of that is ignored because there is not a television camera allowed. That is bad.

This morning we had the privilege of listening to Mr. Václav Havel address parliament. He talked quite a bit about democracy. I sat in my seat to listen to his speech. One of the senators who was sitting in the middle aisle came over to the Reform House leader and I and said "Over in the Senate, over in the other place, we televise all of our committee hearings. You are the great bastion of democracy here, so why do you not televise your own committees?" He laughed and said "You guys give us the gears about the Senate, but we are more open and more public with our committee hearings than in the Commons".

I hung my head low and I thought to myself "What do I say to an unelected senator, who is not accountable to anyone, who is there by the grace of the Prime Minister's blessing, who tells me about televised and democratic committee hearings that the public can catch any time they like?" They can turn on the television set and it is right there. Here we are, hanging our heads, saying "Unless it is in one particular room it will not be televised. I guess the Senate does it better than we do". What a shameful comment.

I slunk back to my seat and listened to a pillar of democracy talk about openness, transparency and all of the things that we should have in our committee system, which we do not.

My fifth point is that at times when democracy reigns, when television cameras come into committee, it is a nice, refreshing breath of fresh air. Yesterday the major networks in the country fought for most of the day to have the defence hearing televised so they could attend, bring in their cameras and so on. They spent the day struggling with government authorities, asking why they could not televise the defence hearing.

● (1535)

We are in the middle of a war in Kosovo. Does the government not think the defence committee hearings might be of interest, not only to the media, but probably to several million Canadians who are worried about the future of our defence corps, our Canadian forces?

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They fought for a day until they finally got in. What happened? Both the government and the opposition got a clip on the news. I thought it made the whole thing. It did not paint anybody in a bad light. It brought some light to the situation. It was a fine example of how it could be in years to come.

I will close by quoting Robert Hutchins, a former president of the University of Chicago, who edited the great books of western civilization. He said:

The death of democracy is not likely to be as assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.

In our attempts to make our committee work more democratic and more open, I urge the House to adopt both the 70th and 48th reports which deal with the televising of committees so that we can nourish those committees, make them more democratic, more open, more available to the Canadian people, and I ask that we do that without any delay.

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to listen to my colleague who spoke about the issues surrounding what happens in committees. Having been one of three people from the Reform Party who sat on the procedure and House affairs committee which dealt with televised committees, I can only say that the frustration is growing more and more every day.

The problem is, when members from all parties in a committee agree on a concept, it comes into the House and it dies. I note that the government whip was there and he agreed to it. I presume that these folks are just as knowledgeable as we are as far as what has to take place. Now the question in the House and in committees as well is: Should we even be here? If we develop a report, put all of our ideas together and come to a unanimous consensus, only to have it die because someone in cabinet kills it, should we even bother?

I note that the recommendations coming from the report on televised committees were very good. This was to be a pilot project for the coverage of committees, with 24 hours' notice. There was a sunset clause that it would end this June. There were constraint criteria, such as those televising the committees would obey the rules. It would be gavel to gavel coverage of the whole committee meeting. It would be objective coverage.

The only recommendation which was made that put some negative light on it was that the committee did not want to renovate one particular room because of the cost and the fact that the House of Commons will soon be under renovation.

What happens? The government House leader says "I do not like this report. What we will do is renovate a room". That was the very recommendation to which the committee said no. Not having been

at any of the meetings, I suppose he could have read the report, but I doubt that he did.

Is this just an issue of televised committees, or is there something bigger at stake? I will leave it at that because that is the important question.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, the Reform House leader has cut right to the nub of the question, which is: What is the big issue about committees? Is it just that we need more television cameras? Is it an ego thing for parliamentarians? What is the issue?

• (1540)

It is not about televising committees, although that is critically important. It is very important that we at least keep up with the Senate in our ability to communicate with Canadians about the work of this place. That is important, but it is not just about televising committees, it is about the work of all committees.

Perhaps 10% of members of parliament are present now in the House. Why is that? Are they off having tea and crumpets at the Empress Hotel? No, they are off at committee, doing important work. They are having clause by clause discussions on bills. They are proposing amendments to legislation. Members are bringing forward proposals on policy initiatives. They are investigating the role of Canada in Kosovo. They are asking the defence minister to explain where the money is being spent and how we are protecting our soldiers. Members are doing all of this important work.

We will not know about most of it. Even if we had a television camera in front of us we could not watch the hearings. We cannot see the work, the hours, the money, the expertise and the witnesses that we fly here at great public expense, and the devotion to the subject matter which is shown by members from all parties in the House. Members bring different perspectives and often come to a unanimous conclusion after hearing witnesses and having a clause by clause debate. A lot of work is involved in coming to a unanimous conclusion.

Then what happens? The report is tabled in the House with much fanfare. Maybe there is a press conference downstairs. We all say that it was a satisfying bit of work. We came to parliament to help change the system and propose things to make Canada better. What happens? Nothing. The fact that nothing happens is the big issue.

Reports are prepared, work is done, effort is expended, dollars are expended and hours are wasted because the reports gather dust. That is a shame. What we should have is a vibrant discussion, under the full light of television cameras, so that members of parliament can be seen by their constituents back home.

Our constituents could see us deliberating, for example, an important agricultural issue. The member for Portage—Lisgar

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might be debating the future of the wheat board, the future of a farm subsidy program, the railway and so on. The member could say to his constituents "Watch tomorrow morning at noon because I will be going to work for you. You will be seeing me in action. Tomorrow I will represent our constituency on that important issue".

The big issue is that no one knows about it. No one can see it. When a report is finally drafted, nothing happens. That is the big issue. That is why reports should be dealt with. They should at least merit a response from the government in a timely fashion.

There is a list, which is too long to go into, of dozens of reports that have been tabled in this place. The response from the government, at best, was: "We had a look at it and we are not going to do it". That brings the work of parliamentarians into question. That is unfortunate. As I mentioned earlier, democracy does not die usually a violent death; it dies by apathy, neglect and undernourishment.

I say that the light of television cameras would do something to reverse that. It would nourish democracy. It would give strength and importance to the work of all members of parliament, so that it would not appear that we simply gather here for question period. The work we do would be noticed and would make a difference in the Government of Canada.

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when I go to schools and talk to children about the workings of parliament I tell them that very important work takes place in committees. I would like to be able to continue to tell them that. However, from what I have been hearing from my colleagues, committees are not always relevant. I believe the discussion today is about relevance.

Standing Order 109 states:

Within 150 days of the presentation of a report from a standing or special committee, the government shall, upon the request of the committee, table a comprehensive response thereto.

• (1545)

All too often what is deemed to be a comprehensive report turns out to be totally ignored or, as has been so eloquently expressed here, it is tossed in the dustbin. It speaks volumes to the relevance or irrelevance of the work of committees. I would like my colleague's comments on that.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, that standing order, one of the rules we work under here in the House, is exactly as the member described. There is a requirement for the government to respond but often that response is "We are going to take a little more time to look at it" or "We appreciate the work you have done thank you very much, we are sure looking this over". I would bet they are just sweating late at night over there in the Langevin building going over it clause by clause.

It reminds me of Standing Order 108, another rule that committee members can use to bring subject matters to the committee. We gather signatures from the opposition parties. We get a subject matter or a witness to come before the committee. That is supposed to give us some influence on this side but often what happens is the government will say "Thank you for that request. We know you have the right to do it", but guess what? The committee goes in camera.

When a committee goes in camera that means not only are there no television cameras, there are no witnesses, there is no *Hansard*, there is nothing. At that time the committee makes a decision on whether we get to hear our witness or not, and guess what? There is always a majority of government members on a committee and guess what? They always turn it down. I should not say always, but 90% of the time.

Standing Orders 108 and 109 are examples of a government that says it wants to keep us busy, but when it comes to the nub of the issue or if we get too close to home and it looks like we are about to strike a political point, there is a dust gathering area that is sifting down as we speak on a layer of books as high as an elephant's eye.

**Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. I know my hon. colleague is most anxious to take part in the debate once more.

On the matter of the debate on the 70th report raised by my colleague the hon. whip of the official opposition, the 70th report of the procedure and House affairs committee is an excellent report, one that we collectively worked on very closely. There was some give and some take but ultimately I believe we have contributed to a report that enhances private members' business.

The chair of that subcommittee, the member for Waterloo—Wellington who is with us today, and other colleagues from all parties who work on that committee I think will find this contributes to the process in a very positive way.

While I wholeheartedly support the strong and sincere view of the member who spoke previously about the worthiness and importance of committee work—

**An hon. member:** What about report 48?

**Mr. Bob Kilger:** I am being asked to comment on another report. I know the Chair wants me to remain relevant to the report at hand, but I know he will allow me some flexibility in presenting my case and also to expand it to some other reports that in the end will ultimately contribute to this discussion.

The 70th report is an excellent report. I remain optimistic that this report will meet everyone's expectations and in fact will be concurred in. I have no doubt. I am quite optimistic. Having said that, I do not want to take up any more House time without diminishing the significance and importance of the 70th report. I do

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believe the government will respond within the 150 days in a favourable way.

Briefly on the 48th report, I am a member of that committee. I concurred and was part of that unanimous report. I can share some of the frustrations that my colleagues opposite have about that. We did not quite make it all the way that day.

• (1550)

Notwithstanding that we did not quite get it all done through that report, I think we have made a substantive contribution to ultimately in the end arrive at the objective. The ultimate objective is to have more televising of committees. We will get there. The fact that we did not get there right now does not discourage me one iota. Does it frustrate me a little bit? Oh yes, I wish we had it done, wrapped up and delivered, but we are not quite there. There is a little adversity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The chief government whip is getting carried away with his rhetoric, but I remind him that the report we are debating is not on televising of committees, it is on private members' business and I know he will want to return to that. Perhaps he is building a foundation, but we are all looking forward to the superstructure.

**Mr. Bob Kilger:** Mr. Speaker, I said everything that I could about the importance and the quality of the 70th report. I know that the House also anxiously wants to get back to the business of the House, Bill C-66, the very important National Housing Act. Therefore, I move:

That the House do now proceed to the orders of the day.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I have had discussions with the government House leader who indicated that he is now prepared to negotiate even further and help this along on Monday. In view of that, we will not be standing for a vote this time, but we do expect some action on Monday.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

The House resumed from April 28, 1999 consideration of Bill C-66, an act to amend the National Housing Act and the Canada

Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-66 and specifically the proposed amendments to the bill as outlined in Group No. 1.

I would like to begin by raising the broad issue of housing in this country today. I do not think there is anyone in this House who will deny that there is a housing crisis in Canada. In fact, many would go beyond simply calling it a crisis. The mayors of capital cities right across the country have called it a national disaster and the facts bear that out.

More than 100,000 Canadians are homeless. We know the situation facing our aboriginal community both off reserve and on reserve. The backlog of houses in first nations communities in the north exceeds 4,500.

Communities right across the country especially in our inner cities and older neighbourhoods, have a major problem in terms of the housing stock.

In my constituency of Winnipeg North Centre, we are faced with what can only be described as such a deplorable situation that a state of emergency should be declared. This is not unique to Winnipeg North Centre. My community represents the same kind of concerns we see from one end of the country to the other.

There are vacant and boarded up houses. Houses and buildings have become targets just waiting for arsonists. I do not need to tell the House that there is a very high incidence of arson in my community and in other communities across the country with the deplorable situation in terms of housing stock and the many boarded up vacant houses.

• (1555)

We are talking about absentee landlords. We are talking about lack of dollars being provided either by government or from an individual's own disposable income for renovations and upkeep. We are talking about drastically dropping market values for housing in some of our inner cities and older neighbourhoods. We are talking about red circling by insurance companies which makes it very difficult to purchase the necessary protection for one's house. We are talking about insurmountable barriers to home ownership.

All of those factors have to be noted in this debate because they are taking a devastating toll. It is so apparent through the bill before us today that this government pays no heed. At the precise moment when the need is the greatest our federal government is pursuing a policy of abandonment.

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Let us not forget it is federal withdrawal from the areas of public housing, social housing, co-operative housing and non-profit housing that in very large measure has caused this crisis in the first place. Why then would the government do more of the same? Why at a time of crisis would the government do the opposite of what is required?

Why would this government retreat even further from its responsibilities as it is doing in Bill C-66? Why at precisely the moment when this country needs a national housing strategy and national housing standards would this government introduce measures to complete its policy of abandonment?

In my community, as I am sure is the case in other centres across the country, citizens and community organizations are trying to fight back. In the true spirit of Winnipeg's north end, citizens are banding together to find co-operative, collective, community based solutions.

Neighbourhood patrols are springing up. There are economic development initiatives. Housing renewal projects are developing in response to this critical situation. But the federal government is not participating, supporting, encouraging and ensuring that we can come up with realistic solutions to this very grave problem. Why will this government not support this spirit of community and pride of neighbourhood?

We are focusing in this debate on a government that refuses to see what is happening around it and refuses to recognize that it must be part of the solution. Bill C-66 is going in the wrong direction. It is absolutely the wrong remedy for the critical situation we are facing. The amendments being proposed by the Reform Party in this grouping do not make the situation any better. They will undoubtedly make the situation worse and will contribute even more to a government policy that is bound and determined to put everything in the context of the marketplace in terms of efficiency and competitiveness.

The government has a moral obligation, a political responsibility and a constitutional obligation to ensure that Canadians everywhere in the country have the right to adequate shelter. This bill and these amendments do not satisfy those requirements.

We are here to try to convince the government, although I know it seems far-fetched, to withdraw Bill C-66. The measure of good government and great leadership is in the government's ability to respond to needs. It is in the ability of a government to reverse its policies when it can see that the needs are growing, spreading and becoming critical right across the country.

• (1600)

It is not too much to ask the minister to reverse his policies, put this bill on ice and go back to the drawing board and start to look at some of the promises that were actually made to the people back in 1993.

It is useful to remind the Liberals about their policies in 1993 when they were still in opposition. I want to specifically mention a letter dated September 22, 1993 signed by the present Minister of Finance in which he said "Our platform document provides a framework for government in the 1990s. We believe the federal government has a positive, proactive role in national housing policy and the responsibility of accessibility and affordability to over one million Canadian households living in need of adequate shelter".

What happened to that promise? What happened to that election platform? Why do we have Bill C-66 before us today? Instead of the amendments that we have before us today, which make the CMHC more of a competitive force in the marketplace, we should be seeing amendments to a bill today that reflect the needs in our communities and make mortgages more accessible to those who are having a hard time.

I specifically want to implore the government to look at the whole question of changing the rules and regulations to make it possible for people on low incomes or on social assistance to be eligible for home ownership and to be able to benefit from public policy.

I remind the government that it had promised earlier to consider changing the arrangements under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to address concerns about eligibility of social assistance recipients for CMHC underwriting. It had promised to look at the question of sweat equity as a means of satisfying down payment requirements. We have heard nothing on that front.

What we hear is CMHC becoming more competitive and putting housing out for export. While the government talks about exporting housing, people in this country are living in squalid and deplorable housing conditions.

We want to tell the government to stop and look at its priorities, look at the needs in the country and recognize that we absolutely must have leadership from our national government. We have to have a national housing policy. We are the only OECD country that does not have a national housing policy. It is deplorable, it is negligent and it must be addressed.

We urge the government to reconsider this bill and come back with a progressive, innovative policy to deal with the serious crisis in our country today.

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to various motions presented by my hon. colleagues.

What we have before us are three visions of the relationship between the Government of Canada and the CMHC. At one extreme, we have the amendments being proposed by my colleague from Kelowna which in my view would seriously undermine the government's ability to carry out its public policy role in housing which it fulfils through the renewed mandate of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Allow me to explain. The Government of Canada is committed to playing a leadership role in housing. That is why the government renewed the mandate of its housing agency CMHC and has strengthened CMHC's ability to fulfill its mandate through amendments to Bill C-66.

The government understands the importance of helping Canadians meet their housing needs. We understand the importance of building a strong, competitive housing industry. We know that good housing creates sound communities and a strong country. We know that housing has a major impact on the economy of Canada.

[Translation]

Bill C-66 clearly sets out the public policy objectives of the CMHC. Permit me to read this extract from the bill:

The purpose of this Act, in relation to financing for housing, is to promote housing affordability and choice, to facilitate access to, and competition and efficiency in the provision of, housing finance, to protect the availability of adequate funding for housing at low cost, and generally to contribute to the well-being of the housing sector in the national economy.

I know we have already talked about this, but it is important to repeat it.

• (1605)

[English]

Surely nobody would dispute the importance of these objectives. Yet the hon. member proposes changes that would eliminate the government's ability to regulate CMHC should it be necessary to do so.

If we were to remove this section of the National Housing Act, as proposed, we would effectively be reducing the government's control, in other words the public's control, of CMHC.

I am certain that if my hon. friend thought for a minute about what he was proposing, he would realize how ridiculous it is to imply that the public should not have the right to ensure that CMHC is accountable to them. CMHC is a public institution with a public policy role, a role that has served Canadians so very well for over 50 years. To suggest that government control of a public institution should be reduced is somewhat bewildering.

Bill C-66 will give CMHC the means to carry out its public policy role more effectively and in a financially prudent manner. This is what the Government of Canada expects. This is what the people of Canada deserve. This is what Bill C-66 is all about.

At the other extreme, we have the member from Cape Breton who would have every decision made by CMHC approved by the governor in council. Perhaps the hon. member does not realize that to do so would involve great expense, both in terms of administrative costs and in the quality of services that the Government of Canada can offer to Canadians. Indeed, the hon. member would

### *Government Orders*

have the government return to the old days of red tape and heavy bureaucratic processes at the expense of efficient delivery of important government services for needy Canadians.

[Translation]

Finally, we have another member of the opposition presenting a scenario where every service provided by CMHC to individuals and communities would first have to be approved by the province concerned. This would limit the Government of Canada to such an extent that it could not provide Indian reserves with the services they require without provincial approval.

It could also prevent other Canadians from having access to federal government measures in areas that were not of interest to a province.

Let us be clear about it. The benefits arising out of programs administered by CMHC are, and will remain, subject to the decisions of this House.

Bill C-66 will modernize the relationship between CMHC and the Government of Canada. In fact, Bill C-66 requires yearly approval of the CMHC business plan. This will ensure that CMHC's actions are in keeping with the wishes and priorities of the government.

[English]

Moreover, every year the House is involved in approving the resources given to CMHC to reach out to needy Canadians to implement those programs that one member would rather see not regulated at all and that another member would regulate to the point of administrative paralysis.

Further, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act and the Financial Administration Act clearly confer to the government oversight in all aspects of the corporation's activities. What more could the hon. member want? Why, for instance, would we go so far as to endorse a proposal from the member from Cape Breton to have potentially every project approved by the governor in council?

The vision that we are proposing in Bill C-66 is a modern vision, a vision which will result in government services that are more responsive to the needs of Canadians and the needs of their regions, a vision which will better equip CMHC to work co-operatively with provinces, a vision that at the end of the day will lead to a more efficient and effective government. That is a vision that I think every Canadian would support.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, again we rise up in the House to debate another bill that came from the Liberal government. This is a piece of legislation that came from the south end of a north-bound cow. That is exactly where it came from.

*Government Orders*

• (1610)

The previous member spoke about the hon. member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. The hon. member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton sees through the government's plans and that is why it is so upset and is trying to discredit her in any way it can.

The government is again trying to download federal responsibility for the citizens of this country and load it onto the provinces. That is absolutely unbelievable.

In Nova Scotia, for example, the government downloaded the responsibility for social housing onto the backs of the provinces by saying, "No problem. We are done. We have done a good deed". That is exactly what it is trying to do now, only in this particular case it is making it worse.

The government wants to merge with a company called General Electric Capital Corporation, a large, foreign-owned multinational company, so it can do the mortgage insurance part of it. Not only is the government downloading its responsibility to the provinces, it is also giving the financial responsibility away to a foreign multinational corporation. Where is the heart in the government? It is absolutely unbelievable that it can continue to do this.

The destruction of the federal role in housing began in the 1991 budget when the then federal Conservatives announced the end of federal funding for new social housing. As usual, the Liberals have reformed the Tory policies and have made them even worse. The Liberal government continued the abandonment of social housing in 1996 when it began to download social housing back to the provinces. It concluded downloading agreements with seven out of the ten provinces. B.C., Alberta and Ontario are currently the holdouts.

This is just another disguise, another masquerade by the government to download its responsibility for housing onto the backs of the provinces and tell the citizens of the country "Don't worry about it. The provinces will look after you". That is absolutely unacceptable and shameful.

Let me put some personal perspectives on this. I come from the beautiful riding of Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore in beautiful Nova Scotia. Many people in my riding, as well as in all of Atlantic Canada, have been hurt by the downturn of the fishery. These people have lost their homes. There is probably nothing worse to a family than losing their home, the shelter, the peace, the security and the ability to bring up their children in their own home.

What happens when they look for assistance and help from the government? They go to the federal government and get slapped in the face one more time. The federal government, with its Ottawa-central attitude, is saying "Too bad, so sad, make it out on your own".

I wonder where the heart is in the government. Whatever happened to the Pearson days? Whatever happened to those caring Liberals who cared about Canadian citizens, not just about the bottom line of foreign national corporations?

We hear the rhetoric from the government time and time again that it is on the right track; it knows what it is doing. It tells us not to worry, it can be trusted. It is absolutely despicable.

Allow me to reread what the current finance minister said while in opposition; "Dear friends"—I love that term—"Our platform documents provide a framework for government in the 1990s". Let me make it abundantly clear that a Liberal government should be absolutely committed to stable and secure funding for the non-profit and co-operative housing sector, but it is not. It has completely abandoned its responsibility.

It gets to the point where we wonder why we even bother coming here. Are we relevant any more to the Canadian people, except the government's friends and the party? It goes on and on and on. Even the UN has discredited our policies when it came to that.

We have many reports we could speak about, but the abandonment of housing by the federal government comes at a time when the need for federal support is even greater. We need support from the federal government in resources and manpower more than ever.

The Golden report on homelessness stresses that all levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, have to co-operate to put an end to homelessness. What the federal government wants to do is just abandon its responsibility and say to the provinces and municipalities "It is your problem, you look after it. We are just the federal government. We absolutely have no heart. We do not really care about you anymore".

• (1615)

The government has proven that in many other industries. It has proven that in our defence capabilities, in the fishing industry, in agriculture with the farmers across the country, and small business. And when it comes to the most basic need of Canadian citizens from coast to coast to coast, affordable social housing, the government is abandoning that as well.

The Liberals talk about CMHC, that great corporation, and what they are going to do. In actuality the government is going to eliminate any power or control that we as members of parliament may have. The government is going to stack the CMHC board of directors full of its Liberal friends. Patronage. The pigs are at the trough again. They are going to feed at taxpayers' expense with absolutely no concern for Canadian citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable.

When I came to Ottawa, and I assume I speak for all 301 of us, in both official languages I might add, our goal and role in life was to help those who cannot help themselves. We certainly did not come here to abuse labour rights. We did not come here to abuse the

environment. We certainly did not come here to neglect those who cannot help themselves.

Federal social housing is a policy that should be upgraded and maintained. There should be resources and manpower available in order to maintain that.

Other than that, what are we going to be telling our children? What in God's name are we doing here if we cannot help those who cannot help themselves?

The hon. member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton and the hon. member for Vancouver East are two women who have fought harder for social housing than anybody else in the country. I am very proud to be their colleague.

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## THE ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House  
Ottawa

April 29, 1999

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Peter deC. Cory, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 29th day April, 1999, at 4.30 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Judith A. LaRocque  
Secretary to the Governor General

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-66, an act to amend the National Housing Act and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act and to make a consequential amendment to another act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee; and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the Group No. 1

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motions concerning Bill C-66. I should say right from the start that we are opposed to these amendments.

These amendments attempt to deal with limiting the powers of CMHC in the commercial insurance market. It is interesting to note that of these six amendments, several were suggested by GE Capital in material that was sent out to MPs.

We are concerned about the effect of multinational companies taking over and influencing the direction in which housing should go. We notice that the federal government has already stepped back from the area of social housing. That has certainly given rise to the problem we see in our society today with respect to so many homeless people and the conditions that exist in so many of our communities.

There are a lot of communities throughout Canada where people do not have adequate shelter over their heads. We know how very important housing is to every aspect of a child's life. Children growing up without proper shelter, squeezed into bedrooms that house more than they should, or perhaps children not even having an adequate bedroom, all of these things impact upon the child's ability to pursue their education at school and to interact socially with others. These things come together to create some of the social conditions we see today, the many tragic incidents that are taking place across our country. We wonder how these things can take place and many times it comes right back to the root cause that those very basic necessities of life are not being provided.

• (1620)

We are very much opposed to things which would limit the potential for social housing and for the government to play a role. The question here is whose side are we on? Are we on the side of the large foreign owned multinational companies, or are we on the side of Canadian families who are looking for affordable decent housing?

If some of these amendments were to go through, it would certainly create a climate that would push CMHC to move away from that kind of risk market and into areas where it felt more secure. It would back even further away from helping with social housing.

We cannot say enough about how important it is that the federal government get back into the area of social housing to provide much needed accommodation right across our country. Lots of times when backing away from something people look at the budgetary reasons and say, "We have to get this deficit down. We have to cut back so we can bring the finances in line". They forget that by cutting so deep, quite often they make the situation worse.

It is similar to a doctor who performs an operation and in cutting away a cancer cuts too deep into the bone and creates another problem. We know if we cut back on the programs to such an extent that we do not have adequate housing, then those other problems I mentioned earlier follow, people not being able to pursue their education, people becoming discouraged about looking for work.

*Government Orders*

The social problems of people living on the streets, problems of drugs, needles and getting diseases because of unsanitary conditions, all of these things will develop. It escalates.

It is very important that the government assume its responsibility and role and makes sure there is adequate housing for all.

All through this bill there are provisions which would remove any direct government involvement in providing housing for those in need. Instead of parliament or even the cabinet making decisions about how best to provide affordable housing, that authority has been delegated to an appointed board of directors at the CMHC. Again we are into this whole area of privatizing everything which is something that disturbs me quite a bit.

In too many areas of public or social responsibility the government is cutting back and privatizing, putting it out into the private sector. Consequently government is losing control of the things that are really within its responsibility to make sure they are preserved in the best interests of society at large.

We have to look very closely at this whole process where everything is put out into the private sector as if it could be done better there than being maintained in the public sector. When that is done, we are actually putting a vote of non-confidence in our public service and in the people who work within that service. We are saying they cannot do things as well as private business or private industry.

The group of amendments that we are looking at and the kind of changes in this legislation are all geared in the direction of giving favour to the private industry as opposed to building up and enhancing our public service and getting the programs that are required so that all people can have adequate and affordable housing.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in this debate on the housing bill.

I ask publicly of the senior minister in the House today, the Minister of National Revenue, why has the Liberal Party strayed so far from its progressive roots of Lester Pearson and Paul Martin, Sr. when it comes to social policy and social housing?

• (1625)

I remember years ago when the ministry of urban affairs was created. I was a member of the House when the first policy steps were taken in the Trudeau years toward more social housing in Canada. In the last few years it seems to me that the Liberals have forgotten where they stood in those days when they were more progressive.

It seems to me that the Reform Party has had a tremendous impact in setting the agenda, in being the rudder in terms of the new Liberal policies. The Minister of National Revenue is shaking

his head, I can hear it from here. I think he would probably agree with what I am saying if we had the kind of parliamentary system that would allow a bit more freedom and independence for expressing ourselves in the House.

The Liberal Party at one time was socially progressive, starting with the great thinkers conference in Kingston many years ago with Tom Kent. Lester Pearson was leader of the opposition. I remember people like Eric Kierans in the party and the three wise men coming out of Quebec, Trudeau, Pelletier and Jean Marchand. They talked about a new and just society, about participatory democracy. They swept a young man, the member for Vancouver South—Burnaby, the Minister of National Revenue, off his feet and into what he found was a great social democratic revolution. All of a sudden it went poof and the whole thing disappeared.

This is an open debate. We have 10 minutes on each of these amendments. I would like the Minister of National Revenue to explain why the party has lost its way. This minister is very ambitious. He wants to take on the Minister of Finance as a leadership candidate. He wants to challenge Brian Tobin and the Minister of Health as the left-wing progressive Liberal in terms of challenging the Minister of Finance for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

I think we ought to hear from the Minister of National Revenue and have him explain what his vision is for social housing and what his vision is on what we do about homeless Canadians. I am sure the Reform Party is sitting here with great anticipation to hear where this Liberal stands.

Just last night I was coming back from a function at the Cuban Embassy, and I did not see the minister there by the way. I saw homeless people sleeping under a bridge not too far from Parliament Hill. They were not Cubans, they were Canadians. These were homeless people. A number of years ago there were not many homeless people around the streets of Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Regina or Vancouver. Now there is homelessness.

The government has established a ministry responsible for homelessness and the minister is from New Brunswick. I want to know what the vision of that ministry would be. Will there be funding for that ministry? A New Brunswick member is here in the House. Perhaps he knows whether or not there will be funding for that ministry of homelessness. What is the vision? How do we find homes for people?

We have a government bill before the House today that is going to be regressive in terms of the amendments. It seems to be tilted toward the marketplace and commercialization of CMHC in terms of its lending policies, and the influence of the Minister of Finance and his conservative bent.

I would like the Minister of National Revenue to tell us what the vision should be in terms of social housing, homelessness and what we should do about the number of Canadians who are suffering from falling incomes. The gap between the rich and the poor has widened radically in the last five to ten or twelve years. Yet the

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government across the way is the government that has made the most drastic cutbacks in the history of our country in terms of social programs, particularly health care.

Of course the taxes go up. They go up very unfairly and indiscriminately. It is an unfair tax system in Canada. Most taxes are placed on the backs of the people who are least able to pay them, low income and middle income people.

In any event, we have a lot of time this afternoon. I would like to sit down now and give the Minister of National Revenue an opportunity to tell us what his vision is of social housing, what his vision is in terms of homelessness, what his vision is in terms of where we should go to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. After all, as we all know, he wants to be a leadership candidate on the left of the Liberal Party. He wants to challenge the Minister of Finance to the mantle of the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. I want to know where he stands.

• (1630)

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday I asked a question about whether the votes would be deferred for each of these groups until the end and that the vote would be taken at the end of Group No. 3. Is that correct?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** No. Each one will be done as they come up on a voice vote.

The question is on Motion No. 1. 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 nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 2.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** 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 nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I asked a question yesterday as to whether all of Group No. 1 would be deferred until the end of all of the groups, and the Speaker at that point indicated that would be the case.

I am somewhat confused now that we are taking a vote on each one of these motions in turn. Yesterday they were grouped and the understanding given to the House by the Speaker was that they would all be deferred until after the last motion in Group No. 3.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I will deal with the point of order of the member for Kelowna. All we are doing is putting the question on the motions in the group that has already been debated and then the votes will be deferred.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, pardon the interruption, but there is some problem with simultaneous interpretation. Would you be so kind as to have this seen to?

• (1635)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The next question is on Motion No. 4. 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.

*Government Orders*

**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):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 5. 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):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 6. 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):** The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

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## THE ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy to His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

• (1645)

*And being returned:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber the Deputy Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, the royal assent to the following bills:

Bill C-43, an act to establish the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and to amend and repeal other acts as a consequence—Chapter 17.

Bill S-25, an act respecting the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1650)

[Translation]

### NATIONAL HOUSING ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-66, an act to amend the National Housing Act and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**Ms. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP)** moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-66, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 13 on page 9 with the following:

“(3) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-66, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 17 on page 10 with the following:

“person who is a builder of rental housing projects on reserves, as defined in the Indian Act or that is a non-profit corporation or a cooperative association is unable to obtain a loan described in”

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-66, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 28 on page 10 with the following:

“(2) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-66, in Clause 4, be amended by adding after line 44 on page 10 the following:

“(3) The Corporation may only make a loan, contribution or forgive an amount under subsection (1) for rental housing projects being built or owned by a non-profit corporation or cooperative association or for housing projects on reserves, as defined in the Indian Act.”

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-66, in Clause 9, be amended by replacing line 5 on page 13 with the following:

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“(2) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-66, in Clause 11, be amended by replacing lines 31 to 36 on page 13 with the following:

“(2) Paragraph 75(2)(a) of the Act is replaced by the following:

(a) pursuant to any of paragraphs (1)(a) to (f) or paragraph (1)(h) or (j), except with the approval of the Minister; or”

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-66, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing line 20 on page 14 with the following:

“(2) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-66, in Clause 13, be amended by replacing lines 3 to 7 on page 15 with the following:

“and develop land for a low-rental housing project or to construct or acquire and operate a low-rental housing”

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-66, in Clause 13, be amended by replacing line 35 on page 15 with the following:

“(2) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-66, in Clause 16, be amended by replacing line 28 on page 16 with the following:

“(4) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 20

That Bill C-66, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 13 on page 17 with the following:

“projects owned by public housing agencies, as defined in section 78, non-profit corporations or cooperative associations, and may forgive amounts owing on”

Motion No. 21

That Bill C-66, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 15 on page 17 with the following:

“(2) The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-66 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 23

That Bill C-66, in Clause 23, be amended by replacing line 5 on page 18 with the following:

“99.2 The Corporation may, subject to the approval of the Governor in Council, determine the”

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.)** moved:

Motion No. 24

That Bill C-66, in Clause 24, be amended by deleting lines 16 to 18 on page 19.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ)** moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-66, in Clause 13, be amended by replacing lines 13 to 15 on page 15 with the following:

“79. The Corporation may, pursuant to agreements made between the Government of Canada and the government of any province, undertake jointly with the government of the province or any agency thereof or with any public housing”

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-66, in Clause 34, be amended by adding after line 37 on page 21 the following:

“(3) The Corporation may not exercise any of its powers or functions under this section within the territorial limits of a province without having first obtained the agreement of the government of the province.”

He said: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-66 is an important bill. It is intended to give new powers to the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

● (1655)

It is paradoxical, to say the least, that we are having to deal with a bill such as this. I think everyone understands that the federal government has absolutely no interest in housing.

Before introducing our amendments, I want to remind the House that the government made a commitment in the 1996 speech from the throne to withdraw completely from the housing sector. Government members with us today will remember that, at least I hope they do.

However, we find a paradox on reading the bill. We discover the government wants more space and more powers in the housing sector. It is totally incomprehensible. It is contradictory to say the least, and completely inconsistent.

If the bill were passed—and I certainly hope not, but we are sometimes at the mercy of majorities—it has all the potential to allow the federal government to establish a national housing allowance.

I asked the Minister of Public Works, who is responsible for the CMHC, whether it was not somewhat inconsistent that, in the throne speech, which is a commitment after all, the government said it wanted to withdraw from this sector, and that negotiations were even under way to transfer \$1.9 billion to the provinces. The minister replied that, while that was so, there were some provinces where logic did not apply.

This attitude is a bit hard to understand. Our amendments, which I hope will be favourably received by the government, provide that, if the federal government takes action in the low cost, co-operative or non-profit housing sector in municipalities in Quebec, we hope that permission will first be required from the Government of Quebec and the National Assembly.

*Government Orders*

The bill contains certain provisions flowing from a clause such as this, particularly where aboriginals and student loans are concerned. We hope, through our amendments, to broaden the scope of what exists already on a smaller scale.

I wish to take this opportunity to ask the federal government, particular the government members here today—I am thinking of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—to bring pressure to bear so that the negotiations that have been going on with the Government of Quebec for over two years reach a successful conclusion.

There is something positively indecent about the federal government's proposal, and I will explain why.

As we speak, the federal government is spending \$362 million annually in the housing sector, through various CMHC programs. But this is to completely ignore Quebec's demographic weight. If the federal government had to adjust its spending to reflect Quebec's demographic weight, it would be just over 24%, as everyone knows. It would then have to spend \$480 million. The difference is \$117 million.

Nor is it respectful of what used to be termed households with core housing needs. I would remind members that all the governments in Quebec, the one the Minister of Immigration belonged to, as did her friend Mr. Johnson, the government of Mr. Parizeau and the government of Mr. Bouchard, all these have made the same demands on the federal government as far as housing is concerned, namely that they receive a fair share, taking core housing needs into consideration. Although Quebec accounts for 24.60% of the population of Canada, it contains 29% of households in need of core housing.

• (1700)

This has been acknowledged by Mr. Ryan, Mr. Trudel, and all the housing ministers, one after another, in the National Assembly.

If Quebec had its fair share, taking into account the households in need of core housing, that would mean it would receive \$567 million. I repeat, however, that as we speak what is being spent is \$362 million. This makes no sense at all.

More ridiculous still, the Minister responsible for CMHC and member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, makes an offer to Quebec, offering it less than the CMHC spends annually. This makes little sense. He offers Quebec \$289 million, while at this very moment \$362 million is what is being spent.

I hope the voice of Quebec will be able to make itself heard in this cabinet, that the ministers will get some hold on themselves and loosen the purse strings a little. Housing is an important issue. The main cause of poverty is certainly the amount that our most disadvantaged fellow citizens have to pay in rent.

Even if there is no official indicator of poverty in Canada, the National Council of Welfare, along with Statistics Canada, considers a person poor, and below the poverty line if he or she is devoting 55% of income to basic necessities, i.e. accommodation and food.

We live in a society where there have never been so many poor, and in many cases, of such poverty. We should recall the slogan of the Liberal government in 1968, which called for a just society. This is how Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberals made their entry into government.

These people, who claimed to have a sense of fairness and to want to live in a fairer society, are becoming dramatically accustomed to living with a level of poverty that has never been so high. It is important the federal government give the provincial governments the money it will transfer so they have additional resources in the housing sector.

I cannot stress enough with the Liberal ministers that the voice of Quebec must be heard and negotiations must continue. There is no need for a bill like this. If the federal government wants to talk of housing, it will have the support of the opposition parties. I am sure it will have the support of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Reform Party and the New Democratic Party if it wants to make more money available to the provinces, which should be the real agents in the area of housing.

There is a major shortage of resources. However the federal government has a lot of money. After dumping responsibilities, it has a huge amount of money. In the fight against poverty, the least it could do is let the provincial governments, with Quebec in the lead, have some of it.

In all of Canada, as we speak, two provinces are working on housing development, that is, permitting public housing to be built. There is Quebec, with one of the best governments ever assembled in the National Assembly. Quebec has set aside \$42 million for housing development. Another province has also done so: British Columbia.

I would ask the Liberal members to vote in support of our amendments, because it is in the interest of Quebec.

• (1705)

[English]

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to enter the debate on Group No. 2. These amendments from various members of the opposition parties all essentially deal with one subject: the governance, the administration and the devolution of powers with regard to the housing situation in Canada.

I want to address my remarks primarily to the efficiency, the accountability and the effectiveness of the Canada Mortgage and

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Housing Corporation and the operation of the Government of Canada with regard to housing.

I notice a number of members of the Liberal Party are here. It is to their advantage to listen carefully. It would be very good if all of them were here to listen to some of the comments that are about to be made.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** I must have hit some kind of chord. They all agree that they should be here listening to this point.

The government does not have a national housing policy. There is a little bit here and a little bit there. There is a little bit in CMHC and a little bit in some other kind of program. There is no consistent national housing policy.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been set up under the National Housing Act to implement the government's housing policy when in fact there is not one. There is a whole bunch of hodgepodge itsy-bitsy pieces coming together. Sometimes they work and sometimes they do not. It is essential that we have one.

I would like to ask whether the government believes that a hodgepodge is the best way to meet the housing problem in Canada today. I submit that it is not. The way to look after housing and to develop a solution to the housing problem in Canada would be to give the jurisdiction of this matter to those people who are closest to the situation and to the problem. That would be the provinces and the municipal governments.

There is no doubt that is precisely what was addressed by my hon. colleague who just spoke. It is also a question that has been raised by the other opposition parties. Huge sums of money are involved in the business of providing housing. There is also a huge social problem which needs to be addressed. We need to ask ourselves what is the best way to resolve this problem.

I commend the city of Toronto that commissioned a major study, the Golden report which was published in January of this year. It comes to grips with many of the issues we are dealing with today.

It is not only the city of Toronto that has done good work. The magazine put out by the Canadian Housing Corporation made some very interesting points. It indicated that the municipal governments throughout Canada that are closest to this problem have probably done a better job of coming to grips with it than any other level of government.

Surprise, surprise. Of course they have because the problem is before them virtually every day. It deals with Vancouver and Van City Place, a 50 unit development for street involved youth. There is a new development of 40 singles in Toronto in addition to the Golden report. The city of Montreal is an equal partner with the

province of Quebec on a 50% cost sharing program designed to improve the quality of housing in central areas.

On a small scale, the city of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, was a key player in establishing a new affordable home ownership initiative. The city of Kamloops provides another example. Working in partnership with the Canadian Legion and a local developer, the city has provided land on a lease basis for a seniors condominium.

The city of Edmonton is an active partner in the Edmonton coalition of the homeless initiative to establish a housing trust fund. The city of Saskatoon is similarly assisting the development of a trust fund. The city of Toronto just established an \$11 million capital revolving fund, using money collected from private developers in return for density bonuses over the past dozen years.

A variety of cities large and small have shown not only that they can deal with the issue but that they actually are dealing with the issue. It is significant that we can demonstrate the housing issue can be dealt with at the local level and that these governments are competent, able and willing to deal with the issue.

• (1710)

The government through Canada Mortgage and Housing has vacated a large number of these areas. It is confusing. On the one hand it devolved the problems to the provinces but not with all provinces. There is another confusion and that is the federal co-op development that has been happening in Canada. In Ontario there is a real division. Roughly 50% of the housing co-operatives are owned by the provincial government, or under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, and about 50% are under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

On the one hand the government says it wants to divest itself and give it all to the provinces. Lo and behold a lobby group is formed and is successful in saying that the federal co-ops should stay with the federal government. That is exactly what happened.

The concept of housing co-operatives is a good one. I like it a lot because it comes to grips with one of the fundamental principles of housing, the pride of ownership that goes along with owning a home.

The National Housing Act has given many people the right, privilege and opportunity to own their own homes. It has been a benefit to all of them. They have expressed their own individualism through housing. People who are not as capable or not as able financially to do that have joined together with others and have formed a co-operative venture so that they can own their domicile co-operatively.

There are different kinds of co-operatives. We have mentioned federal and provincial co-operatives, but there is also those that are equity co-operatives and those that are non-equity sharing. People who do not have the resources can get into a co-op, develop their equity and actually feel they are part of a co-operative, have an

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ownership and a direct interest, an equity interest in the particular place where they live. It makes them accountable. It makes them responsible. It gives them a sense of pride as individuals to be able to express themselves in this way, which is highly desirable.

A better solution to the whole business of social housing might be to allow these people to own some of it themselves and be able to share in the management and operation of a particular unit on a co-operative basis, rather than on a handout basis where it is given to them virtually without any strings attached and without any responsibility connected to it.

My colleague was commenting on my speech. I am so happy that he was impressed with it. I just wish hon. members opposite would be as impressed as he was. It is good to hear that common sense is recognized by both sides of the House.

I want to come back to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. We need to have accountability. We need to recognize that accountability is best found if the decisions are transparent and if the powers of the corporation are somewhat restricted. The provisions of the bill give almost carte blanche to the management of Canada Mortgage and Housing to do whatever it wishes to do, whether it is to get involved as a intermediary in the financial marketplace or whether it is to have agents and branches in other countries.

One of the amendments concerns the ability of Canada Mortgage and Housing to establish branches and agents. It is not restricted to Canada. They could be established anywhere in the world. That is not what Canada Mortgage and Housing should be doing. If the purpose is to establish Canada's national housing policy, it should not be allowed to establish agents and branches in a foreign nation somewhere. The loophole is not closed in this legislation. It is important for the members opposite to recognize that this is Canada's mortgage and housing corporation, to implement Canada's national housing policy, and not some other national policy.

• (1715)

**Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will make some brief comments on the amendments in the second group. I will deal first with the amendments submitted by the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Motions Nos. 8, 10 and 20.

If my understanding of the amendments is correct, the intention is to restrict financial assistance to non-profit and co-op associations when it comes to encouraging the building of rental housing projects on reserves.

I firmly support and encourage the involvement of housing co-ops and other not for profit associations in the provision of rental housing, such as the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. It has been helping to supply Canadians of mixed income with affordable housing for over 30 years. The government should

continue its commitment to co-op housing as a social policy instrument.

I should also mention that non-profit and co-ops are not the only forms of social housing. There are many innovative and successful private sector solutions for the provision of affordable housing; everything from large apartment buildings all the way down to single duplexes owned by small builders. These small business people should not be excluded from the bill. They are also important in supplying affordable housing to all Canadians.

I will now move on to Motions Nos. 7, 9, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21 and 23. My comments are relatively straightforward on these items. These motions would create a legislative requirement that cabinet advise Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on how to implement certain aspects of its mandate.

I have two thoughts on this. First, I am concerned that these amendments would place unnecessary restrictions on the CMHC that would require it to seek cabinet approval every single time the corporation wanted to assist an individual, group or company in setting up affordable housing projects.

Second, cabinet already provides policy direction to the CMHC on many issues. In some cases, cabinet will want to direct the corporation on how to proceed in certain instances. However, when and how cabinet should intervene should be at the discretion of cabinet and not be written inflexibly into the legislation.

On Motion No. 17, the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton has suggested that we specify the type of housing projects in section 78 to be low rental housing projects. I have no trouble with this amendment as it spells out in clearer language the intent of the act with respect to the development and financing of public housing. I certainly see no great demand among Canadians that the government should be involved in financing upscale housing, so I would be pleased to support this amendment.

The next two motions I would like to speak to are Motions Nos. 17 and 35 put forward by the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. I understand the intention of the member with respect to the intrusion of the federal government into areas of provincial jurisdiction.

It was just last year that we had to deal with a senseless and unprecedented program called the millennium scholarship fund. This was a unilateral and unwarranted invasion of Canada's provincially-run education system. First, the government slashed educational transfers to the provinces by 40%, and then, to add insult to injury, it kept most of the money for itself and started a new program to solve the lack of money in education, a problem it created in the first place. However, the program was not universal for all students as were the educational transfers it replaced. Much of the budget for the program will be eaten up in new administrative costs. This program has set federal-provincial relations back several years. This is certainly not a nightmare that my party and I

would like to see repeated. I think my hon. friend and I are in agreement on this.

• (1720)

Where I differ from him is whether or not a real threat exists in this bill that would allow the government to create another millennium scholarship fund but this time in housing, an area of provincial jurisdiction. I think the member for Hochelaga—Maisonnette is trying to kill a mosquito with a nuclear bomb when only a fly swatter is necessary.

In my reading of the bill, in both sections that the member would like to amend, there is a requirement that CMHC create a program working jointly with the provincial governments. That means that CMHC cannot proceed alone but must have the approval of the provincial government concerned and must work bilaterally with that province to produce a joint result.

This goes beyond consultation, beyond co-operation or collaboration. It requires CMHC to create a program that is the child of both the federal and the provincial governments. Just as it takes two hands to make a handshake, there is no way the federal government can create a new program on its own according to the bill. I am satisfied that the provisions in this bill provide sufficient protection against that happening.

Lack of decent affordable housing and the proliferation of homelessness in the country is reaching dramatic proportions. Just last month, the Prime Minister appointed the new Minister of Labour from Moncton, New Brunswick as the new minister for homelessness. Last Friday, during question period, a member of the Reform Party asked the new minister for homelessness a question and she denied being the new minister for homelessness. It is a shame that she has had the title for over a month now and does not even know what her job is.

That is why I am saying that CMHC must have the flexibility to act jointly with provinces to solve these problems in different areas and under different circumstances.

These two amendments, if passed, would prevent the provinces and CMHC from being able to implement solutions to housing problems, even if there is agreement between the provinces and CMHC, until a universal agreement on housing is signed covering all aspects of housing policy between the provinces and CMHC. In other words, the provinces and CMHC could not solve any problem until they solved all of their problems. This is too restrictive.

Bill C-66, as it stands now, will allow the provinces and CMHC to take action incrementally in areas where there is joint agreement without the requirement that they must agree on everything before moving forward.

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**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak to various motions presented by my hon. colleague. The government does not support these motions and I will explain why.

I cannot repeat it often enough. What we have before us today are three visions of the relationship between the Government of Canada and CMHC. The amendments being proposed by my colleague from Kelowna would, in my view, seriously undermine the government's ability to carry out its public policy role in housing which it fulfils through the renewed mandate of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Allow me to explain.

The Government of Canada is committed to playing a leadership role in housing. That is why the government renewed the mandate of its housing agency, CMHC, and has strengthened CMHC's ability to fulfil its mandate through amendments to Bill C-66.

The government understands the importance of helping Canadians meet their housing needs. We understand the importance of building a strong competitive housing industry. We know that good housing creates sound communities and a strong country. We know that housing has a major impact on the economy of Canada.

Bill C-66 clearly states the public policy role of CMHC. I will quote from the bill itself. It states:

The purpose of this Act, in relation to financing for housing, is to promote housing affordability and choice, to facilitate access to, and competition and efficiency in the provision of, housing finance, to protect the availability of adequate funding for housing at low cost, and generally to contribute to the well-being of the housing sector in the national economy.

• (1725)

Surely nobody could dispute the importance of these objectives. Yet the member proposes changes that would eliminate the government's ability to regulate CMHC should it be necessary to do so.

If we were to remove this section of the NHA as proposed. We would effectively be reducing the government's control, in other words, the public's control of CMHC.

I am certain that if my hon. friend thought for a minute about what he was proposing, he would realize how ridiculous it is to imply that the public should not have the right to ensure that CMHC is accountable to them. CMHC is a public institution with a public policy role, a role that has served Canadians so well for over 50 years. To suggest that government control of a public institution should be reduced is somewhat bewildering.

Bill C-66 will give CMHC the means to carry out its public policy role more effectively and in a financially prudent manner. That is what the Government of Canada expects. That is what the people of Canada deserve. That is what Bill C-66 is all about.

*Private Members' Business*

At the other extreme, we have the member from Cape Breton who would have every decision made by CMHC approved by the governor in council. Perhaps the member does not realize that to do so would involve great expense, both in terms of administrative costs and in the quality of services that the Government of Canada can offer Canadians. Indeed, the member would have the government return to the old days of red tape and heavy bureaucratic processes at the expense of the efficient delivery of important government services for needy Canadians.

Another member has presented a vision which would require that every service CMHC offers to individuals and communities be approved by the government of the particular province. We know this vision would have the Government of Canada so hamstrung that we would not be able to serve the housing needs on reserves without provincial approvals. This vision would also deny other needy Canadians access to important federal assistance should any of the provinces not consider the particular measure important or necessary.

Let me be clear: The benefits conferred by the programs administered by CMHC are and will remain governed by the House.

Bill C-66 introduces a modern relationship between the Government of Canada and CMHC. Bill C-66 calls for the approval of CMHC's corporate plan every year to ensure that the directions taken by CMHC meet the will and priorities of the government.

Moreover, every year the House is involved in approving the resources given to CMHC to reach out to needy Canadians; to implement those programs that one member would rather not see regulated at all and that another member would regulate to the point of administrative paralysis.

Furthermore, the CMHC Act and the Financial Administration Act clearly confer to the government oversight in all aspects of the corporation's activities. What more could the member want? Why, for instance, would we go so far as to endorse the proposal from the member from Cape Breton to have potentially every project approved by the governor in council?

The vision that we are proposing in Bill C-66 is a modern vision, a vision which will result in government services that are more responsive to the needs of Canadians and the needs of their regions, a vision which will better equip CMHC to work co-operatively with provinces, and a vision that at the end of the day will lead to a more efficient government. That is a vision I think every Canadian would support.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed with the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**VOISEY'S BAY NICKEL PROJECT**

**Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should become actively involved in the Voisey's Bay nickel project, specifically to speed up the settling of native land claims and to expedite the completion of all environmental studies.

• (1730)

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague the member for Compton—Stanstead for seconding my motion. Obviously the Voisey's Bay nickel find in Labrador is of major importance. We have taken this time today to bring it to the attention of the House to see if we can exert some influence on the Government of Canada in particular and the Government of Newfoundland as well to expedite this process.

I am pleased to introduce discussion today on this proposed development of the rich nickel deposits at Voisey's Bay in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Members will note that my motion was originally filed exactly 19 months ago today.

During this period a series of developments have taken place which we hope can bring us closer to the approvals required for this project to proceed and for the maximum benefits to be realized for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and of course for Canada. But it is symptomatic of our sometimes cumbersome system and the red tape that we create that even now questions remain about whether positive economic activity will be allowed to proceed.

Despite the fact that my Motion No. 194 was submitted over a year and a half ago, the questions it addresses remain pertinent and topical. Developments on this file are ongoing and include the presentation of the environmental assessment panel's report to government on the first day of this month, the associated commentary from Inco representatives at the company's annual general meeting held yesterday, and ongoing consultations with aboriginal groups.

I fully understand that there are important questions which must be answered before a mining operation of this magnitude can be

undertaken. In this case the most important questions include the project's impact on the environment, the status of aboriginal land claims and the revenue sharing arrangements with the provincial government in particular.

At the same time I feel it must be pointed out that those who propose to develop this rich natural resource, thereby creating employment and generating a new revenue source for our government, have to date lived up to their environmental responsibilities. Inco has acted in good faith on the environmental assessment process and invested considerable time and resources to co-operate fully with the panel set up to review the various aspects of this project.

There are still some outstanding issues on the questions of processing and refining. I am in full agreement with the province's position with regard to the requirement for a smelter and refinery in Argentia, Newfoundland. Every Newfoundlander agrees that the export of these raw materials from our province would be absolutely devastating to our economy. We are sticking to our guns. We are, all of us together in Newfoundland and Labrador, saying to Inco and its shareholders that there must be a refinery and smelter in Newfoundland if there is to be a mine site.

The spirit of my motion is to call on the Government of Canada to play a lead co-ordinating role in ensuring that while the important environmental and land claims issues are addressed, government itself does not become an impediment to progress.

I would like to share with my colleagues the fact that new discoveries of nickel have been found in Australia and other places in the world. Despite the fact that these deposits were found after the discovery in Voisey's Bay, the Australian projects in particular have in that time been designed, duly approved, developed, fully constructed and are now producing nickel.

The message is not complicated. The message is simply let us not allow the machinery of government itself to constitute a barrier to economic activity. Let us examine the advice carefully prepared through the work of the environmental assessment panel. Let us consult with the aboriginal people who hold land claims in the area. But let us do so in an expeditious manner so that when we know these valid considerations have been satisfied, we do not stand in the way or indeed cause even further delays.

The proposed Voisey's Bay development has, since its inception, been faced with a series of obstacles to overcome. I do not want to leave any member of the House with the impression that the concerns that lie behind some of these delays are not valid or important. Nobody that I know of is suggesting that such a project would ever be undertaken without due regard for the environment and without close consultation with the aboriginal groups in the area. But we must adopt a reasonable approach. We must not be blind to the fact that our people suffer when the wheels of

### *Private Members' Business*

government turn so slowly that the viability of a significant development project is put in jeopardy.

There are some obvious practical matters to be taken into consideration with regard to the timing of the government decision and its impact on the Voisey's Bay development potential. One of these is the very short construction season available in Labrador.

• (1735 )

Because of the length and severity of the winter in the Labrador climate, construction can only be carried out during a relatively brief window of time every year. As a consequence of this, a delay of, let us say, three months in the government's decision making does not mean a delay of only three months in the start of construction. If the government were to wait until the end of this summer before giving its approval for the Voisey's Bay project to go ahead, the whole development would remain dormant, on ice, pardon the turn of phrase, until the weather warmed up some time in the year 2000 so the project could begin. A three month delay in decision making means more than a full year's delay in construction.

I know that all members of the House are familiar with the difficulties experienced by the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in adjusting from the collapse of the northern cod fishery that drove our economy for centuries. I and my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus have identified the problems created by the fisheries crisis, emphasized the need for new avenues of economic growth and made constructive proposals to that end.

The problems are real and they have a human face. I see it firsthand on a regular basis. Many of the people affected are my constituents and still others have been forced from a lack of economic opportunity to leave our province. Can members present in the Chamber imagine that 30,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been forced to leave Newfoundland in the last three years alone?

The area of Placentia and Argentia for example is in my federal riding of St. John's West. The closure of the former American military base in Argentia dealt a significant blow to the economy of that whole area of Placentia Bay. Since the Americans' departure, the Canadian government has invested in the neighbourhood of \$100 million in environmental remediation, cleaning up the toxic waste and making the area suitable for new industrial and commercial development.

One of those new industrial commercial developments is the Voisey's Bay smelter and refinery. Much of the land has been put on reserve for this project and indeed, we have probably lost some other business activity in the area because we are waiting for this smelter and refinery to happen.

*Private Members' Business*

The proponents of the Voisey's Bay project have proposed a smelting and refining facility for the Argentia area that will provide the much needed economic boost to the local economy. I take my responsibility to the people of this area very seriously. I am here as their elected representative to fight to make sure that the smelting and refining facility does become a reality in Argentia. We have a responsibility to seize every opportunity that will generate new activity in the economy.

I would like to share with hon. members some information that illustrates the importance of new economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to the most recent labour force survey figures from Statistics Canada, unemployment in the province of Newfoundland stands at an intolerable 17.6%, more than twice the national average of 7.8%. The rate is three times that of Alberta with 5.8%, or Manitoba with 5.4% unemployed. That is good news for the people of those provinces and I congratulate the governments of Alberta, Manitoba and certainly Ontario for creating an environment in which economic activity is encouraged.

Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy once said that a rising tide floats all boats. I say to members that whatever positive signs may be evident in some parts of the country, Newfoundland and Labrador cannot afford to have a lethargic government act as an economic anchor.

Third party analysts agree that Newfoundland and Labrador will experience slower growth in 1999-2000 than it did last year. Even with developments in new industries outside the province's traditional economic backbone, the fishery, estimates are that growth in Newfoundland and Labrador next year will be only one-half of what it was last year. Surely it must be obvious that the last thing we would want to do is delay unnecessarily the start-up of a new development that will benefit the country, the province and its people.

Another point I would like to make, lest I be accused by some of overstating the impact of the Voisey's Bay project, is that I realize this development in itself is not a panacea for all of our problems. We all know that the days of seeking the magic megaproject solution that can stand alone and satisfy all of our economic needs are long past. This has much more to do with getting the fundamentals right.

In getting the fundamentals right, Newfoundland and Labrador exports more raw material per capita than any other province in Canada. Ontario as an example exports the least raw material per capita. There is an obvious correlation between the amount of raw materials we export and the unemployment rate. If raw materials are used wisely, we will get a much lower unemployment rate.

• (1740)

We have an opportunity for an important new addition to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Moving forward with the project will be helpful. Failure to do so, failure to take full advantage of our natural resources when the opportunity to develop them presents itself, would be a clear indication that we are a long way from being able to effectively build a new economy in the absence of a viable commercial cod fishery.

I ask my colleagues in this House to join with me in making a strong statement calling on the federal government to assume a leadership role not only in seeing that the necessary criteria are satisfied but also in co-ordinating negotiations among all the stakeholders. Let us work to ensure that this project, including the Mill/mine in Labrador and the smelting and refining facilities in Argentia, can proceed without further delays for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and indeed for all Canadians.

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for St. John's West and I can understand the passion with which he speaks. One might wonder why the member for Etobicoke North would enter the debate on the project in Voisey's Bay. I will give the House some background to that.

I had the good fortune to visit Voisey's Bay with my colleague from Labrador in 1996. It was quite impressive and we could see the potential for this particular site for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and indeed the people of Canada.

The member for St. John's West said that this would be an important new addition to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. He asked for the federal government to assist in facilitating some resolution to this impasse. I certainly would support that. This project is important to that region and to all Canadians.

The problem as I understand it is that the Newfoundland government has attached preconditions. These preconditions are aligned, I suspect, with what the member opposite said, that the refinery would need to be located in Argentia.

Unfortunately I think we need to ground some of the debate in business economics and logic. Going back to the original purchase, in 1994 Inco paid \$4 billion for the Voisey's Bay discovery. The price of nickel at that time was about \$3.50 U.S. a pound. It is now about half that price.

To have this important new addition to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador given current economic conditions, which are really projected to last for some time regrettably, this project will not really be implemented. That would be a sad day for the people in Newfoundland and Labrador and it would be a sad day for Canada.

Inco, as I understand it being a business, has to look at other options. It is looking at a project in New Caledonia, a French colony near Australia. Inco has to decide which one of these deposit sites is going to be developed next. Is it going to be Voisey's Bay or New Caledonia? Being a very strong Canadian company with a lot of roots in Canada, Inco would much prefer to develop the site at Voisey's Bay, but how can it when business economics argue totally against it?

One might ask why the member for Etobicoke North would be concerned. I am concerned as a Canadian. Having visited Labrador I would like to see the economy of Newfoundland benefit. I can understand why the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and their government are anxious to realize the full potential for their treasury and for their people, but we have to come back to basic business economics.

The fact is that if Inco decides to go to New Caledonia, Labrador will lose about 500 permanent direct jobs plus about 1,200 spin-off jobs. It will also lose about \$1.1 billion in investment for the mine, the mill and the concentrator facilities.

• (1745)

As a member from Ontario let me say that Ontario is affected as well. The way that Inco has proposed it, the only way the project can proceed is if the mining, the milling and the concentrating are done in Labrador. At that point the concentrate would have to be sent to Quebec City or Sept-Îles and then moved to Sudbury, Ontario, or to Thompson, Manitoba.

That is the only way that Inco seems to feel it can proceed. It has its business people who understand business economics. They are accountable to their shareholders. That is the only way it sees the project working.

If the project does not go ahead, northern Ontario and northern Manitoba will lose smelting and refining jobs. Most of the smelting and refining of the New Caledonia concentrate will be done, for logistical and other reasons, in Japan and not in Canada.

Newfoundland insists on the smelting capacity being located in Argentina. Newfoundland and Canada are at risk of losing about \$1.7 billion in taxes and other revenues over eight years. Now that the election in Newfoundland is behind us, it is time for the Government of Newfoundland to look seriously at some business economics and get on with this project.

To add some insult, I am afraid that in November 1998 the Newfoundland government announced amendments to the mineral act which gave the provincial cabinet the power to decide what was economically viable. The cabinet in Newfoundland, while we respect that it has good analysts and other people for advice, has the power to tell Inco, which is a business with shareholders, employees and other stakeholders groups to whom it is accountable

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and spends its whole life running businesses, that Newfoundland will decide what is economically feasible and what is not.

That is quite tragic. We are depriving Canada, Newfoundland, Labrador, Ontario and Manitoba of jobs, revenue and economic activity because of an understandable passion by the Newfoundland government not to repeat mistakes it has made in the past. We can understand that sensitivity, but when the price of nickel is half what it was when the project was conceived, it is a matter of economics. Sometimes we cannot have the full cake and have to accept half the cake.

I believe strongly that Inco is quite prepared to sit down with the Government of Newfoundland. Perhaps the Government of Canada could play a facilitative role in bringing the parties together, cutting through the rhetoric, getting down to the basics of creating jobs and economic activity in Canada. If that could happen I know it would be very positive.

The project at Voisey's Bay is a staggeringly attractive proposition. As I said, I had the pleasure of visiting it and seeing the area oozing with hope and the dreams of the people who will be involved. However, they will not be involved if the people of Newfoundland and Inco cannot get together to make the project a reality.

I support what the hon. member is saying. The Government of Canada should play a facilitative role, but I do not see how it can do that if the Government of Newfoundland is saying there are preconditions, that the smelting capacity must be in Argentina. That is a huge stumbling block.

I support the member opposite in the sense of moving the project forward. I would argue that our government should be involved in helping to get the project rolling.

• (1750)

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for St. John's West. For those Canadians watching these proceedings on television, I would like to read the motion that is currently before us:

That in the opinion of this House the government should become actively involved in the Voisey's Bay nickel project, specifically to speed up the settling of native land claims and to expedite the completion of all environmental studies.

The hon. member certainly has more faith in the federal government than I have. I understand his frustration at the seemingly endless process of study and negotiations and more study and negotiations. However, I would never have thought I would hear anyone on the opposition side of the House looking to the federal government to expedite anything.

The victims of tainted blood have been waiting for over a year for compensation. We could ask them what they think of the

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government's ability to be expeditious. Newfoundlanders in particular have not been served well by the Liberal government. The TAGS program has been a disaster for Newfoundlanders and was a band-aid solution in place of real reforms of the cod fisheries.

The Hibernia project has been another Liberal failure. Not one oil manufacturing job will be created in Newfoundland as a result of the project.

Churchill Falls is another example. Newfoundland lost \$1 billion a year as a result of a do-nothing Liberal government that refuses to give Newfoundlanders a fair deal.

The seal hunt has also been systematically destroyed by the Liberal bureaucratic red tape that has prevented the export of seal projects around the globe.

These are four good reasons why we should not invite the Liberal government to get involved in this project. Newfoundlanders are better served by negotiating on their own terms.

Furthermore, the Voisey's Bay project has been stalled and delayed, not because there has not been enough government interest in the matter but because there has been too much. This is no longer a business venture. It is a three ring political circus.

Let us look at the players already involved in this project. Inco Limited is involved. As it is the private sector company ready to take on the risk of the project it will be the one creating the wealth and the jobs. It will be the one jumping through the political hoops trying to please the various stakeholders involved in the project, many of whom have very legitimate concerns that must be addressed.

I applaud the patience of Inco's president, Scott Hand. It seems that Canadian entrepreneurs have unfortunately had to become politicians and spin doctors. That is the new cost of doing business in the Canadian economy and more federal intervention, as is proposed in the motion, is not the solution.

I take this opportunity to encourage Mr. Hand to continue to negotiate with the province. The Newfoundland people want this project, need this project, and are ready and able to make this project a success.

The Labrador Inuit Association and Innu nation are also involved in the negotiations, representing the interests of the first nations people in the area. They have been active participants in the creation of a 200 page study of the project that contained over 100 recommendations. On the basis of this report, it looks as if the Voisey's Bay negotiations may have been given a second life and a second chance.

The land claim concerns and benefit agreements brought forward by these groups are currently being considered by Inco. The

environmental study has given the company a conditional green light to proceed.

The premier of Newfoundland is also involved in this matter. While Brian Tobin is working for the people of Newfoundland, I believe he can learn a lesson from Alberta about creating economic growth. In Alberta we are working to remove the barriers impeding economic progress and development. In Newfoundland they are erecting new ones.

If my hon. colleague from St. John's wants to be of some assistance to his constituents, and I know he does, he should ask Mr. Tobin a simple question: Is Newfoundland open for business? Nobody questions where Mr. Tobin's loyalties lie. I would however question his commitment to liberalizing the Newfoundland economy to encourage domestic and foreign investment.

The answer to the Voisey's Bay project and economic development in general is not further political meddling. We need to see the development of sensible and workable environmental policies that allow for sustainable economic growth.

Environmental regulations are another tax on Canadian businesses. While many of them are necessary, others are not. There is a balance that must be struck.

• (1755)

We also need to address the first nations land claim issues according to fair and equitable guidelines, but this must be done on a comprehensive basis so that it does not continue to be a never ending barrier to economic development in the country.

Politicians and lawyers have hijacked land claim issues and it is the grassroots Inuit or other aboriginals who have suffered. I once again applaud the author of the motion for allowing debate in the House on the Voisey's Bay project. However I do not believe he will find a solution through this arrogant and out of touch Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged to hear members say that the Voisey's Bay project could find minerals in my riding of Manicouagan. I am referring to Sept-Îles.

I am pleased to speak to this motion regarding the problems of the nickel project in Voisey's Bay, Labrador.

The motion recommends that the government become actively involved in this project; on the one hand, to speed up the settling of land claims from aboriginal communities present in the area and, on the other hand, to ensure that all environmental studies necessary for implementation of the project are duly completed.

The Bloc Québécois supports this motion. In order to explain our position, I will give some essential background and history.

Inco Ltd., the main backer of the Voisey's Bay nickel project, has its eye on lands in the far northeast corner of Labrador. But the Inuit and Innu in this region have lived on these lands for thousands of years. Clearly, these are their traditional hunting and fishing grounds. They also grow certain medicinal plants there.

What is important is that these northern communities have, from time immemorial, maintained a close relationship with the land and its resources. Their traditional economy is based on the bounty of nature and the land, for instance boots made of skins, bone and ivory needles, food-gathering, trapping, and so forth. In addition to providing for the material needs of the Labrador Inuit and Innu, the land is at the heart of their relationship with other works of the Creator, and their spirituality.

In fact, in its 1996 report, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified the land as one of the four fundamental themes of the northern first nations' culture. In other words, the land is extremely important for the culture and the soul of a northern aboriginal.

But let us get back to the issue before us. The Innu and the Inuit have important land claims in the Voisey's Bay region. These claims obviously concern traditional lands that are filled with memories and that have been used by generations of Innu and Inuit. These claims are still not settled and now there is this nickel mining project.

It goes without saying that the federal government and the Newfoundland government must sit down with the Innu and Inuit communities to settle their claims, this before allowing Inco to begin mining operations in Voisey's Bay.

This is, in my view, a basic issue of respect for the aboriginal community that lives there and for which these lands are literally their living environment, one that also reflects their cultures. In short, these lands are their universe.

This mining project is a good development opportunity for Labrador. It could even, based on my information, benefit communities as far as Sept-Îles. For the moment, I cannot say any more on the subject. However, we must not forget that it will also, in all likelihood, have a negative environmental impact on that region.

• (1800)

It is therefore imperative that the federal government try to settle the claims of the Innu and Inuit, so that Inco's arrival in Labrador can take place in a climate of mutual co-operation between those involved, and in the respect of the aboriginal community living on that territory.

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Therefore, the Voisey's Bay mining operation must necessarily include guarantees and a significant compensation package for the first nations directly affected by this mining project. The motion before us generally goes in that direction.

Incidentally, a few years ago, the federal government, the Newfoundland government and the Innu and Inuit communities in Labrador appointed a group to examine the impact of the Voisey's Bay mining project. The group tabled its report on April 1.

It recommended, among other things, to settle the issue of land claims and to arrive at an agreement between the company, the governments and the aboriginals on the sharing of benefits—we are talking billions of dollars—from the mining project. Indeed, this is the way we will have to go, it would seem.

While the land claims issue is still not resolved, particularly in the case of the Innu, there is also another basic issue that remains unresolved, namely the environmental impact of the mining project.

In fact, at this time, the Inuit and the Innu of Labrador still do not know where the smelter will be located and what will happen to the slag it will produce.

There are a number of contaminants contained in this residue, and the wind may carry them to adjacent soil and water. These vital problems are still on the back burner. The Bloc Québécois is therefore calling upon the federal government, as the motion proposes, to become actively involved so that all of the environmental studies will be completed in order for the aboriginal population, and all other individuals or groups affected, to have the proper information on environmental impact.

To summarize, if this development project, which is of importance for Labrador, is to be given the green light to proceed, first the native land claims by the inhabitants of this area, the Innu and the Inuit, must be settled. It must also be ensured that the environmental consequences of mining operations are analyzed in depth and that the information relating to this, which is of such vital importance, must be made publicly available. In other words, the project is a good thing, but not at any price.

What is required first of all is to sit down, put all the pieces of the puzzle together, scrutinize all the implications of the project, while maintaining harmony, good faith and respect among all partners associated in the project.

It is certain, indispensable even, that the federal government must get actively involved in resolving the major problems I have raised here. There is much still to be done, so it is very much in the federal government's interests to roll up its sleeves and get cracking.

Since Motion M-194 is along the same lines as my own observations, I support it.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this motion, which was put forward by the member for St. John's West, regarding the proposed Voisey's Bay project.

• (1805)

This debate is timely in that a significant step was recently taken with the release on April 1 of the environmental assessment panel's report.

Before getting into the issue, there are a couple of points I want to make with respect to the remarks made by the Reform member for Edmonton—Strathcona. He spoke disparagingly about some of the programs which the Government of Canada has in place in the province of Newfoundland. He spoke about the TAGS program, for instance. The TAGS program, the Atlantic groundfish strategy, was put in place to help people in their time of need. We were there for the people of Newfoundland as a result of the downturn in the cod fishery.

He also spoke about the seal hunt. I really do not know what his point was on that, other than he was flopping around like a seal on the ice and he would not know the difference between a codfish and a seal if he saw one.

I believe it is important to review the historical context of this project so that we can more fully appreciate the present situation and some of the complexities that still lie ahead. However, before I begin I would like to preface my remarks with a couple of points.

First, the Government of Canada's position regarding the Voisey's Bay project is that this is a matter to be resolved between the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is the manager of the mineral resource, and the Voisey's Bay Nickel Company, which is the firm proposing to develop the project.

However, I would like to emphasize that while it is up to the province and the company to negotiate a mutually beneficial outcome, the federal government strongly supports all positive endeavours to this end and looks forward to its successful completion.

The second point I would like to make is that the Government of Canada is heavily involved in native land claim negotiations across the country and is doing everything in its power to resolve all such claims as expeditiously as possible. The Government of Canada is committed to the land claims negotiations in Labrador and to a fair and equitable process and outcome. These talks have their own pace and the government does not want to jeopardize them by attempting to advance them beyond that pace.

The project we are addressing today concerns a mine and a mill near Voisey's Bay on the northern coast of Labrador. This is a rugged area, with rough terrain and a sub-Arctic climate of short summers and long winters, which was a point made by the member for St. John's West earlier. It is located between the Inuit community of Nain and the Innu community known as Davis Inlet. The area is the subject of overlapping land claims on the part of the Labrador Inuit Association and the Innu Nation. The land holds an estimated 150 million tonnes of ore containing nickel, copper and cobalt.

Minerals were first discovered in this vicinity in 1993 by a company called Archean, which was under contract to Diamond Fields Resources Incorporated. Two years later, in 1995 and 1996, Inco Limited purchased the area in two stages for \$4.3 billion.

The Voisey's Bay Nickel Company, an Inco subsidiary, has proposed to develop a nickel, copper and cobalt mine and mill in the area. The nickel concentrate from the mill would be sent elsewhere for processing.

In November 1996 the Voisey's Bay Nickel Company announced that it had chosen Argentia, Newfoundland as the site for a smelter and refinery complex. The company estimated that the two sites together would create 3,500 direct and indirect jobs in the province, and that we all certainly would welcome.

On January 31, 1997 the four principal parties involved in the Voisey's Bay project, that is, the Government of Canada, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Labrador Inuit Association and the Innu Nation, signed a memorandum of understanding to establish the environmental review process. Under the MOU a five person environmental assessment panel was appointed. The panel held two rounds of public consultations over the next year and a half. The first round began that spring. The second round of consultations took place in the fall of 1998, from September 9 to November 6. The company was also at those hearings to explain the project and to respond to any concerns and questions raised by participants.

• (1810)

During the period between the two rounds of consultations several events took place that had a significant impact on the project's negotiations and progress.

In August 1997 the Newfoundland court of appeal issued a temporary injunction blocking the company from building a temporary road and airstrip that would allow it to begin underground exploration. The next month the company announced that it was delaying the Voisey's Bay start-up date, which had originally been scheduled for late 1999, by at least one year. Three days later, on September 22, the Supreme Court of Newfoundland stipulated that the road and airstrip were an integral part of the mine and that the company must refrain from any underground exploration until it had received environmental clearance.

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In the spring of 1998 the Federal Court of Canada heard arguments put forward by the Citizens Mining Council of Newfoundland and Labrador that the project's environmental assessment should include both Voisey's Bay and Argentia sites. On March 8 of this year the court ruled that the law did not impose a duty in the circumstances of this case to include the two projects in one environmental assessment. This decision served to remove any uncertainty over the environmental assessment process for the two sites.

As well, Newfoundland rejected the new proposal of Inco on the ground that it was not of sufficient benefit to the province. It took the position that the project would not proceed unless all of the ore was processed within provincial boundaries and that the company's investment must include a smelter at Argentia in order to maximize the number of jobs for Newfoundland and Labrador citizens.

On July 23, 1998 Newfoundland suspended negotiations. A few days later the company halted its engineering and procurement activities relating to construction.

While these events were going on, parallel talks were also taking place with the Labrador Inuit Association and the Innu Nation. The negotiations were being conducted separately with each of the two native groups. I would like to emphasize that these organizations, as well as other aboriginal groups, have been an integral part of the environmental assessment process.

Negotiations with the two aboriginal groups are continuing. The federal government is strongly committed to forging new partnerships with native peoples. It is through the successful negotiation of major projects such as Voisey's Bay that the government will build and maintain such partnerships.

I repeat, therefore, that the Government of Canada is strongly committed to a fair and equitable process and outcome. It is making every effort in its power to achieve such a result as soon as possible.

Despite the sometimes rocky road behind us, I am happy to report that events have in the past few months taken a much more positive turn. On February 10, 1999 the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador indicated his willingness to renew talks with Voisey's Bay Nickel Company after the company said that it too hoped to resume negotiations. The four MOU parties have since held discussions and have reached a preliminary agreement on a broad framework for future consultations. I understand that formal consultations are expected to begin on May 3, 1999.

Also, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the environmental assessment panel released its report on April 1, 1999. This represents a significant milestone. The Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as native groups, are now in the process of reviewing the report.

I conclude by stating the government's view that a positive spirit of co-operation on the part of all parties will ensure that everyone concerned achieves mutually beneficial results from this impressive project.

• (1815 )

**The Deputy Speaker:** I should advise the House that if the hon. member for St. John's West speaks now he will terminate the debate.

**Mr. Charlie Power (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. members who have spoken. Some were in support of the motion and I am not so sure others were supporting it or not. However I thank all hon. members for their contributions to this important debate.

The member for Malpeque just outlined a decent history of what has happened and how government will proceed with supporting this major development. In the case of the Government of Canada the major role it can play is in the lands claim area. I hope the motion will encourage the government to speed up and to make a priority of land claims.

Land claims for Newfoundland and Labrador relating to Voisey's Bay are a little more important and urgent than they may be in other parts of the country because of what I said about the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have to have priorities as a House of Commons and as a Government of Canada.

If there is a priority for land claims settlement in Canada, it should be in Labrador to make sure this development can go ahead. I also thank my friend from Quebec who talked about the settlement for aboriginal peoples which comes from the land claims issue and his concern for the environment.

Not in a confrontational way I want to say in particular to the member from Etobicoke why this project is so important to Newfoundland and Labrador and why it is different from the norm. We just celebrated 50 years of Confederation a few days ago.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Charlie Power:** Our union with Canada has been an amazingly good stroke of luck for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has helped us in many ways. It has given us a social safety net. It has allowed us to access the Canadian economy in many ways. It has served in many ways to benefit Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately it has not always worked as well as it could have or should have. Certain things have happened to Newfoundland and Labrador because of our union with Canada that really should not have happened.

We still have an unemployment rate that is twice the national average. Why is that so? Why does Newfoundland and Labrador

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have twice as many people unemployed every single day of every single week of every single month of every single year for 50 years? There has to be something wrong. There has to be some way that can be rectified.

Let us look at some of the problems we have. Our unemployment situation is obvious. Some 30,000 people left Newfoundland in the last three years alone. That would be comparable to 7,500 people leaving Prince Edward Island. It is unbelievable to think that can happen consistently and still have a viable entity as a province with health and education systems.

I want to give the member from Etobicoke a little history of what happens in Newfoundland and Labrador. One thing that happened in Newfoundland that should never have happened was that the Government of Canada forced the tiny unimportant province of Newfoundland to sign a deal on the Upper Churchill agreement, which has cost Newfoundland citizens anywhere between \$700 million and \$800 million every year since 1969. We could be a have province. We could contribute positively in a revenue sense to Canada. That is one example.

Everything we do in Newfoundland and Labrador is because of the nature of where we are and of industry in Canada. Maybe we should send all our fish to be processed in New Brunswick or Nova Scotia because there is excess capacity there. Maybe we should take all the nickel we have and send it to Sudbury for smelting. It would be logical to ask what Newfoundland and Labrador can supply to Canada. We can supply raw materials and labourers, I suppose.

That is not the nature of Confederation as we want it to be. There is a difference. There is an opportunity for the Government of Canada and the province. There is a problem with the province in some of its stances in negotiating with Inco. If we were to work this arrangement through it would show to all Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians and all other people of Canada we can be allowed in Newfoundland and Labrador to earn our own keep. We can be allowed to make our living, pay taxes and contribute revenue to the country of Canada. We can do it just using our own resources. We are not asking for a whole lot.

There is the Inco deal, the Voisey's Bay deal, and 48 million barrels of oil off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland this year, but we are not allowed to refine any of it in Newfoundland and Labrador. What should we do, just basically supply raw materials?

There is a tremendous correlation between Newfoundland having the highest per ratio export of raw materials and the highest unemployment rate, and Ontario having just the opposite. It does not export raw materials to the same degree per capita and has a high employment rate.

That is what we have to do in Newfoundland and Labrador and that is why Voisey's Bay is not just a mine. It is an opportunity for Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada to put our partnership right, to allow those of us in Newfoundland and Labrador to contribute. I hope this debate highlights the issue so that some of the people in the House can have a full understanding of the history of what has happened in Newfoundland and why Voisey's Bay is so important to us.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion not being designated as a votable item, the time provided for the consideration of Private Member's Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the order paper.

[Translation]

It being 6.20 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.20 p.m.)

**APPENDIX**

Address

of

His Excellency Václav Havel

President of the Czech Republic

to

both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on

Thursday, April 29, 1999

• (1035)

[English]

ADDRESS  
of  
His Excellency Václav Havel  
President of the Czech Republic  
to  
both Houses of Parliament  
in the  
House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa  
on  
Thursday, April 29, 1999

*Mr. Václav Havel and Mrs. Havlovà were welcomed by the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable Gildas L. Molgat, Speaker of the Senate and by the Honourable Gilbert Parent, Speaker of the House of Commons.*

**Hon. Gilbert Parent (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Mr. President, Madam Havlovà, Senators, distinguished guests and colleagues, I call upon the Prime Minister to introduce our guests: the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister):** Speakers of the House of Commons and Senate, honourable members, ladies and gentlemen.

Once in a great while, members of the two Houses of the Canadian Parliament put aside partisan differences, silence our debates and come together on our very, very best behaviour.

For anyone who has ever watched our daily proceedings, such occasions are nothing short of a miracle. And I must admit, they are right, especially today, for we have in our presence a leader, a truly remarkable leader, whose perseverance in the face of tyranny, whose dignity in the face of persecution, helped to make possible the democratic transformation of his people, his country and his continent ten years ago; a transformation which, by any standard, was a miracle.

I speak of course of the President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel.

[Translation]

The great Victor Hugo once wrote that not even the strongest army in the world can defeat an idea whose time has come. But it is also true that, for any idea to triumph in its time, there must first be a champion, a leader, a symbol.

Mr. President, in your long crusade for freedom and justice, you led a mighty struggle against some of the strongest enemies known to human progress: fear and oppression.

Armed only with the courage of your convictions and the rightness of your cause, you triumphed.

Your childhood was spent, first, under foreign occupation, and then under the consolidation of a brutal totalitarian regime. A regime that chose to block your aspirations in life.

In most of us, wounds like these might have created bitterness and a sense of personal futility. But in you, they fuelled the writing and acts of conscience which captured the longing of your countrymen and the admiration of the entire world.

You revealed the hollowness of an imposed political system, and your words and deeds helped secure its doom.

• (1040)

When the time came, after so many years of privation, you were the only real choice to lead a country that was new again, to define its new politics, its economic transformation and its new relationships within Europe and beyond.

[English]

Mr. President, I would like to quote from your first New Year's address to your people:

You may ask what kind of republic I dream of. Let me reply:

I dream of a republic independent, free and democratic; of a republic economically prosperous and yet socially just; in short, of a humane republic that serves the individual and that, therefore, holds the hope that the individual will serve it in turn.

When you visited Canada for the first time in early 1990 that vision was still to be made real. Today the Czech Republic is one of the leading democracies of central and eastern Europe.

Your economic transformation, despite certain challenges today, will lead toward membership in the European Union.

You are a partner of Canada in NATO, the OECD, and you are active in the WTO. Our soldiers are keeping the peace in Bosnia and we make common cause in the OSCE.

You have sent some of your finest sons and daughters to Canada over the past century, who have become some of our most distinguished business leaders, academics, writers and, of course, hockey players. I have to tell you, Mr. President, that one of your fellow citizens, Dominik Hasek, is not very popular in Ottawa these days, but it is very nice of you to come here to compensate for that humiliation.

In return, over the past decade Canada has done its best to support your country in re-establishing democracy and recreating a market economy. Together we are also seeking to build new trade and investment links of mutual benefit.

Mr. President, your personal journey and that of the Czech Republic speak to how far the cause of freedom and human rights have come in Europe, but the crisis in Kosovo is a stark reminder of

how much further there is to go. And if I might be so bold, if that journey is to have lasting meaning in the Europe of the new millennium, then its simple and powerful lessons must be applied without hesitation in that complex and troubled land.

The people of Kosovo, and everywhere in Europe, must one day feel the same security and attachment to their homelands that you described in your dream of a humane republic; ideals that you have done so much to make a reality in the Czech Republic of today.

I am fortified by the knowledge that someone of your unshakeable faith in the forces of justice and right has taken up this cause without hesitation.

Together with our NATO allies we are doing the right thing in Kosovo. Together we will prevail.

We live in an age of overstatement, Mr. President, where the meaning and value of words are often made cheap by excess rhetoric, but for you there can be no overstatement.

It is my great pleasure and honour to introduce to this honourable House a beacon of freedom, a man whose achievements repudiate the idea that poets and dreamers have no place among statesmen.

Ladies and gentlemen, a poet, a dreamer and a great statesman, Václav Havel.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

• (1045 )

**Mr. Václav Havel (President of the Czech Republic):** Prime Minister, Speaker of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Commons, members of the Senate and the House of Commons, distinguished guests, I certainly do not need to emphasize how honoured I am to address you. With your permission, I shall use this opportunity for a few remarks concerning the state and its probable position in the future.

There is every indication that the glory of the nation state, as a climax of the history of every national community and the highest earthly value, in fact the only one in whose name it is permissible to kill or which is worth dying for, is already past its culminating point.

It seems that the enlightened endeavours of generations of democrats, the horrible experience of two world wars, which contributed so substantially to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the overall development of our civilization, are gradually bringing the human race to the realization that a human being is more important than a state.

The idol of state sovereignty must inevitably dissolve in a world that connects people, regardless of borders, through millions of links of integration ranging from trade, finance and property, up to information; links that impart a variety of universal notions and cultural patterns. Furthermore, it is a world in which danger to some has an immediate bearing on all; in which, for many reasons,

especially because of the massive advancement of science and technology, our fates are merged together into one single destiny; and in which we all, whether we like it or not, suffer responsibility for everything that occurs.

It is obvious that in such a world, blind love for one's own state, a love that does not recognize anything above itself, finds excuses for any action of the own state simply because it is one's own state, and rejects anything else simply because it is different, inevitably turns into a dangerous anachronism, a hotbed of conflicts and, eventually, a source of immeasurable human suffering.

• (1050 )

I believe that in the coming century most states will begin to transform from cult-like objects, which are charged with emotional contents, into much simpler and more civil administrative units, which will be less powerful and, especially, more rational and will constitute merely one of the levels in a complex and stratified planetary societal self-organization. This change, among other things, should gradually antiquate the idea of non-intervention, that is, the concept of saying that what happens in another state, or the measure of respect for human rights there, is none of our business.

Who will take over the various functions that are now performed by the state?

Let us first speak about the emotional functions. These, I believe, will begin to be distributed more equally amongst all the various spheres that make up human identity, or in which human beings exercise their existence. By this I mean the various layers of that which we perceive as our home or our natural world; our family, our company, our village or town, our region, our profession, our church or our association, as well as our continent and, finally, our earth, the planet which we inhabit. All this constitutes the various environments of our self-identification; and, if the bond to one's own state, hypertrophied until now, is to be weakened it must necessarily be to the benefit of all these other environments.

As for the practical responsibilities and the jurisdictions of the state, these can go in only two directions: downward or upward.

Downwards applies to the various organs and structures of civil society to which the state should gradually transfer many of the tasks it now performs itself. Upwards applies to various regional, transnational or global communities or organizations. This transfer of functions has already begun. In some areas, it has progressed quite far; in others, less so. However, it is obvious that the trend of development must, for many different reasons, go along this path.

If modern democratic states are usually defined by such characteristics as respect for human rights and liberties, equality of citizens, the rule of law and civil society, then the manner of existence toward which humankind will move from here, or toward which humankind should move in the interest of its own preservation, will probably be characterized as an existence founded on a universal or global respect for human rights, a universal equality of citizens, a universal rule of law and a global civil society.

• (1055)

One of the greatest problems that accompanied the formation of nation-states was their geographical delimitation, that is, the definition of their boundaries. Innumerable factors, ethnic, historical and cultural considerations, geological elements, power interests, as well as the overall state of civilization, have played a role here.

The creation of larger regional or transnational communities will sometimes be afflicted with the same problem; to some extent, this burden will possibly be inherited from the very nation-states that enter into such entities. We should do everything in our power to ensure that this self-definition process will not be as painful as was the case when nation-states were formed.

Allow me to give you one example. Canada and the Czech Republic are now allies as members of the same defence association, the North Atlantic Alliance. This is a result of a process of historic importance; NATO's enlargement with states of Central and Eastern Europe. The significance of this process stems from the fact that this is the first truly serious and historically irreversible step to break down the Iron Curtain and to abolish, in real terms and not just verbally, that which was called the Yalta arrangement.

This enlargement, as we all know, was far from easy and has become a reality only ten years after the bipolar division of the world came to an end. One of the reasons why progress was so difficult was the opposition on the part of the Russian Federation; they asked, uncomprehendingly and worriedly, why the West was enlarging and moving closer to Russia without taking Russia itself in its embrace. This attitude, if I disregard all other motives for the moment, reveals one very interesting element: an uncertainty about where the beginning is, and where the end is, of that which might be called the world of Russia, or the East. When NATO offers Russia its hand in partnership, it does so on the assumption that there are two large and equal entities: the Euro-Atlantic world and a vast Euro-Asian power. These two entities can, and must, extend their hands to each other and co-operate; this is in the interest of the whole world. But they can do this only when they are conscious of their own identities; in other words, when they know where each of them begins and ends. Russia has had some difficulty with that in its entire history, and it is obviously carrying this problem with it into the present world in which the question of delimitation is no longer about nation-states but about regions or spheres of culture and civilization.

Yes, Russia has a thousand things that link it with the Euro-Atlantic world or the so-called West; but, it also has a thousand things which differ from the West, just like Latin America, Africa, the Far East or other regions or continents of today's world.

• (1100)

The fact that these worlds, or parts of the world, differ from one another does not mean that some are more worthy than others. They are all equal. They are only different in certain ways, but

being different is not a disgrace. Russia, on the one hand, deems it very important to be seen as an entity of moment, an entity which deserves special treatment, that is, as a global power; but at the same time it is uncomfortable with being perceived as an independent entity that can hardly be part of another entity.

Russia is becoming accustomed to the enlargement of the Alliance; one day it will become acclimated to it completely. Let us just hope that this will not be merely an expression of Engels' "recognized necessity" but an expression of a new, more profound self-understanding. Just as others must learn to redefine themselves in the new multicultural and multipolar environment, Russia must learn it also.

This means not only that it cannot forever substitute megalomania or simply self-love for natural self-confidence but also that it must recognize where it begins and where it ends. For example, the huge Siberia with its vast natural resources is Russia but the tiny Estonia is not Russia and never will be. If Estonia feels that it belongs to the world represented by the North Atlantic Alliance or the European Union, this must be understood and respected and it should not be seen as an expression of enmity.

With this example I would to illustrate the following. The world of the 21st century, provided that humankind withstands all the dangers that it is preparing for itself, will be a world of an ever closer co-operation on a footing of equality among larger and mostly transnational bodies that will sometimes cover whole continents.

In order that the world can be like this, individual entities, cultures or spheres of civilization must clearly recognize their own identities, understand what makes them different from others and accept the fact that such otherness is not a handicap but a singular contribution to the global wealth of the human race. Of course, the same must be recognized also by those who, on the contrary, have the inclination to regard their otherness as a reason for feeling superior.

One of the most important organizations, in which all states as well as major transnational entities meet as equals for debate and make many important decisions which affect the whole world, is the United Nations. I believe that if the United Nations is to successfully perform the tasks to be imposed on it by the next century it must undergo a substantial reform.

• (1105)

The Security Council, the most important organ of the United Nations, can no longer maintain conditions from the time when the organization first came into being. Instead it must equitably mirror the multipolar world of today. We must reflect on whether it is indispensable that one state, even if only theoretically, could outvote the rest of the world. We must consider the question of which great, strong and numerous nations do not have permanent representation in that body. We must think out the pattern of rotation of the non-permanent members and a number of other things.

We must make the entire vast structure of the United Nations less bureaucratic and more effective.

We must deliberate on how to achieve real flexibility in the decision making of UN bodies, particularly of its plenary.

Most important, I believe we should ensure that all the inhabitants of our earth regard the United Nations as an organization that is truly theirs, not just as a club of governments.

The crucial point is what the UN can accomplish for the people of this planet, not what it does for individual states as states. Therefore, changes should probably be made also in the procedures for the financing of the organization, for the application of its documents and for the scrutiny of their applications.

This is not a matter of abolishing the powers of states and establishing some kind of a giant global state instead. The matter is that everything should not always flow, forever, solely through the hands of states or their governments. It is in the interest of humanity, of human rights and liberties as well as of life in general, that there is more than one channel through which the decisions of planetary leadership flow to the citizens and the citizens' will reaches the planetary leaders. More channels mean more balance and a wider mutual scrutiny.

I hope it is evident that I am not fighting here against the institution of the state as such. It would, for that matter, be rather absurd if the head of a state addressing the representative bodies of another state pleaded that states should be abolished.

I am talking about something else. I am talking about the fact that there is a value which ranks higher than the state. This value is humanity. The state, as is well known, is here to serve the people, not the other way around. If a person serves his or her state, such service should go only as far as is necessary for the state to do a good service to all its citizens.

Human rights rank above the rights of states. Human liberties constitute a higher value than state sovereignty. In terms of international law, the provisions that protect the unique human being should take precedence over the provisions that protect the state.

• (1110)

If, in the world of today, our fates are merged into one single destiny, and if every one of us is responsible for the future of all, nobody, not even the state, should be allowed to restrict the rights of the people to exercise this responsibility. I think that the foreign policies of individual states should gradually sever the category that has until now most often constituted their axis, that is the category of "interests", "our national interests" or "the foreign policy interests of our state".

The category of "interests" tends to divide rather than to bring us together. It is true that each of us has some specific interests. This is entirely natural and there is no reason why we should

abandon our legitimate concerns; but there is something that ranks higher than our interests: it is the principles that we espouse.

Principles unite us rather than divide us. Moreover, they are the yardstick for measuring the legitimacy or illegitimacy of our interests. I do not think it is valid when various state doctrines say that it is in the interest of the state to uphold such and such a principle. Principles must be respected and upheld for their own sake, so to speak, as a matter of principle, and interests should be derived from them.

For example, it would not be right if I said that it is in the interest of the Czech Republic that there is an equitable peace in the world. I have to say something else. There must be an equitable peace in the world and the interests of the Czech Republic must be subordinated to that.

The Alliance of which both Canada and the Czech Republic are now members is waging a struggle against the genocidal regime of Slobodan Milosevic. It is neither an easy struggle nor a popular one, and there can be different opinions on its strategy and tactics; but no person of sound judgment can deny one thing: This is probably the first war ever fought that is not being fought in the name of interests but in the name of certain principles and values.

If it is possible to say about the war that it is ethical, or that it is fought for ethical reasons, it is true of this war. Kosovo has no oil fields whose output might perhaps attract somebody's interest. No member country of the Alliance has any territorial claims there, and Milosevic is not threatening either the territorial integrity or any other integrity of any NATO member.

Nevertheless, the Alliance is fighting. It is fighting in the name of human interest for the fate of other human beings. It is fighting because decent people cannot sit back and watch systematic, state directed massacres of other people. Decent people simply cannot tolerate this and cannot fail to come to the rescue if a rescue action is within their power.

This war gives human rights precedence over the rights of states. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been attacked without a direct UN mandate for the Alliance's action. But the Alliance has not acted out of licence, aggressiveness or disrespect for international law. On the contrary, it has acted out of respect for the law, for the law that ranks higher than the protection of the sovereignty of states. It has acted out of respect for the rights of humanity, as they are articulated by our conscience as well as by other instruments of international law.

• (1115)

I see this as an important precedent for the future. It has now been clearly stated that it is not permissible to slaughter people, to evict them from their homes, to maltreat them and to deprive them of their property. It has been demonstrated that human rights are indivisible and that if injustice is done to some, it is done to all.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am well aware that Canadian politics has long and systematically advanced the principle of security of

the human being, which you deem equally important as that of security of the State, if not even more important. Let me assure you that this Canadian ethic enjoys a profound respect in my country. I would wish that we are not merely allies in a formal or institutional sense as members of the same defence alliance, but also as partners in promoting this worthy principle.

Dear friends, many times in the past I have pondered on the question of why humanity has the prerogative to any rights at all. Inevitably, I have always come to the conclusion that human rights, human liberties and human dignity have their deepest roots outside of this earthly world. They become what they are only because, under certain circumstances, they can mean to humanity a value that people place, without being forced to, higher than even their own lives. Thus, these notions have meaning only against the background of the infinite and of eternity. It is my profound conviction that the true worth of all our actions, whether or not they are in harmony with our conscience, the ambassador of eternity in our soul, is finally tested somewhere beyond our sight. If we did not sense this, or subconsciously surmise it, certain things could never get done.

Let me conclude my remarks on the State and on the role it will probably play in the future with the following statement: While the state is a human creation, humanity is a creation of God. L'Etat est l'oeuvre de l'homme, et l'homme est l'oeuvre de Dieu. Thank you.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

• (1120)

[Translation]

**Hon. Gildas Molgat (Speaker of the Senate):** Your Excellency, President Havel, Mrs. Havlovà, Prime Minister and Mrs. Chrétien, parliamentary colleagues, distinguished members of the diplomatic corps, and friends.

[English]

Your Excellency, the applause that you have just heard is the best thanks that we give to you for the vision for the future which you have given us this morning, what I might call the Havel Highway for Humanity.

Your Excellency, we are delighted to welcome you here, both as a friend and as a NATO Head of State.

[Translation]

Your address to our Parliament this morning, together with the new status of the Czech Republic as an ally, symbolize the growing closeness of the relations between the Czech Republic and Canada.

[English]

On a personal note, Your Excellency, I was pleased indeed that my Alma Mater, the University of Manitoba, awarded you one of its rarely given Special Honorary Degrees last night in Winnipeg. The university wanted to recognize your intelligence, your cour-

age, your devotion to principle and your literary achievement. I only regret that I could not be there myself last evening.

Just eight months ago, the Parliament of Canada convened to hear President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. I cannot help but be struck by some of the parallels in your separate careers. Both of you overcame what seemed to be insurmountable barriers, some life threatening, to promote your principles of freedom and the advancement of the human spirit.

You faced discrimination. You faced a totalitarian social structure. You were harassed and imprisoned for your beliefs and activities. You were denied the opportunity to complete the formal education of your choice. But never, never did you weaken.

Through your words and through your courageous leadership you became a key voice for freedom in Eastern Europe and through the world. The free world admires you.

[Translation]

During the decade of the sixties, when the cold war was at its deepest, you fought with a forceful weapon: words. In your writings, in your dramatic presentations *The Garden Party*, *The Memorandum* and *The Increased Difficulty of Concentration*, you made statements of principle and morality that struck a firm note for freedom.

• (1125)

It is an historic fact that your literary works helped to inspire the revival of democratic and national sentiments that led to the Prague Spring of 1968. And when Warsaw Pact intervention withered the Prague Spring, you played a leading role in organizing peaceful opposition to the totalitarian regime of the time.

[English]

Over the next decade, your continuing refusal to compromise your personal beliefs and political principles gave you a unique moral authority. And when passive Czechoslovak resistance turned revolutionary in November 1989, the Prague Drama Club gave birth to the Civic Forum. This organization spoke out on behalf of the growing number of groups and individuals demanding fundamental changes to the political system.

Given your past as a playwright and dissident, it was natural that you should play a leading role in the Civic Forum. Your strength of leadership seemed to make it inevitable that, like Nelson Mandela, you should be chosen President of your country and that in the summer of 1990 you should preside over the first free elections in more than 40 years.

[Translation]

Your Excellency, over the past six years, as the first President of the Czech Republic, you have assumed the role of international statesman and educator, leading to greater focus on the future of Europe. Your training as a dramatist has given you the philosophical and moral confidence to address the challenges facing Europe in a most profound way.

[*English*]

For example, your speeches have dwelt on the need for the European Union to stand for more than just a common currency and a common market; they have dwelt on the need for Europe to reinvent itself spiritually and to rediscover its basic classical civilization.

As a broad extension of that, you have often spoken of the common roots of human spirituality, as you have this morning. You have spoken of the need to find the universal moral imperatives that should focus on accepted rules of human co-existence, so badly needed right now.

Your Excellency, your ability and willingness to address the profoundly moral issues of a spiritual regeneration of western societies makes you unique among politicians and statesmen. We thank you for your address.

When you leave Canada, you will take with you our affection, our respect and our universal good wishes.

Merci.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Speaker Parent:** Mr. President and Mrs. Havlovà, the Prime Minister and Madam Chrétien, Senators, my colleagues of the House of Commons, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. President, thank you for honouring the Chamber and us with your presence and your eloquence.

[*Translation*]

As the Prime Minister said, it is a rare occasion for our two Houses to convene here as we have today. It is, Mr. President, a mark of the strong ties between the Czech Republic and Canada and of the deep friendship between our two countries.

And if there is any person for whom we should, as the Prime Minister said, set aside our daily skirmishes, it is you, Excellency. Because your life is a truly inspiring story of courage in the face of oppression. It is one of stubborn adherence to the highest political principles.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Our country, our dear Canada, is fortunate to have had a democracy since its beginning. Yet sometimes we may take our democracy for granted.

On the other hand, Mr. President, you had to fight to secure political rights for your people, and at great personal risk.

You acted on your belief, and you underlined it today, that every individual is entitled to freedom and dignity. And we, the parliamentarians of Canada, know how hard you worked in your country to rebuild the parliamentary institutions that gave expression to those rights.

Your presence in this Chamber is a very strong symbol for us, one that tells us we should always cherish, cultivate and renew the basic democratic ideas that are embodied here in this place.

You have given us a broader perspective of the challenges we face as a country that wants to play a positive role in a turbulent world. We agree, all of us here, that some values are so fundamental that they are worth defending, sometimes at great cost.

Ultimately, these values are not just Czech or Canadian, or even western, but values that belong to the human race as a whole.

[*Translation*]

You have championed a vision of Europe that strikes a chord among Canadians. You have called Europe “a single political entity, though immensely diverse and multi-faceted”, where diverse peoples can work in common cause. The same can be said of Canada. We take pride in our diversity and have always sought to thrive on our differences.

[*English*]

Mr. President, you have shown us how one individual can influence the course of history in the face of great adversity.

The world is fortunate to have such an eloquent spokesman for its greatest dreams.

Some years ago, Mr. President, I and many, if not all, Canadians rejoiced in the Prague Spring, and then we wept with you because it did not continue.

Now, in the last few years when you, sir, have been president of your great country, there is a renewal of the Prague Spring.

You spoke about not only individual rights, but you spoke, sir, about humanity.

I said once in this House to a gathering like this that if you would know about the strength of a nation, you should look to her laws and to her soldiers. But if you would know about the soul of a nation, you should turn to her poets, to her writers and to her artists.

Today, sir, you have become for us and all those who have heard you, the poet, the writer and the spokesman who tells us about the soul of humanity. Thank you for being with us on this day.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.



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