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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 2, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 2, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

[Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Environment Week, a week set aside for Canadians to recommit themselves to environmental action. This week Canadians have an opportunity to act to meet our climate change goals and commitments. The federal government wants to help.

In last year's budget \$150 million was committed to the climate change action fund. The fund includes a public education and outreach program. This program builds public awareness and informs and engages Canadians on climate change. It encourages partnerships between governments, communities, the private sector and other organizations in early action measures.

We do know this: we must act; we can act; we are acting. Only by acting now can we protect the environment for today and for future generations.

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THE DEBT

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is about two and one-half years ago since I gave a statement in this House welcoming little Noah, our new grandson. Members may recall that I bemoaned the fact that the Liberal and Conservative governments of the past 30 years had loaded him with a debt of around \$20,000.

I am proud to announce that Noah now has a little sister, Hannah, born on May 15. She too was born crying. Like her brother, her share of the debt is almost \$20,000. Our four grandchildren, Dallas, Kayla, Noah and Hannah, collectively owe \$75,000. I am very unhappy about leaving that legacy of debt to our grandchildren.

I say to little baby Hannah, welcome. We assure you that you are and will be greatly loved. I assure you too that your grandpa and his Reform colleagues will continue to demand debt reduction and lower taxes from this high-flying Liberal government.

* * *

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a fellow member of the Women Entrepreneurs of Canada, Rossana Magnotta, executive vice-president of Magnotta Winery and president of Festa Juice for having been selected to represent Canada as one of the leading women entrepreneurs of the world.

As the only Canadian honouree, Rossana was one of 50 women business owners selected to attend the third annual gala and celebration in Monaco. The concept of an annual gala and celebratory events in a different international city each year was created to highlight the accomplishments of women business owners worldwide, their effect on the global economy and to showcase these women as role models.

Rossana Magnotta is certainly one of those role models. In eight years Magnotta Winery has become Ontario's third largest winery in terms of volume and sales. It has also been awarded over 800 medals in adjudicated competitions. With increased capacity Magnotta is taking on the international markets with exports to the United States, Japan, Taiwan and China.

This truly is a Canadian success story. We congratulate Rossana.

* * *

[Translation]

TÉLÉBEC MOBILITÉ

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, continuous cell phone service has been available in La Vérendrye wildlife refuge since May 19, thanks to the perseverance of the President of Télébec Mobilité, Richard Hélie, and his employees.

S. O. 31

Under this \$2 million project, five cellular sites were installed along the nearly 200 kilometers of Trans-Canada Highway 117.

This service is an important safety factor for car and truck drivers, as well as for fishers and hunters. It provides technological, economic and tourist advantages to the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region and the wildlife operations of the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec.

We thank the Télébec and Télébec Mobilité team in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

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[English]

SENIORS MONTH

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today in recognition of June as Seniors Month.

On this occasion as well as throughout the year it is important to remember the tremendous contribution that our senior citizens have made and continue to make to the social and economic well-being of Canada. In my own riding of Guelph—Wellington, senior citizens are a vibrant part of our community through their work and volunteerism.

The United Nations has declared 1999 as International Year of Older Persons. The Government of Canada is proudly participating in this event through activities that help raise awareness of the important role that seniors play in society.

During Seniors Month let us reflect on the rich gift that we have inherited from Canada's seniors. By emphasizing the need for consideration and respect between all generations, Canadians can contribute toward giving our senior citizens the honour that they deserve.

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• (1405)

NELSON MANDELA

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, members regularly unite in recognizing political greatness. One such leader who deserves this unity is Nelson Mandela. Taking the helm of his country after nearly three decades in prison, he has acted as a moral compass for a deeply divided society.

The bitterness of apartheid could quite easily have erupted into a violent and extremely bloody civil war. However, it did not and today it is one of the few functioning democracies in Africa. South Africa is now holding its presidential election.

In pursuing retirement he now seeks peace and quiet to contemplate his life's work and the future of his country. But it is his

leadership and his moral purpose that characterized his term in office that have made these elections possible.

This House will not be sitting when his successor is sworn in. Nevertheless I think that this House will join me in extending to Mr. Mandela our very best wishes and our admiration for what he has accomplished as President of South Africa.

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WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY

Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell everyone a little bit about Windsor and Essex County as a summer vacation destination.

We enjoy festivals such as the Carousel of Nations where we join together to celebrate our multicultural society. Each of our cultural groups proudly shares their foods and customs with their neighbours who tour from village to village.

The International Freedom Festival, a two nation birthday celebration, has turned into a two week party over the last 30 years. It showcases talent and fires off the most elaborate and exciting fireworks display on the continent.

The International Blues Fest each year attracts world class performers and music enthusiasts to this outdoor weekend of fun and street partying.

Festival Epicure shows off the talents and cuisine of our finest restaurants and bistros, while the International Busker Fest celebrates the talents of street performers from around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but you had better come to Windsor and Essex County to see for yourself.

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[Translation]

GILLES DOSTIE

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Société nationale des Québécois de L'Amiante paid a rousing tribute to Gilles Dostie, a true nationalist of unshakeable convictions, who has remained a simple and modest man while being involved in all manner of humanitarian causes.

The ceremony, held before over 400 people at Club Aramis, with Guy Bouthillier as the honorary chairman, afforded the people of L'Amiante an opportunity to say thank you to this man who has committed his life to serving his community.

Gilles Dostie will leave his mark on our region, among other things as a co-founder of the Comptoir familial de Thetford and the Centre communautaire Marie-Agnès-Desrosiers.

I join with all the people of L'Amiante in congratulating and thanking Gilles Dostie, who is and will continue to be a source of inspiration for the entire population.

Thanks are also due to his wife, Pierrette Gagnon, for her unflinching support over the years.

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[English]

SPACE MISSION

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Canadian astronaut Julie Payette for sharing with Canadians her experiences during the current space mission.

Nunavut students in Rankin Inlet were among those Julie touched as she answered their questions. I know they will be along with other young Canadians inspired to reach for the stars themselves.

Canadians watched Sarah Wheaton of Iqaluit, winner of the Canadian Space Agency's nationwide contest, proudly wave the new Nunavut flag at the launch at the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida. I know she and her family will not forget this experience.

I applaud the opportunities my constituents have had to participate in yet another historic moment for Canada.

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CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's question period brought back fond memories of when the current Minister of Human Resources Development was minister in charge of the CIDA cesspool and I was the critic.

The Prime Minister makes much of the fact that there were three bidders for the infamous Mali contract. He has apparently forgotten that those three companies, all from the same region, were hand-picked by the minister, who then told the House, "I have no recollection of only three Quebec firms having been kept on the short list". Other competitors including at least one better qualified than Transelec were not even allowed to bid.

The bad odour from that saga forced CIDA to rewrite its rules for tendering.

• (1410)

It was well known that at that time the prime qualification for a large CIDA contract was a substantial donation to the Liberal Party. What was not well known until recently was that doing business with the Prime Minister was much more useful.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

Long live pork barrel politics.

* * *

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Henri, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is road safety week.

We can never stress enough how careful both children and drivers must be on roads and in public places.

Too many Canadian children are lost to the road, unfortunately, every year. The years in which the statistics are lower never compensate for the pain these tragedies bring to all of us.

The government can come up with all sorts of laws and regulations, but without greater community and individual responsibility than we are seeing now it will be to no avail.

Repression will not put an end to all the carelessness on our highways. How many more victims will it take before we recognize that this responsibility is essential in order to spare the lives of our children?

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[English]

YOUTH UNLIMITED

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1974 Youth Unlimited of Regina has been helping address problems for the city's young, problems many Canadians incorrectly assume exist only in the third world.

In the past decade the federal government has helped with the summer day camp. The federal government has advised however that it is not funding this year's camp. There was no consultation and no alternative sources of funding, just a plain no.

Clearly Regina MPs are not in the same league as the fabulously successful member of parliament for Saint-Maurice who was able to secure multiple grants and loans for Shawinigan enterprises often before a plan was submitted.

The Regina day camp has helped keep children off our streets. Also off the street this week is the executive director of Youth Unlimited in Regina. Maurice Kovatch is atop a flagpole on Albert Street trying to attract attention and secure donations to aid this worthwhile cause. It is a shame the government by its heartlessness forces this kind of bread and circuses on to causes which desperately need and deserve public support.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, between May 31 and June 11 the federal court will hear the appeal by the government of the decision made by the Human Rights Tribunal on pay equity.

The scorn heaped by the President of the Treasury Board on his employees is shameful, and becoming more apparent daily. While he spends millions of taxpayers' dollars in legal costs of all sorts, he has the gall to cite excessive costs as the reason for his refusal to comply with the latest decision by the tribunal on pay equity.

The President of the Treasury Board should be ashamed of treating his employees this way. The worst of it is that pay equity is not an isolated incident; nothing of the sort.

Although they have the legitimate right to strike, these employees are being forced to return to work by a government that dared do so with special legislation passed behind closed doors.

It also passed legislation allowing it to brazenly dip into the surpluses of the public service employees' pension funds.

What bounds are there to the government's scorn for the legitimate rights of its employees? It ought to take a look to see whether the President of Treasury Board is not at war with his employees.

* * *

CANADIAN ECONOMY

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the economy, the Liberal government chose to take concrete measures to promote economic growth. The results accurately reflect our efforts to improve the quality of life of Canadians.

For example, since 1993 the job creation and economic growth strategy of the Liberal government has been made possible by a policy promoting investment, tax reduction and debt reduction.

Since October 1993 1.6 million new jobs have been created and economic indicators are generating optimism among Canadians.

The Liberal government is also helping young people. To help regions with high unemployment we invest \$110 million each year in the Canada jobs fund.

These are concrete measures taken by the Liberal government to ensure sustained economic growth in all regions of Canada.

KOSOVO

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Kosovo crisis has moved public opinion in our country. It has triggered many initiatives and gestures of solidarity.

In my riding, children from several schools have drawn pictures and written messages of peace to the children who are among the victims of that crisis. Through their initiative, our children want to reach out in compassion to comfort other children of their own age who have been torn away from their families, homes and dreams.

• (1415)

We are sending these messages today to the Kosovar children in the refugee camps located in Macedonia and Albania, and to those whom we have welcomed here in Canada.

In addition to the collective commitments made by our country to take part in NATO air strikes and to welcome refugees, we must also let our hearts speak through small acts of compassion such as these in the face of such terrible inhumanity.

Congratulations to those in charge of the Paix-Cible organization, particularly Diana Tremblay and Francine Riverin, and their chaplain, Reverend Paul Tremblay.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

KOSOVO

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, last week defence ministers from the United States and the major European countries met to discuss the question of ground troops in Kosovo, but not the Canadian defence minister. He was not even asked to deliver doughnuts.

Our CF-18s carry NATO payloads in the skies of Yugoslavia. We have hundreds of military personnel already involved in the conflict and we are sending 800 more. We ought to be involved in the planning.

How does the government explain Canada's complete absence from this important meeting?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we are involved with the planning because the decisions are made at NATO and we are a full partner in NATO.

Second, the meeting last week was a regular meeting of defence ministers of the European Union. On the side of that meeting, a few of them met with Secretary Cohen of the United States. It was an

informal meeting. It was by no means a meeting attended by any NATO officials. No decisions were made. It was an ad hoc meeting. In fact, I had an ad hoc meeting on the phone today with Secretary Cohen to discuss the matter.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this avoids the question.

A meeting of major members of NATO was held to discuss the question of ground troops in Kosovo. President Clinton has just made an announcement based on that meeting. Meanwhile, our defence minister's response to questions on a mission in which Canada will presumably be involved is "I do not know who was there. I do not know what was discussed. I do not know what impact it had".

How does the government expect Canadians to have any confidence in the defence minister or Canada's participation in this affair when the position of the defence minister is "I do not know?"

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not know yesterday simply because it was an ad hoc meeting. It was not a formal meeting. There was no decision making made there whatsoever.

There are lots of bilateral meetings. I have them with these same people. They have no official status whatsoever. What is important is that the decision making and planning goes on at NATO and we are a full partner in that process.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there was a time when Canada had a major and important role in any military and strategic conference involving the security of the western world.

Prime Minister King met with Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt. The counsel of Prime Minister Pearson was sought out by world leaders with respect to the Suez crisis. Under this administration and this Prime Minister, Canada's influence on international security has been reduced to the minimum.

What does the government propose to do to secure a meaningful role for Canada in the military and strategic planning in Kosovo?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of these questions is absolutely false.

When decision making is going on at the NATO council, we are there. When participation in terms of the peace plan involves the G-8, we are there. When decisions are made by the United Nations Security Council, we are there.

This was a European Union regular meeting of defence ministers. On the side of that, there were a few of them who got together in an ad hoc informal way. No decisions were made. Nothing came out that we were not involved in because the involvement and decision making goes on at NATO.

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I did not realize the Americans were part of the European Union for its little ad hoc chat.

The Prime Minister has battles of his own here. The showcase of shame continues to loom over him. A friend won a \$6 million CIDA contract after donating more than \$10,000 to the Prime Minister's campaign. He then went on to inject more than \$500,000 into the Prime Minister's company on a land deal.

Why does the Prime Minister think it is okay to abuse his office that way?

• (1420)

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premise of the hon. member's question is totally false.

The decision on the CIDA contract was made by an arm's length committee composed of four members: two of them were representatives of the Government of Mali, one was an outside consultant and the other one was an observer from CIDA. They made the decision and the decision was obviously one based on the fact that the successful company had the lowest bid.

Only the Reform Party would be against the lowest bidder winning a government contract.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in some of these arm's length organizations the arms get pretty short.

The Prime Minister accepts tens of thousands of dollars in contributions from Mr. Gauthier. He then does personal business deals that pull in over half a million dollars for Mr. Gauthier. Then when Mr. Gauthier gets a \$6.3 million government contract, the Prime Minister and his government wonder why anyone would see a conflict with that.

We would like to hear an answer from the Prime Minister to this question. Why does he not get up? Why does the Prime Minister always pretend there is no conflict when it is as plain as the pavement on his driveway?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no involvement by the Prime Minister.

Why do the Reform Party members not get up and admit that they are making these baseless allegations because they are trying to divert attention from the fact that their party is disintegrating before the eyes of Canadians and Reform members are in open revolt against the united alternative initiative and, in particular, against their Leader of the Opposition? For that matter, they are at half of where they were in the last election. The party is dying and they are trying to hide that fact even from themselves.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***ASBESTOS**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in reference to asbestos and the WTO, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs justified the federal government's refusal to be accompanied by Quebec by saying "winning a round against the WTO means playing by the WTO's rules".

How can the minister say that it is the WTO's rules that are preventing Quebec from joining the Canadian delegation when, in reality, everyone knows that the rules were set by the federal government?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the asbestos issue obviously involves regulations passed by the French government and not regulations passed by the province of Quebec.

It is therefore only right that the national government, which represents all Canadians, including Quebecers, play the principal role.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs will reply, unless the Deputy Prime Minister is going to bat for him.

I would like him to tell me the specific WTO regulation or section that prevents a provincial government from sitting on the Canadian delegation.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister not admit that this was a decision taken by the federal government, and that the truth is that it is the federal government that is preventing the provinces, including Quebec, from sitting on the delegation and not the WTO?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, it is all the federal government's fault.

They are still looking for winning conditions, but these conditions will be their undoing. In the case of an international trade dispute, Canadian policy is to invite the provinces to take part in hearings only in the case of provincial measures that are challenged by other countries.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs had the nerve to claim that Quebec would be less well served if it were present at the table with the federal government. Yet it is Quebec that prepared the entire case. Even the minister acknowledges that.

Is the minister aware that the federal government's position of excluding Quebec from defending its asbestos, when we are the second ranking producer in the world, is not based on any logic, has no connection with any WTO requirement and is purely doctrinaire?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would say is that yesterday the deputy Premier of Quebec accused the Government of Canada of being fanatical on this issue.

I would suggest that the Government of Quebec and the Bloc Québécois drop all of this verbal bombast, which only proves in the end that they are out to get winning conditions.

• (1425)

Second, in the WTO all member states, without exception, jealously protect their ability to speak with a single voice in negotiations in order to be in a winning position.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister told us that Quebec will be briefed every evening on the progress of negotiations.

He ought to realize that by evening it will be too late for us to tell the federal government what other arguments it ought to have used to defend us.

Is this the best way to defend the interests of Quebec, briefing us in the evening after the cases have already been argued?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been informed that, of the 12 delegation members, 10 are from the province of Quebec and are spokespersons for the Quebec asbestos industry. These are the real experts. Their expertise will, I trust, help us toward a good outcome for the people of Quebec and for all the people of Canada.

* * *

[English]

KOSOVO

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister is scrambling to convince Canadians that he is on top of his job. Let us listen to the words of the defence minister about a key NATO meeting that took place six days ago. He can try to duck it but these are his words, "I don't know exactly who was at the meeting. I'm still looking into it. I don't know what was discussed or what impact it had. I'm still waiting to find out".

Canadian Armed Forces personnel are doing their jobs in the Balkans. Canadian aid workers are doing their jobs. Why can the defence minister not do his job?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing that is false about that preamble is her suggestion that it was a NATO meeting. It was not a NATO meeting at all. It was a regular meeting of defence ministers of the European Union. They have been going on year in and year out and nobody has ever suggested that Canada should be involved in those meetings. They are strictly for the European Union. A group of them decided to have an informal ad hoc meeting on the side with

Oral Questions

Mr. Cohen. That is all it was. It was not a decision making meeting by any means. Decisions are made at the full NATO council in Brussels and Canada is a full participant.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when is a meeting a meeting? When armed forces personnel go AWOL there are definite consequences, but when the defence minister abandons his post there appears to be absolutely no consequences whatsoever.

Are Canadians to conclude that the government has no intention of doing anything about the incompetence of the defence minister?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am on the job. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas was part of the NDP caucus that went a little AWOL not too long ago in going over to Belgrade.

I just had a meeting today with Secretary Cohen. I have had numerous meetings with Secretary Cohen and other defence ministers within NATO. I do not hear complaints from other NATO defence ministers that I did not include them.

We all know that we have informal discussions, but we also know that the decision making process is at NATO in Brussels and we are all full participants in it.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister refused to answer three simple questions: First, will he ask his HRDC minister to release the 363 pages withheld from my access to information request on the Duhaime and Thibault deals; second, will he release all the documents regarding the CIDA contract to Claude Gauthier; and third, will he invoke section 11 of the Auditor General Act to investigate this questionable use of taxpayers' dollars?

Will the Prime Minister answer these questions or will he keep hiding behind his cabinet ministers?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is obvious that if there is one person who is a 100% stand-up guy and does not hide from anything, it is our Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is meeting with the executive director of the International Monetary Fund at an important function.

• (1430)

I want to say that there is not a shred of evidence of any wrongdoing. The auditor general, of course, has his own autonomy and jurisdiction. Furthermore, the Minister of Human Resources Development and the minister responsible for CIDA can give answers on the release of documents.

The Prime Minister has acted in a perfectly proper way in this—

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, if there is not a shred of evidence, let us table all of the documents.

We, the Conservative caucus, were the first to urge the Prime Minister to use section 11 of the Auditor General Act to clear the air on this scandal. Only an independent investigation from an apolitical, arm's length office can credibly examine the nearly \$9 million in questionable HRDC grants, federal business loans and CIDA grants to the Prime Minister's friends and constituents.

Is the Prime Minister refusing to ask the auditor general to investigate because of what might be uncovered?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no CIDA grant. It is a contract for work being done in one of the poorest countries in the world.

There is not a shred of evidence. It is all innuendo and it is rotten politics.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that whenever—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jason Kenney: There is a little concern over there.

It seems that whenever the Prime Minister is asked some tough questions about his shady business dealings—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to go directly to his question.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, why is it that when the Prime Minister threatens to sue people for talking about conflicts of interests outside this House he ends up ducking, dodging and disappearing? Why is it that the Prime Minister expects Canadians to believe that when he receives \$15,000 from a constituent and gets a half million dollars in his company from that constituent that a \$190,000 untendered government paving contract is an accident?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to call your attention and that of the House, to remind everyone, to the fact that the Prime Minister is in the House a lot more than the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all hon. members that we do not refer either to the presence or the absence of any members in the House.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, no one has ever accused the Leader of the Opposition of letting an untendered government contract to a campaign contributor and a business partner. No one has ever accused the Leader of the Opposition of doing business with convicted criminals and benefiting from it.

I want to ask the Acting Prime Minister, seeing as the man in his stead is not here, how can he—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

* * *

[Translation]

KOSOVO

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week in Bonn the U.S. defence secretary and four of his European counterparts met secretly to discuss a possible ground war in Kosovo.

• (1435)

Canada was excluded from this meeting. Yesterday the Minister of National Defence did not even know who had attended the meeting and what was said.

What explanation can the Minister of National Defence offer for the way in which Canada was left out of discussions that could ultimately involve the lives of our troops?

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I have said a number of times. We are not a member of the European Union. This was the defence ministers of the European Union getting together as they regularly do. On the side of that meeting there was an informal ad hoc meeting of three or four of those ministers plus Secretary Cohen of the United States. This was not a decision making meeting because decisions are made at NATO and we are a full participant of NATO.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the U.S. was there, as well as four major European nations, not necessarily members of the European Union. Not all members of the European Union were there.

Is the fact that the Minister of National Defence was excluded even from the informal meeting not proof that this government is considered second rate and that is exactly what other countries

think of this minister? When he is called, it is to inform him of decisions already taken, but not to consult him.

[English]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had a bilateral meeting with Secretary Cohen by telephone today. I have had numerous meetings with him. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, met last week with the Secretary of State for the United States, Madam Albright. We did not receive any complaints from the Europeans because we had these informal bilateral meetings. It is part of the ongoing process of keeping each other informed.

However, when it comes to deciding what needs to be done, when it comes to mapping out the plans for NATO, that is being done in Brussels with the full NATO council of which we are a full participating member, and we will continue to be a full participating member in this fashion.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it was the Prime Minister's numbered company that owned the Grand-Mère golf course when Monsieur Gauthier bought the half million dollars worth of land. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that he believed he had sold those shares, but—and this is critically important—the sale of those shares never went through. In other words, the shares returned to the Prime Minister and they are now in the hands of his own solicitor.

How can the Prime Minister claim that there is no conflict of interest when he had a financial stake in a company that stood to benefit from this deal?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recall hearing the Prime Minister say in this House more than once that he has no financial interest in the company in question and that the shares were not returned to him.

The unwarranted allegations of the Reform Party show the truth of the adage, especially when we look at how it has fallen in the polls, that when the Reform Party throws mud, it loses ground.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when the ethics counsellor appeared before the standing committee he admitted that those shares had not been paid for. In fact they were searching for a new buyer for those shares. They are held by the solicitor of the Prime Minister. In other words, he had an interest in the company. Mr. Gauthier then bought some land from him. He then got a big contract from CIDA. He then gave a \$10,000 donation to the Prime Minister's personal campaign.

The Prime Minister benefited electorally from that donation and I assume that he also benefited from the sale of that land. How much did he benefit from the sale of that land to Mr. Gauthier?

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Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister played no role in the granting of the contract through CIDA to carry out work in Mali. It was done by an outside committee.

The Prime Minister has said over and over again that he has no interest in the company in question.

The hon. members are in breach of a basic principle of Canadian and British justice, that he who asserts must prove. They have not brought any evidence. They have not proven anything. All they have proven is why they are trying to deflect attention from their own disintegration and their own self-destruction.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-54

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

By saying in response to Quebec Minister Joseph Facal that Bill C-54 did not call into question “the principles of Quebec civil law” the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is showing that he is sadly ignorant of the subject.

Is the minister not aware that Minister Facal’s position is the same as that of the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires du Québec and the Québec Interprofessional Council, among others?

• (1440)

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I quote witness Jacques Frémont of the University of Montreal, who said “I have been saying for a while that there is a legitimate federal presence”.

He also said that the federal government could get involved and that it would be entirely constitutional to regulate exchanges of data for the protection of personal lives in all areas of interprovincial and international trade.

We will protect, with the Government of Quebec, the privacy of all citizens of Quebec and Canada.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the same Jacques Frémont said, the same day, “It is a constitutional blow”.

How can the minister say his government is acting totally within the Constitution when, with Bill C-54, his government is usurping the right to decide whether a law in Quebec, in an area under Quebec’s jurisdiction, applies or not? This is not federalism, it is trusteeship.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that it is not solely the responsibility of the provincial

government. It is the responsibility of both levels of government. The same Jacques Frémont said “Bill C-54 is a good idea, a very good idea”.

That is enough for me, because the people of Quebec have an advantage. They have a provincial bill on privacy protection as well. This was a bill of the former government of Daniel Johnson, which gives them, with Bill C-54, the best protection in Canada. Now, that is a good idea.

* * *

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is patting himself on the back for the great things he has done in the riding of Saint-Maurice, unemployment in that region is as high as when he was elected in 1993. Yet he continues to use the money of Canadian taxpayers under the pretext of creating jobs in order to pay back his buddies.

It is obvious that this money is not increasing employment. Only are increasing donations to the Liberal Party slush fund.

How can he justify being the Prime Minister of the people when the only people he is helping are his friends?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the projects in the riding of Shawinigan were no different than job creation projects approved in the Reform Party held ridings of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for the West Coast Trail Hotel, Cariboo—Chilcotin for the Wells Hotel expansion project and, listen to this one, West Kootenay—Okanagan for the Halycon Health Spa.

[Translation]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the government line, but—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the government line, but what the minister appears to be forgetting is that the Prime Minister announced contracts in his riding even before the ink was dry.

It is pure coincidence, I am sure, but how can he explain that a high proportion of the contracts awarded in his riding have links leading directly to him or his office?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made it very clear that he has no personal interest whatsoever in this matter, despite the constantly repeated allegations to the contrary. He has been very clear on that.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: The projects approved by my department had been discussed between my staff and the contractors in the riding of Saint-Maurice. There was no undue pressure. We checked things very carefully indeed.

I can assure hon. members that we are going to continue with the Canadian job creation fund, which has so far created 30,000 jobs across Canada in regions of excessive unemployment.

* * *

● (1445)

MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development thought he could get away with appointing a facilitator in the matter of millennium scholarships.

However, it appears that the facilitator did not facilitate much, and time is of the essence in this matter for the students.

Will the Minister of Human Resources Development assume his responsibilities, become personally involved in the matter, and, finally, meet once and for all with Minister Legault in Quebec City?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont for the planted question, planted perhaps by the other side.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: I do want to say one thing. I realize that this time, unfortunately, the member for Rosemont does not appear to be particularly up to date on the latest events. I talked to Mr. Legault at noon.

I can assure the member that he and I are on absolutely the same wavelength. We noted that progress had been made in meetings between our officials and our spokespersons. We are both aware that the few remaining minor stumbling blocks may be resolved in the coming days.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the finance minister indicated that he would make a decision soon regarding extending the Y2K tax exemption.

Now that the industry committee has reported, could he tell us if he will extend the Y2K exemption for small business?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question posed by the member for Sarnia—Lambton is a classic example of how he and all other members on this side of the House have consistently sought to further the interests and the needs of small and medium size business in the country.

I am very grateful to the member as indeed I am very grateful to the members of the industry committee who have deliberated long and hard on the particular measure. They have recommended that this tax measure be extended for small and medium size business until October 31 of this year.

I am delighted to announce today that the government accepts that recommendation.

* * *

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here is what has happened. First, a friend buys a money losing hotel from the Prime Minister's company and then receives nearly \$1 million in grants and loans.

Second, just before the election the Prime Minister makes a splashy announcement of a big grant in his riding without any approval.

Third, another friend donates \$10,000 to the Prime Minister's campaign, injects \$500,000 into his cash starved golf course, and receives a multimillion CIDA contract.

Is this what the Prime Minister calls good, honest government?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to use this occasion to correct an inaccurate insinuation by another Reform member earlier.

The Prime Minister sold the shares in question before he became Prime Minister. He has not yet been paid. His trustee holds the debt. The shares are in the hands of the buyer. The Prime Minister's lawyer only controls the debt and the Prime Minister has no intention of ever getting the shares back.

The basis for the earlier question is wrong. The basis for this question is wrong. Once again it is an act of desperation by the disintegrating Reform Party.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that is a good try, but the fact is that the Prime Minister's fingerprints are all over these suspect transactions of public money.

When will the government set things clear by tabling all the documents, having an independent inquiry into this matter, and making sure that there has been no conflict of interest, for Canadians?

Hon. Diane Marleau (Minister for International Cooperation and Minister responsible for Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of making these wild unsubstantiated accusations, the

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Reform Party should congratulate the companies in question for the work they are doing in one of the poorest countries in the world.

* * *

PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, background documents on the new made in America magazine deal state that Canadian content is "original to the Canadian market or has been authored by a Canadian".

By this definition a quick rewrite of an article on American Olympians in a new spit-run edition of *Newsweek* becomes voila, Canadian content.

The new definition now includes work written by American writers as long as they are only published in an American split run. Does the minister agree that by this new definition American content is now Canadian content?

• (1450)

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the regulations specifically preclude rewrites.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister should read her own documents. By agreeing upon this definition of Canadian content, the minister has kicked open the door for challenges on Canadian content in films, books, music, and all other endeavours. They are now all threatened.

The minister has a choice to make. Either she endorses an American definition of Canadian content and keeps her cabinet seat, or she stands up as a Canadian cultural nationalist and resigns in principle.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy the member has understood that Canadian content in the law is a big step forward.

The fact is that the regulations accompanying this legislation insist any new magazine that sets up in Canada must have a majority of content for the Canadian market which is only Canadian content.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Minister of National Defence of some interesting facts.

A month ago the NATO secretary general asked General Wesley Clark, NATO chief of staff, to prepare a plan for the deployment of ground troops. Last week in Bonn a plan was provided and a call was issued for a meeting of NATO members, to which Canada was not invited.

How are we to be credible in the military action if Canada is not even included in the military planning?

[*English*]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, it was a meeting of the European Union. We are not a member of that.

There were a few on the side who decided to have a meeting with Secretary Cohen. I am told that General Clark was not there. In fact there was no NATO official there.

It was not anything more than an exchange of information, an exchange of views, which is the same thing that goes on, on a bilateral basis every day, including a meeting my colleague had with Secretary Albright last week. The decisions are in fact made at the NATO council in Brussels and we are a full participant.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has just told us that he himself spoke today with the U.S. defence secretary, Mr. Cohen.

Can the minister tell us if they discussed the Bonn meeting? Is he now aware of what went on last week? Could he inform the House a bit?

Did the U.S. defence secretary also inform the minister of the agreement that now reflects Russian participation in a military force in Kosovo?

[*English*]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have regular meetings either by phone or in person with Secretary Cohen to discuss general matters relevant to the effort in Kosovo. Secretary Cohen informed me that the position of the ministers he met with is as we all understand and as we all agree, that the air campaign must continue.

We must put continuing pressure on the Yugoslav government while the diplomatic effort is also ongoing and involves the Russians. Hopefully it will all come together and we will be able to get peace and security and a return of the Kosovars to their homeland.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It concerns NATO actions against Yugoslavia.

Could the minister please advise the House as to the rulings announced today by the International Court of Justice on the legal suits brought by Yugoslavia against Canada and other NATO states?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the House that the Interna-

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tional Court of Justice, by an overwhelming majority, has totally dismissed the petition by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for an injunction against NATO action. The judges themselves have clearly seen through the attempts by the Milosevic regime to use this as a propaganda means.

I remind the House that Yugoslavia has never recognized its responsibilities under international law. Last week Mr. Milosevic and his cohorts were indicted as war criminals. It showed clearly where the responsibility lies.

* * *

NAV CANADA

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, summer air travel in the country could come to a halt if the dispute between the air traffic controllers and Nav Canada does not come to a quick conclusion.

With both parties willing to negotiate, will the Minister of Labour allow them time to hammer out a deal and get it ratified?

• (1455)

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the conciliator's report was released on Monday and the parties have returned to the table. The government is prepared to assist the two parties in any way we can.

* * *

*[Translation]***MONETARY UNION**

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian ambassador to the United States and the second in command at the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank have just rekindled the debate on a single currency for the Americas. Even the very skeptical chief economist of the Royal Bank of Canada now admits that the idea intrigues him.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does he really want to be the last on the bandwagon, or has he had a change of heart since March and would he now agree that a special house committee should be struck to take a hard look at this issue, which is capturing the interest of more and more people?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, Mr. McCallum said exactly the opposite of what the member just claimed.

Second, the United States has made it very clear that it would never consider monetary union or a common currency. It would only consider the use of the U.S. dollar, which would be a very expensive proposition for the monetary policy of any other country wishing to use it.

*[English]***THE BUDGET**

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance confirmed in the House that he paid \$104,000 of the public's money to three Liberal hacks to polish his budget speech.

That is \$3,500 a page or \$5 a word; in other words a lot of public gold for the minister's silver tongue. On top of that he spent \$3.85 million advertising the budget, an increase of 500% from last year.

In what could be a Liberal leadership year, how much will next year's budget cost to advertise? Will it be \$5 million or \$10 million? How much?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me simply quote from the departmental official who confirmed what I said in the House yesterday, that it was not only for a speech. It was for the entire communications strategy.

In fact, and I now quote, it was for all of the other informational material about the budget. It is true that there was advertising about the budget. That advertising was generally very well received by all people in the country, unlike the advertising for the Parti Quebecois which was condemned by the agencies that watch that kind of advertising.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government has set up an official maritime helicopter project office in the Department of National Defence. This is the first official step toward a Sea King replacement.

I have a question for the minister. Why has there been no announcement? Is he waiting for parliament to recess to make this announcement, or will he do it now?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working on this project. As I have said before, we are developing our procurement strategy. This is a very major purchase. It is very complicated too in terms of the missions system, so it is taking some time to put all the pieces together.

I am hopeful that at the very earliest opportunity we will be able to announce that we are proceeding, but certainly the matter is still under consideration.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly concerned about climate change. May was drier and warmer than normal in some regions of Canada. The St.

Lawrence River and the Great Lakes have water levels that are well below their 30 year average.

Could the Minister of the Environment tell the House what she is presently doing to ensure that Canada will reduce its greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is a top priority of the government. Earlier today, with the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Transport, I had the opportunity to announce eight new transportation projects intended to demonstrate how all Canadians can participate in reducing greenhouse gases.

This is clean air day. The government has also launched a climate change trade fair which I welcome all members of the House and the public in this region to visit to see how all Canadians have worked together to reduce greenhouse gases.

* * *

NAV CANADA

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour say that she was willing to do everything possible to get an agreement between the air traffic controllers and Nav Canada.

I hope that also means there is a willingness to declare a moratorium on job action so that the parties will have plenty of time, maybe even a couple of months or so, to ratify this deal.

It is of the utmost importance that they have time to go through this deal and negotiate it and not have something imposed on them.

• (1500)

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a process in place. We believe in negotiations and we intend to let the negotiations take place.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in our gallery of His Excellency Hugo Fernandez Faingold, Vice-President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period I said that 10 of the 12 members of the Canadian delegation representing Canada including Quebecers at

Routine Proceedings

the World Trade Organization hearings on asbestos were industry representatives. I want to correct that. Ten of the twelve are Quebecers from Quebec but they are not all industry representatives.

I apologize for any misunderstanding I may have created.

BILL C-55

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

During question period the Minister of Canadian Heritage in response to a question from the member for Dartmouth about Bill C-55 said "The regulations exclude rewrites".

I wonder if the minister would be willing to table these regulations. If she is referring to regulations that none of us here have seen, we would certainly like to see them.

The Speaker: Did the hon. minister hear what the point of order was? It was a request actually.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the member will have a chance to review the regulations when they are available.

I trust that he takes the word of the hon. member that when an agreement is signed and the agreement specifies that there are no rewrites in terms of the regulations, the member will have a chance to review those regulations.

The Speaker: I do not want to get into what is the answer and what is not, but there it is. Good luck.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1505)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House in both official languages the report of the meeting of the IPU working group for legislators on a draft handbook for legislators on

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HIV/AIDS, law and human rights, held in Geneva from February 24 to 26, 1999.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

In accordance with Standing Order 108, your committee has considered proposals for a miscellaneous statute law amendment act, 1998 as well as changes by the Department of Justice. It agreed on Tuesday, June 1, 1999 to report the same without amendment.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages the 29th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to chapter 2 of the April 1999 report of the Auditor General of Canada dealing with Revenue Canada, the underground economy initiative.

I also present the 30th report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to chapter 4 of the April 1999 report of the Auditor General of Canada dealing with fisheries and oceans managing Atlantic shellfish in a sustainable manner.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests the government to table a comprehensive response to these two reports.

* * *

MEDICALLY UNNECESSARY ABORTION REFERENDUM ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-515, an act to provide for a referendum to determine whether Canadians wish medically unnecessary abortions to be insured services under the Canada Health Act and to amend the Referendum Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move first reading of my bill entitled an act to provide for a referendum to determine whether Canadians wish medically unnecessary abortions to be insured services under the Canada Health Act and to amend the Referendum Act.

The purpose of this bill is to provide for a referendum to be held on the question of whether public funds should be used for medically unnecessary abortions.

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

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-516, an act to amend the Criminal Code (consecutive sentence for use of firearm in commission of offence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move first reading of this bill entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code (consecutive sentence for use of firearm in commission of offence).

The purpose of this bill is to require that a sentence for the commission of certain serious offences be supplemented if a firearm is used. The additional sentence is to be served consecutively to the other sentence and is to be a further minimum punishment of 10 years imprisonment if the firearm is not discharged, 20 years if it is discharged, and 25 years if it is discharged and as a result a person other than an accomplice is wounded, maimed or disfigured.

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

* * *

• (1510)

PRAIRIE GRAIN ELEVATORS ACT

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-517, an act respecting the transfer of grain elevators located in a prairie province and the discontinuance of their operation.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to require persons who operate grain elevators located in a prairie province and who plan to discontinue operating any of these elevators to provide potential buyers with an opportunity to purchase the elevators. This would place them on an equal footing or on the same basis as the railway companies.

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

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would be grateful if you would seek unanimous consent to return to presenting reports from interparliamentary delegations.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from interparliamentary delegations?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in the House the report of the Canadian group of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association which attended the meeting of the association's standing

committee in Paris and in the Aquitaine region from February 21 to 27.

[*English*]

Mr. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present Motion No. 634, that in the opinion of this House, all parliamentary secretaries be removed from all standing committees and that they not be allowed to be on these committees again. The reason is that they have become mouthpieces—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I believe the hon. member has a notice of Motion No. 634 on the notice paper. My recollection is that it is a motion under Private Members' Business, is it not? Perhaps he can inform me if that is the case.

Mr. Keith Martin: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: If so, it has to wait until it gets drawn for debate in the usual course before he can make a speech on the subject, unless he is seeking consent from the House to have that debate now, which I did not sense he was.

Mr. Keith Martin: I would like to ask for consent now and make a short speech.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

ESTROGEN PRODUCTS

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first one is from PMU producers in my province. They urge the government to support and recognize the unique contribution PMU ranchers make to women's health care and to withdraw proposed regulations that would permit or encourage substitution of non-equivalent synthetic estrogen products for Premarin.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is quite a lengthy one. It has to do with child custody for divorced parents.

• (1515)

The petition states that no parent should ever lose custody of a child by legal process; no parent should be denied adequate parenting time; and no parent should be allowed to seriously

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obstruct a child's relationship with the other parent. In other words, this is about parental access to children in matrimonial breakups.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is on the defence of marriage. The petitioners from Alberta are saying that they would like parliament to define the statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

[*Translation*]

CANDU REACTORS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to submit a petition signed by residents from my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard.

The petitioners are asking the Canadian parliament to oppose the sale of Candu nuclear power reactors to Turkey, and they hope that all necessary measures will be taken in that regard.

[*English*]

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today. The first one is being submitted on behalf of the children of separation and divorce who are asking for their rights to be loved and nurtured by both parents with numerous examples of how that should be done.

They call upon parliament to pass legislation incorporating these rights of children and the principle of equality between and among parents to bring that about.

PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION PLAN

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two further petitions, one signed primarily by people in the Vegreville, Alberta area and the other signed by people in and around my constituency who became aware that the President of the Treasury Board wanted to appropriate the pension fund belonging to 670,000 current and future retirees.

They say that the action is morally flawed. They therefore ask that Treasury Board end all actions which would undermine the confidence and morale of the public service, armed forces and RCMP personnel.

I am pleased to say that I and my Reform colleagues voted against Bill C-78.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition from about 300 petitioners from the Province of Ontario who are calling on the government to ensure that the downloading of the urban native housing program does not go ahead.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are expressing their concern about the federal government abandoning its fiduciary responsibility to aboriginal people by proceeding with the downloading of social housing. Most of these constituents are from the Province of Ontario and are outlining their very serious concerns about the abandonment and the downloading of aboriginal housing to the province.

MARRIAGE ACT

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today from people in my riding in the Beauséjour area who are petitioning that marriage is a voluntary union of a single man and a single woman.

They pray and call upon parliament to enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act, so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into by a single male and a single female. They pray that the House take notice of that.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have a petition where the petitioners request that parliament amend the Divorce Act to include a provision, as supported in Bill C-340, regarding the right of spouses, parents and grandparents to access to or custody of the child or children.

YUGOSLAVIA

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I would like to table the following petition which comes from the constituents of my beautiful riding of Lethbridge.

The petitioners accuse parliament and the Government of Canada of blindly following a careless and dangerous U.S.-NATO policy of bombing the sovereign nation of Yugoslavia. They call upon parliament and the Government of Canada to disengage from such policy and bring our troops home.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today all containing hundreds of signatures.

The first petition calls upon parliament to enact legislation to allow veterans' spouses to receive benefits under the Veterans Independence Program until their own death.

MACKAY TASK FORCE

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the House to totally reject the recommendations of the MacKay task force report pertaining to the entry of banks into the casualty and property insurance markets.

• (1520)

ABORTION

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition draws the attention of the House to the following: that Canada in her bill of rights recognize the supremacy of God, that God recognize the unborn child and forbids the taking of an innocent life.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon parliament to repeal laws allowing abortion.

The Deputy Speaker: I invite the hon. member to avoid reading. I know he is supposed to give a brief summary of the petition and I thought he was doing so well until he got to the last one.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I present literally hundreds of signatures, which now, added to those collected, will probably add up to thousands, from urban aboriginals in Ontario who have come to me and other caucus members because they do not have the representation from the governing side of the House.

The petitioners call on the House and the government to stop the downloading of urban aboriginal housing. They want to be given the same recognition as those people involved in the co-operative housing movement in Ontario. They want to have the same right to have their housing looked after. They believe the government is shirking its fiduciary responsibility.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today from constituents. The first petition is with regard to marriage.

The petitioners are expressing parliament's responsibility to ensure that marriage remains defined as it always has been which is the union of a single, unmarried male and a single, unmarried female.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am honoured to present concerns the children of divorced and divorcing parents.

The petition states that no parent should ever lose legal custody of a child, or by legal process be denied adequate parenting time unless there has been due process to determine that the parent is unfit. This is signed by petitioners from my constituency.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition concerns spending public money on projects which are not properly scrutinized.

The petitioners refer in particular to the spending of \$98,000 on a book entitled *500 of the Best Dumb Blond Jokes*. Members should know that many people besides the petitioners are upset about that as well.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am particularly upset with the point raised in the last petition myself, on a personal basis. However, I do not want to associate myself with the member's previous petition.

It is an honour to present a petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, from a number of constituents who are aware of discussions presently ongoing with the Government of Canada and a number of provincial governments about the possible transferring of federal responsibility for urban native housing.

Consequently, the petitioners have a number of reasons for opposing this, which are pretty self-evident to most people. They are asking the Government of Canada not to proceed with the proposal to download the urban native housing program to the provinces.

FRESHWATER RESOURCES

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from a large number of constituents from the Kamloops region who are concerned about the pressures building to export freshwater from Canada.

The petitioners point out a number of reasons, which I have presented in previous petitions. They are calling on Canada not to proceed with any possible transporting or exporting of freshwater resources from Canada to the United States and Mexico.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

INTERNET CHILD PORNOGRAPHY PREVENTION ACT

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand that there have been

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discussions among all the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent of the House to replace the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar with the name of the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore as a sponsor of private member's Bill C-424 on the order paper.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the proposition put forward by the hon. member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1525)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-39 in the name of the hon. member for Skeena.

Motion P-39

That an Order of the House do issue copies of the most recent band audits at all reserves in Canada that showed a deficit or an accumulated debt on their last band audit.

Motion No. P-39 is an order of the House to issue copies of the most recent band audits at all reserves in Canada that showed a deficit or an accumulated debt on their last band audit.

The financial statements of first nations and their organizations are mandatorily protected by paragraph 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act. Portions are mandatorily protected under subsection 19(1) which protects personal information. In addition, a federal court decision of June 27, 1985 judged that information regarding Indian moneys was confidential and not subject to release by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

First nations are required to make their audited financial statements available to members of their community. Officials of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development cannot release the audited financial statements because of the third party nature of the audit.

Individuals interested in reviewing a first nation's audit can contact the chief and council to request it. It is up to the chief and council whether they wish to disclose audits to non-band members.

I therefore request that the hon. member withdraw his motion.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-39 to be called.

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The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member has a choice. Could he indicate whether he wishes to proceed with the motion now and accept it subject to the limitations, or withdraw, or transfer it for debate? Those are really his options.

Mr. Mike Scott: Mr. Speaker, what I was trying to communicate is that I would like it transferred for debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-54, an act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 156 motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-54. The motions will be grouped for debate as follows.

[Translation]

Group No. 1, Motions Nos. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 27 to 33, 36 to 43, 47 to 49, 56, 58 to 96, 99 to 156.

[English]

Group No. 2, Motions Nos. 3, 4, 6 to 8, 11 to 26, 34, 35, 44 to 46, 50 and 51.

[Translation]

Group No. 3, Motions Nos. 52 to 55, 57, 97 and 98.

[English]

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 27 to 33, 36 to 43, 47 to 49, 56, 58 to 96, and 99 to 156 to the House.

[English]

Does the House wish to have this whole group of motions read?

Some hon. members: No.

• (1530)

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that all these motions have been deemed moved, seconded and read to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-54, in the title, be amended by deleting the long title.

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 6.

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 13.

Motion No. 31

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 14.

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 15.

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 16.

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Motion No. 36

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 19.

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 20.

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 21.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 22.

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 23.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 24.

Motion No. 43

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 25.

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 27.

Motion No. 48

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 27.1.

Motion No. 49

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 28.

Motion No. 56

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 32.

Motion No. 58

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 33.

Motion No. 59

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 34.

Motion No. 60

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 35.

Motion No. 61

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 36.

Motion No. 62

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 37.

Motion No. 63

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 38.

Motion No. 64

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 39.

Motion No. 65

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 40.

Motion No. 66

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 41.

Motion No. 67

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 42.

Motion No. 68

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 43.

Motion No. 69

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 44.

Motion No. 70

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 45.

Motion No. 71

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 46.

Motion No. 72

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 47.

Motion No. 73

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 48.

Motion No. 74

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 49.

Motion No. 75

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 50.

Motion No. 76

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 51.

Motion No. 77

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 52.

Motion No. 78

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 53.

Motion No. 79

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 54.

Motion No. 80

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 55.

Motion No. 81

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 56.

Motion No. 82

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 57.

Motion No. 83

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 58.

Motion No. 84

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 59.

Motion No. 85

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 60.

Motion No. 86

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 61.

Motion No. 87

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 62.

Motion No. 88

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 63.

Motion No. 89

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 64.

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Motion No. 90

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 65.

Motion No. 91

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 66.

Motion No. 92

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 67.

Motion No. 93

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 68.

Motion No. 94

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 69.

Motion No. 95

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 70.

Motion No. 96

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 71.

Motion No. 99

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 100

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.1.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 101

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.1.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 102

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.1.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 103

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.1.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 104

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 105

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 106

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 107

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 108

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 109

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.5 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 110

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.2.6 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 111

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Schedule 4.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 112

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 113

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 114

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 115

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 116

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.5 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 117

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.6 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 118

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.7 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 119

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.3.8 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 120

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 121

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.4.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 122

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.4.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 123

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.4.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 124

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.5 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 125

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.5.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 126

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.5.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 127

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.5.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 128

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.5.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 129

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.6 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 130

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.6.1 of Schedule 1.

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Motion No. 131

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.6.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 132

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.6.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 133

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 134

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 135

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 136

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 137

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 138

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.7.5 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 139

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.8 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 140

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.8.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 141

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.8.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 142

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.8.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 143

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 144

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 145

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 146

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 147

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 148

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.5 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 149

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.9.6 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 150

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.10 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 151

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.10.1 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 152

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.10.2 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 153

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.10.3 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 154

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Clause 4.10.4 of Schedule 1.

Motion No. 155

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Schedule 2.

Motion No. 156

That Bill C-54 be amended by deleting Schedule 3.

[English]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motions in Group No. 1 at the report stage of Bill C-54.

This is a very important bill because it deals with the leading edge of technology. It refers to the explosion of information technology that is occurring today, the challenges we face as a nation, and how to protect the personal information of individuals.

I am disappointed with Bloc Quebecois members for putting together the motions in Group No. 1 because unfortunately they are intending to filibuster the entire bill. They are doing so because they believe, and to some extent correctly, that privacy issues are provincial issues. That is true.

The Reform Party seeks to create a situation where federal privacy issues are merged with and complementary to the provincial regulations that have been set up. Unfortunately only Quebec has set them up. The other provinces have not done so, primarily because of a lack of resources.

The other side of the coin is that privacy issues in relation to the Internet are not provincial in nature. They are national and international. The Internet is an international system. It is the World Wide Web. Therefore any systems and regulations we apply to the World Wide Web by their very nature have to be national and international.

The Reform Party wants to work with its provincial counterparts and provincial governments in Quebec and other parts of the country to make a seamless integrated collection of rules and

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regulations to ensure the protection of people's privacy. Therein lies one of the great challenges.

With the explosion of information occurring today there is another side of the coin: How do we protect people's individual privacy? A lot of information is put out there. A lot of information is of a very personal nature. People across the country are justifiably concerned as to how that information will be protected.

One of the most important areas to protect is that of medical records. The personal medical records of people are very sensitive. They fall within the category of sensitive information that can only and should only be shared among individuals and groups with an interest in treating, dealing with, and benefiting the individuals concerned.

The medical community has some grave concerns about the bill. It wants to make certain the bill will not trammel its ability to share medical information about patients. If we put roadblocks between medical professionals taking care of a particular patient we impede the ability of that patient to be treated in a responsible and effective fashion. It is a very difficult area to deal with, to be sure, but many of the motions put forth will benefit patients across the country.

On the other hand, we want to make sure the personal medical information of individuals will not be spread willy-nilly among people who have absolutely nothing to do with the care of patients. The overarching requirement in the sharing of medical information has to be that the information is shared only with people and personnel intimately involved in the care of patients.

That is what we do today. Physicians and other medical personnel share information on the basis that it is a group which is trying to take care of a particular patient or patients. It would be a very serious offence for that information to be sent out to individuals who are not involved. Penalties would be placed upon the individuals who have violated the privacy of the patients concerned.

• (1535)

On the larger issue in the Group No. 1 amendments, I hope the Government of Quebec, the province of Quebec and the other provinces will come together with the federal government to ensure a seamless group of rules and regulations that protects the privacy Canadians, not only between provinces but nationally and internationally.

Blockages have to take place and barriers have to exist to make sure that individuals cannot access personal information that can be used against people.

This group of amendments contains information concerning the police. We want to make sure the police have the ability to extract and acquire information about individuals engaged in criminal

behaviour. The line in the sand is that the information can only be used in a legitimate investigation of individuals about whom the police are legitimately concerned who are engaging in criminal activity.

My colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona has done an incredible job. He has taken a leadership role in this issue. He has made it very clear that it cannot be used as a fishing expedition on the part of the police or any other organization. They cannot extract or find information about people who have absolutely nothing to do with the criminal activity.

It is a very fine line. We want to make sure that the police, as I said before with respect to the medical community, are able to obtain the information on individuals they require to do the job they are tasked to do. On the other hand, we want to make very certain that personal information on the individual is not abused. The laws of the country are there to protect the personal information of individuals. Penalties will be paid by those who abuse personal information.

With the explosion of the Internet and with the explosion of electronic commerce a great deal of potential exists, not only for our country but for individuals and companies, to be able to utilize this information in a very productive fashion. We are in favour of that.

The member for Edmonton—Strathcona has done a great job in shepherding the bill through and helping the government craft a finer bill than it was originally. We are in support of the bill to make sure rules and regulations are in place to protect the personal security of individuals and to make sure that there will be no barriers or impediments to fair and equal utilization of information technology for the benefit of the country and Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I take part in this debate at report stage with some emotion. I say so without hesitation, because for Quebec this bill is an attack on the fundamental right of Quebecers under civil law to have privacy legislation.

In 1994, under a Liberal government in Quebec, and with the unanimous support of the Parti Québécois, Quebec passed legislation to protect personal information in the private sector. It was the first state in North America to have the courage to pass such legislation.

After much consultation, the bill became law. It aroused some concerns, and in some instances anger, among representatives of employer organizations who feared its effects. However, five years later, after a review, again unanimously supported, what we discovered during the consultation phase of Bill C-54 was that in

1993-94 it was organizations and companies that were concerned about the effects of the act respecting the privacy of information in the private sector.

• (1540)

They told us “We were concerned. We held discussions with the representatives of the Commission d'accès à l'information, and now we are here to ask you why the federal government has not made use of the experience acquired in Quebec, the experience of Quebec businesses and the experience of the Commission”.

The Quebec legislation has been in place for five years. It is a piece of legislation many describe as a model, because it is simple and readily understood. People are aware of their rights. Businesses know their obligations. The legislation provides effective and free recourse which really helps people in Quebec in their dealings with organizations in the private sector.

Under such circumstances, how can we let the federal government, when it decides finally to legislate in this area, use an entirely different model, that of a voluntary code of behaviour for businesses, rather than draw on the experience of Quebec, businesses, individuals, consumer organizations, the government and the access to information commission?

This voluntary code, a positive initiative in which Quebecers have been considerably involved, is full of conditions and language which permits recognition of neither rights nor obligations. It is vague.

When the essence of a bill is appended and is not written in legal terminology, it is very likely that it will be extremely difficult to apply, not to mention that legal recourse is time consuming, may be very costly and is ineffective, according to the witnesses we heard.

Quebec cannot prevent Canada and the other provinces from establishing legislation, but it, its government and many, many witnesses asked “Why not create legislation that is effective because it is harmonized?”

The principle underlying such legislation, if personal information is to be effectively protected, presupposes harmonization. In addition to the constitutional problem raised by Bill C-54, we are faced with a bill that will weaken the meaning of the Quebec legislation and will make businesses subject to two levels of law and regulation. They will not know which way to turn. For the public, it will be a terrible mess. They will not know whether to complain under one law or the other.

The issue of personal information is abstract until people have experienced a specific case themselves. In the present situation one law applies. If a person has problems, he goes to the access to

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information commission, which investigates. If the problem is resolved at the first level, it is all well and good. If not, the commission reviews the matter and gives a decision. This is at no cost to the individual. If it is a matter of record, the remedy will follow quickly.

However, this is not the case under the federal legislation. Information gathered in Quebec, with all the consent guarantees, does not require the same guarantee across the border.

• (1545)

What will the ordinary citizen do? Does he know if the information collected will cross the border or not? No, he does not.

When a business collects information, does it know whether this particular information will cross the border or not? Does it know whether it will be used both within and outside the province? In such a case it would have to apply to both systems at the same time.

This is absurd from a harmonization point of view. The testimonies heard on this issue were unanimous. Business people asked repeatedly that the government stop this process and harmonize the bill with Quebec and the other provinces.

From a constitutional point of view, as constitutional expert Jacques Frémont pointed out, there is also a show of force. If the Minister of Industry had read the whole testimony he would have read this, and I am quoting Mr. Frémont:

In my opinion, Bill C-54 is based on a false hypothesis, the hypothesis that electronic trade is a federal area of jurisdiction. Nothing could be further from the truth; in my opinion, this is a shared area of jurisdiction, where both the provinces and Ottawa should have a say. Since I am from Quebec, I think that we would be quite right to be very concerned if ever the common law applicable to electronic commerce were to become a federal area of jurisdiction. If that were to happen, we would be out and out supplanting the Code civil as the basis of Quebec's legal system, a characteristic that is recognized by this parliament. If we were to keep the approach of this bill, we could out and out strip the provinces of authority to regulate in the areas of trade and commerce as soon as they include some aspects of electronic commerce. This would be a power grab, a full-fledged attack on provincial jurisdiction over economic matters.

Those are the words of Jacques Frémont, a well known constitutional expert and, I insist, a free man.

From a constitutional point of view, the government says that it has complete jurisdiction in the area of personal information and electronic commerce. It claims to have jurisdiction over all personal information collected in the private sector.

Then it decides that, if satisfied that a province has legislation that is substantially similar, the governor in council may exempt from the application of its own legislation organizations or classes of activities—provinces are never specifically mentioned—that come under the purview of the province.

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It is indeed a power grab. That is why the Bloc Québécois has asked that this bill be withdrawn at all stages. It is not that we do not want legislation in that area, but we want legislation that truly and equally protects all Canadians and Quebecers.

We did not simply ask that provisions of the bill be deleted. To save whatever could be saved, we also prepared amendments in consultation with many witnesses from Quebec. What we want above all is to ensure that Quebecers are protected. That is what we are here for.

[*English*]

Mr. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to the motions in Group No. 1. We strongly oppose the motions in Group No. 1. These motions, which were tabled by the Bloc, strike at the heart of Bill C-54 and undermine the government's ability to introduce a national law that will protect the privacy rights of all Canadians.

Moreover, these motions attack the government's competence to deal with federal laws that impede electronic government and electronic service delivery to Canadians.

In our consultations as well as in the industry committee consumer groups and industry have expressed the view that the government has achieved the right balance in Bill C-54. We have balanced the right of individuals to have some control over their personal information and to have access to avenues for effective redress with the need of industry to collect and use personal information as a vital component of success in the information economy.

• (1550)

For these reasons consumer groups like the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and the Canadian Association of Consumers, as well as industry groups like the Information Technology Association of Canada, the Canadian Marketing Association, cable companies and telephone companies have all called for the rapid passage of Bill C-54. Swift passage of Bill C-54 will help build the consumer trust and market certainty needed to ensure that Canada is a world leader in electronic commerce and the global information economy.

The motions tabled by the Bloc are unacceptable and must be rejected. With the passage of Bill C-54, Quebec citizens will benefit from the best data protection in the country. Bill C-54 will provide all Canadians, including those in the province of Quebec, with complete and comprehensive privacy coverage across Canada.

I will quote some of the witnesses. The Chief Regulatory Officer for Bell Canada, Bernard Courtois, told the member for Mercier that Bell welcomes this legislation. In responding to a question from the member the witness said:

This bill clearly applies to companies operating under federal jurisdiction. It leaves a place for the Quebec legislation within its particular area of responsibility. That seems to us to be quite a clever way of not getting involved in needless jurisdictional disputes.

Members of Quebec's historical community, the Quebec Association of Archivists and the Historical Institute of French-Speaking America, expressed support for Bill C-54. In fact, I asked them specifically to comment on the Quebec privacy law. They said that the Quebec legislation has problems because it does not make any provision for the preservation of personal information for the future. In other words, for historical or archival purposes.

I would point out that Action réseau consommateur and Option consommateurs, which were involved in the adoption of the Quebec legislation, told the committee:

We fully support the bill's underlying principles. We would also like to highlight the importance and the relevance of federal government intervention at the Canada-wide and international level to ensure the privacy of Canadians.

We are here today because we strongly believe in the importance of truly protecting the personal information that companies have concerning Canadians. We congratulate the federal government for its initiative and for the ongoing efforts by the Minister of Industry, as well as the many people who have given concrete expression to this requirement which has become, over the past few years, more and more obvious.

The committee heard constitutional experts who spoke of the need for a law that applies between provinces and across the country. Roger Tassé of Gowling and Henderson said that the federal legislation could stand with the provincial legislation because they deal with different areas.

Finally, Jacques Frémont of the University of Montreal, who does not support this bill, acknowledged on March 16 the following, which the member for Mercier left out:

If there is a federal law, it's perfectly proper for parliament to regulate the transfer of information between provinces.

What I'm saying is there's a perfectly, and I want to repeat it to stress it, there's a perfectly legitimate federal presence for inter-provincial international commerce and for inter-provincial international circulation of private information.

(There is) perfectly legitimate room for Canada and the federal parliament to have a Canada-wide law which applies to federal fields of jurisdiction.

Finally, I would have expected better of the Bloc than to table amendments which would deprive the rest of Canadians, who have no privacy protection in the private sector, from getting the benefits of this new national law. I have full confidence in the privacy commissioners of this land, in each of the provinces, and the

federal privacy commissioner. I urge all members to support consumers and reject the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a delight to rise today to speak at report stage of Bill C-54, an act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act.

• (1555)

We are truly today speaking about an economic revolution that is sweeping our country, our continent and indeed the world. The whole issue of electronic commerce will have profound implications on the way that business is conducted, where people work, how people work and how business will be transacted. It is part of the globalization forces at work in our country. It has already had a major impact on business transactions in our country.

If there is one thing that has become very clear in the last number of months in which electronic commerce has begun to move into the stratosphere in terms of importance, it is the concern that people have about information about themselves that is being shared between companies, organizations and individuals themselves. Therefore, the public of Canada has been calling upon us to do something about the privacy of information.

If hon. members were to do a little shopping on the Internet and they found themselves a nice book that they wanted to read and they were asked for their credit card number, they would probably wonder where that credit card number was going to end up.

When people apply for a credit card, on the application there are a number of pieces of information about their financial world and their lifestyle itself and at the moment that information can be shared with virtually anyone. As a matter of fact, it is probably sold to different groups in terms of being used for their marketing plans and so on.

As we move into the World Wide Web of commerce, and as we become participants as individuals, something has to be done to protect privacy and personal information. I am pleased to say that Bill C-54 is a major step in the right direction.

When I spoke at second reading I indicated a number of concerns that we in the New Democratic Party had about this bill. Most of those concerns have been addressed. I am pleased to say that when it comes to third reading we will be supporting this piece of legislation. I will say on behalf of my New Democratic colleagues that it is a good first step in providing protection for personal information held by private sector organizations. More important-

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ly, it will give consumers the tools and the confidence they will need to fully participate in the thriving but highly complex 21st century economy, that knowledge based economy of the 21st century that will see the use of the World Wide Web, the use of computers particularly for inter-business transactions, but also transactions between individuals and business firms.

I think it is fair to say that a number of firms and organizations met with the industry committee. Perhaps at this stage I should say that I want to compliment members of the industry committee on the work which they have done in dealing with the provisions of this legislation. I am a new member of this committee and I must say that when I looked over the transcripts of the committee proceedings, when I looked over the minutes of the proceedings and when I looked at the various experts who were called upon to report, I thought that the examination was very thorough.

One of the issues raised, and I think many of us received personal correspondence to this effect, was about people who do research using personal information about individuals. I am thinking of historians, genealogists, geographers, authors, urban planners, social policy analysts, medical researchers, climatologists, media of all types, anthropologists and occasionally even politicians who research information about individuals and, as a result, require personal information.

This legislation, as I understand it, protects the information, in that people can access that information for their research purposes as long as it is not being researched to be used for commercial means. If a researcher wants to look into the personal life of Louis Riel, he or she can seek an exemption through the legislation from the privacy commissioner. That exemption will be given and the researcher will simply have to indicate that the information will not be used for commercial purposes.

• (1600)

Although we want to see the regulations, I believe that the concerns researchers have brought to the attention of the committee have been addressed adequately in this legislation. If this becomes a problem for ongoing research, it is something we will need to re-address in the future in terms of making some modifications to the legislation. At this point let us assume those problems have been dealt with.

Another issue is that when we have privacy protection, when it comes to personal information, we do not want to have a number of different systems across the country. We do not want to have ten provincial and three territorial systems. We want to have one Canadian system.

We are under a lot of pressure from the European Union to get this legislation into place, to meld in with the work it has done. It

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expects us to act by this summer. This legislation presumably will be passed by the Parliament of Canada before the summer.

We will oppose the amendments in Group No. 1. They are thoughtful amendments from the Bloc Québécois, but it is important that we acknowledge that if we represent one province or different provincial jurisdictions regarding this issue across the country it would not be appropriate. We have to oppose these amendments in order to maintain the consistency of these rules and regulations from coast to coast to coast and not have them on an interprovincial basis.

It is important to note at this early stage in the debate that this bill has an international context. We are aware that certain European Union deadlines have been imposed. We are not interested in being an obstacle to the passage of this bill. Indeed it is incumbent upon Canada to take the necessary measures to address these EU directives on the protection of personal data.

As a political party we support this legislation. Sufficient safeguards have been built in to address the concerns that have been raised at the second reading stage. We look forward to the debate on the second group of amendments.

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the PC Party of Canada, I am pleased to speak to the Group No. 1 amendments to Bill C-54, the personal information protection and electronic documents act.

I would like to thank the many witnesses who took the time to make submissions either in person or in writing to the Standing Committee on Industry. Their representations were extremely helpful with respect to bringing new issues to light.

I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues on the industry committee for their vigorous discussion of the contents of the bill, in particular my colleagues from Mercier, Lévis and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. Regardless of our political differences, we are all trying to ensure that parliament acts appropriately on legislative matters. Moreover I would like to note the efforts of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry for his credible defence of the government's position. I would also like to commend the member for Durham for bringing forward an amendment at committee to clause 18 of the bill which was identical to an amendment I sponsored.

We in the PC Party believe in the need for personal privacy legislation but we do not feel the government has adequately taken into account the views and concerns of the Ontario and Quebec governments. We do not feel it has adequately considered the cost impact of Bill C-54's new regulatory regime on the private sector.

We do not see the need in rushing to pass a law to meet a European Union directive when our number one e-commerce and

overall trading partner has adopted a diametrically different approach.

I will now speak to the specific amendments in Group No. 1, all of which were sponsored by the member for Mercier. I especially salute the work of the member. While I certainly find myself at the opposite end of her separatist convictions, I do admire her dedication in opposing the bill.

To be fair to the member for Mercier, I would like to note for the record that at the industry committee, the member presented the following motion:

Whereas witnesses were recently heard by the Standing Committee on Industry, on Bill C-54, concerning the major problems in implementing this legislation; and took into account the big application difficulties of this bill,

Whereas the Quebec government has repeated its demand that Bill C-54 be withdrawn,

That the committee suspend clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-54 and ask the industry minister to undertake negotiations with all the provinces, to forestall any constitutional challenge that might impair the attainment of its objectives.

● (1605)

This motion was defeated seven to four by the Liberal majority. Support for the Bloc amendment crossed party lines with all the opposition members voting in support, namely my Reform colleague from North Vancouver, my Bloc colleague from Lévis, the member for Mercier and me as the Conservative member.

Having heard so many concerns from witnesses, the Liberals had a choice to take their time and consider meaningful changes to Bill C-54. The Bloc, Reform and the Conservatives were ready to work together to draft a better bill.

To their credit the Liberals allowed for some minor tinkering to Bill C-54. For example they supported two of the 16 amendments I brought forward. But on the major question of over-regulation in the form of excessive powers granted to the privacy commissioner and provoking battles with the Ontario and Quebec governments, they refused to budge. They refused to co-operate; they refused to compromise.

On behalf of the PC Party, I refuse to blindly support Bill C-54 for the sake of getting a law, any law, on personal privacy and e-commerce.

One glaring example of the defects in this legislation is clause 18(1) which would give the privacy commissioner the right to audit a company based on disputes regarding recommended business practices which are listed under schedule 1 of the bill. Recommended business practices are just that, recommendations. They are not laws and should therefore not be enforced as such.

The privacy commissioner should be allowed to conduct an audit only where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the law has

been violated. Audits are intrusive and place a heavy administrative burden on the business operations of Canadian companies. The audit power under Bill C-54 should only be used to cover alleged violations of mandatory obligations set out in the bill.

The privacy commissioner should not be permitted to micro-manage whether or not a company complies with recommended business practices, such as what types of passwords or encryptions are being used by a company.

Furthermore, clause 18(1) as presently drafted is not necessary since Bill C-54 already provides the privacy commissioner with the tools needed to ensure the compliance of schedule 1. For example, clause 11 allows an individual to file a complaint if he or she feels that an organization is contravening the legislation or not following a recommended business practice. Furthermore, clause 12 gives the privacy commissioner the power to investigate all complaints, including complaints that an organization is not following a recommended business practice.

I must also reiterate the longstanding objections of a variety of witnesses to the far-ranging powers granted to the privacy commissioner under clauses 12 and 18. While I do not object to extending search and seizure power to the privacy commissioner under Bill C-54, it is in the best interests of all concerned that that office be required to obtain prior judicial authorization.

The lack of any obligation for the privacy commissioner to obtain the approval of our courts before exercising search and seizure powers is deeply troubling. Clauses 12 and 18 of Bill C-54 create a fundamental conflict by allowing the privacy commissioner to determine whether or not to exercise search and seizure powers and to execute those same powers. The authorization should be granted by a neutral third party, as is the case for criminal investigations.

Bill C-54 already provides the privacy commissioner with broad investigation and audit powers. The commissioner may summon and enforce appearance of persons under oath, converse with any person, compel the production of documents and receive and accept any evidence in the same manner and to the same extent as a superior court.

It is for these reasons that additional safeguards are needed in Bill C-54 as it relates to the privacy commissioner or his delegate actually entering the premises of a private organization and seizing records.

These are not just the concerns of allegedly self-interested companies. Indeed, Blair MacKenzie from the Canadian Newspapers Association told the industry committee that these provisions within Bill C-54 are "frightening". Other witnesses have alluded to these provisions of the bill prompting challenges under the

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charter of rights and freedoms if the privacy commissioner acted upon clauses 12 or 18.

I am also troubled that the government did not bring forward any study or reports on the cost impact of Bill C-54. From a legal, constitutional and economic standpoint, these unfettered audit powers constitute a tremendous defect in the legislation.

• (1610)

Sadly, the Liberal majority decided to ignore the fears of free speech advocates, ignore the pleas of the private sector and chose to defeat my amendments to oblige the privacy commissioner to obtain a court order before exercising search and seizure.

If there is any reluctance I have in supporting the Group No. 1 amendments, it is due to Motion No. 56 and up which deal with part 2 through part 5. Most of these objections pertain to part 1 of Bill C-54.

Unfortunately the familiar double dose of Liberal arrogance and heavy handedness has left me, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, with no choice but to support the Group No. 1 amendments. The Liberals had their chance to co-operate at committee to make a substantially better bill and they chose not to.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to discuss Bill C-54 at report stage.

I worked quite closely with members of the industry committee on this bill. My colleague from Mercier and other Bloc members have put forward a number of amendments, some of which we have tried to take seriously. I have had much discussion with the member for Mercier. I know we differ on this bill in its scope when it comes to the issue of provincial legislation on privacy and the role of the federal government in implementing some sort of privacy protection when it comes to the use of sensitive documents on the Internet and various other forms of transactions in the whole area of electronic commerce.

It will not come as a surprise to my Bloc colleagues that even though there are many issues I share with them when it comes to provincial responsibilities and defending the right of provinces to develop their own legislation in domains that are strictly provincial, there are certain things I believe need to be in the national interest, especially when they go beyond provincial boundaries or national boundaries as in the case of Bill C-54. This bill is almost global in its scope. That is something we have to take into consideration when dealing with Bill C-54.

The bill itself has provisions to deal with provinces that want to develop their own regulations when it comes to privacy legislation. I differ with my colleague from Mercier and the Bloc when it comes to this legislation. Normally I would work toward protect-

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ing the interests of provincial legislation and provincial responsibilities.

Specifically with Bill C-54 we are dealing with a bill which creates a legal and regulatory framework that will be applied to the commercial use of sensitive and private information in all areas of business. Reform supports this initiative to protect privacy.

When we look at the evolution of this particular industry, and I brought this up during our discussions in committee, we can see that in Internet commerce or specifically electronic commerce a lot of the growth has taken place with very little interference from the government. Why do we need to create legislation if many companies engaging in electronic commerce are taking the issue of security very seriously? Obviously that is happening because many people who are using these services feel confident in providing personal information on the Internet for various services.

With that comes the issue of sensitive documents aside from commercial activity on the Internet or electronic commerce transactions. The sensitive issue of private information is something the Reform Party takes very seriously. We believe in free markets. We believe in businesses taking the time to develop interests and direction that is positive to their own services and products but which also respects the privacy of consumers. The one area we identify as a potential concern is that of sensitive documents.

• (1615)

In particular, aside from the first set of amendments in Group No. 1 that we are currently discussing, I have introduced amendments on behalf of a number of organizations which we will be discussing in Group No. 2 that specifically pertain to health issues and the issues of privacy in health. That is an area in Bill C-54 that needs to be addressed and needs to be strengthened.

We do not often hear the Reform Party talking about private lives, but many interest groups, especially from medical and dental associations, are very concerned about the impact Bill C-54 will have on the issue of health privacy, health records, and so on.

I will touch on some of the amendments briefly even though I know Group No. 1 is specifically Bloc amendments. If we want to ensure that the legislation covers all the areas of concern of Canadians, there must be clear protection against the use of personal health information collected for a purpose different from the original purpose for which consent was given. In a nutshell that is what the bill comes down.

When we look at what electronic commerce is trying to achieve in this day and age, we see that it is often dealing with sensitive information or commercial information. I will take a moment to distinguish between those two points.

In terms of commercial information on the Internet, when one orders catalogues from department stores or certain services or products from various companies, quite often information is traded, such as a Visa number or financial information.

Often these companies take this information very seriously and it is confidential to their own records. Aside from that obviously issues arise where privacy needs to be protected, specifically the issue of health. The purpose of consent is something the bill addresses. We addressed it in committee and we are addressing it currently, especially when it pertains to the health amendments I have introduced.

The issue of consent needs to be looked at. For instance, in the industry committee I addressed the issue of how consent can sometimes go too far and almost restrict the ability of companies to be able to develop products and services in electronic commerce.

On the flip side, when it comes to sensitive information, the issue of consent can sometimes not go far enough in terms of private records of health and various other forms of information that pertain to a person's privacy. This is something we need to discuss and I will be discussing it even further in the Group No. 2 amendments.

The Reform Party will be supporting this legislation and opposing the Bloc amendments. When it comes to the Bloc's concerns, the difficulty with provincial privacy protection legislation, and the fact that this is obviously more global and national in scope, there is something within the legislation which allows provinces to develop their own privacy protection legislation if they wish. That should be complementary to the national view or the global scope of the bill.

A two year phase-in in the timetable is given to provinces that do not have comparable legislation and would fall under federal legislation. Currently only Quebec has comprehensive privacy protection. Other provinces have determined that they neither have the resources nor the inclination to create their own provincial privacy protection legislation and preferred to be included under the broad federal legislation.

The Bloc would prefer that we have a total exemption for every province that creates its only privacy legislation. What we want to address in the Group No. 1 amendments is that within the legislation for once we see the government realizing the need to take a complementary view when it comes to privacy protection.

It is almost encouraging the provinces to develop their own legislation if they see fit in order to complement what is being done on the federal level. In many cases, such as in the province of Alberta and other provinces, privacy is taken very seriously.

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In the case of Bill C-54 many people realize that it would cause unnecessary duplication to have separate privacy legislation applying strictly to provinces because transfer of information in this day and age goes well beyond the boundaries of provinces and territories and is almost on a global basis, as I mentioned earlier.

• (1620)

This is where we differ. Specifically we would like to make sure the government does not get too heavy handed when it comes to the commercial side of the bill. As I touched on earlier, currently much of the commerce on Internet has grown without regulation, with very little government intervention, and has been very positive. I do not have the figures off the top of my head, but I know we are talking about a billion dollars worth of business being done on the Internet.

On the other hand there is definitely room to strengthen the bill when it comes to the protection of health information. My hon. colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca touched on the medical issues. In the Group No. 2 amendments I will address those issues in more detail.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the Bloc Québécois representative, along with the member for Mercier, on the Standing Committee on Industry, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-54 at report stage.

It will come as no surprise to anyone if I say that I agree fully with the member for Mercier, whose strenuous and very articulate defence of our position was noticed by all members of the committee from both sides of the House. However, we have not succeeded in persuading everyone that we are right.

The main problem with this bill is that it was announced rather extemporaneously by the Minister of Industry at last fall's OECD meeting. The Minister of Industry was bent on showing leadership. He wanted to take the lead with a modern bill on e-commerce.

It is possible to want to promote e-commerce and still protect personal information. Personal information insofar as industry is concerned is a provincial responsibility. It is also a fact that the majority of provinces have not assumed their responsibilities in this regard, unlike Quebec, which for five years has had very effective personal information legislation.

It therefore comes under the jurisdiction of the province of Quebec—I use the word “province” because that is what we still are—which we call the state of Quebec. At the OECD meeting in question, during a reception at the Museum of Civilization in Hull that I attended, certain federal government officials had praise for Quebec's personal information protection legislation, but still the Minister of Industry wanted to wow them with his bill.

There are some astonishing things in this bill. For instance, the CSA standards in the schedule to the bill were something industry members came up with voluntarily at the time, a code of ethics as it were. Many of the verbs in this code are in the conditional.

Because the minister was in such a hurry to introduce this bill, he threw the voluntary standards used by people in the various sectors into the schedule as guidelines.

There is a difference between a voluntary code of ethics written by people from the industrial sector and legislation that is not only supposed to provide a framework, but also to prohibit and to regulate. This bill is too vague, a fact that a lot of people have condemned.

This bill is nothing but wishful thinking in many respects, but there are certain provisions that Quebec cannot not support.

• (1625)

For example, the minister may change any provision of the bill without consulting the House. The bill gives him this power. We will come back to this later on. It is unusual for a bill to give a minister the power to change the famous CSA code contained in the schedule to the bill.

The Reform Party usually adheres to the principle of respect for provincial jurisdiction and often defends this principle, as does the Bloc Québécois. I am somewhat surprised that my colleague from the Reform Party, who took part in the work of the committee on Bill C-54, would not follow his party's usual policy. I am somewhat surprised and, I should say, disappointed.

Usually the Reform Party recognizes that the provinces have jurisdiction over certain areas under the Constitution and that the federal government must respect that. Reformers are not sovereignists, but they often talk about that in their speeches. However, in this case they decided to support the Liberal government. They decided that we needed this bill, as flawed and as vague as it may be, because many provinces have not passed legislation regarding the protection of personal information.

Constitutional experts told us that this bill could be challenged under the Constitution and that the government could lose its case. In spite of that, we are being told that this bill is good and that it must be passed.

The title talks about protecting personal information in the area of e-commerce. Of course, we are on the eve of the year 2000. Everyone is talking about e-commerce. We know abuse occurs, but laws do exist. The government could have dealt with the provincial ministers in other ways and more properly. All the provincial ministers have contested the fact that this occurred without their being consulted.

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In Quebec, if only the Bloc Québécois and the ministers of the Parti Québécois were opposed, people could say "We know the traditional positions of these two parties". However, there are also the Conseil interprofessionnel, the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires and the Conseil du patronat, all saying essentially the same thing we are. We cannot say that the Conseil du patronat du Québec is a part of the sovereignist movement or a branch of the Parti Québécois.

There is a consensus in Quebec on this issue among the unions, management, notaries, lawyers, the Conseil interprofessionnel and consumer associations. This represents quite a lot of people. People in other parts of Canada too have said much the same thing.

A representative of the Ontario ministry of health said that this was excessive meddling and that they had something in the works that would better protect personal health care information. All this was said by many witnesses and many groups.

It is probably very difficult for such a proud minister, who announced to the people of the other countries of the OECD that he had a super bill and suggested they follow his example, to drop his idea now.

• (1630)

It is difficult for us too. We are looking at a real constitutional coup. It would take too long to relate all the examples, but this is often what happens. Once again the federal government is interfering in an area of provincial jurisdiction.

On the subject of personal information, Quebec has an excellent law, and everyone recognizes that. Even federal officials have said so to representatives of foreign countries. But no, the federal government continues to use its bulldozer style, ignoring the objections of the people in Quebec.

Our role is to represent the interests of Quebec and to remind this House that this bill fails to respect Quebec's jurisdiction.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Halifax West, health.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I want to debate the item that refers to the intent of the amendment to ensure that privacy laws do not inadvertently restrict criminal investigations. I will talk about several issues I have been working on recently to illustrate my point.

The first issue concerns an individual by the name of Eduardo Montenegro. Eduardo is from Mexico. He came into our area of British Columbia and immediately began selling drugs to our children; cocaine in fact. This is the story about this fellow. Despite

two convictions for trafficking in Canada, this 26 year old Mexican is being considered for refugee status. This is a fellow who has come into our country, who has not worked, who sells cocaine to our kids and who is now being considered for refugee status.

People in my area, and I suspect people right across the country, do not understand that. He applied for refugee status last June, just days after his second conviction for selling cocaine. That means that he stays in Canada until the refugee hearing takes place, which could take up to a year. I know because I have been through a lot of them myself, fighting them as well.

Two months after this fellow applied for refugee status the police arrested him again for selling drugs. He was waiting for the refugee hearing and he was selling drugs. Not only that, they found this fellow with two separate identities. Why? Because he was picking up two separate welfare cheques as well as selling drugs.

When that kind of thing happens one might think there is something wrong with our system. Having been there I can say that is an understatement.

I decided to find out what was going on and I started on the usual process. I applied to the refugee hearing. As soon as I applied they said "Let's have the hearing really fast so White does not get involved and we have the spotlight put on us. Let's do this really quick".

After that happened I said that I wanted to know whether the individual had been booted out of the country, in other words whether his refugee application had failed, or whether he would be staying.

I applied in writing to the refugee board to say that I wanted to become involved. I received a letter from the good old refugee board, which I usually end up dealing with, which essentially said this: "Further to your access to information request for the board's decision in Vancouver, British Columbia, on October 27, 1998 regarding Eduardo Montenegro, we want to tell you this: In a telecommunication today between your office and another person, an access to information and privacy officer of the board, the former confirmed that you are neither his representative nor do you have his consent to know what happened".

• (1635)

In other words, the privacy laws are telling me as a Canadian citizen and as a member of parliament that it is none of my damn business whether or not this cocaine dealer from another country, this guy who is ripping off our system twice on welfare, is staying in Canada or leaving Canada. Why? All because somebody says it is a matter of his privacy.

I would like to know from the government whose brilliant idea it was to say that the privacy of people who should be deported,

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non-citizens selling drugs and ripping off our social system, is paramount to the safety and security of the citizens of this country.

If this were an isolated case I would not be standing here. However, I can cite case after case on the issue of privacy in this country that is not correct. It is not working properly.

I come into the House every opportunity I can to talk about privacy and other laws to demonstrate to this government, all two members who are sitting across from me, that what is in existence in those departments and in the laws does not work, and yet it is bringing in new laws that do not address the old laws. It is just compounding the issues in delivering legislation.

For the life of me, for all of the people watching this, I do not understand why people continuously, for two successive parliaments, vote this group in when it is not only introducing laws like Bill C-54 that are mediocre at best, but when it is not fixing the broken laws that are breaking our society today.

I ask government members to listen, all two of them. There are 160-some representatives of the government who belong to the House and we have two sitting here listening to the debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I must interrupt to remind the hon. member that we do not comment on the presence or absence of members in the House.

Mr. Randy White: Thank you for that reminder, Madam Speaker.

What is more important is not how many opposition members are speaking in the House, but how many Liberals are listening.

I can remind the House of a lady from the United States who broke the laws in California. She came into my area and claimed refugee status. How can American criminals claim refugee status in Canada?

I asked for the information on her. I asked whether she was kicked out or whether she was kept here. Is she worth keeping? If she is, then tell us. If she is not and we want her out, then tell us. Guess what? That happens to be a matter of privacy too.

We do not know today whether that person lives in this country. Members over there shake their heads because they do not understand what I am talking about. It is far easier in this country, under the current government, to keep people like that in our country, in particular drug selling, rip-off artists like Montenegro, than to stand to be accounted for, to stand to say "That is wrong. It should be moved out".

• (1640)

I might remind government members that we just finished one of many anti-drug rallies in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Well over

900 people attended. George Chuvalo spoke at the rally. He has lost three sons to heroin. All of the people who attended agreed that non-citizens who sell drugs to our kids should be booted out of this country, without any right of appeal. Not only does the board not do that, it does not even tell us. It hides under privacy laws. It does not even tell us whether they stay in Canada.

When I come into the House and look at Bill C-54, which talks about privacy, I say privacy be damned. The system has many flaws in it and the board does not understand.

In my final comment I will say that it would be a whole lot more worthwhile to be down here talking if there were as many people sitting across there as there are listening up there and on television.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Madam Speaker, I trust that the next speeches by my Reform Party colleagues will address the bill itself and not how many criminals they have in their ridings.

The Bloc Quebecois has always set itself the fundamental mission of defending and promoting the rights of the Quebec people here in Ottawa. In reading Bill C-54, I realized once again how vital the Bloc Quebecois presence here in the House is for Quebec.

Bill C-54 is once again clear evidence of the incompetence of this centralist government, and of its lack of understanding and total arrogance toward Quebec and its people. First of all, I add my voice to those of my colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois in condemning and strenuously opposing Bill C-54.

Bill C-54 is entitled an act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act.

Instead of that title, the government ought to have called it Bill C-54, an act to promote electronic commerce at the expense of privacy. It could have called it Bill C-54, an act using electronic commerce as a pretext to invade the jurisdictions of Quebec and the other provinces. This is one of the many fundamental realities of the bill.

Bill C-54 would introduce measures to protect personal information in the private sector, to create an electronic alternative for doing business with the federal government and to clarify how the courts assess the reliability of electronic records used as evidence.

Bill C-54 is a component of the Canadian electronic commerce strategy announced by the Prime Minister on September 22, 1998, which seeks to recreate in cyberspace the best conditions that

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currently exist in ordinary commerce to promote confidence and reliability.

The government's stated objective is to establish Canada as a world leader in electronic commerce by the year 2000. This bill is one of the measures that would allow us to achieve that objective.

On this issue, the federal Minister of Industry purposely decided unilaterally to introduce the legislation on personal information without waiting for the outcome of the consultations with the provinces that he himself had undertaken. Let us look at the chronology of events.

On June 12, 1998, the ministers responsible for the information highway met in Fredericton and agreed to consult each other at the appropriate time when reviewing the opportunity to legislate the protection of personal information in the private sector.

On September 21, 1998, the federal Minister of Industry sent a draft bill to his provincial counterparts, asking them for their comments on a bill that the federal government wanted to introduce.

• (1645)

On October 1, 1998, the Minister of Industry introduced Bill C-54 in the House of Commons, without waiting to hear from his provincial counterparts.

On October 30, 1998, the 12 provincial and territorial justice ministers unanimously called on the federal Minister of Industry to withdraw his bill, which is a major intrusion into provincial and territorial areas of jurisdiction.

On November 11, 1998, Quebec's minister responsible for relations with the public and immigration and Quebec's minister of culture and communications respectively criticized this unacceptable interference by the federal government in Quebec's jurisdiction.

What justification can the minister give today for introducing this bill? Quebec is the only government in North America to have passed legislation protecting personal information in the private sector and it did so in 1994. The legislation in question, Bill 68, an act to protect personal information in the private sector, has to do with personal information that anyone collects, holds, uses or communicates to a third party in the carrying on of an enterprise within the meaning of article 1525 of the Civil Code of Quebec.

In other words, Quebec's legislation applies to all activities in the private sector, for profit or not. And I would point out that it is regularly mentioned by the experts as being cutting edge.

How do we explain Bill C-54? How do we explain such an infringement upon these areas of provincial jurisdiction? The

Constitution clearly stipulates that privacy is a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

Also, for the people of Quebec, Bill C-54 represents an incredible step backward in the protection of personal information. For instance, where consent is required for the release or use of personal information, this bill does not protect consumers because its ambiguous statements of principle lend themselves to a broad interpretation.

Let me quote what Claude Masse, the former president of the Quebec bar association and a consumer law professor at UQAM, had to say:

Having carefully read Bill C-54—and in my view, it is clearly a huge step backward for Quebec—this regulation, or this type of voluntary standard which will be given a legal connotation through a schedule, I can tell you it is not strong enough to protect consumers. It is chock-full of loopholes for businesses. It is largely based on a completely outdated approach to consumer protection, and any recourse is practically non-existent.

Having read Bill C-54, I realize that it will apply to Quebec, which means that the people and the businesses of Quebec will be subject to two systems for the protection of personal information. What sense will the people make of all this confusion?

Thus, a Quebec company that would like to transfer information outside Quebec will have no choice but to abide by two different systems for the protection of information, the Quebec system and the federal one.

When the Bloc Québécois says that the federal government is doing everything it can to hinder Quebec's economic development, this example is proof positive. Here is what the representative of the Alliance of Manufacturers and Exporters of Canada said:

If we are trying to promote e-commerce... the last thing we need is a patchwork or layers of regulations, private standards and legislative frameworks that would only make things more difficult for business people. I do not think our members are convinced that we should have a national framework that would be incompatible with the systems already in existence in Quebec or other provinces.

Those words show clearly that the federal government should go back to the negotiating table with the provinces in order to come up with more adequate legislative proposals to bring about harmonization in the whole area of the protection of people's rights.

In short, Bill C-54 as it stands now has too many flaws from the constitutional, democratic, and legal points of view, and it does not adequately protect personal information. It is almost unenforceable, it lacks clarity, it will create unneeded complications for Quebec companies, and it substantially reduces the rights of Quebecers to protect their personal information.

• (1650)

For all those reasons, the Bloc Québécois disapproves of this bill, and it is absolutely out of the question for us to support it.

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Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois in explaining to members opposite and to Canadians and Quebecers who are listening to us through electronic means why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to Bill C-54.

I remind those who just joined us—and I am thinking of children just back from school, particularly in the Gaspé Peninsula—that Bill C-54 seeks to promote electronic commerce, but it does so at the expense of our right to privacy.

What is the right to privacy? It means that strangers have no right to obtain information concerning my private life without my consent as an individual or a member of my family.

For Canadians and particularly for Quebecers, the right to privacy is already provided for in the Quebec charter. I am not ashamed to say that this was done under the Liberal government that legislated in that area in 1994. Quebec was the only state in North America to have legislation aimed at protecting personal information in the private sector.

Why is it important to have this type of legislation? In e-commerce, where everything goes so fast in this computer age, information is easily available. In the past, it took time to gather information from huge registers. Now, with a diskette, one just has to press a few keys on a keyboard to transfer information regarding the lives of thousands of people instantly. That is why it is very important to legislate in that area.

Why is the Bloc Québécois opposed to the federal bill? I will give a brief historic overview. As I mentioned earlier, in 1994, Quebec passed an act to protect itself in this regard, and it also has a privacy commissioner. The act has been tested. Numerous cases have been brought forward and we can be proud of the way the act operates.

Nevertheless, the federal government took an initiative in June 1998. It brought together in Fredericton all of the provincial ministers responsible for the electronic highway to examine the advisability of passing legislation to protect private information in the private sector.

Last fall, on September 21, 1998, the federal Minister of Industry sent a bill to his provincial counterparts and asked for their comments. However, without waiting for an answer, on October 1, 1998, the Minister of Industry introduced Bill C-54 in the House of Commons.

What is it that happened during the week of September 21 to October 1 to lead the federal minister to decide to speed up the enactment of the legislation? I do not know. Why are we coming

back to this bill at this stage, during the last few weeks of sittings? Why the rush? I do not know.

However, I would like, if I may, to suggest how the House could have made better use of its time.

• (1655)

The fishing industry, the auditor general and all parties in this House have unanimously asked the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to introduce framework legislation so we will know how the fisheries will be managed in the future.

The Bloc Québécois made a similar suggestion at the outset, in 1993, when I began in politics. The issue was also raised in section 19 of a report of the standing committee on fisheries, which asked the department to review its management methods. The auditor general himself, who is completely independent and neutral, and who most of all is not a member of the Bloc—and no one can say whether he is a Conservative or a Liberal—also asked in 1997 for the introduction of framework legislation for the future management of the fisheries. Nothing has been done.

Again this spring the auditor general, while examining another area of fisheries—the first time, in 1997, it was groundfish and this time it was shellfish—repeated the same thing “I find the same management principles that might have caused the groundfish collapse in the shellfish industry”. He called on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to act to define this framework legislation.

Just this afternoon, in the House, the chair of the standing committee tabled a unanimous report—the five parties in the House are in agreement—asking the department to introduce framework legislation.

When I note that all parties are unanimously asking that legislation be introduced, contrary to what I see concerning Bill C-54, on which there was no consultation with the provinces, which did not receive the approval of all parties in the House and which the federal government is trying to have passed at the last minute, in the last days of sittings, I wonder who is making us run around in circles.

I am here, full of goodwill. I gave my assistance and my support, along with my colleagues from other parties, to the bringing forward of a bill. This was done unanimously. The government is not listening. I see the stubbornness of the Minister of Industry, who wants to have his bill on personal information protection passed. It is poorly drafted, from a legal point of view, and I will come back to this later. I wonder what he is really trying to protect.

I have already explained why the Bloc Québécois is giving this bill so much attention. We already have our own law in Quebec. We are in the House of Commons, where matters of federal jurisdiction are discussed. The Bloc Québécois is pointing out that this

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legislation interferes with provincial jurisdiction as it is written in the Constitution of 1867. The provinces have jurisdiction over personal information by virtue of the powers the 1867 Constitution confers upon them in the area of property and civil law.

All experts consulted by the Bloc Québécois acknowledged that privacy of information is an area of provincial jurisdiction. Why is the federal government so obstinately intent on meddling in this?

I am not very familiar with the legislative framework of the other provinces. However, if the purpose of Bill C-54 was to stir up some of the provinces to get them to bring their legislation up to date with what the Quebec provincial legislation is already doing, a good meeting and a reminder would have sufficed. Trampling heavily into provincial areas of jurisdiction at this point, when the House's time could have been better used to pass fisheries legislation which everyone in this House wanted to see passed, is just making parliament go around in circles and is a waste of MPs' valuable time. The ministers in the other provinces are not prepared to be pushed around either.

• (1700)

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate along with my Bloc Québécois colleagues.

To start with, I would like to thank my colleague from Mercier, who vehemently condemned this bill, which is a direct encroachment on Quebec's privacy act, an act unanimously hailed as a model.

Bill C-54 is aimed at promoting e-commerce, but sadly it also infringes on the right to privacy, as explained by my colleague.

The Bloc Québécois is against this bill and asks that it be withdrawn for five reasons. First, because the Minister of Industry introduced it without previously consulting the provinces. He went through the motions, telling everybody "Have a look at it and we will get together". One week later he hastily introduced his bill, saying it had to go through.

We know why every bill must be passed quickly. It is because every bill is highly centralizing. The government wants to grab all of the provinces' powers, be they on privacy or, as we saw this week, the environment. The federal government wants all of the powers because it needs to position itself within the World Trade Organization, in view of what is coming down the pike with supergovernments. It wants to play the role of a country with all of the powers, one in which the provinces will be mere regions.

Nobody was consulted on this bill, and yet it was introduced. The Minister of Industry introduced this bill without consulting the provinces. There was no consultation whatsoever.

We are asking that this legislation be withdrawn because it infringes upon provincial jurisdiction, because it is a step backward for Quebecers in the protection of personal information, because its implementation in Quebec will create confusion, and because it is flawed from a legal point of view.

The Bloc Québécois is not the only one to say that. The *Chambre des notaires du Québec* came to tell the committee. The *Québec Interprofessional Council* also came to tell the committee, as did the *Barreau du Québec*, the Quebec government and the *Conseil du patronat du Québec*. Incidentally, that organization is not pro-sovereignist, as far as we know. They told the committee that the bill had too many flaws from a constitutional, democratic and legal point of view, and also with regard to the protection of personal information.

The bill is almost unworkable, it lacks clarity, creates unnecessary problems for Quebec businesses and significantly impedes the right of Quebecers to the protection of their personal information.

Given what I just said, it would be unacceptable for government members to support such legislation.

Quebec has its own charter of human rights and freedoms, which was enacted in 1975. The Quebec government also passed, in 1994, an act respecting the protection of personal information in the private sector, which is unique in America. That legislation is recognized as a model all over the world. The federal government should use it as a source of inspiration to draft its own legislation.

But no. Because it wants to have all of the powers and take credit for it, the government is trying to pass this bill as quickly as possible so that no one will notice. Quebecers and Canadians are not stupid. They can clearly see the government's intention. They know what it wants to do with this bill.

• (1705)

I am going to try to show that this minister did not consult the provinces, that he acted unilaterally in tabling this bill.

On June 12, 1998 the ministers responsible for the information highway met in Fredericton and agreed to consult each other, when appropriate, when contemplating legislation with respect to the protection of personal information in the private sector.

On September 21, 1998 the federal Minister of Industry sent a copy of proposed legislation to his provincial counterparts, asking for their comments. Oddly, though, on October 1, 1998, without even waiting to hear from them, the Minister of Industry tabled his bill in the House of Commons.

In addition, as I mentioned earlier, this bill interferes in provincial jurisdiction. The Minister of Industry is now creating a

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constitutional dispute that could have been averted if he had agreed to work together with his counterparts.

Under the powers vested in them by the Constitution of 1867 with respect to property and civil rights, the provinces have jurisdiction with respect to personal information. All of the experts consulted by the Bloc Québécois see this as provincial jurisdiction.

However, Bill C-54 provides that the legislation will apply to the commercial operations of organizations under federal jurisdiction, to organizations that transfer personal information from one province to another or one country to another, and to employees about whom personal information is collected by an enterprise under federal jurisdiction.

In addition, under clause 30(1) the federal legislation will apply to private organizations even if they come under provincial jurisdiction if, in the view of the federal government, the province does not have similar legislation. This is ridiculous. The result will be complete havoc.

The proposed legislation is unenforceable, interferes directly in provincial areas of jurisdiction, and is unconstitutional. The provinces' consent was not sought. It is interference in their jurisdiction, and Quebec is being forced to take a step backward with respect to the protection of personal information.

Under the Quebec law an individual with a grievance may apply free of charge to the access to information commission, which will first try to mediate between the two parties involved. If this fails, it will investigate and make a decision or an order which would be binding. In this case, recourse is simple and effective.

Conversely, the provisions on recourse in Bill C-54 are more complex. An individual with a grievance must first try to reach agreement with the organization. If this person is dissatisfied, he may ask the federal privacy commissioner to intervene, and the commissioner can make recommendations only. After this, a dissatisfied individual may seek reparation from the federal court.

How many people can afford to seek reparation in the federal court? This is totally crazy.

The Quebec law provides that an organization must inform an individual of the use to be made of the personal information gathered. Bill C-54 simply provides that people gathering personal information should be able to explain the use intended for this information.

This bill, in Quebec, will create confusion because it is weak from a legal standpoint, because the heart of the bill is appended, because Bill C-54 gives cabinet discretionary power to decide the value of provincial law and its application and, finally, because it will invade provincial jurisdiction within three years of its proclamation unless the province adopts similar legislation.

• (1710)

I repeat, the government tabled this bill without consulting the provinces. It is encroaching on provincial jurisdiction and forcing Quebec to take a step backward in the area of the protection of personal information.

Its application in Quebec will create confusion, and the bill is lacking in legal terms. It is unworkable, unclear, creates unnecessary problems for Quebec businesses and significantly reduces Quebecers' right to the protection of their personal information.

I urge my colleagues in this House to vote against the bill.

[English]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate today with respect to this very important bill.

Electronic commerce is a whole new and uncharted area. We had not dealt with this in our country until the last year or two. It is six, seven or eight years old. In the grand history of things it is in its infancy.

I have engaged in electronic commerce. I was intrigued with an ad I saw in a magazine on an airplane. It offered a clock. The clock never has to be set and it always has the precise time to the nearest one one-thousandth of a second.

Having a little fetish for time and the measurement of time, which has been an interest of mine all my life since I am a mathematician with a physics major, I was intrigued with this. I wrote down the website location and I ordered this clock radio. It is quite intriguing because literally I do not have to set it. I plug it in and in a few minutes it pulls the time from the air, sets itself and keeps perfect time after that. It is an intriguing device.

Something really interesting happened. The website of course is American. How would I know when I gave my credit card number on the Internet that it was properly scrambled and secure so that nobody else could pick up the information and use it for inappropriate purposes? I was quite worried about that. A message even came up on my screen saying that when ordering I should be aware of the fact that it may not be totally secure. That worried me. It really worried me a lot, but I did it anyway because I can resist anything except temptation and I was so tempted to have this little clock radio.

There is something else too. It was advertised at \$69 on sale for \$59. I thought that was a really great deal. Well, was I in for a surprise. By the time my bill appeared on my credit card, the American money had been converted, and GST and shipping and handling had been added. On top of all that, when I went to pick it up, there was a bill from Canada Customs. There is no customs duty on this, but I was charged a \$5 fee to say that there was no

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customs duty. In the end the whole bill came to about \$130 for my \$60 clock, so thanks a lot, Canadian government.

I really love that rate of taxation. It is nice to hear the Minister of Finance say that he is cutting taxes at every turn, because I sure got nailed on this one. I still enjoy my clock radio and every time I look at it I am reminded that we must work hard to replace the Liberals.

I mention that because it is so easy and is a wonderful way of doing commerce. It basically opens up every store in the world to Canadian citizens or to any citizens for that matter. It also opens up the world as customers for Canadian companies, provided that our country has a tax regime that would encourage business people to stay here and operate in this country.

We have heard throughout the debate today especially from members of the Bloc about this whole jurisdictional question. It is very important for us to remember that governments, whether they be the federal government, provincial governments or even municipal governments, are there to serve the people.

• (1715)

I have no problem with the people here who represent many of the 43 or 44 ridings in Quebec, the separatist Bloc. I have no problem with them saying that it is provincial jurisdiction and that they already have a law in Quebec that covers it. That is what they have been saying and I presume it is correct. I have not had any dealings on the electronic Internet with Quebec firms. However, they have this in place and that is great. If another province has rules and regulations that deal with the protection of their consumers and citizens, that is fine. It is within their mandate.

However, what do we do when we have interprovincial and international transport of goods? It happened in my case when I ordered this from one of the American states, which is where it originated.

When we get on the computer and click a website it is almost transparent as to where that is. I got an e-mail not long ago from a guy who said his name was Epp. He wanted to know about me. He asked where I was from and wanted to know my family history. I answered him back and asked him to tell me, when he responded back, where he was because there was no indication on his e-mail address. I asked if he was also an Albertan or from one of the other Canadian provinces. It turned out that he is from California. Here I was corresponding with a person in California and I did not even know it.

I think it is high time that we have proper legislation in place to ensure that the scumbags in our society, who would take advantage of this kind of a system, are regulated and controlled and will face penalties in the event that they try to rip us off as citizens.

There is absolutely no problem in my mind with the federal government doing what it can with respect to the regulation of

electronic trade based on what is happening into and out of Canadian homes and businesses.

We need to be careful. We need to make sure that we set this up in such a way that it is economical and efficient, but we must ensure that there are penalties in place for those who would abuse the system.

I look forward to the day when we have a federal government and a provincial government, whether it is Quebec or any other province, coming up with rules and regulations and working together. This is what we should be doing. We should be co-operating among and between the provinces and the federal government.

I am sure my Bloc colleagues would agree that the federal government would probably have a proper role to play in regulating electronic commerce internationally that has to do with work between nations.

Let us not hamstring our government officials in terms of what they can or should not do when it comes to things which make common sense and which are cost effective. On the other hand, I cannot sit down without mentioning the fact that we do want government to be efficient, to make wise and careful use of the taxpayers' money and to not enter into areas where it should not be.

The amendments put forward by the Bloc members have some validity from their point of view. I have tried hard to understand where other people are coming from, but I think in this particular instance I can only advise that on this group of amendments we should, as a body of parliamentarians, reject the amendments, let Quebec do what it wants in terms of the provincial sphere and let the other provinces do what they want to in their provincial spheres. The federal government should work not only from its part internationally but also in terms of trying to bring co-operation among the provinces.

I think that would be a great and unifying goal and would hopefully help to keep the country together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am really pleased to speak to this issue because it so happens that I spent most of my career working in the field of computer science and I know these things.

• (1720)

When Quebec was preparing its legislation on the protection of personal information in the private sector, I even had the opportunity to appear before the commission that held hearings on that subject in Quebec. Therefore, I am very comfortable talking about this issue.

First of all, let us see what this bill does and what it does not do.

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Here, today, I heard comments that led me to believe that some members do not clearly see the limits of this bill. It is aimed at promoting electronic commerce, as stated in the title.

However, in promoting electronic commerce, it also deals with the protection of personal information in commercial transactions. It must be understood that all personal information that is not related to a commercial transaction is not protected under the bill before us.

It must also be understood that this bill simply does not apply to any foreign transaction, commercial or other. A few moments ago, our colleague from the Reform Party told us about his clock that does not have to be set. Since the transaction was made with an American company, the bill simply does not apply. This bill does not apply to transactions made outside the country, only to the ones made within Canada's borders.

This being said, the bill does not apply either to the protection of information on health or on any other activity that we may enter into, unless it involves a business transaction. This bill will not apply to government information either. However, we will see later that the government will have all powers to access our personal information, even of a commercial nature.

In fact, this bill has three major flaws. The first one is that, since its purpose is to promote e-commerce, it does not offer real protection for personal information. It is clear from the bill that there is no obligation on the part of businesses to let clients know how they will use the information they collect.

There is no easy recourse for the consumer or the owner of that personal information, you, me, or anybody for that matter. It will not be easy for anybody to find out who has what information, to check if the information is exact and to have the records amended if it is not.

When they talk about a law that will put us on an equal footing with the European Union, I consider, frankly, that the bill introduced by the Minister of Industry leaves a lot to be desired. It is quite weak compared to the legislation passed in Quebec five years ago.

That is why we in the Bloc Québécois are so concerned. This federal legislation will conflict with Quebec legislation, which is sound and well put together, and will destroy the benefits people in Quebec have been enjoying for five years.

The first problem with this legislation is that it is incomplete. It does not really protect personal information. It certainly does not protect the individual who could be wronged by the use of that information, however accurate or wrong the information be.

The second problem with this legislation is that it conflicts directly with Quebec legislation. Commerce, among other things, comes under the Civil Code. The Civil Code of Quebec is

different from the legal system in the rest of Canada. Thus, commerce is a prerogative covered by Quebec legislation and the bill before us is in conflict with it.

• (1725)

So much so that, as some of my colleagues have pointed out, it must be expected that constitutional challenges will be launched by corporations and individuals who will feel wronged by the situation.

If I had advice to give to law students, I would tell them to undertake some research, a thesis or a master's degree on Bill C-54. Then they could rest assured of collecting good fees for many years. This will be a real gold mine, quite literally a Klondike for lawyers, unless of course the House and the minister change their minds and the bill is never passed.

This is my fondest wish. This would save a lot of people a lot of money. It would provide much better protection for Quebecers' interests and the Quebec legislation might even apply throughout Canada, which would be good protection for Canadians, who deserve to be treated as well as Quebecers.

This bill will create an unbearable situation for Quebec businesses. Let us suppose I run a business. My transactions will now be subject to two acts, the Quebec act, according to which I have to do this or that, and the federal act, which says something else. If the two acts do not conflict with each other, I will still have to multiply my efforts, which will cost me money and time, but I will be able to abide by both pieces of legislation.

However, when the two acts conflict with each other, and there will be such instances, I will have to choose between breaking the Quebec law or breaking the federal law.

The House and the Minister of Industry have no right to create such a dilemma for businesses; namely, to decide which law to obey. This is unacceptable.

By acting without consulting the provinces, and Quebec in particular, the Minister of Industry failed to carry out his duty to ensure that taxpayers, businesses and individuals are not placed in a situation where they have to choose between one act and another, without knowing which one must prevail.

This is why I can assure members that there are people who, in such circumstances, will go all the way to the supreme court to get a clear answer. What will be the outcome? Since the Constitution states clearly that those issues are under provincial jurisdiction, the Supreme Court of Canada will disallow the industry minister's bill, which will have been nothing but a loss of valuable time.

I said that there are three problems here. The third one came to my attention this afternoon when I was going through my notes and a few documents, some of which are from the Library of Parliament. I had not realized up to now how extensive the

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government's power to collect personal information from businesses will be.

Big brother is looming. Listen to this. The first amendment moved by the minister will allow an organization to disclose personal information to a government institution or part of a government institution that has made a request for the information, indicated its lawful authority to obtain the information and its suspicions.

Members will remember that, not too long ago, Canada Customs gave the Department of Human Resources Development a copy of its tapes so that the department could go on a fishing expedition to identify people who went abroad while receiving EI benefits, and have them pay back those benefits. That is what we are facing with this bill.

The impact could be enormous. If the government now has the right to ask businesses for information, to sort and collate data, then no one can hide from the watchful eye of the government any longer.

For all these reasons the Bloc Quebecois will vote against this bill, while hoping that it will die on the order paper.

• (1730)

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should recognize: (a) multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia as illnesses that have the capacity to cause disability; and (b) those suffering the disabling aspects of these diseases require protection and a strong moral commitment to their well-being.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I know I have 15 minutes but should any time be left after I deliver my speech I would like to share my time with the Minister of National Defence, if that is agreeable with you.

The Deputy Speaker: If we are going to have a splitting of time, I should advise the hon. member for Ottawa Centre that it will require the unanimous consent of the House.

Is it agreed the hon. member may split his time into 10 minutes and 5 minutes for this purpose?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on a motion of critical concern to all Canadians. Multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia affect between 6% to 15% of the Canadian population. Of those affected approximately 1% to 2% are so severely debilitated that they require hospitalization. This is a large number of Canadians that need our attention. I will elaborate on these illnesses and their effects on Canadians.

Multiple chemical sensitivity or environmental illness is a chronic condition where symptoms occur in response to low levels of exposure to multiple unrelated chemicals and the condition improves or resolves itself when these chemicals are removed. It is a multiple organ disorder that is closely related to chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. Symptoms overlap in these three conditions.

In 1994 the U.S. Centre for Disease Control concluded that chronic fatigue syndrome is a clinically defined condition characterized by persistent fatigue and a variety of multisystem symptoms. The core symptoms include excessive fatigue, general muscular and joint pain, mental fogging and often gastrointestinal problems. Other symptoms include fatigue following stressful activities, headaches, sore throat, sleep disturbance, low grade fever and depressed mood. The symptoms fluctuate in severity and persist for a prolonged period of time.

The exact cause of chronic fatigue syndrome is not yet known. Current etiological theories proposed are neuroendocrine dysfunction, viruses, environmental toxins, genetic predispositions, head injuries and stress. The disease is more prevalent in women than in men.

Fibromyalgia on the other hand is a painful muscle disorder in which the thin film or tissue, myofascia, that holds the muscles together becomes tightened or thickened causing pain. It is also known as fibrositis. This disorder shares many of the same symptoms as chronic fatigue syndrome and is also more common in women than in men.

The sad truth about these illnesses is that they destroy not only the health of those they afflict but also affect the lives of their families. Imagine your child being rendered bedridden by allergic reactions to the new carpeting in his or her school or your spouse or companion becoming disabled after his or her office has been renovated. These are the realities of people affected with multiple chemical sensitivities.

• (1735)

We may or may not be aware of the struggle of these people and the fact that they are unable to look after themselves and their families once afflicted. The problem is that there is no standard

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when it comes to applicability when we are dealing with these diseases.

Imagine an individual who is affected by this disease and applies for assistance, say for example through the Canada pension plan disability benefit. Those benefits may or may not be given to that particular person depending on the province or territory they may be living in. The problem is that there is no standard. The result is that disabled people are treated inequitably.

These people are sick and in many cases they are being denied benefits. At a time when they need support, they are being told no. The result for many afflicted with these illnesses is poverty, a lack of hope and in a few tragic cases, suicide. It is my view that we no longer can ignore these illnesses or more important, the people afflicted by these illnesses.

The suffering of these people is real. This fact is acknowledged by Revenue Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec, the Women's College Hospital in Toronto, the University of Toronto, Dalhousie University medical school in Halifax, the Alberta supreme court, the Peel and Waterloo school boards in Ontario, as well as the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centre for Disease Control. All of these organizations recognize these illnesses as ones that deserve our most attention.

There are other groups and organizations that recognize these diseases but in the spirit of saving time I am going to move on to talk about environmental medicine and the lack of it in many cases in certain parts of Canada.

For example, Canada has 25 doctors in environmental medicine. They are medical doctors who are familiar with these illnesses and know how to treat them. That compares with 1,400 licensed practitioners in the United States. Clearly we have an acute shortage of physicians who are trained to treat these devastating illnesses. Furthermore with only two medical schools, the University of Toronto and Dalhousie University, offering an elective course in this area, Canadian doctors are forced to train in the United States to practise in these areas.

Add to the situation the cost of the treatment. In many cases these treatments are not covered by the health care system.

I would like to share the remainder of my time with the Minister of National Defence who has a few comments on this issue.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in my capacity as a private member on this occasion. I do so to very strongly support my hon. colleague who has so eloquently spoken about the difficulties and challenges faced by so many people in our society as a result of various environmental illnesses.

These include multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

The hon. member speaks with great knowledge. From a personal standpoint he has had his own challenges in this regard but he has also studied this subject matter well.

I would hope that some way could be found for the House to support this motion. I know there is a procedure involved. I understand only the Reform Party members have indicated some opposition to it. I do not know why they would.

This motion should get the support of all members of the House. It is not a matter that is going to involve, as some might suggest, an additional expenditure of money outside of moneys already allocated for such purposes. I should think that all members would want to support this motion.

An increasing number of Canadians are being afflicted. I also have personal knowledge of that. Two people are here from the Environmental Illness Society of Canada, Judith Spence and Maggie Maier. I know there are other people as well who deal with these matters on a day to day basis. They deal with the many challenges that are involved in chemical sensitivities, allergies respecting food and inhalants such as mould. Many people suffer from mould difficulties in different buildings in this city and other cities right across the country.

• (1740)

An increasing number of people are affected by the results of what we as a society are doing to our environment. This matter requires some serious attention.

I have talked with my colleague the Minister of Health on this matter. He is quite sensitive to this need to move forward to establish some ways that this government together with our colleagues in the provinces will be able to treat people who are in these circumstances.

Much conventional medicine, much of what is allowed now under medical plans does not recognize many of the problems and symptoms that people with environmental illness are encountering. It is time we got that kind of recognition for environmental illness and these various components of it that are noted in the motion by the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

I would hope that all members of the House, including those in the Reform Party, would have another look at this matter. I hope that we can come to the conclusion of this with a votable motion on something which I think is very important for all Canadians.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to compliment the member for Ottawa

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Centre for bringing this motion forward. It is a very timely and important issue. I would also like to compliment our critic for health, the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, who is a strong advocate for health care for those who need it and an activist in the whole industry.

This motion asks that chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and multiple chemical sensitivities be recognized as illnesses by the federal government. It is not complicated. There should be no doubt that these environmental illnesses have the capacity to disable Canadians, to rob them of their livelihood and their ability to lead a normal lifestyle.

This motion will ensure that many Canadians suffering from these illnesses do receive equitable treatment when they apply for various disability benefits under existing federal support programs.

Motion No. 468 asks that there be a harmonization in the way eligibility criteria are applied to federal disability support programs. Currently federal programs apply different eligibility measurements from one program office to the next within a department. The result is a checkerboard of vastly different decisions for applicants who have the same degree of disability for the same illness. It also creates a tremendous amount of frustration and antagonism, and whatever the situation is, whoever the patient is, it just makes it a lot worse.

We continue to see that while some Canadians are rightfully accessing the various programs by the federal government, others with the same degree of illness are denied. To eliminate this grave injustice it is necessary to have standardized eligibility criteria to ensure that it is applied in an equitable fashion.

In my own experience as a member of parliament, the most frustrating part of the job is Canada pension disability applicants who cannot prove their disabilities. They have not got an X-ray, they have not got a blood test, they have not got any diagnostic system to absolutely without doubt say the person is disabled. It is all subjective and it is very, very frustrating because these people have very serious disabilities and are just as disabled as somebody with a serious physical illness or injury.

It is estimated that the three diseases we are talking about afflict up to 15% of Canadians. Six per cent of all Canadians are reported as experiencing allergic and sensitivity reactions every single day. Of these, up to 2% are severely debilitated and are unable to work or even leave their own homes. Through timely access to specialized treatments, most sufferers can expect to return to health, community involvement and employment.

It is hard to imagine the hardship and the stress created within a family when one of its members is stricken with one of these illnesses. Even though they are already ill with the physical illness caused by this, the emotional stress and frustration can make it far worse as they go through the Canada pension disability system.

At present there is no biomarker, no blood test that has been sufficiently tested and validated to assist doctors in the diagnosis of these three illnesses. However, we are hopeful that research which is being facilitated by the Environmental Illness Society of Canada will be validated by a larger study conducted by the Environmental Health Clinic of Women's College Hospital in Toronto. If this research is successful, Canada will have discovered a diagnostic and screening tool that will benefit millions of people worldwide and will eliminate those frustrations that I mentioned before.

● (1745)

I would like to read part of a letter from Sandra Madray of Winnipeg:

At present, Canadians afflicted with Environmental Illness... have been placed in limbo because of the lack of support from virtually all government agencies at nearly all levels, the medical establishment, the workplace and insurance companies. The current lack of a definitive test to validate or disprove the existence of this illness and the fact that its etiology is not fully understood, further complicates the politics surrounding EI. However, this lack of understanding is no excuse for lack of action... the inescapable and horrible fact is that real people and their families are suffering while the medical community dismisses them as "psychos" having an imaginary affliction.

That is exactly what I deal with whenever I have appointments in my riding office. I deal with people who come in with Canada pension disability applications and are unable to get them through the system, through the series of appeals, the tribunals and further appeals because there is no system of diagnosis.

I hope a positive outcome will come from the motion. Canadians with these three diseases must be assured equal access to income support, tax relief and other already existing federal accommodation programs for the disabled. The Canadian government must take a leadership role and demonstrate a strong commitment to the socioeconomic well-being of those suffering from environmental illnesses.

On behalf of the member for New Brunswick Southwest, our caucus and myself, I urge the Minister of Health to refer the issue to the Standing Committee on Health.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central to speak to Motion No. 468 brought forth by the Liberal member for Ottawa Centre. The motion calls on the government to recognize multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia as illnesses that have the capacity to cause disability.

The Liberal member wants his government to recognize that Canadians suffering the disability aspects of these diseases require protection and a strong moral commitment to their well-being. My constituents and I find this amazing: here is a Liberal backbencher begging cabinet to learn to recognize Canadians suffering from these diseases.

Let us look at the three things the motion asks the Liberals to do: recognize these diseases as disabling diseases, give these victims protection, and make a strong moral commitment to the well-being of the victims.

Canadians know that the Liberals will do none of these things. The Liberals have cut \$23 billion from our health care system since 1993. The government will not be providing any protection for Canadians who are sick. They have already seriously reduced such protections.

The government makes no moral commitments to Canadians who are sick. The Liberal backbench MPs were weeping openly in the House; they were crying and tears were coming out of their eyes when they voted not to compensate victims of federal government controlled tainted blood.

As I have said, the Liberals cut \$23 billion from the health care system. Now we have a Liberal asking the House to try to force the government to do something about Canadians who are sick. The member has chosen only a few diseases for his motion. Some 20 other diseases could be added to the list by any Canadian. Why is the member so selective?

What about the organ donor transplant system? The government could have done very simple and basic things to immediately save the lives of Canadians waiting for organ transplants.

I ask the House to imagine a very small bedridden children crying. They need medical help. They could need a new kidney. Members of the government lazily drag their feet while little children, teenagers, young Canadians, mothers and fathers suffer waiting for a transplant or death.

We have a three tier health care system in Canada, courtesy of the Liberal government and courtesy of the defence minister. First, we have a waiting list system. Second, we have a system where those who are rich can go to the United States and get immediate treatment for whatever ails them. Third, we have a system which I call the sickness system.

• (1750)

There is no money from the government to protect the health of Canadians. The only time Canadians can try to contact our health care system is when they are already sick.

The Liberals should be ashamed. They owe Canadians an apology for creating this mess in our health care system in the first place. It is because of them that 6,000 nurses and 1,400 doctors left Canada last year alone. It is because of them that 200,000 Canadians are on waiting lists for various treatments. I could go on and on and on.

The government has lost control over the levels of pesticides found in our fruits and vegetables. About two dozen genetically

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engineered food products are already on our shelves. The Health Department has been stripped of the responsibility to monitor food safety. That responsibility has been given to the agriculture department, which is like a fox minding the chicken coop.

There is no money for these things in our health care system because the government has cut all the money it could. It has cut \$23 billion from health and other services. I could go on and on. Yet we have the member for Ottawa Centre crying crocodile tears on the floor of the House with the motion. I hope the Environmental Illness Society is listening very carefully to the debate.

The government member is not fooling anyone while he pretends to do something for Canadians suffering from these diseases. Where can he get money for the undefined protection he wants to offer Canadians with these few specific diseases?

The Liberals already voted against compensating hepatitis C victims. They voted to keep high taxes and supported a \$23 billion cut to the health care system. They supported a \$30 billion grab by the government from the pension plans of public servants, RCMP and other public service employees.

Why can some of that \$30 billion not be spent on the initiatives the hon. member is talking about? The Liberal government does not even recognize Canadians suffering from these diseases. His cabinet colleagues will not provide Canadians living with the challenges of disabling diseases protection and a strong moral commitment to their well-being. That is what he has admitted by submitting the motion. The motion is evidence that he has been unable to convince his own colleagues to support it.

I can prove that in the official opposition benches on this side of the House we have compassion and vision. We would not let the health minister close the file and abandon hepatitis C victims. We forced the Liberal health minister to reopen the file.

We on this side of the House also have vision. We would not have chosen to close the hepatitis C file because we know that Canadians who are compassionate people would want to help these innocent victims. These Canadians were sick from tainted blood given to them by the federal government that may even have obtained the blood from prisoners in Bill Clinton town.

The majority of Canadians would not want these people who are fighting for their lives to go through our court system. They are not strong enough. The Liberal government should be held accountable for not compensating them. We on this side of the House are ashamed of the Liberal government's health record.

The government is denying Canadians freedom to choose natural health products. Canadians sick with the diseases mentioned in the motion and others have met with our chief health critic many times over the years. Like all Canadians, they have been denied access to

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simple alternative remedies which would alleviate some of their pain and suffering.

Today the government will not be helping victims of multiple chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

• (1755)

I regret that my remarks could not be more positive. I support any compassion, moral commitment or protection that any government including this one would provide to Canadians. It could do what the motion asks by returning at least \$11.5 billion that it still refuses to restore to our health care system. Why has the government cut that money? The Liberals on the other side of the House could had the opportunity to restore it.

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is critical to support this motion. I will put it in the context of the people in north, but I do not want necessarily to exclude anyone else who suffers from fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue or environmental sensitivities.

The Arctic Council recently did a report on the particular vulnerability of people who live in the north. The rates of pollution are unacceptably high and environmental sensitivities are part of the problem. The levels of heavy metals such as cadmium, lead and mercury congregate in the north and remain there. They are in country foods; in indigenous foods; in caribou; in surface, mountain and rain waters; and in mother's breast milk.

I personally know dozens of women who have suffered from chronic fatigue for five, six or seven years. It goes undiagnosed. I know of women with fibromyalgia who can no longer work and have been reduced to going to social assistance because they are not eligible for disability pensions. Of course social assistance is regionalized and these women cannot go from one part of the country to another and expect to obtain social assistance at an equivalent level. Being able to obtain a disability pension which recognizes their medical suffering would allow them the mobility to move a part of the country where their suffering could be lessened.

One point about Private Members' Business that is uplifting is that we can actually hear a minister talk to an issue rather than being constrained by a party position. Debate very often is oriented to an issue and we do not have to hear battles back and forth about one party saying this and another saying that. As individual members of parliament, elected from wherever in the country, we can defend a position that we think is critical.

To include these three diseases and make the people eligible for pensions validates the suffering of people. They are not depressed for nothing. They can go to the doctor who can tell them what is going on, who can help them out or recommend other areas of

medicine. This could encourage more research into an area where there is not enough.

More and more the newer research indicates that low levels of toxins affect individuals more than we thought. Low levels of combinations of toxins have more effect than we expected them to have. We do not have a lot of information on it, but we do know that it affects people. It limits their lives and their ability to work.

I rise as the member for Yukon in support of the motion. It is important and I hope it leads to further research and more support for the people who are suffering.

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House. As well, I thank the Minister of National Defence for taking the very unusual step of speaking in support of a private member's motion.

There are both scientific and humanitarian reasons for recognizing multiple chemical sensitivities, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome as conditions causing disability and for supporting the sufferers of these conditions.

The extent of the suffering caused has been documented. People suffering from these diseases may endure up to 20 painful symptoms a day.

[*Translation*]

The symptoms include soreness in the bones and muscles, gastrointestinal problems, headaches, dizziness, irritability and sleep disorders for those who are affected. Their quality of life is greatly affected.

• (1800)

Every day, Health Canada receives several letters from patients who are asking for help and who want assurances that serious measures will be taken with regard to the disease that is destroying their lives.

[*English*]

It is also important to recognize the largely voluntary efforts of the scientific and social groups that have organized to promote progress in this field.

One of the motivations for this motion is the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which say that states should ensure the provision of effective medical care to persons with disabilities. The Environmental Illness Society of Canada has interpreted this as an obligation to protect the people through legislation in order to achieve the goal of full participation and equality for persons with disabilities.

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It feels that recognition by the House of Commons will help sufferers gain access to disability support programs.

Because MCS, CFS and FM are not considered disabling illnesses at present, they are often misdiagnosed. Without recognition, sufferers are unable to be considered for disability benefits and treatment. It also means that we are lagging behind in research for determining a cause for these diseases and a consequential treatment.

For sufferers, these illnesses are often unidentified and they suffer not only from their symptoms, but also from marriage breakdown. They often lose their jobs due to an inability to perform at their full capacity. They cannot afford treatment. They use up their savings, often risking their homes. They go on social assistance. They do not have access to community social service support. They often get into legal battles with private insurers and they have a higher rate of suicide.

It is hard for many of us to imagine being sensitive to almost everything that surrounds us, but it is not hard to realize that we live in an increasingly toxic world and that this has the potential to cause risks to our health.

We have, as a government, taken some actions which demonstrate the concern about the growing number of environmental hazards. The Bureau of Chemical Hazards concentrates on the effects on human health of chemical and biological agents in the environment. The bureau has recognized the need to study not only air quality but also personal exposure to airborne contaminants.

We have an environmental health directorate at Health Canada and an office of environmental health assessment which deal specifically with environmental health risks. Last Thursday the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Health announced the first phase of research projects under the toxic substances research initiative. This initiative responds to the need to have sound scientific research in order to define and reduce the health and environmental effects of toxic substances in Canada.

Health Canada, through its participation in an expert working group on these conditions, participates in the identification of research gaps in the field. Health Canada holds a number of informal consultations with sufferers, concerned physicians and other health professionals. It is anticipated that in the upcoming months Health Canada will work toward a coalition of patient groups in order to ensure their participation in program planning and research agendas.

Research is extremely important and recognition by the House of these illnesses would be an important step forward in ensuring that researchers are able to carry out badly needed research in these fields.

We have recognized that there is a link between environmental factors and health. What Canadians who suffer from multiple

chemical sensitivity, chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia experience is a chronic and acute reaction to environmental factors against which the majority of the population are able to defend themselves.

• (1805)

We have devoted resources and energy to dealing with chemical environmental triggers at the level considered toxic. We have mechanisms for dealing with the substances, but we cannot help the people who suffer from even the slightest exposure to them. Sufferers are often misdiagnosed as having psychological disorders or are told that the source of their discomfort cannot be identified.

Finally, I want to talk about the need for treatment. In this country we have one centre for the treatment of environmentally-induced illnesses. That centre has a waiting list so long that the people who require care simply will not ever be able to get it.

We have a Canadian expert in this area practising in the United States, occasionally coming to Canada to provide treatment. Most often, when the system can be persuaded that it is necessary, we are sending Canadians to the United States to be treated by a Canadian doctor who would love to be applying his expertise in this country to help the many Canadians who are suffering from what to much of the medical profession is a great mystery.

I wish this motion were votable. I know that the Minister of Health recognizes the importance of this issue and is prepared to act on it whether or not this is endorsed by the House.

We need to look at some specific things. We need to look at some pilot projects to set up other treatment programs in Canada. We have the expertise. We should be taking care of these issues in our country.

Finally, I would like to quote a statement from a letter I received this week:

CFS and FM have seriously affected each of our lives. Previously employed as professionals, we are now incapable of employment and some are only able to work with reduced hours. Every aspect of our lives has had to be altered in order for us to feel some sense of accomplishment. We struggle to do the basics such as personal hygiene, home maintenance, raising families and maintaining friendships. Every single task we attempt must be pre-planned and often we fail in the end because our bodies do not co-operate.

That statement, from a group of people who suffer from these conditions, says more than I or any other member of the House can say. I hope that this debate, even though it is not going to lead to a vote, certainly leads the government and leads all of us to make a commitment to follow through on this debate and to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier I heard the hon. member for York Centre, the Minister of National Defence, mention in his speech that all parties in the House are supporting this motion except the Reform Party. That is

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not true. I would like to put it on the record that the statement was supposed to be the other way around.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I have a suggestion which I think, with the unanimous consent of the House, might be acceptable to all sides. The suggestion is that Motion No. 468 be withdrawn and that the subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

The Deputy Speaker: I think perhaps there may be agreement to proceed in this way at the conclusion of the debate, but I suggest that we wait until the conclusion of the debate. Otherwise there will be no motion left before the House to debate. That would be a disaster from the point of view of the debate.

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona wishes to speak and I suspect that the hon. member for Ottawa Centre might want his five minute reply.

If it is agreeable, perhaps we can simply hold the parliamentary secretary's suggestion in abeyance for a few moments and hear the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have a chance to speak to this motion before it disappears, procedurally speaking, but not before it disappears in terms of the subject matter being a matter of ongoing concern to the Canadian parliament.

• (1810)

Rather than have this motion, which is not votable, simply be debated and disappear, the idea of referring it to the health committee is a good one, providing of course that it does actually lead to some action down the way. However, we cannot know that unless we give it the old college try and so having this referred to the committee is certainly a good idea. I look forward to the hon. member for Ottawa Centre seeking the consent of the House to do that at the appropriate time.

This is a welcome motion because it gives us a chance to talk about something that is a very serious problem for a growing number of Canadians.

I have had the experience of visiting a person who suffers from MCS, multiple chemical sensitivity. She is a person who lives just outside my riding. Her name is Margaret Tatlock. She has educated me, and I hope educated a great many other Manitoba politicians, and not just politicians but others, in the terrible circumstances which people who suffer from MCS live in, the way in which their whole lives are virtually destroyed by this condition.

I know the bill is not just about MCS. It is also about chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia. However, I want to talk in a little more detail about MCS because it seems to me that one of the

tragedies of this is not just the illness itself, but also the great difficulty that these people experience in getting anybody to take them seriously.

Most of the people who suffer from these things go through a great period of time in which they have various doctors and others tell them it is all in their head, that it is psychological, that it is psychosomatic, et cetera. Even when elements of the medical community become persuaded that there really is something going on that is organic and not just psychological, then they find that they cannot get treatment. Even having crossed over the bridge of recognition, once they get there, there is nothing there for them in terms of treatment.

The person I am talking about has had to make repeated trips to a clinic in Texas, which is a very expensive thing to do, especially if you are not employed, because you cannot hold down a job when you have this kind of thing.

I have had to communicate with this person on occasion through a neighbour because sometimes she cannot even use the phone. These are all very difficult circumstances. I am sure there are peculiarities to every case, but here we have a Canadian having to go to Dallas on as regular a basis as she can to get treatment which alleviates her symptoms for a time. There is a clinic in Nova Scotia that deals with this, but it is only one. I think it is the one that the member from Ottawa was referring to earlier. The waiting list is enormous.

We have a growing number of Canadians who need to have this officially recognized as an illness and have all of our provincial health care systems deal with it.

I have written to ministers of health and to the federal Minister of Health. There seems to be a kind of jurisdictional twilight zone. How do we get a particular illness recognized as something that should be treated under the terms of the Canada Health Act, that falls under the rubric of a medical problem, which is therefore something that Canadians can claim through their medicare system? I have to say that I have not had any success in doing that on this person's behalf, or on anybody else's behalf for that matter.

That is an outstanding problem. Of course the recognition of it would also address, as this motion does, the whole question of disability, of having this recognized for disability purposes so that people can qualify for a disability pension. Surely people who fall into this category and suffer from this are people who are genuinely disabled. A lot of them cannot leave their homes.

This is a genuine disability and we need to cross over. We need to get out of the paradigm we are in. We need to get out of the way of understanding things the way we do now and do a new thing. If in some way the motion leads to that in the health committee, the House will have served Canadians who suffer from these condi-

tions very well and we will have done our job. I hope that will be the outcome of the debate this afternoon.

• (1815)

One of the things that was disappointing this week, with respect to another issue that touches on these things, is the whole question of the environment. Here we are talking about multiple chemical sensitivity. I know the government members have already been on their feet to say what a wonderful job they are doing in instituting this new program to do research on toxic substances, et cetera. However, the fact of the matter is that this week we did not cross over. We did not do a new thing. We did not build a bridge to a new day when it comes to the environment when we had the opportunity. We may be doing that now, I hope, with respect to the recognition of MCS and these other two conditions, but we did not do it yesterday or on Monday when we had all the votes on the Canadian environmental protection act.

By the admission of everyone who knows anything about what happened in the environment committee, the government, in collaboration with the Reform Party, stomped out the more progressive amendments that were brought forward by the committee and by people on the government side who have a reputation with respect to the environment that is second to none. I am thinking of the hon. member for Davenport who has been a recognized expert on the environment in this parliament ever since I arrived and long before I arrived, since 1968, and the member for Lincoln and the member for York North. Here we have three Liberals with a reputation for being concerned about the environment, who were forced to vote against their own government, not just in defence of environmental principles but in defence of parliament.

Here we have another case of a committee that took a piece of government legislation, examined it and improved it, but when it got back to the House the improvements were literally stomped out.

The Reform Party members sometime complain that the work of committees is not respected. I will have to take that with a grain of salt from here on in. I thought they were sincere but not after this week. They not only participated in the ignoring of a committee report, they were active collaborators in the stomping out of the work of a committee.

I dare say there is a certain element of hypocrisy here, even on the part of the hon. member who moved the motion. Had he been up on his feet yesterday and the day before with the members for Davenport, Lincoln and York North then I might be in a bit more of a complimentary mood than I normally am, but he was not. I would urge him to reflect on the fact that one of the ways of dealing with multiple chemical sensitivity is to deal with the fact that our environment is more and more permeated with chemicals and it is going to continue to be more and more permeated with chemicals until we adopt a policy of total phase-out of persistent toxins.

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As long as we have a policy that says we have to have balance no matter how bad the stuff is, it is like saying there can be only so much arsenic in our coffee. That is not balance. That is death, destruction and poison. That is negative and destructive. We need a policy of total phase-out of toxins in our environment. Until we get that kind of policy from the government, we will continue to have more and more Canadians suffering from these environmental illnesses.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Listening to the members of the House talk, in particular the minister of defence, the deputy whip of the government and the mover of the motion, there was indication from them that they might like to make this a votable motion. I would therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to make this motion votable.

• (1820)

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the motion be made votable?

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, in fairness to all of my colleagues here, there have been some discussions. If we really want consent for the bill to go to committee, procedurally this is perhaps the most effective way. I do know of at least one or two members who are going to say no. As a result, this is the best possible scenario in a situation where we can still continue to debate the issue at the committee level and have the House dispose of it.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I would ask if I could possibly propose a motion at this time or would you rather that I wait until later?

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the member for Winnipeg—Transcona for introducing my particular solution to this problem that the member has raised.

I raised it when I did, not to interrupt the member's speech but simply because you were dealing with a point of order on this same matter.

This is a non-votable motion. The member for Ottawa Centre has put a great deal of work into it, as have other members of the House of Commons. Normally on a non-votable motion there is a debate and nothing happens.

The intent of my motion, which I will repeat if needed, is simply to see that it is referred to committee where it can be studied and hopefully come back to the House in a form in which it is not simply a motion but—

The Deputy Speaker: It sounds to me as though the parliamentary secretary is making a speech rather than rising on a point of

Adjournment Debate

order. While perhaps everyone appreciates the tenor of his remarks, we are using up the time that is available for debate.

The hon. member for Wetaskiwin has put a request to the House. Does he wish me to put that request to the House?

Mr. Dale Johnston: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the motion be made votable?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I should advise the House that if the hon. member for Ottawa Centre speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not put on the record my great appreciation for the tremendous amount of leadership that has been provided by the people at the Environmental Illness Society of Canada and, in particular, Judith Spence and her volunteers not only across the country but perhaps around the world. She has been a leading force in trying to bring about awareness of this issue.

I would also like to put on the record a word of appreciation for Kara Thompson who has also been a tremendous supporter of the issues, the Minister of National Defence who has been great inspiration for me on this issue, as well as members on all sides of the House, from the Reform Party, the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois. Collectively, the House has come to a level of awareness where something needs to happen. The member for Winnipeg—Transcona has also, on a number of occasions, given me a tremendous amount of support on the motion.

In that spirit, I move:

That Motion No. 468 be withdrawn and the subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the 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)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.25 p.m., is it agreed that we call it 6.30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

● (1825)

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

HEALTH

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a scientist at the Pacific Science Congress in Vancouver in 1974 had the following words to say. "A scientist has as much luck in communicating with the federal bureaucracy as you would have reciting Gaelic poetry to a deaf seagull".

Recent events have served to prove these words. The government seems to be favouring the narrow, short term, cash interests of a few huge multinational corporations over the health of Canadians.

Canada's scientists have been gagged, muted, silenced and ignored by this Liberal government. They have been pressured to approve drugs and overridden by bureaucrats.

This is a very serious matter, and I believe the health of Canadians to be threatened. The disease is misplaced government priorities. The symptoms include muzzling scientists and heavy-handed government intimidation tactics. The prognosis is a festering, politically motivated plague on health prevention and the prescription is for this Liberal government to clean up its act where the health of Canadians is concerned.

In 1996 senior health protection regulator Dr. Michelle Brill-Edwards resigned, charging that the interests of pharmaceutical companies were being put ahead of those of the public.

Health protection scientists have revealed outside pressure to approve drugs aimed at increasing milk production in cows. The biggest multinational pressuring the Liberal government to approve their drugs for this use is Monsanto who, according to Elections Canada, during the last federal election donated to one candidate, the Liberal member for Mississauga Centre, and to one federal party in 1997, the federal Liberal Party.

The file on rBST, a drug to increase milk production, was placed off limits. A notice was sent out by the then director, Dr. Lachance, stating:

Please be advised that starting immediately, January 11, 1999, the following files cannot be obtained by anyone prior to my approval: rBST, . . .

The memo went on to list other files. Then gag orders were placed on the scientists not to discuss this issue publicly. One scientist, who testified early in May before the Senate committee on agriculture, said:

Adjournment Debate

There was pressure to pass drugs, not only rBST, but also antibiotics and other hormones. There were serious problems with hormones that could cause cancer.

Another scientist, who testified before the Senate committee about the situation facing health department scientists, said:

—looking after the health of Canadians who are eating food produced from animals that are receiving dangerous drugs, antibiotics and hormones.

Yet another scientists, Dr. Margaret Haydon of Health Canada, testified that after her research she could not recommend support for a drug that affected the thymus gland of young calves which could in turn affect the immune system. Another evaluator agreed and the two acting chiefs of the section concurred.

All of this was overridden by higher powers closer to this Liberal government and hence closer to the corporate interests of Monsanto.

Even the food and drug administration in the U.S. admits that cows injected with these drugs could suffer from increased udder infections known as mastitis, severe reproductive problems, digestive disorders, persistent sores and lacerations.

Canadians do not want to consume pus in their milk. The government has done a real disservice to the health of Canadians, not to mention scientific integrity.

What will the Liberal government do to convince Canadians that it places their health over the greed of multinational corporate giants?

Finally, to what will the government commit in terms of putting in place processes which will protect the integrity of Canada's scientists and ensure that their research into our safety is given the priority it is due?

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member for Halifax West on behalf of the Minister of Health regarding allegations about the health department.

These scientists have aired their concerns a number of times: For example, with the Public Service Staff Relations Board, PSSRB in September 1998 and at an October 22, 1998 and May 3, 1999

hearing of the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

Following two days of testimony and volumes of information, the department found that scientists did not, through their testimony or documents, provide evidence to support their complaints. In fact the PSSRB dismissed all complaints made by Health Canada employees.

The department has gone to every effort to make certain that these scientists' concerns are heard and addressed and in fact, if there are concerns the scientists may have, they should bring them to the department where dispute resolution mechanisms are well in place.

No information on products is kept from scientists doing reviews and they have access to all information submitted and to the world literature on any subject.

• (1830)

Further, the deputy minister appeared before the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on May 13. Let me repeat what he told them in the other place. He told the committee that there are 6,000 heroes at Health Canada, dedicated staff who work every day and many nights and weekends to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Let it be perfectly clear that the product at issue, rBST, has been reviewed within Health Canada for more than nine years and has been evaluated internationally. Some countries have approved it and some have not. Health Canada issued a non-compliance for rBST on January 14. For rBST injected animals there were concerns related to animal health and safety.

There is no gag order. This should be obvious from the very fact that the scientists provided hours of testimony to the Senate committee at both hearings. In fact we were advised very clearly by the department that it was its obligation to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:31 p.m.)

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