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Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 14, 2000

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ) moved that Bill C-205, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of expenses incurred by a mechanic for tools required in employment) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

• (1105)

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to raise a problem which has been going on for far too long in Quebec and in Canada, and which in my opinion is prejudicial to the development of an essential sector of Canadian and Quebec industry, namely automobile mechanics.

I will start off by asking my colleagues of all parties in the House for their co-operation and support, because I believe that this problem is vital to a category of workers who are literally discriminated against when it comes to tax deductions.

I believe that this bill goes beyond party lines. I do not think it has anything to do with the differences of opinion there might be between the left and right in Canada, between sovereignists and federalists. I believe this bill should be an opportunity to rise above party lines. This bill will be a votable item, as I remind hon. members. Each and every one of my colleagues in this House will

therefore be able to vote according to his or her conscience. Based on the number of letters I have received in my office since introducing Bill C-205, I have great hopes of its being passed by the House.

The people affected by it are the men and women who work under the hoods of our cars and other vehicles, covered with grease and grime, day after day, in order to keep them in running order.

Each and every one of the 301 members of this House, myself included, have to submit every four years to the test of democracy, and when I say submit, I should probably be saying pass the test of democracy to convince people to support us. From time to time, we all visit car dealers for various meetings or during election campaigns. I am convinced that all my colleagues have had the same experience as I have. The owners of the garage open their doors to us, they allow us to meet the employees, either during the morning or the afternoon break, or at lunch time, and we then have the opportunity to talk with those men and women who tell us about the problems they are facing.

Some of you might be wondering why the Bloc Québécois transport critic is introducing a bill. It is a private member's bill. I was, and still am, of the opinion that it is a problem that should be fixed by parliament.

We have to understand that it is actually very difficult for these men and women to work in a ideal context because of the high cost of the tools they need to do their job. We have to understand that mechanics usually have to provide every tool, or at least many of the tools that they need to do their work. These tools, as members can imagine, are much more than the simple screwdriver that people can buy for a dollar or two. They are very expensive tools.

According to my information, a young mechanic or apprentice very often has to lay out a sizeable amount of money. This bill raises another problem with regard to the opportunity these young people have to work and earn a decent living.

It often happens that a young mechanic who has just finished school has to spend between \$5,000 and as much as \$30,000 or \$40,000 to buy the tools he needs for his job. Moreover, some of these expenses are recurrent. Technological change makes some tools obsolete quite rapidly, and new parts have to be bought. Some

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tools are sometimes forgotten inside vehicles, or some of them break and have to be replaced. To sum up, a mechanic has to spend thousands of dollars on the tools of his trade, but since he is a worker and not a business, he cannot benefit from tax deductions. I hope the national revenue and finance ministers will be sensitive to this problem.

• (1110)

However, a business that has to buy equipment can claim a deduction for these costs and get depreciation. This is not possible for an individual, except in certain cases.

Here are a few of these exceptions. We have the chain saw operators, and forestry workers, for example. To a certain extent, musicians and artists can also claim deductions for their instruments and tools. But mechanics cannot.

I therefore believe that mechanics are being treated unfairly and it is high time parliament did something about it. Today, February 14, on Valentine's Day, we are exactly two weeks to the day from the Minister of Finance's budget. We know the budget will be brought down on February 28 because the Prime Minister let it slip out about two weeks ago already. I wonder if the Minister of Finance was pleased when his Prime Minister accidentally revealed the date of the budget speech. So, the budget will be brought down on February 28.

I call on the Minister of Finance, on his community spirit and on his sense of justice and equity. I would appreciate it if, in his budget—and I convinced that the minister will be receptive and our speeches today are aimed at making him aware of this issue—he took into account the government's anticipated surplus of some \$95 billion over the next five years. The minister should take the opportunity provided by his budget to grant tax deductions to mechanics.

I mentioned earlier that I received numerous letters of support from members on both sides of the House. I also received letters from some of my constituents who work as mechanics in a garage and who are asking me to act. I would like to quote one such letter written by Mario Labrecque and Gérald Corriveau. Both work as mechanics in Beauport and they sent me this letter:

As constituents in your riding, we wish to inform you of the discriminatory nature of a tax policy that has an impact on our livelihood as automotive technicians.

A young apprentice who begins his career as an automotive technician must, on average, invest over \$15,000 in tools and equipment. He must also invest an average of \$5,000 each year to keep up to date.

These two persons go on to say:

The problem is that we are not entitled to deduct the cost of our tools, even though buying these tools is a condition of employment for us.

The unfairness of this treatment is aggravated by the fact that members of other professions, including chain saw operators and musicians, are allowed to deduct the cost of their saw or of their musical instrument. Moreover, the decision of the federal Minister of Finance not to grant any tax relief to mechanics regarding the purchasing

of tools and equipment is a deterrent for anyone who might be interested in that trade. The result is that the industry has a serious problem recruiting candidates and there is currently a shortage of skilled manpower.

In the light of these remarks, I decided to introduce this bill, which is intended to provide a deduction relating specifically to, and I will explain the content of Bill C-205, the cost of tool rentals, tool maintenance, related insurance and the full price of tools costing less than \$250.

This measure, I am sure, will ensure tax equity for people who are well deserving of it. This parliament is aware of this injustice and has been for a long time. On many occasions since 1992, members have drawn the fact to the government's attention. There was the member for Lakeland, I recall, and even a Liberal member, who introduced a similar bill when the party was in opposition in the early 1990s.

• (1115)

How have things changed since? Why has the Liberal Party not remained true to itself? Nearly every party, each in turn, has made the government aware of this inequity and nearly all have reached the same conclusion: the solution is a tax deduction for mechanics.

In its December 1997 prebudget report, the House Standing Committee on Finance said:

The Committee believes that all Canadian employees should be allowed to deduct from their income the cost of large mandatory employment expenses. Special provisions in the Income Tax Act already apply to artists, chainsaw operators and musicians.

To deny this tax treatment to apprentices and technicians in the automotive industry is not only unfair, it also imposes an impediment to employment, especially for the young who might choose to work as apprentices. Revising the tax treatment of such expenses would remove the impediment that exists under the present tax rules.

I would point out that the majority of the members of the House Standing Committee on Finance are government members. I would hope the Liberal members of this House will indicate the route the government should follow in the vote at second reading of my bill.

Through the Parliamentary Secretary to the then Minister of Finance, the government implied that it had great sympathy for mechanics and the difficult situation they faced, but that it could not take a piecemeal approach because other categories of workers might be facing a similar problem and it was necessary to bring in a legislative reform that would apply to all trades.

Despite its sympathy, in the budgets tabled since the 1997 report of the Standing Committee on Finance, the government has still not introduced the tax deduction needed to resolve this problem. Once again, I appeal to members, regardless of their party, and particularly to the Liberal majority, to offer automobile mechanics more than their sympathy.

Sympathy is certainly helpful. It is a comfort. It is encouraging and supportive. But I am asking for more. I am asking for a

concrete policy, for this parliament to take a democratic decision that will bring around the Minister of Finance and influence the government. I am therefore calling for more than sympathy.

I would like to tell the House what I think of the supposed importance of not opening Pandora's box by creating a deduction for mechanics and not for other trades that might also be similarly penalized.

An injustice exists. We know what needs to be done to fix it. Under no circumstances can we allow it to drag on because there might be other similar cases. On the contrary, let us resolve to take corrective action in the case of these other injustices at a later time.

We will hear from other members. Perhaps they will honestly decide to introduce other private members' bills to correct other injustices, but the bill I have introduced concerns a tax deduction for automobile mechanics.

I implore the members opposite not to play the game of doing nothing until a comprehensive solution is found to the problems of federal Canadian tax law.

• (1120)

The federal government coffers are full. We expect a \$95 billion surplus over the next five years. The Minister of Finance has money coming out his ears.

We have seen some of the decisions that have been taken, including the one about giving some thought to providing tax benefits to hockey teams owners when the average salary in the National Hockey League is \$1.2 million. Thanks to public opinion and because ordinary citizens sent faxes, phoned the riding offices and condemned this idea I would describe as stupid, that of giving tax deductions to hockey millionaires, the government thought about it for three days, then changed its mind.

As far as this bill is concerned, mechanics are not hockey millionaires, they do not earn \$1.2 million a year working in a garage. These people are middle-class workers, who are struggling and who have children in school. These young people need clothing and they sometimes have to rent an apartment away from home to pursue specialised studies in college or at university. We are talking here about middle-class people.

If, as we often say in our speeches, we as parliamentarians are sympathetic to the concerns of the ordinary people and the middle class, this bill is a very good opportunity to show it instead of simply expressing pious hopes, saying kind words, and crowing over how nice and fine our actions are. When we vote on this bill at second reading, we will see if the 301 members of the House are showing solidarity with those who are unfairly treated.

It is obvious that, when they finish school, many young people do not have \$15,000 to spend on a tool kit. What does that mean? It means that, when they enter the work market, young people who have already run into debt to get an education have to get further

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into debt to equip themselves with a tool kit that may cost between a minimum of \$5,000 and \$15,000.

Usually, these young people do not own any property or house, which they could use as collateral for a bank loan. Often they will need their parents to guarantee their loan. Not all parents are able to stand surety for their children. Let us not forget that parents who have spent a lot of money to support and help their children sometimes are not able to stand security for a bank loan. I hope that you are aware of the fact that, after graduation, young people do not automatically have \$5,000 or \$10,000 or \$15,000 in their pockets to buy a tool kit.

Let us not forget that a tool kit is required to perform their job. It is a job requirement. The garage owner will tell them "I am willing to give you a job, but you must bring your own tools".

I conclude by saying that my bill, contrary to similar bills debated in this House since 1992, is a votable bill. I hope that that is evidence of a sincere commitment to this issue on the part of my colleagues. I thank the members of the committee for having given me the opportunity to plead in front of them and for having agreed to make the bill a votable item. This is good news.

The Prime Minister regularly states that the members of his party are free to vote according to their conscience on private members' bills. There is no party line imposed by the government. Each member is free to vote for or against the bill, as he or she sees fit.

• (1125)

During election campaigns, all the members of this House probably had the opportunity to visit garages and dealerships employing automotive technicians. Thus, several of my colleagues are aware of the problem.

Those who vote against the bill will have explanations to give to thousands of voters come the next election.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans for this initiative and for his work on this very important subject.

[*English*]

This private member's bill proposes that the Income Tax Act be amended to permit automobile mechanics to deduct the cost of tools they are required to provide as a condition of employment.

The deduction encompasses maintenance, rental and insurance costs, the full cost of tools under \$250 and the capital cost of tools over \$250. This is a complex issue with many aspects that need to be examined carefully.

In framing the issue, however, a number of tax policy principles must be kept in mind. First, any tax policy change should be fair.

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Second, changes should also be relatively simple to administer and enforce for the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and easy to comply with for taxpayers. Third, any change should be consistent with the government's overall fiscal situation.

[*Translation*]

Mechanics are not the only workers who have to incur considerable expenses as a condition of employment. It would be difficult to justify giving tax relief to mechanics and not to other taxpayers, as proposed in the bill.

[*English*]

In fact, other groups are also seeking tax relief for work related expenses. Other expenditures for which tax recognition has been sought include personal computers purchased by employees, reading material, professional journals and other general costs associated with skills upgrading, business clothing and construction safety clothing, home office expenses, photographic equipment for staff photographers and tools for employee trade persons.

Extending relief in all of these situations would be a major shift in policy and would be fiscally very expensive. This is all the more difficult in view of the many other priority areas for tax reductions, given the overall level of personal income taxation that Canadians face.

Moreover, one would need to ensure that any tax relief is targeted only for items required as a condition of employment and not for those purchased for personal use. This would be difficult for the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency to administer and enforce and for taxpayers to comply with as many items, such as personal computers, provide a personal benefit even when they are required for work.

[*Translation*]

The provisions that would have to be made to solve these problems would necessarily be complex since they would have to cover a wide variety of items which could be subject to tax relief as well as the various situations where these articles are used at work. To have an idea of the monumental task that would represent, one just has to think of the numerous provisions dealing with car expenses.

The provisions governing the deduction for equipment acquisition expenses by employees would apply to hundreds of different items and to a good number of occupations.

[*English*]

The private member's bill that is before the House today would also provide tax relief to all mechanics, irrespective of the size of their expenditures, instead of targeting relief to those incurring extraordinary expenses relative to their income. For mechanics with employment expenses comparable to those incurred by other employees this would be unwarranted as tax relief for normal employment expenses is provided through the basic personal amount.

• (1130)

Given the complexities associated with providing tax recognition for specific employment expenses and the need to reduce the overall level of personal taxation that Canadians face, the government provided broad based tax relief in the last two budgets and will continue to do so in future budgets.

I hope the hon. members present will agree with this approach and not support the private member's bill before us today.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-205, in my view, is simply a matter of fairness.

As a physician and an amateur mechanic, I have two interests in this. I would like to compare what happened in my office when I became a young doctor setting up a practice. I also have a profound interest in old cars so I have my own tools, for which I have spent a lot of money. Because of my medical practice and my love of cars, I would like to rebut some of the things the member opposite has said.

When I set up my practice as a young doctor I had significant expenses. I bought electrocardiograph equipment. I bought surgical equipment. I set them up in my office. Every single penny that I spent on those things was deductible as a practice expense. It meant that the thousands of dollars that I had spent setting up my medical practice as a country surgeon was not an onerous burden for me personally.

I also said that I am a keen car enthusiast. I purchased a significant number of mechanic tools, hobby tools and personal interest tools. Those should in no way become deductible. How about the young mechanic who just finishes school and sets himself up in his mechanic practice? He generates a huge expense. I have personal knowledge of some of the new equipment because it is equipment I could not afford. There is a significant expense in diagnostic equipment.

I bought those tools for my physician employment and I lost some of them and some wore out. Sometimes new technology came along and I had to replace them. Every single time that happened I got a personal deduction in my practice expenses. What happens to the young mechanic? If he loses a tool or has to upgrade his tools, or new technology comes along and his tools become obsolete, should he have credit for that? In my view, it is a straight matter of fairness.

I listened to someone say that it would be difficult for the department to figure out what was personal and what was bought for employment. Obviously if I used a scalpel for hobby work that would not be for the practice of medicine. If the department had

trouble with this, it would be very simple for it to come to the mechanic's home or place of work and say "These tools are personal", if all that is needed is to establish that they are in use for gainful employment and for making funds.

I also listened to the incredible comment that there are other people calling for tax fairness in other areas. Those things should be looked at on their merits. Should construction safety equipment be brought under this regime? Should computer use be brought under this regime? Only if they are used for a specific generation of income.

This is one of those issues where I reflect back on the Liberals when they were in opposition. One of their members put forward a private member's bill just like this one. Who voted for it? The Liberals did. Not so long ago my colleague from Lakeland brought forward just such a bill in private members' business which was supported by, guess who, Reformers.

Now we have a member of the Bloc. What is going on here in terms of the partisan debate? If this had merit when Liberals were sitting on this side of the House it has merit, plain and simple. In my view, this is so meritorious that I cannot imagine that the member would stand up here and argue against it with a straight face. If mechanics have significant expense for their tools, and they do, why not give them a deduction? It is a straightforward deduction.

• (1135)

I will leave this issue for a second and talk about two other big problems with our tax system, one of which actually brought me to parliament. The GST as it relates to medical practitioners is handled very poorly. All other professionals who pay GST on their rent, supplies and equipment can use it as a deduction, but physicians and nurse practitioners cannot. That is wrong. The GST should be zero rated for those individuals, which is something I hope the government will also pay attention to.

They talk about fairness, and once again this is an issue of fairness. If an accountant pays rent and pays GST on that rent, he gets a deduction. If a physician pays rent, which every physician in private practice in Canada does, he or she pays the GST and does not get a deduction. I want the member across to remember that.

I have another issue that relates to the GST. The GST is a big issue with Canadian auctioneers who auction off goods, such as art and antique vehicles. An individual who purchases such an article has to pay GST on it but there is no way to get a deduction. If the person resells that piece of property, then GST is paid on it again. That is called a cascading of tax. For used goods that are sold over and over at auctions there is a cascading of GST, which is wrong. These are matters of straight fairness.

I support the Bloc member on his initiative. I congratulate him for bringing it forth again. It is votable. It will give us an

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opportunity to see if the Liberal members will vote the same way in government as they did in opposition.

For the mechanics, I admit that this is a little lighthearted. For all those individuals who vote against the mechanics getting a deduction for their tools, which is not that big of an amount, maybe they should leave the spark plugs out of their vehicles so they cannot come here to the House.

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Madam Speaker, I also support Bill C-205 which would amend the Income Tax Act so that mechanics can deduct the cost of their tools.

It seems that bills similar to this have been brought forward by different parties over the past years and, at different times, supported by all the parties. We now have an opportunity to vote on this. If we all vote at the same time to support it, it would obviously pass. Historically we have seen support for this bill and for the mechanics in question.

It is hardly fair to mechanics, who are self-employed or employed by someone else, to have to provide their own tools. That is the equalizing effect. Whether they are running their own business or working for someone else, it is up to the mechanics to buy their own tools, and those tools are expensive.

If there is one thing I know, having many family members in the trades, they never dream of showing up to a job site without their own tool kit. They also have to upgrade their tools and update their knowledge. As machines become more sophisticated, the tools become more sophisticated and more expensive.

On top of that, those living in the north may need industrial, high quality tools which are not easily available and are more expensive. This adds more expense to the cost of people getting trades and going through their apprenticeships. Apprentices do not make a lot of money because they must work for somebody else. They should be able to deduct the cost of their tools.

Fairness, as it is being distributed right now, is certainly in question. The Liberal member who stood up made outright excuses for not supporting the bill. He said that it should be fair, that it is complex, that it should be easy to comply with and that it should be consistent with the fiscal situation. That is just putting up road-blocks.

As it stands, mechanics are facing a situation that is blatantly unfair. What is wrong with treating someone fairly? Is it that it would encourage other people to expect to be treated fairly? I do not think that is an adequate excuse for not supporting this bill.

It is also not an excuse to say that it would make a lot of work for the new Canada tax agency to treat Canadians fairly. Every Canadian deserves the right to be treated fairly. When it comes to the cost of doing business and carrying out one's trade or profession, it should be treated equally. The question should not be based

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on whether a person is in a trade or in a profession, or that somehow trades do not rank equally with other professions. We should never entertain that sort of thought. Whether people are doctors, mechanics or carpenters, they should be eligible to deduct the cost of their tools to do their business in the country.

• (1140)

Any move forward to a fairer tax system is a good position to take. As a private member in the House, I will certainly support the bill. I hope other Liberal members will see it as a cause to support as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with bitterness that I rise this morning on Bill C-205.

However, it is not because of Bill C-205 that I am so bitter, so sad and so disappointed, it is because of the clarity bill, which we will be considering clause by clause in a few hours.

Bill C-205 leads me to talk about Bill C-20. Bill C-20 shows Quebecers, Canadians, the democratic world how low and arrogant the Liberal government has become and shows that it does not have the slightest respect for democracy. Its behaviour is shameful for all of us, members of the House, including you, Madam Speaker, who preside over the House.

I ask myself many questions: Where have they gone, the democratic values of the leader of the Liberal Party, the very little guy from Shawinigan? Where have they gone, the democratic principles of the brilliant university professor, the lackey of the very little guy from Shawinigan, the machiavellian member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville?

How should we interpret the silence of the President of the Treasury Board, of the Minister of Finance, of the Minister of Public Works, of all the Liberal backbenchers on this assault on democracy? Are the advancement of the Liberal Party and the lust for power more important than democracy?

I have not forgotten the Minister for International Trade, the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Denis; every member knows that he makes himself scarce these days, since he is responsible for the HRDC scandal. What a courageous man.

History will teach our children that the leaders of the Reform Party and of the New Democratic Party and the deputy House leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and all the members voting for C-20 have dealt democracy a dirty blow.

I hope that members of this House will weigh the benefits of Bill C-205, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of expenses

incurred by a mechanic for tools required in employment), in terms of democracy and fairness.

I want to remind the House that mechanics generally have to provide most of the tools of their trade. You surely know how expensive these tools are.

Usually, a mechanic who is starting his career must invest at least \$5,000 in various tools and, depending on his further training, this can reach over \$40,000. The existing law is discriminatory for automotive mechanics. Indeed, a business can claim a capital cost allowance for the purchase of equipment, but auto mechanics cannot.

• (1145)

The act is unfair because it permits chainsaw operators, musicians, artists and farmers to deduct the cost of their instruments and tools, but it does not let auto mechanics do so.

The current act is dealing a serious blow to the profession of auto mechanic. Due to very high costs of buying tools, practically no young people are choosing this profession any more, which causes a shortage of auto mechanics.

Bill-205, sponsored by my colleague, the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, will permit mechanics to deduct the cost of providing tools for their employment if they are required to do so by the terms of the employment.

This deduction will encompass the following: rental, maintenance and insurance costs, the full cost of tools under \$250, and such inflation-adjusted limit as is set by regulation, and the capital cost allowance of tools over \$250, set by regulation.

I would like to draw the members' attention to the fact that the Commons finance committee had recommended, in its December 1997 prebudget report:

The Committee believes that all Canadian employees should be allowed to deduct from their income the cost of large mandatory employment expenses. Special provisions in the Income Tax Act already apply to artists, musicians, chainsaw operators and farmers.

I ask all members to support this excellent amendment to the Income Tax Act.

[English]

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, at the beginning of my discourse I would like to seek unanimous consent to split my 10 minutes with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Does the hon. member have permission to split his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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Mr. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure today that I rise to speak to Bill C-205. This legislation addresses the very important issue of tax deductibility for the tools of mechanics.

I have met and spoken with a number of people representing mechanics across the country. As members of the House of Commons finance committee we have heard some very sound representations on behalf of these individuals. The fact is that many of them have to invest between \$15,000 and \$40,000 initially as they enter this industry. Every year their equipment needs replacement and updating, which is an ongoing expense.

It is important to realize that the average income of mechanics across Canada is about \$29,000 per year. It is very difficult for that industry to attract new people and to attract people with the skills and desire to succeed as mechanics with this kind of barrier to entry. It is having a deleterious impact on the ability of the automobile industry to attract people to this important area.

Initially I had some concerns that this would further complicate an already too complicated tax code, but in many ways it simplifies the tax system because it equalizes the treatment of equipment necessary for one to do his or her job. We heard other speakers this morning refer to the fact that other industries can claim tax deductibility on the equipment necessary to complete the job. This would equalize it to ensure that our mechanics have the same treatment.

● (1150)

It has a broad base of support from several national organizations. As well, in 1996 and 1997 the House of Commons finance committee recommended that we move toward ensuring tax deductibility of the equipment or tools necessary for mechanics to do their jobs. This is just part of the tax reform we should be seeing. It is a very small but important part for the mechanics and the people they serve. It is a step in the right direction.

I hope in the upcoming budget to see a significant level of tax reform and tax reduction, no just tofu tax tinkering but some real red meat tax reform that will help benefit Canadians and provide them with a fairer, more progressive and innovative tax system to create more of a culture of opportunity in Canada. This would be a good place to start.

With that, I ask the member for Cumberland—Colchester to provide us with some of his erudite views as a former member of the Canadian automobile industry.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Speaker, I am certainly pleased to participate in this debate. As the last member said, I was directly involved in the car business for 18 years and probably another 5 years indirectly before that. I worked

with mechanics for years and years. I feel very close to this proposal and totally support it. It is long past due and I hope all members will support it in the end.

We have a lot of unemployment in my area. It has one of the highest rates of unemployment in Canada. We have a group of people that want to work and train but are unable to do so because of the high cost of training and the high cost of getting into the business.

We have two problems that we could resolve with the bill. It would be a tremendous incentive for people to go into the business. It would help people to get off unemployment. Any cost that the government would incur in lost revenue would be more than made up in unpaid employment insurance.

I have watched the car business completely change over the last 15 years. At one point people would come into the business if they could fix a carburettor or a distributor, adjust points or change them or the wires, and that sort of thing.

Carburettors are not in existence any more. It is all electronic fuel injection. Distributors are not distributors with points and rotors. They are electronic ignitions. Transmissions, which used to be so simple to work on, are now very complicated because they are electronic and interrelated with onboard computers and everything else. Brakes used to be the most simple thing. Almost anybody could change them. They are no longer simple because they have sensors involved with the ABS or anti-lock brake and traction lock systems.

Even the exhaust systems are different. Anybody used to be able to change a muffler and a tailpipe. They cannot do it any more. They need special tools and training because the exhaust is an integral part of the pollution system in a car. As cars change with new fuels, new standards and everything else, mechanics will have to change. All the tools they have will be obsolete even though they have spent \$10,000 to \$20,000 to purchase the tools and were unable to write them off.

In all kinds of industries and professions people from musicians to plumbers can write off the tools and equipment they use in their businesses. It makes absolutely no sense that mechanics cannot write off their tools. It is an absolute necessity. Mechanics need these tools. They need to upgrade them almost weekly. They cannot take them home. They are not a luxury. They are an absolute necessity to earn their money. I applaud the member for bringing forth the bill, and I totally support it.

In closing, I hope all members of parliament will support the bill and vote in favour of it. It is a wrong that needs to be righted. It has been wrong for a long time. I urge the minister to act quickly to implement the proposal when the bill passes.

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[Translation]

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what my colleague, the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans, had to say about his bill. He is to be congratulated for having taken this initiative.

• (1155)

In my opinion, and in the opinion of other members of the House, the idea behind this bill compels us to look for the best way to reduce the tax burden of our citizens. Everyone agrees that the tax burden is too heavy. The question is: What is the best way to reduce it?

[English]

As the parliamentary secretary said in his remarks, when one examines the question of what is the best way to reduce the tax burden on our citizens we always have to choose. I was a little surprised by the remarks of the hon. member for Kings—Hants. Usually one looks to him for some sort of knowledge in these matters. He is on the finance committee and speaks regularly on finance matters in the House. I would have thought that he and other members of the House would recognize the wisdom of the words of the parliamentary secretary when he pointed out, if I can put it in a colloquial way, "You can't have your cake and eat it too".

We cannot reduce tax burdens sectorally in individual areas and at the same time say we want broad based tax relief as well. The consequence of a continued sectoral approach is one of tax expenditure. This will be followed by demands and important requests, as the parliamentary secretary pointed out reasonable requests for those who are artists, for those who are working on computers and for others to have reasonable deductions made for them in the name of tax equity.

Equity is what we seek to achieve in the House, but it seems to me that the real equity we are seeking to achieve at this time when we are discussing taxes is equity in terms of a broad based tax relief. That is what the government has been seeking to achieve with tremendous difficulty since our first mandate in 1993 in bringing huge budget deficits under control and having broad based tax relief.

We have managed to achieve a balanced budget. As a result in 1998 we were able to take 400,000 people off the tax rolls. That seems to me most important. From 1998-99 we perhaps got 600,000 Canadians off the tax rolls with a total of \$16.5 billion in tax relief spoken to in the last budget, without thinking of what is ahead in the next budget.

I have heard about the issue of the mechanics. I sympathize a great deal with it and with other sectors that also have certain tools for which they should have relief. I talked with a single woman in

my riding during the last election. She earned \$21,000 a year. She had two children to raise in downtown Toronto. She did not have any professional tools for which she could seek relief. In my view she should not be on the tax rolls when we look at the type of problems of a person like that living in our downtown communities.

We have to look at broad based tax relief. We have to look at moving the middle class, lifting its general levels and making it available to all Canadians. This must be our first priority before we turn to specific issues in specific sectors.

That is what the government has been doing. We have managed to balance the budget. We have kept our obligations to increase our social policies. We have used the tax system to help those in need through the child tax benefit and we have been reducing the deficit.

In my view this is what we have to do. We must keep all priorities in view and not single out one group. In the future we will see this done. We have heard that the minister intends to have further measures designed to move more lower income people off the tax rolls; to increase the tax brackets so that the burden will not be so heavy on those who are in the middle class; to gradually approach the surtax issue; and to deal with the issue of capital gains, which addresses the question of productivity.

[Translation]

I agree with the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, when he describes the problems faced by mechanics. However, we need to strike a balance. There must be some investments in garages if we want mechanics to be employed. The idea is that we have to look for the right balance in the system.

• (1200)

[English]

Speaking for my constituents in Toronto Centre—Rosedale, I think that they are looking for that balance. They want a system which alleviates the burden on those less able to pay, yet encourages entrepreneurship and creates a dynamic economy of benefit to all citizens. I dare say that we have proven the qualities of this approach by the government. We have gotten the economy back on track.

Unemployment is at its lowest rate ever. That was not achieved by looking at sectoral issues; it was achieved by having a broad based and balanced approach for all Canadian citizens.

What do the people of my riding want? They want to see a continuation of those policies, whether they be mechanics, artists, theatre employees, lawyers or doctors, all of whom have special needs in their professions, in their work, or in other ways in which they carry on, benefit and create economic benefits for the country. Ultimately what they want is a better system for everyone. They want to bring the general tax level down in a way that will benefit all of society. That is the present policy of the government.

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While I congratulate the member for bringing forward the bill and while I recognize the merits of the comments of each of the members from the opposition who have spoken to the bill and the needs of mechanics, I believe in my heart that the mechanics and all other citizens who might make an equal claim for this form of personal tax relief directed to themselves would say that it is better that the general tax burden come down, that we address it in a way which guarantees a balanced economy such that all participate, that we create a sense of entrepreneurship and fairness in the system so that all sectors benefit and that we do not concentrate on one specific area in a way which would, as the parliamentary secretary wisely pointed out to us, create tax inequities, because it would create a need for certain types of supervision. It would create a sense where one person would say, "Why are they able to deduct that? Why cannot I deduct my dress which I bought for my work on television? Why cannot I deduct this because I am an artist? Why cannot I deduct that?"

Let us concentrate on the main issue which is before us. Let us concentrate on bringing down the general tax rolls, on bringing down the burden for all Canadians. I am confident that is what we will hear from the Minister of Finance when he speaks to the budget in the House at the end of this month. We will hear that balanced approach.

The business of the governing of the country requires focusing on the debt, the general tax burden and the needs of the economy, which must be dynamic, which must grow and benefit all for the benefit of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from December 7, 1999, consideration of Bill C-2, an act respecting the election of members to the House of Commons, repealing other acts relating to elections and making consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of Group No. 2.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Madam Speaker, we are debating the amendments in Group No. 2 to Bill C-2, which will revise the Canada Elections Act.

The Group No. 2 amendments include one from Reform which would alter the completely illogical 50 candidate rule for parties to have their name on the ballot down to 12 candidates. In other words, a party that would have 12 candidates running in a general election would be entitled to have its party name on the ballot.

That whole issue is the subject of a court challenge. The communist party of Canada won its challenge to the previous elections act. The court ruled that two members constitute a party, but during the committee proceedings, in my discussions with individuals from the small parties who appeared as witnesses, they all agreed that 12 was a logical number that represents what is recognized as a party in the House. They agreed that 12 would be logical. Unfortunately the minister refuses to accept that as a satisfactory compromise. He is pursuing this ridiculous 50 candidate rule, which will be struck down again by the courts. I just do not understand why he is doing it.

• (1205)

There is a bigger issue in the bill which also has the potential to be struck down by the courts because of a ruling in B.C. during the last few days. Last Thursday the Pacific Press announced the decision against the Attorney General of British Columbia in the Supreme Court of British Columbia concerning the British Columbia elections act. The British Columbia elections act had a gag law in it, the same way that this elections act has a gag law, to prevent third parties from spending money over a certain limit during election campaigns.

I want to read some of the details of the ruling from the B.C. court because that ruling really relates to this bill. I think what is happening is that the minister's bill is imploding at the moment, based on this court ruling, and he really should hoist it right out of here and send it back to committee to have it consider what came out of the B.C. supreme court.

Specifically the court criticizes the Libman decision upon which the minister based his entire case for having the gag law built into the elections act. The minister said that Libman had ruled that it was reasonable to have spending limits on third parties. However, let me read into the record what the British Columbia court decided. It was pointed out in evidence to the court that Professor Richard Johnston, who is a professor of political science at the University of British Columbia, gave evidence that there have only been three studies done in Canada on the effects of third party advertising, two by himself and one by Tanguay and Kay.

I am not going to go into the details of each of the studies, but suffice it to say that Mr. Johnston's initial report of his findings indicated:

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In December 1990 Professor Johnston published a paper entitled "The Volume and Impact of Third Party Advertising in the 1998 Election". In that paper he posited that third party advertising might have helped the Conservative recovery during the 1988 federal election.

This was used as the basis for the Lortie commission report and that was used as evidence before the supreme court judges in the case of Libman.

Unfortunately for the Libman case, in 1992 Professor Johnston and his colleagues published a book called *Letting the People Decide*. As a result of additional study of the data from his original study, his conclusion was that it is now his opinion that third party advertising had no net effect on voter intentions over the course of the 1988 federal election.

What that means is that the evidence presented to the Supreme Court of Canada in the Libman case was badly flawed, and that was confirmed by the judge in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the hon. Mr. Justice Brenner, when he said:

Earlier in these reasons I have traced the factual chronology surrounding Professor Johnston's 1990 paper on the 1988 federal election and his subsequent book, *Letting the People Decide*. I have outlined how he reached different conclusions with respect to the effect of third party advertising. I also set out the manner in which Professor Johnston's initial paper was relied upon by the Lortie Commission which was, in turn, relied upon by the courts in Libman. . .

Accordingly, the conclusions of the Lortie Commission on this issue can no longer be said to be based on empirical findings. And of course Professor Johnston's later study in *Letting the People Decide* was not available to the court in Libman.

The judge went on to say:

In addition, in Libman the pressing and substantial objective relied on by the government was not challenged by the plaintiff. Finally, the conclusions in Libman on the issue of pressing and substantial objective are a product of the evidence or its lack thereof in that case and cannot be dispositive of any evidentiary issue in the case at bar. Accordingly, I conclude that Libman is not dispositive of the issues in the case before me.

What that really means, to sort out the legalise, is that if Bill C-2 passes in its present form it will be challenged in court by the National Citizens' Coalition and by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Both groups have said that they have more than enough funding to take it all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The minister must know that he will lose based on the evidence. There are now three high courts which have ruled that these gag laws are unconstitutional and there is no basis for them.

• (1210)

One of the other things which was struck down in the B.C. case was any restriction on the publication of the results of polls. During the committee hearings on Bill C-2 newspaper people appeared before the committee and I asked them whether the government had ever approached them to discuss or to try to reach some sort of compromise on the publication of poll results during an election

campaign. They indicated that the government had never approached them.

During that committee hearing—and the records of that committee hearing show this is the case—I had a discussion and reached a compromise where the polls could be printed right up until the time of the election, but the methodology would have to be printed along with them. That was agreed to. But the minister refused to accept that compromise. As a result, I have to tell him the bad news.

Because the Pacific Press continued with its case, the B.C. supreme court concluded that there is no place whatsoever for any restriction on polling. There are no restrictions on the publication of the results and no restrictions or requirements with respect to the publication of methodology.

This means that the whole thing has been thrown wide open and there is no compromise. There is no methodology to be printed and the newspapers are free to print polls right up until the time of the election without indicating how they conducted those polls or from where they got the results.

This is the mess to which the minister has brought us. There are three separate court challenges of this bill. The 50 candidate rule is illogical and ridiculous. We could have had a compromise reached with all of the parties concerned that would have been 12; not the same as the court concluded at 2, but it would have been logical and accepted by everybody.

The gag law provisions in the British Columbia Elections Act, which are basically the same as the gag law provisions in this bill, have been struck down. It is obvious that this bill has no chance of remaining in place if it is challenged by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the National Citizens' Coalition. All of the polling restrictions have been struck down. If the minister had sat down with the parties concerned and reached some sort of compromise we would not be facing this situation today.

This is typical of the government. We see it time after time after time in bills it brings before the House. It has no consultation with the affected parties. It rams things down the throats of the people of this country and it ends up in court, having its restrictions cut down.

I would like to speak a little further on what the B.C. supreme court said. It made the point that in order to override charter rights—we are talking about freedom of expression, freedom of speech in the sense of an election campaign—it is necessary that there be more than a general hypothetical concern about a problem when there is no evidence to demonstrate that it has existed in the past or is likely to exist in the future.

The judge found, based on all of the expert evidence provided at that court case, that there was no evidence whatsoever that third party advertising was the least bit harmful to an election campaign. In fact, the judge concluded that from the lesson of the

Charlottetown referendum it is exactly to the contrary, that there is a strong argument in favour of third party advertising.

Quoting from the judgment of the hon. Judge Brenner concerning the Charlottetown referendum, there are certain circumstances in which the goal of fairness in elections would support an argument for third party advertising. The Charlottetown referendum provides an example. If in a future election campaign in British Columbia all of the political parties were to agree on a significant policy point, the lack of an effective third party advertising campaign would be a detriment to the voters.

The ruling is 88 pages long. I wish I could read more of it into the record. The minister must have seen it. He knows he is going to lose this case. Why will he not withdraw the bill, send it back to committee and let us have another look at it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this House and take part in the debate on Bill C-2, the Canada Elections Act.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Much of the content of this bill has been outlined by the previous speaker who has followed this bill very closely at the committee stage and here in the Chamber.

[*Translation*]

This bill was sent to the committee for review and my colleague, the member for Chicoutimi, our whip, has worked very hard for the Progressive-Conservative Party, the riding of Chicoutimi and all of the country. This bill is very important, and our party wants to improve it as much as possible.

[*English*]

Although I spoke to the bill at second reading, the member for Chicoutimi is the individual who has followed it throughout the committee stage. He has spoken to the bill in the House on numerous occasions.

We were looking forward to working co-operatively in the committee with the government. All opposition parties took an active part in proposing changes to this piece of legislation. Early on it was painfully obvious that the Liberal members of the committee had been advised to bulldoze this through. This exercise was meant to eliminate any real attempts to improve the bill. From witnesses to clause by clause it was a race to the finish line. It was expediency at the cost of efficiency and at the cost of actually improving the bill.

The Conservative Party had three substantial and substantive problems with the legislation from the very beginning. For the

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record, none of them was even mildly addressed by the Liberal dominated committee. There were problems stemming from elections finance, publication of opinion polls and third party spending. I will speak to those in some detail.

With respect to election and party finance, the Conservative Party has definite reservations concerning the extent of the changes to the reporting requirements for candidates and political parties. At the very least there appears to be no compelling reason why the changes could not simply come into effect on a going forward basis only. Most parties obviously will not have the resources of the governing party to spend on new administrative tasks.

Our opinion is very similar with respect to the proposed controls on the publication of opinion polls contained in the bill. In the 1993 amendments there was no attempt to regulate the publication of opinion polls beyond the brief blackout period at the end of the election. Trying to achieve the right balance in terms of the blackout of opinion polls was probably next to impossible in light of the supreme court's decision in the Southam case. Therefore we thought this matter should have been dropped altogether. Instead, the bill goes much further and attempts to regulate the reporting of opinion polls and their results even outside the blackout period. It goes far too far and cannot be supported for that reason alone.

On the issue of third party spending, we are opposed to part 17 of the bill almost in its entirety with respect to the regulation of third party groups and the limitation on third party advertising. We believe that the provisions are too broad, unworkable, unnecessary and very possibly unconstitutional. I am surprised that the government with its record of constitutional constipation would even go down this road. We have seen constantly from the government and particularly the justice department, efforts to tie itself in knots in order to avoid any sort of constitutional challenge.

Our key concern was the issue of advocacy. By no means is this an issue of the rich maintaining access to the system. It is quite possible that these new controls may affect smaller groups in a much more detrimental fashion. There were no attempts to regulate the general issue of advocacy in the 1993 amendments and there still should not be. Such detailed regulation of interest groups by Elections Canada is unwarranted.

Notably, it appears that the government itself would be able to spend unlimited amounts of money on issue advertising during an election giving a very much competitive and unfair advantage to the governing party. As a result of this legislation there would be no provision to address government or crown corporations during an election. This is a definite loophole, one which I fear the governing party would exploit to its own unfair advantage.

Let it be known that the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada continues to have other reservations about Bill C-2. The

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bill's restriction, regulation and limitation on participation in the democratic process by those other than political parties and candidates is unwarranted, cumbersome and far too broad.

• (1220)

The same is true of the restrictions controlling the reporting of opinion polls. Similar restrictions have been tried and they do not seem to work. For that reason they cannot be justified or proven and they should be scrapped.

As previously stated, without significant amendments, the bill is not an improvement over the current Canada Elections Act. Even the government's modest stated goal of making election law easier to read and understand is not met. Again far too often the government comes back with legislation that is more cumbersome, more lengthy, full of loopholes and more bureaucratic red tape than the legislation it was seeking to replace.

The obvious example which comes to mind is the new youth criminal justice act. Although the intent is very much the right one and the direction is very much one which I think most Canadians would embrace, the legislation is thick, cumbersome and wordy. We should be attempting to streamline legislation.

An example which an old farmer gave to me back home is that when we reshingle a house, we take the old shingles off. We do not just put more shingles on top. We should be trying to strip down some of the existing legislation, or at least have something in place that says if we put a new bill in, we take another bill out. This is not accomplished by the bill that is before us now.

Very fundamentally and importantly, the Conservative Party believes that the entire process that was undertaken to revise the elections act was flawed at the very premise. The government should have tried to proceed by all party agreement. At the very least it should have attempted and allowed for adequate time for proper consultation on the provisions of the bill.

Instead, as we have seen time and time again, provisions were rammed through at the convenience and the wishes of the governing party to run roughshod over the opposition. Perhaps it was the Prime Minister himself who was behind this legislation, or the government House leader. The process to amend electoral legislation should not have to be adhered to on a very strict timetable based on the leadership rumblings of the governing party.

It is hard to find the relevancy in having Bill C-2 dubbed as priority legislation. There are so many other issues on the agenda. So many dominant issues need attention and the Liberal government persists in ramming this piece of legislation through the House, further weakening democracy I would suggest by demonstrating its ability to do so. It is not an attempt to strengthen legislation as it would have us believe.

At a time when so many other issues are screaming for attention the government once again puts its own personal political agenda ahead of the needs of Canadians. Nobody will dispute that Canada has one of the strongest democracies in the world, so it begs the question, why are we doing this in such an undemocratic fashion?

The crisis in health care, the HRDC boondoggle, high taxes; these are all issues that need the attention not only of the House but of Canadians generally. However, the government continues to fall short in addressing the issues that matter most to Canadians. Its priorities are obviously skewed and quite different from those of the people on the street.

In fact, this legislation was rammed through committee at such record speed that opposition parties had insufficient time to study the bill, propose reasoned and specific amendments or consult with individuals such as volunteers, poll captains and those who are most involved at election time and those who will be most affected by this new legislation. Nevertheless the Conservative Party did submit amendments and we were successful in having five of them pass. On balance, without significant amendments, this bill is not an improvement over the existing act.

In conclusion, the Conservative Party truly believes that any changes to the elections act should have been done in a reflective and thoughtful way. Input from all parties represented in the House would have resulted in a much more reasoned and much more effective final product.

In the end I suggest that the bill could have had the support of all members of parliament. It could have unanimously passed and we would have seen significant improvements perhaps in our electoral process.

Changes to the election law should not reflect simply the interests of the governing party. Obviously that was not the case in the beginning and it should not be the case when this bill is passed. For those reasons and others I have referred to in my remarks, the Conservative Party will be opposing the legislation.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-2, an act respecting the election of members to the House of Commons, repealing other Acts relating to elections and making consequential amendments to other Acts.

This bill was read for the first time on October 14, 1999. After second reading, it was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The bill is back in the House today at report stage.

At this point in the parliamentary process, one concludes from reading the report that the review by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs was not very fruitful, since what the government talked about initially was an in-depth reform. Let us

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take a closer look at what has been accomplished and at some of the reasons the Bloc Québécois will not be voting in favour of this bill.

The Leader of the Government in the House wants this bill passed at third reading as quickly as possible, even if it means imposing another gag order, something that has become the trademark of this government.

The logic of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons must be clearly understood. Once the bill has received royal assent, the chief electoral officer will need at least six months to implement it. And, since the Liberals think this bill favours them more than the current legislation does, they would very much like to use it for the next general elections. Accordingly, it must come into force as soon as possible, thus allowing the Prime Minister to call if need be early elections, which some might consider premature.

The committee met about 15 times and heard over 30 witnesses, in studying the proposed amendments to improve the bill and to bring about an in-depth reform.

Despite all that, one has to conclude that the government may have made a few cosmetic changes but has completely failed to make the in-depth reform it had indicated it wanted.

The government missed a wonderful opportunity to give more transparency to campaign funds by reviewing the rules governing the financing of political parties by corporations, in order to limit their contributions.

In 1998, the bank lobby contributed \$815,000 to the federal political parties and, out of this amount, \$400,000 was given to the Liberals. How can one think that, by adopting a \$5,000 limit on corporate contributions, the Bloc Québécois has given up its principles?

It would also have been essential to amend paragraph 428(2) concerning trust funds belonging to registered parties. The transparency here leaves much to be desired. I will remind members of what Allan Taylor, the former president of the Royal Bank of Canada, said during a speech on February 26, 1991, and I quote:

—financing of political parties by businesses did not encourage democratization and public participation in politics.

The government also missed a wonderful opportunity to review the process of appointing election officers. When what is involved is implementation of the legislation on which the democratic system of the country is based, the process must be above all suspicion and there must be the greatest possible transparency.

Last October 28, when Chief Electoral Officer Jean-Pierre Kingsley appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, he said the following:

When I go out on the international scene I do not recommend that the Canadian system be emulated where it comes to the appointment of returning officers. I clearly indicate, as I do in Canada, that the present system is an anachronism.

Mr. Kingsley feels it is imperative for the method of appointing returning officers to be changed, so that they are appointed in a competitive process in order to ensure their total independence from the government and to give the appearance of fairness and neutrality toward all party candidates involved.

As for Former Chief Electoral Officer for Quebec Pierre F. Côté, when he appeared before that same committee on November 16, 1999, he said:

In a democratic system, not only must democracy be served, it must also appear that democracy has been served.

● (1230)

Finally, volume I of the report by the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, better known as the Lortie Commission, in addressing the need for independence of election officers reaches the same conclusion on page 483:

A cornerstone of public confidence in any democratic system of representative government is an electoral process that is administered efficiently and an electoral law that is enforced impartially. Securing public trust requires that election officials responsible for administration and enforcement be independent of the government of the day and not subject to partisan influence.

So, it would have been better for these persons to be chosen following a competition establishing that they have the necessary expertise to assume these functions instead of being chosen because of their affiliation to the political party in power.

The Bloc Québécois proposed amendments to put an end to the control that the governor in council has over the appointment of these people, but the government rejected them. I am forced therefore to acknowledge that Bill C-2 does not contribute to promoting the democratization of the electoral process. On the contrary, the governor in council retains unacceptable power over the selection of election officers.

At report stage, we moved two amendments to clauses 13 and 14 so that at least the appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer, the person responsible the application of the Elections Act, would be done differently to reduce government control of over this appointment.

The object is to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer is appointed with the support of at least the majority of the opposition members. So, we propose that the Chief Electoral Officer be appointed by a resolution of the House of Commons approved by the opposition parties and not simply by the party in power.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who was one of the biggest organizers of the love-in in Montreal a few

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days before the 1995 referendum, should know that love is a two-way street and that actions speak louder than words.

Once again, the federal government had the opportunity to follow the lead of Quebec, which has put in place a system of public competitions for the appointment of the main electoral officers. But no. For the French Power, what matters is to bad-mouth Quebecers to gain popularity across Canada. Quebec French Power in Ottawa will never acknowledge what the Quebec government does right. It would mean lose its legitimacy and becoming suspect in the rest of Canada.

The Bloc Quebecois wants a democratic and transparent federal elections act. It wants an act without any appearance of conflict of interest. Once again I am very disappointed in the government. What has become of the Liberals? Where are their integrity, their honesty, their keen sense of democracy? Why should we stay in a country whose government has only one goal: to stay in power no matter what and at any cost?

Why should we not have our own country, a country promoting at least four values that no longer prevail on Parliament Hill, namely honour, transparency, democracy and, above all, respect for the citizens?

Also the government missed a great opportunity to deal with the issue of voters identification. When the bill was before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Bloc Quebecois asked for a voters identification process to be included in the legislation. The main reason for such a process being to prevent individuals from usurping someone else's voting right. Once again, the government denied our request.

Give the devil his due. The government made some changes to the transitional provisions to give political parties more time before the new rules apply in case the bill would come into force after June 30.

Clearly, when an amendment favours the Liberal Party, the government House leader does not hesitate to act quickly. But when we are talking about an amendment to foster transparency, democracy and the respect of citizens, the government House leader remains adamantly opposed to it. He finds all kinds of excuses to turn down the changes we would like to see, putting them off till hell freezes over or until the 12th of never.

Those are many more reasons why we should work hard to promote Quebec's sovereignty.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to have an opportunity to participate in the debate on the report stage of Bill C-2. Some very major changes have been made to the Canada Elections Act, but

this is the first major overhaul of the act since 1970. There have been changes over the years based on various court decisions and so on, but this is the first opportunity we have had to modernize the Canada Elections Act.

Some very notable improvements have been made to the act, but I do not have to list them because they are essentially well known now by most members of the House. However there have been a number of real missed opportunities.

At the top of the list of missed opportunities is one that perplexes me as we hear the rhetoric from all political parties about the value of today's young people, the need to involve more young people in the election campaigns of the various political parties, the need for young people to be more involved in the electoral process, and the need for young people to be paying more attention to the process of government and the process of politics in Canada. Yet when the proposal comes forward to involve young people, particularly at an age when there is significant interest in becoming involved, the answer is no, a blatant and clear no.

Let us think about this point. Other countries, and I will use Brazil as an example, lowered the voting age from 18 to 16 a number of years ago. The question was whether people of 16 and 17 years of age would be interested in politics and the electoral process and whether they would join political parties and campaigns.

The evidence in Brazil was very clear. Given the opportunity, 16 and 17 year olds participated in the electoral process in greater numbers on a percentage basis than did their parents or anyone else. When the offer went out to young people asking if they were interested in politics and in joining in the electoral process, the overwhelming response was a resounding yes. They wanted to get involved. They were anxious and interested.

If young people in Brazil want to get involved and young people in Nicaragua want to get involved, and I could list all sorts of other countries, why not send out an opportunity for young people in Canada to get involved?

The reality is that a proposal went out to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 as part of this legislation. There was some debate but overall people questioned whether 16 year olds had the intelligence, the knowledge and the understanding of politics to cast a serious ballot.

What a terrible comment to make against young people of the country. I suspect it is the same argument that was made against women years back in terms of whether they had the understanding and the intelligence to participate in the electoral process. We know now how embarrassing it is to even raise this as an issue. It seems as absolutely stupid and silly as of course it is.

A few years ago the issue was with first nations people. Up until 1960 we said that first nations people were not allowed to vote.

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They could volunteer and die in World War I. They could volunteer and die in World War II. They could volunteer and die in Korea but they could not vote in this country. They fought for democracy. They died for democracy. However, the minute first nations people came home from those wars we said that they could not vote, that they could not participate in democracy in their own country. Let us imagine the signal that sent to first nations peoples across the country.

I suspect we are sending a similar signal today. Young people who want to participate are not allowed to when it comes to voting. Yes, they can choose leaders of our political parties. Yes, they can participate in campaigns. They can do anything else they want in the political process but the one thing they cannot do if they are aged 16 and 17 is vote. This is disgraceful.

At the age of 16 a whole number of things occur in people's lives. They can get a driver's licence and drive a truck or a high powered vehicle on our highways. They can join the armed forces and serve in Bosnia and other areas of combat. They can get married and raise children. They can qualify for employment insurance. They can be tried in adult court. However they cannot vote in our country.

● (1240)

If they are 16 or 17 and want to vote to choose the people who will represent them and future generations they cannot participate. The people who have the most to win or lose in an election cannot participate. This is one of those ideal opportunities for the House of Commons to acknowledge it, to send out a welcoming hand to young people who want to participate and to give them a chance.

I am not saying everyone has to do so. Perhaps the people who are listening to this speech could reflect back on the election campaigns of members of parliament and candidates that they worked on. They went to local high schools to participate in debates and discussions. In my experience the level of discussion, participation, knowledge and understanding of those young people was significantly greater than that of their parents.

At the evening meetings—and God knows if they are a road show or some sort of political theatre—very seldom is there intelligent, sensible, meaningful debate like there is in high schools. Young people are keen and knowledgeable. They are far more knowledgeable than we were as young people. They have access to information and knowledge. Their teachers are much more open than ours were to discuss in classrooms the role of government and politics.

Why not extend a welcoming and open hand to young people across the country? However the government decided that this was not appropriate. I have a heavy heart when I have to say that. I thought the government would say yes.

We are entering the new millennium, the 21st century, a century that represents changes of all sorts in terms of demographics, the economy, society and the way we debate budgets in the House. Everything is changing except this aspect of keeping young people pushed down and not permitted to participate in federal elections.

I am very disappointed that we were not able to accomplish it, but I will not give up. One day we will look back and think how stupid we were as a country for not allowing young people of 16 and 17 years of age to vote. One day we will do that but we are not quite there yet. We will not give up the effort.

I have to mention another missed opportunity, the whole issue of voting through proportional representation. Our voting system is rather goofy. When a small number of Canadians choose the government that acts in a sense as an elected dictator for five years, is that the way the system should operate? No. I am not saying this is the fault of the Liberals. Of course it is not. It takes place in provincial jurisdictions and so on. It is our collective way of the first past the post approach to electing government. It is absolutely bizarre.

Let us look at intelligent countries around the world. We would be hard pressed to find a country that has a system like ours. Their systems are much more reflective of the population's wish as to who should represent them. This place does not represent what people said in the last election.

With all due respect, in the last election the majority of Canadians did not say they wanted half the House plus a few more filled with Liberals. That is the way it turned out but that is not what the people said. We have should looked at some other form of choosing members of parliament that actually reflected what Canadians say when they cast a ballot. That was a missed opportunity.

We made a number of amendments to the whole issue of campaign reform which basically said that more access should be allowed to smaller political parties to more accurately reflect what people in our country are thinking about. We should ask for disclosure on spending limits on party leadership elections. Let us face it. If somebody buys the leadership of a political party, should people not know about it as opposed to being elected in a fair and open democratic process?

What about numbered companies? We have to do something about numbered companies. When number company 12754 makes a huge contribution to a political party, should we not know who is behind the particular firm? Of course we should. Let us get these numbered companies back on the transparency pathway so we know that when somebody makes a political contribution to a political party or an individual in our country, we know who is actually making that contribution.

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• (1245)

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-2, the Canada Elections Act.

This is very important legislation. In fact, there are probably few pieces of legislation more important in a democracy than that which establishes the rules for election of the people's representatives to government.

With such an important piece of legislation it is significant that the government decided to direct its passage through parliament by way of the more unorthodox method of proceeding directly to committee before second reading. The government indicated that it wished the committee to thoroughly study this legislation, to call witnesses, to hear concerns, propose significant amendments and return it to the House in a more complete and acceptable form. I suppose that sounded good, but once again the government merely went through the motions.

The committee heard major concerns. Significant changes were proposed. The committee did not listen. It returned the bill in essentially the same format in which it was received. Once again we are faced with legislation which leads us to believe it will be subject to a charter challenge.

The committee heard from various individuals about the unconstitutionality of third party spending limits in the bill. Powerful groups have threatened court challenges. There has been little, if any, attempt to work out the differences. Once again the taxpayer will pay for these court challenges because the government is not ready to do the necessary work to bring about resolution and agreement.

Spending limits definitely favour the party in power. All other parties are operating on unequal footing. We all know that the amount of money spent on campaigns is not always a deciding factor but we also know that it can play a significant role.

The committee heard a number of concerns over the publication blackout period provisions in this legislation. The courts have struck down previous similar legislation, but the government is proceeding down the same path once again without even attempting to come to a compromise with media representatives.

The Chief Elections Officer of Ontario has challenged the need for blackout provisions. He has pointed out the difficulties in enforcing them. Constitutional law experts have indicated that our courts will again strike down these provisions. Once again the taxpayers will pay for these court cases and really, for what?

The committee heard a number of concerns over the 50 candidate rule for registered party status. The courts have struck down this 50 candidate rule as being too oppressive. The courts have

suggested that as little as two candidates should be sufficient to be recognized as a party.

There was discussion of coming to a consensus and agreeing on a more practical limit of 12 candidates to be recognized as a registered political party. Instead of even considering compromise and agreement, the minister seems intent on maintaining the 50 candidate rule. Once again this is another provision of this legislation that is subject to a court challenge. Once again the taxpayer will be expected to pay for the government's refusal to consult, to consider change and to compromise.

The government seems intent on limiting the opportunity for new parties to grow from small beginnings. The government is perfectly content to maintain the status quo. The citizens of Canada are being deprived of new political initiatives and new choices. Just as with recent moves with the airline industry, it seems to be all in favour of limiting competition.

Then there is the issue of political patronage appointments. In something so crucial to a democracy of a country, one would expect that the presiding government should have little involvement in the selection of the personnel who run the electoral organizations. In fact, Canada has often been asked to assist third world countries to supervise and report on elections to ensure that the presiding government operates in a free, fair and open manner. Surely the presence of political appointees within the very organization tasked with counting the votes and reporting on the results should be independent of the presiding power in office.

Even our Chief Electoral Officer testified that it is critical that he be given the power to hire returning officers based on merit. If he is given the responsibility to properly operate our election process, he must be provided with personnel chosen by him, supervised by him and paid by him. Political appointments are not beholden to him. They owe their allegiance to the governor in council, the Prime Minister and the party in power who put them into their positions and who decide on their remuneration. That is not right. One of the interested parties to an election cannot have control over the employees who control the counting of votes and the reporting of results.

• (1250)

Elections Canada has repeatedly asked the government to change this process of political patronage. Elections Canada wants and needs to hire its own personnel to properly oversee an election. The government is intent on maintaining its system of political patronage. This is certainly a sorry indictment against democratic principles and the status of Canada on the world stage.

The timing of elections is also a major advantage to the party in power. At present there is only a maximum number of years legislative bodies may operate without an election. Section 4 of the

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charter of rights and freedoms states, “No House of Commons and no legislative assembly shall continue for longer than five years from the date fixed for the return of the writs of a general election of its members”.

Bill C-2 does not include an automatic date for Canadian elections. The charter does not stop us from legislating an election every five years or some other lesser time period. To do so would place all political parties on an equal footing as everyone would know the exact timing of an upcoming election. Every party would have the same opportunity to plan for the election, to generate war chests for election expenses and to expend funds to advertise the benefits of party policy or the detriments of government policy or opposition policy.

The committee that studied this bill heard about the advantage of present government members being able to distribute a household-er just prior to the call of an election because of inside information. We can probably all remember a government which called a needless election at great expense to the taxpayer just because the governing party had the power to do so.

Legislating the timing of an election to a specific period of time would not solve all of our problems but it would level the playing field and it would place greater controls on the expenditure of public funds. It would also provide greater definition to all parties in the House of Commons. Our employees would know when an election is to be called and they would be able to prepare their careers and their lives accordingly. Members of parliament would know when their commitment to their constituents would end or when it would need to be renewed through a campaign. I imagine a number of companies and individual citizens would also be better equipped to react to parliamentary influences.

Bill C-2 was an opportunity to vastly improve our electoral process. Once again the government has taken the easy way out. It makes minor changes. It ignores or refuses to introduce long overdue initiatives. The government protects itself by maintaining the status quo or increasing the inequity of its position compared to the competition. It ignores the pronouncements of the courts and continues to place the public purse at risk of considerable future legal proceedings.

Instead of providing leadership and progressive thinking, the government has decided to stay the course and will only change when it is forced to. This is unacceptable and it is unfortunate. All that lies ahead is more litigation at great expense to the Canadian taxpayer.

I hope my words cause some members to reconsider their position on this important piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise this morning in support of the Bloc Québécois

amendment, which is also supported by at least one other party in the House, to the effect that only voters can make contributions to political parties. This is in keeping with the Quebec law on the public funding of political parties.

Let me point out that in Quebec, until that act was adopted in 1977, many ordinary citizens felt that politics was rotten. When René Lévesque, along with others, created the Parti Québécois, after the Mouvement souveraineté-association, he said “We will fund our party strictly and exclusively with people’s contributions; we must avoid falling into the business contributions trap, as it spells corruption”.

• (1255)

René Lévesque knew what kind of pressure major corporations could exert when the time came to implement government projects. He had experienced such pressure at the time of taking political stands and developing projects. In his mind, democracy was incompatible with the misappropriation of funds generated by the funding of political parties by corporations, because corporations never give money with no strings attached.

Just like in *The Godfather*, it may be free at first, but an order or a request invariably follows. It is these orders and requests that result in policies not being designed for the general public, but often for the rich and the most affluent.

The people of Canada and Quebec, especially with this crisis in the administration of the Department of Human Resources Development—in Quebec, funding for parties in Quebec has been cleaned up—feel that politics is rotten and serves politicians and that politicians and big business are as thick as thieves in looking after their best interests.

Bill C-2 provided an opportunity for the government to say, even though it can never be said definitively, that the political process must be the prerogative of the public who become members of a party or decide to fund a party, but that the important decisions are made for purely interest considerations.

Interest may be seen in different ways, according to whether the party is the NDP, the Bloc Québécois or the Liberal Party, but the public could at least have been assured that politics and not interests are at issue.

This is a fundamental issue, especially these days. The public will not support politics with their minds, their hearts or their membership unless politicians are above all suspicion. It may be said that that is far from the case and that the public’s cynicism simply encourages individuals to stick their hand in the pot and take advantage of the situation.

I know that very many members are honest, but I also know that the temptation can be great—the opportunity, tantalizing—elections are expensive, and there are always good reasons for

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supporting so-and-so's project over another's, a private project over some other one, because that too can come into play.

Canada likes to say what it is and what it wants.

• (1300)

The Economist, which is not a social democrat periodical, contained a review for Europe of what constituted democratic control of party funding. According to *The Economist*, whether or not citizens exercised democratic control depended on whether or not corporate funding was permitted.

As members will recall, there were scandals in France because there was no legislation requiring grassroots funding. Since 1995, the legislation has allowed only voters as contributors.

We know that Germany was rocked by a scandal that damaged the reputation of someone thought to be a great statesman, Helmut Kohl, who worked to bring about the unification of Germany and who was one of the key European architects of the Treaty of Maastricht.

Despite his brilliant career, Helmut Kohl now finds himself caught up in a political and financial scandal which is destroying his reputation in a way that no one would have wished on him or themselves, for that matter. Once again, at issue is secret corporate party funding, and many Germans—and I discussed this with members at the Council of Europe—are wondering whether they should not be considering having parties funded by voters alone.

When we look at the issue of corruption, because that is what it is, we are automatically forced to the conclusion that there is only one way: have all voters on the same footing, have all citizens on the same footing when it comes to making decisions, and have parties funded by citizens, by voters. That is democracy. Otherwise, democracy takes a back seat to interests over which there is no control. In such cases, the policies introduced generally, if not always, do not reflect the wishes of the majority of citizens.

If we want to liberate politics from what some like to call vested interests, we must ensure that parliamentary democracy is based on grassroots funding.

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the debate today is continuing on the report stage motions of several members and the government on the Canada Elections Act, Bill C-2.

I think I counted five interventions from the opposition benches just prior to my rising. One might get the impression that the act, which is currently before the House, is seriously flawed. It will not be a surprise to anyone here if I take a different view.

The statute and the amendments in it are a substantial improvement to the old statute. I just want to take a moment to outline, technically but very lightly, the amendments we are dealing with now in Group No. 2, at least for the record. I realize opposition members often use the debate at report stage to deal with broader issues in the statute.

Quite simply, there are two categories of amendments in Group No. 2 that have been proposed by government members. The first amendment deals with adding into approximately four sections of the bill the term "generally accepted accounting principles". That term in the statute was originally proposed, I believe, by members of the Bloc Quebecois as a standard that would be useful in the statute. Members at the committee agreed and the term was incorporated into the bill.

• (1305)

Having had some time to read the bill following the committee study, there are approximately four other sections that, for the sake of consistency, would benefit by inclusion by reference to that term, and so that covers off four small areas.

The second area involves amendments that would make the English and French versions consistent. I do not have to go into detail, but having adopted amendments at committee, one having to do with inclusion of amounts in candidates' personal expenses, amounts directed to child care or care for persons who are dependent normally on the candidate, there were some arguable inconsistencies between the French and English versions as they were put together at the committee. Those amendments are offered as well. I assume they were offered without objection. I have not heard objection to them. They appear quite appropriate.

I have heard opposite references to the appointment process for returning officers and a description of the fact that Canada is often asked to act internationally to provide observers or advice on how to run elections. That is true. Canada is well respected, being one of the world's oldest democracies, in how to run elections.

I have to point out that our system of appointing returning officers has worked well. We are well respected with our system now of appointing returning officers. People do not say "We don't want you to help us out here because you appoint your returning officers the way you do".

It is our view that the appointment system works well and it is very cost effective. No one, in proposing changes to the system, has actually addressed the matter of the costs of implementing a whole personnel and recruiting selection process. Perhaps we should think about costs sometimes. We are supposed to around here when we propose changes. If the system works I suggest that we do not try to fix it.

I notice a certain inconsistency sometimes. In debate that will happen. I may fall victim to it myself from time to time, but I hope not. It seems that some opposition members are only too quick to adopt the reasoning of the British Columbia courts in dealing with third party spending limits and other elements of the elections act in that province.

There is a certain sense that the B.C. courts are right on the money here. They are quoted extensively, but I could not help note that a few months ago the same parties were not so quick to quote the B.C. courts in dealing with the criminal code child pornography provisions. Sometimes the courts serve the opposition parties' interest and sometimes they do not. I will not get into a debate on the merits, but just because a lower court ruling is made does not mean the House must respond in a knee-jerk fashion.

At the end of the day, all members of the House will make their decision and cast their vote on these amendments in the way they feel will be in the best interest of the public.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I need some clarification from you. I have been listening very carefully, as always, to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, who discussed the amendments in Group No. 3. But if I am not mistaken, we are still on Group No. 2. Correct me if I am wrong, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Indeed, we are still on Group No. 2.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak on the new Canada elections act, Bill C-2.

I am greatly troubled by many of the provisions in the act. The most telling one is the gag law. How can gag laws and polling restrictions find a way into the laws of a democratic country like our own?

One cannot help but notice that the recent Supreme Court of British Columbia decision, which only came down on February 8, struck down this very provision in the province of British Columbia. If there is one reason to strike this whole bill down this would be the reason.

This issue hits very close to home with me. I was involved in it in British Columbia where I witnessed, firsthand, third party organizations that believed in educating voters by sending out very balanced information. These organizations had literally hundreds of thousands of supporters from across the province who would send in money.

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Troy Lanigan was the British Columbia director for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The B.C. government, with its very heavy-handed approach, threatened to take him to court and charge him. It told him that he could be facing a long jail sentence. This was a young man, working very hard on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Canadians citizens who sent in money, who was trying to educate the public on what he felt were the best options for the province. I was with him when this was happening. It was troubling for both him and his family. He felt passionately that he was doing the right thing.

If there is one issue for striking this bill down, that would be it.

Under this new elections act, third party spending would be limited to \$5,000. I believe that parliament, not the courts, should write the laws for the country. Right now it seems that the courts, not parliament, are the ones defending Canadian citizens. Two decisions in Alberta have struck down gag laws. Just last week the British Columbia court struck down the gag laws. I would argue that it is wrong for governments to stop small parties from running candidates and greatly limiting their party spending during election campaigns.

It is no surprise that the government is trying to ram this bill through parliament. We have witnessed this many times before. The government is very content to just push this through parliament.

The second issue, aside from the gag law, is the number of candidates required to become a recognized party. The government suggests the number should be 50 candidates even though the standing committee recommended 12 candidates. A number of the witness groups that came before the standing committee recommended that it should be 12 candidates. My colleague, the Reform member for Vancouver North put forward a private members' bill recognizing that it should be 12 candidates. This came from all parties across the House. Yet the government said that to be a recognized party it requires 50 candidates. This is insulting to the Canadian voter. We should be providing them with the information just like in the gag law. To put a \$5,000 limit, or, for a national campaign, \$150,000 limit for a third party, is wrong.

Many organizations, such as the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the National Citizens' Coalition, have members from across the country who raise money in order to inform and educate the public so that they can make very educated decisions when they go to the ballot box.

I do not always agree with what these third party groups say, but it is insulting to the Canadian taxpayer that the government wants to keep this stranglehold, this noose on what information gets out there. It wants to control what is out there in the public domain and what is in the media. I would argue that is why the government is

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putting gag law limits forward. It is completely unacceptable that this is the direction in which it is going.

• (1315)

The government has virtually ignored all the work of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. It has refused to consult with the public by holding meetings across the country. It does not want to listen. It does not want input from various organizations, only the select few it invites to committee hearings in Ottawa to present their briefs. Surveys across the country have shown that the Canadian people do not want spending limits on third parties so that they can get their message out there.

I notice my NDP colleague from Kamloops also supports this position. He just rose in the House and said "Let them educate the people". There may be a group out there that does not agree with my viewpoint, but we cannot insult Canadian voters by not letting them make their informed choice. They will sort out what they believe, who is putting credible arguments forward and who is putting a balanced position forward.

I clearly remember the Canadian Taxpayers Federation listed all the arguments. It firmly believes that we are overtaxed and if we are to move forward we should be reducing the size of government and reducing taxes. Not everybody would share that view. I obviously share that belief. If it wants to spend the money from its supporters who donate to these campaigns then it should be able to. I might add that the people who donate to the organizations that want to get this message out do not get the same political tax credit as when they donate to a party. That is another debate for another day. They do not get the same benefits as those who donate to the Liberal Party. That is wrong.

It is most disturbing to me that government had an opportunity to fix up the elections bill, to do something positive with the Canada Elections Act, and did not seize that opportunity. It is a lost opportunity.

What we see is old line partisan party politics: control, control, control. The Liberals want to keep their noose on a dictatorship. They want to control the amounts of money and the message that get out there. That is patently wrong. That is what we need to change.

The chief electoral officer and the Canada Elections Act should be removed from partisan politics, as well as the whole appointment process and who the returning officers are. It should not be appointments by the government. It should be an all-party committee. The political nature of this needs to be removed.

Is anybody on the government side paying serious attention? They got a message from the Supreme Court of British Columbia on February 8 in *Pacific Press v the Attorney General of British Columbia* wherein the court completely struck down the gag law as

unconstitutional. I do not know how many times the government needs to hear it. It has been struck down twice in Alberta and again last week in British Columbia.

I hope the government takes notice of this and wants to bring true accountability to the Canada Elections Act. Unfortunately it has not this time. Again it is back to the old style, the patronage stranglehold, controlling the message and the dictatorship. That is wrong.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-2 and in particular the amendments in Group No. 2 specifically referring to some of the major provisions of the bill.

At the outset let me pick up where the Liberal member left off. As the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River introduced his comments he asked why we on the opposition benches were debating the bill, was it not in effect a fairly perfect bill before the House, and what was all the fuss about. In fact he said: "If it isn't broke, don't fix it", implying that the bill was a pretty good collection of ideas which would make a difference in terms of elections law in the country today.

• (1320)

My question to that member and to all other members of the Liberal government involves a couple of things. How do they know it is not broken? Does the bill represent an in-depth systemic look at the situation in Canada today when it comes to elections law and elections provisions? Why would they wait until it was broken before they fixed it? Why would they not start looking into the future to see whether there are obstacles, problems or concerns that need to be addressed now?

I share a bit of Reform's concern with the fact that we had an opportunity to address some very serious problems in our Canadian political system. We had an opportunity to take a hard look at elections law and to make some pretty fundamental and significant changes. I share the concern of Reform and others when it is said that we have missed that opportunity.

I certainly believe we have missed an opportunity in reassessing how effective our elections act has been and where we need to go in the future to achieve what I think is the *raison d'être*, the underpinning, the root purpose of all of this work to create the rules and regulations that would allow everyone to participate. Our job and the role of government is to ensure a level playing field. Our elections act and other complementary pieces of legislation must work to ensure that everybody has the opportunity, regardless of economic status, regardless of region and regardless of sex, to participate in Canadian politics today.

We had an opportunity to do something meaningful and to look at a piece of legislation that has not been changed substantially

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since 1970. Over that period of time a lot has changed. We have learned a lot more. We are faced with many new problems as Canadians. We had a golden opportunity to make some important changes to our political system, beginning with ensuring that the laws determining elections financing and participation were up to date, relevant and meaningful.

That is where I have any kind of similarity to the Reform Party. We part company right after the notion that we had a great opportunity which has been missed. We all agree that leadership has again been lacking from the federal government. The government has again been fixated on tinkering with the system, on making small changes, on maintaining the status quo, and then on getting it through the House as fast as possible.

There is no question that we all share concerns about the way the government at every turn, with every bill, has tried to push through legislation as quickly as possible, just at the time when we need to be getting into indepth debate involving more Canadians and having really important dialogue across the country.

I part company with Reform, a party that wants to take us in the direction of American style politics. Its position on the bill and on the amendments is very much the same as its position on health care: American style health care, American style politics. Reformers are focusing on the gag law or the gag order, as they would put it, as opposed to seeing it from the point of view of the positive impact of restrictions on third party advertising for all Canadians and as a mechanism for ensuring participation by everyone in our political system today.

• (1325)

We in this party believe that the bill does not go far enough because it does not clearly set out a definite framework in terms of ensuring equal participation by Canadians right across Canada. We think this was an opportunity for the government to ask what are the barriers and obstacles to Canadians participating. Are the limits on election expenses significant enough? Are the reporting mechanisms in terms of donations meaningful enough? Do we have a fair enough system? Is it a level playing field? Are we able to ensure that every group and individual feels they can participate if they are so inclined?

Reformers, on the other hand, would like to take us further in the other direction. From what I have heard in this debate and being at committee at one occasion, they would like to lift the rules and have a total free-for-all, an open door, a come as you go kind of approach to politics in Canada today. Our position is that we need rules, regulations, limits and a way to ensure that every Canadian has a right to participate.

We can take a look around us at the makeup of the House. Is that not enough to tell us we have a long way to go with our Elections Act to ensure that kind of participation? Where is the 50%

participation by women we thought we would see by the year 2000?

The House may remember the history accounts of when Agnes MacPhail was first elected to the House in 1921. She had fought long and hard for women to be involved in political life and said "I can almost hear them coming". She thought at that point in 1921 that a breakthrough had been made, that barriers had at least in large measure been eliminated and that women would enter politics in as equal numbers as men.

As we can see there was no stampede. What are we at today? Is it overall 20% participation by women in the House today? In my party we have at least raised that number up to 40%, but that took hard work and deliberate affirmative action measures. That is the kind of provision, the kind of effort and the kind of action we need to see by the government as a whole when it comes to the Elections Act.

Where is the emphasis in the bill to address the kind of responsibilities that women face in society today and the barriers that prevent them from participating equally in our political arenas? Have we looked at reasonable limits on expenses in a serious way in terms of the participation of women? Have we looked at the extra cost it takes for women to get into politics because they are juggling their work, their family, their household and community responsibilities? Have we addressed all the financial, attitudinal and structural barriers?

Here was an opportunity. We could have done it. We could have made a difference. Goodness knows we need to. We are a long way from the goal of equal representation in the House. We are a long way in the Chamber from representing the whole diversity of society today. If anything, this should be a lesson and a signal to all of us that the bill is incomplete. It takes some important steps. It addresses the need for restrictions on third party advertising. We are happy with that. It looks at a 48 hour blackout of polling. It looks at some restrictions in terms of financing, but it could have done a lot more.

My colleague from Kamloops mentioned in particular one issue which we are dealing with right now, the disclosure of all donors who register as numbered companies. Why do we not know who these donors are? Why do we not try to find out? Why do we not make sure we have a level playing field? I think that would be in the best interest of Canadian society today.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central to speak to third reading and report stage of Bill C-2, the government's proposed changes to the Canada Elections Act.

I spoke in debate at second reading of the bill before the Christmas break. At that time I said that my constituents and I were not supporting the bill.

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• (1330)

Bill C-2 is a very important bill for our democracy. The foundation of a strong democracy calls for our elections to be democratic, free and fair, offering an equal opportunity to all Canadians and all parties. This bill continues to maintain the most objectionable provisions of the elections act which benefit the ruling party, in this case the Liberal Party.

Canadians have asked for changes to the way we elect our federal government representatives. With this bill we see clearly that the Liberals have once again failed to respond to the wishes of Canadians. What a great way to start the new millennium, along with the billion dollar HRDC boondoggle.

The government has wasted an opportunity to modernize and democratize the elections act. The amendments we are debating today will not be adopted by the government. Specifically, they have failed to deliver changes to a number of things; for example, patronage appointments, party registration requirements, campaign financing, third party spending issues, the reimbursement of election expenses, voter identification and the timing of elections and by-elections.

Let us talk about third party spending limits. Even though the hon. member for North Vancouver has done a marvellous job in analyzing the elections bill, which is so important for Canadians, let me go over it very quickly.

The bill seeks to limit third party spending to \$150,000 during a federal general election, of which no more than \$3,000 may be spent in any particular riding. We on this side of the House believe that it is not the place of government to limit the right of individual Canadians, or a group of Canadians, to spend their own money in support of a cause or a candidate in a federal election.

In B.C. we call this kind of manipulation a gag law. It is an effort by government to prevent other, smaller political voices from engaging heavily in an election campaign. The government is ignoring recommendations made to modernize our elections act. In B.C. the government tried to do this recently. It tried to restrict third party advertising to \$5,000. It knows it will not form the next B.C. government so it is trying everything it can to prepare to win the next election. It is toying with our B.C. election rules, and that is what the Liberals are going to do in Ottawa.

But the Liberals in Ottawa are even more cruel than the bankrupt, some would say corrupt, NDP government of B.C. The Liberals only want to allow \$3,000 to be spent in any riding in Canada by a fledgling third party. That amount of money would not pay for a single advertisement on television. What a sham.

What all of this shows is that the Liberals are desperately afraid of losing the next election. Can we imagine being so afraid of our opponents that we try to tie their hands?

The B.C. supreme court ruled the limits to third party spending invalid. The Liberals are challenging the hallmarks of our democracy. For example, the ruling party, the Liberal Party, has free broadcasting time based on its number of members of parliament far and beyond what any other party is allowed. Have the Liberals changed that situation with this bill? No.

Far from levelling the playing field, they are forcing a spending limit to be put in place of \$3,000 per riding. This would give a huge advantage to the Liberals by restricting the ability of any other person or group to counter government propaganda during an election. Have the Liberals changed that situation with this bill? No.

MPs from B.C. know what desperate governments do to legislation affecting elections. We wanted to see the Liberals adopt amendments to this bill. They refused to do so during the committee stage. Now we give them the opportunity. This is the opportunity to adopt amendments at this stage. We are holding the flashlight for them, but they are closing their eyes. They are not looking when we show them the light through the darkness. That does not mean they will do the right thing.

• (1335)

The Liberals are passing legislation that will immediately be struck down by the courts. This is a waste of taxpayer money.

The Liberals have witnessed the B.C. NDP government's third party election limits legislation struck down by the court, but they will go ahead and pass the same legislation. The B.C. supreme court found that there is no evidence to suggest that big money alone wins elections. It said there was no evidence that third party spending affects the election process.

Everyone knows during the referendum on the Charlottetown accord that the yes side lost, even though it spent at least 10 times as much as was spent by the no side.

During the 1993 election the PC Party spent significantly more than any other party, yet had only two members elected to the House.

Why will the government not adopt the amendments?

For example, with respect to the requirements for registered party status, the elections act requires a political party to run 50 candidates in an election to remain on the ballot. The courts in Ontario say that only two candidates are needed to form a party. It is the voters, not the government, who should decide whether a party and a candidate are worthy of their vote.

Government Orders

This is an attempt by the government to hinder the formation and growth of new parties like the Reform Party or the Canadian alliance. The government is actually trying to limit competition on the ballot. This is so undemocratic that it is anti-democratic. It is almost a dictatorship. The government should be ashamed.

There are many other things which we could talk about. For example, we put forward an amendment concerning voter identification. A voter can now be asked to swear an oath to confirm identity. That is ridiculous. We need to use photo ID. If someone is evil enough to try to commit fraud in an election, surely we can assume that the same person would have no problem swearing an oath and lying to God or himself.

Another amendment concerns electronic voting. Electronic voting could significantly cut the cost of running elections. In Ontario electronic council elections can be run for one-sixth of the normal cost.

Let us talk about reimbursement of a party's election expenses. Taxpayers should not be expected to fund activities designed to persuade the taxpayers themselves how to vote. There should not be any reimbursement at all.

The candidate deposit of \$1,000 should be much lower in the interests of encouraging Canadians to participate, regardless of their personal financial position.

There are many other areas where the bill can be criticized as being undemocratic, including fixed dates for federal elections, timing of byelections, government advertising or propaganda before an election, and many others. Time prevents me from commenting on these matters. My constituents know all about the bill. We were fighting to have changes made to our elections act when dealing with this bill, which was Bill C-83 in the first session of this parliament, but the changes have not been made. The bill is a manipulation by the power hungry government in power.

It is shameful. When we send our representatives abroad to monitor elections we preach democracy. We go to other countries to monitor their elections to ensure that they are democratic, fair and free. But what is happening right here in our own country? This gag law, this elections act which the government is forcing through the House, will create a situation where we will have undemocratic elections. There will not be free and fair elections in this country.

It is really pathetic. It is so undemocratic that it is almost undemocratic enough to be a dictatorship. Canadians will not support a political party that will force these types of changes on our democratic process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, for years the funding of political parties by corporations, which would ask for control and favours from the government in exchange, has been the Achilles heel of western governments.

• (1340)

But contrary to Greek heroes, these democracies do not die—at least none has died yet—from the low blows to this weak point in their bodies. Each time, however, they are damaged and their image is severely tarnished, which could eventually throw them out of balance.

We recall the series of scandals that shook France five years ago, when the public was at first astounded and then indignant upon learning how just about every national party was bending the law and accepting money from powerful corporations. The French government hastened to pass an act of indemnity to calm people down and save top political figures from legal proceedings.

In recent weeks, France's top political figures have yielded their place in the pillory of public opinion to the once-respected, once-adulated Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl, the father of a unified Germany, he whose party funding over a number of years now appears to be just the tip of an iceberg on the rough seas of German democracy, below whose waters lurks a huge mass of dangerous liaisons between politics and business.

This lax attitude in the western world's legislation on party funding, and worse yet the indulgence with which infractions are tolerated are, in my opinion, what lies behind the dangerous disrepute into which elected representatives today, in Canada as elsewhere, have fallen. The end result of massive financing of parties by lobbies is, of necessity—you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours—nice little subsidies to generous donors, political favours, patronage, hush money, all of which quite properly scandalize public opinion.

The most recent—and most juicy—illustration of this is the discredit currently being focussed on the Minister of Human Resources Development. Do you realize this, fellow citizens? We have just taken money from your pockets that will go to pay back—with heavy interest—the money lobbies have paid to the party that governs us, so that it may continue to reign over our province, when two-thirds of the population have rejected it.

These dirty dealings are possible because of our electoral legislation. In Canada, no one has to even put any effort into getting around it. The Elections Act sets a limit on election expenditures, but there is no such limit on what amount of election funding can come from business.

When the government announced that it was going to freshen up this legislation, when Bill C-2 came up on the floor of the House, we were perhaps incurably naive to imagine that the Liberals had decided to finally tackle a thorough cleaning of the Augean stables of party financing. It meant really not knowing these people and having underestimated the man leading them, the incarnation of vote winning gimmickry and political scheming.

Government Orders

However, our Prime Minister did not have to look far for a model in this area. The Quebec elections act prohibits corporate donations. In shutting off this tap, it put a stop to the disgusting stench that rose from the trough of political favours because of the conniving about contracts and grants.

Do you see in Quebec this sort of endless scandal, which, in Ottawa, delights the columnists, but little by little, dangerously, adds to the up to now silent—regrettably—disdain of the public for its representatives?

The Bloc Quebecois has therefore moved an amendment to limit election funding of the parties to voters and to a maximum of \$5,000 per contributor. This is the third time we have tried to change the law in this regard. On the first two occasions, the Liberals rejected our amendments.

If it is accepted this time—we can always dream and God willing—if such a miracle were to happen, it would put an end to the resolution we voted on at our convention to enable our party, so that it could fight as an equal, to accept corporate donations—with a \$5,000 limit—as our adversaries can.

In conclusion, if our amendment is rejected, Parliament Hill will remain the centre for the distribution of the billions of dollars this government has acquired improperly by rationing the provinces, overtaxing the middle class and the ransoming of two pension funds, by the barons of the system to their buddies, who, never disappointed in their expectation of the favour being returned, will finance their return to power.

• (1345)

But as it is an ill wind that blows no good, we may hope that the bill will help finally convince Quebecers that sovereignty is the only route of escape from the cesspool the federal system has become.

A few more bills like Bill C-2, a few more HRDC scandals and those of us who hoped that Canadian federalism might yet rectify itself, will in the end recognize and understand that there is no hope for a rotten apple. We pitch them.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Okanagan—Coquihalla to speak to Bill C-2, an act to amend the elections act.

As a young man I joined the Canadian armed forces. I was very proud of our country's democracy and I still am today. But as we look around the world we see that Canada still operates in some areas where we can improve our democratic system. I think all people in the House would agree that the way in which senators are appointed should be changed. That is why Bill C-2 is very important.

Webster's Dictionary defines democracy as "a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their agents under a free electoral system".

Legislation that governs the way in which people elect their representatives is a statement of how democratic a nation is. If it is to meet these ideals of democracy, it must be as free and unhindered of restrictions as possible. At the federal level in Canada, the elections act governs the way Canadians elect members to this House.

In the past, the elections act has been criticized for having a number of restrictions that limit the ability of Canadians to exercise democracy. The Liberal amendments have done nothing to address these restrictions. In fact, they have strengthened them with the intent of ensuring that the Liberals as a governing party are re-elected.

I will test three aspects of the bill to show they do not meet the definition of democracy. They are the debate over third party spending limits, the blackout on poll results prior to election day, and patronage appointments.

The first aspect I will test is the debate over third party spending limits. Two separate court decisions in Alberta have struck down the elections act spending limits on third parties as unconstitutional and for good reason. Spending limits always work in favour of the governing party which in this case is the federal Liberal Party. It has a big advantage. The Liberals by virtue of having the most MPs have the most free broadcasting time. In their role as government they can use taxpayers' dollars to advertise for re-election under the guise of information from the government.

The Liberal Party's election spending limit is close to \$30 million. The official opposition has a spending limit of closer to \$9 million. Third parties cannot spend more than \$150,000 or not more than \$3,000 in any one riding.

I for one fail to see how spending limits enhance the freedom of Canadians to elect representatives. The spending limits are obviously biased toward the Liberal Party with its massive spending advantage. Associations and private individuals can barely get their message across given the \$150,000 spending limit in this bill. The whole idea behind Bill C-2 is to curtail freedom of expression and the democratic process.

The second aspect I would like to test to show that it does not meet the definition of democracy is the poll results publication blackout period. In a recent court case, Thomson Newspapers v the Crown, previous legislation preventing the publication of poll results in the final 48 hours of an election campaign was struck down and for good reason. Canadians do not need a paternalistic government trying to black out information from the voting public.

• (1350)

Not to be foiled, this Liberal piece of legislation re-establishes a poll blackout during the last 24 hours of an election campaign. The Liberals believe that if the polls are favourable for them on election day, voters will be more likely to vote for an alternative party to send a message of protest. A blackout on polls during the final 24 hours limits the constitutional rights given to all Canadians while favouring the governing party. It will certainly be challenged by the media in another costly court case which of course again will be lost.

The Reform Party has suggested a compromise that would see an end to poll blackouts. Blackouts would end if the media disclosed their methodology, who paid for the poll, the number of respondents and the question asked. The Liberals rejected this sensible solution, even though it better informed the electorate, because there is no advantage to the governing party.

The third aspect of the bill I would like to test that it does not meet the definition of democracy is the continued use of patronage appointment. There is not too much to examine because the continued use of patronage appointment fails the test straight off the mark. It is unacceptable in a democracy for the Prime Minister to appoint Liberal Party loyalists to key positions like a returning officer in every riding of the country.

I know the parliamentary secretary stood in debate and said that appointments were no problem. Even the Chief Electoral Officer has asked that he be given the power to hire returning officers based on merit alone.

It is ironic that when Elections Canada assists emerging nations during their elections it recommends avoiding a patronage ridden system like Canada's. The Chief Electoral Officer has gone as far as to say that he would not recommend this elections act to a third world nation or emerging democracy, calling the appointment of returning officers in Canada an anachronism.

This patronage system must be abolished. Returning officers and poll clerks should be selected on the basis of ability, experience and impartiality and these positions should be publicly advertised. By not eliminating patronage appointments within the electoral process, the Liberal government is blatantly trying to ensure it has the advantage in every riding.

To conclude, the Liberals had an opportunity to modernize our electoral process by increasing the freedom of the electorate to choose their representatives. This would have strengthened our democratic process making Canada the envy of the world. Instead the Liberals have reaffirmed the regressive aspects of our elections act ensuring the governing party has all the advantage while limiting the freedom of Canadians to elect their representatives.

Government Orders

These regressive measures not only fail to meet the test of the definition of democracy but have created the situation where our own Chief Electoral Officer would not export our system to a developing nation. Instead of vesting the power in the people, the Liberal government is vesting it in itself.

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to move the following amendments:

That Motion No. 90 for Bill C-2 be amended by

(a) substituting the following for the proposed substituted text contained in paragraph (a) of the motion:

“(a) a statement, prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, of its assets and liabilities,”

(b) replacing paragraph (b) of the motion with the following:

“(b) by replacing line 40 on page 153 with the following:

“whether that statement presents fairly and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles the”.

That Motion No. 94 for Bill C-2 be amended by

(a) substituting the following for the proposed substituted text contained in paragraph (a) of the motion:

“(a) a statement, prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, of the fair market value of”

(b) replacing paragraph (b) of the motion with the following:

“(b) by replacing line 11 on page 160 with the following:

“whether the statement presents, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, the fair”

That Motion No. 123 for Bill C-2 be amended by

(a) replacing the opening words of the motion with the following:

“That Bill C-2, in Clause 430, be amended by replacing line 33 on page 178 with the following:”

(b) substituting the following for the proposed substituted text contained in the motion: “report presents fairly and in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles the information con-”

• (1355)

These motions are signed by the minister.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): At this point I would like to take these amendments under consideration. When the bill is brought back to the House, the Chair will have an answer as to whether they are receivable.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate my hon. friend has introduced a set of amendments. In light of the fact that this is a very crucial piece of legislation, could I seek some explanation of what is going on at this point. I do not understand the procedure.

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Mr. Derek Lee: Madam Speaker, members opposite will know that the government has suggested approximately 13 technical amendments. Most of the opposition parties have agreed to the introduction of those technical amendments.

The amendments just read to the House were three of those technical amendments contained within Group No. 2. Because we did not yet have full agreement among all the parties in the House to the introduction of all of the technical amendments, we thought we should deal with the three in Group No. 2.

The Speaker: It is almost 2 p.m. I want to apprise myself of what has gone on with this point of order. We will come back to this later on if it is necessary.

As it is 2 p.m., we will now go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CRAIG SWAYZE

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I pay tribute to a respected member of the St. Catharines sports community and the world of rowing, Mr. Craig Swayze.

Mr. Swayze's rowing credentials were many. He was president of the St. Catharines Rowing Club, the Canadian Henley Rowing Corporation and Rowing Canada. He was regatta chairman for the 1970 World Rowing Championships, a Canadian Olympic Association member and a special adviser to the 1999 World Rowing Championships.

Craig Swayze passed away in St. Catharines on February 13. To his wife Lois and family I extend my condolences. Craig Swayze was more than a rowing icon. He was a wonderful husband, father and grandfather.

• (1400)

I am reminded of an interview Craig Swayze had with the St. Catharines *Standard* in 1996 where he had worked as a journalist for 40 years. He was being honoured by his rowing peers for his tremendous support, commitment and promotional expertise in rowing. In the interview, Mr. Swayze said "Winning races and competing is important, but it's the people who make it worthwhile".

Craig Swayze was one of those people. He was a true friend. He will be missed.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Okanagan—Coquihalla to draw to the attention of the House a formal complaint I have made to the Summerland detachment of the RCMP against the Minister of Human Resources Development.

The minister promised several times in public last week that members of parliament can acquire information regarding grants and contributions in their riding from local Human Resources Development offices. All my inquiries at the local offices have been turned down, and I have four such offices in my riding.

The Liberal government has imposed a gag order and local HRDC offices are not allowed to release any information on local grants despite the minister's assurance.

The shovelgate scandal has exposed the questionable ethics of this government once again. The minister promised to be open with Canadians, yet refuses to release information to members that was readily available only two weeks ago.

The Minister of Human Resources Development should not only be ashamed, she should resign.

* * *

GARTH LEGGE

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to honour one of my constituents, Reverend Garth Legge of Richmond Hill, on his being named a member of the Order of Canada.

He was honoured at the investiture ceremony on February 9, along with many other deserving Canadians. I would like to read his citation:

A man of vision and action, he is an example to follow in missionary work. He was a strong influence in the establishment of Zambia's United Church. Later, as head of the United Church of Canada's world outreach division, he championed justice and autonomy for indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. He has consistently promoted an approach in missions that is based on respect, equality and partnership.

Congratulations to Reverend Legge on being named to the Order of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the increase in the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel in Canada does not reflect the gross price of a litre of gasoline before

taxes. Consumers are always the ones footing the bill. Canadian oil corporations will have to make public across the country the cost of gasoline before taxes, and this every day.

The refinery sector is operating strictly to generate profits for major Canadian oil companies. Why do oil companies such as Imperial Oil, Petro-Canada, Shell Canada and Ultramar not respect consumers?

I would like to hear from the CEOs of the Canadian oil companies, by fax, at (613) 996-0828, within a week.

* * *

HEART AND STROKE MONTH

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that, this year again, February is Heart and Stroke Month.

We are proud of the Canadian heart health initiative, a world renown partnership in which Health Canada is co-operating with the provincial departments of health and with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

[*English*]

More challenges remain to ensure that progress continues in the reduction of the major risk factors: smoking, high blood pressure, elevated blood cholesterol and diabetes. By investing in heart health, we can enhance the quality of life for countless Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, more and more Canadians are living with a disability as a result of heart disease or stroke. For each death attributable to a stroke, three victims require prolonged hospitalization as a result of neurological damage. Heart failure is also becoming an increasing problem, putting strain on our limited health care resources. These statistics point to the importance of having a low fat diet, exercising and limiting stress.

The Government of Canada needs to work with NGOs and professional associations to focus on prevention, such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation's heart smart program for kids. It should focus on developing a national cardiovascular surveillance program, supporting research by the CIHR and putting resources back into the trenches on the sharp edge of patient care.

Cardiovascular disease is a killer. Let's have a heart to save a heart.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today representatives from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of

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Canada and the Canadian Cardiovascular Society are meeting with members of parliament and senators as part of their annual Heart on the Hill day. Their aim is to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke, which is the number one killer of Canadians.

• (1405)

Cardiovascular disease kills almost 80,000 Canadians every year and accounts for almost \$20 billion in direct and indirect health costs.

As we begin the new millennium, the burden of heart and stroke disease will continue to rise. This epidemic will become more pronounced as the average age of our population increases. Of particular concern are the growing number of Canadians who are living in a state of disability as a result of heart disease, especially congestive heart failure.

Heart and Stroke Month offers Canadians an excellent opportunity to learn more about heart disease and stroke. By fostering awareness we can increase preventive measures and hopefully save lives.

* * *

CANADIAN RANGERS

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past 50 years the Canadian Rangers have acted as guides and advisors to the Canadian Forces as well as performing search and rescue duties in northern remote and isolated communities often in harsh weather conditions. The majority of Canadian Rangers are aboriginal, often unilingual, who have served Canada for more than 50 years.

Today at Rideau Hall 17 Canadian rangers received the first presentation of the new ranger bar to the special service medal which recognizes at least four years of honourable service. Many others will also be receiving this special award. From my riding of Nunavut, Peter Kuniliusee and Jimmy Tassugat from Clyde River represented their colleagues.

I congratulate all Canadian Rangers for their outstanding dedication and, on behalf of all Canadians, thank them for their work and contribution to our great country. Mutna. Thank you.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FATHER GEORGES-HENRI LÉVESQUE

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all of Quebec paid tribute to one of the architects of its quiet revolution, Father Georges-Henri Lévesque, who died in January of this year.

Le Devoir wrote that those who knew him considered him instrumental in helping to free Quebec from the yoke that weighed it down between 1940 and 1960.

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He will best be remembered for founding Université Laval's school of social work in 1938 and its faculty of social sciences in 1943. But for some, of much greater importance than founding these two institutions was his contribution to the social debates of the day.

I take a particular interest in this because he led and encouraged many debates from the Manoir Montmorency in Beauport, in my riding. This centre, directed by Father Lévesque, was a hub, where all the agents of change in Quebec society debated ideas and received their training.

I can only hope that in my riding, as well as in the rest of Quebec, Father Lévesque's memory will continue to inspire us to continue along our path toward a society where all are equal and there is no place for exclusion.

* * *

[English]

THE LATE CHARLES SCHULZ

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in one of life's unexplainable quirks of fate, as millions of people around the world opened their newspapers this weekend to read the last *Peanuts* comic strip, they heard of the death of Charles Schulz.

As a baby boomer, I do not recall a world without Charlie Brown, Lucy and Linus Van Pelt, Peppermint Patty, Snoopy and Woodstock.

For half a century, children and adults around the world have faithfully followed Charlie Brown's determined efforts to kick that football or fly that kite. We were enthralled by Snoopy's air battles with the Red Baron or his persistent efforts to steal Linus' security blanket.

While the world underwent great changes over the last 50 years, Charles Schulz was always there to bring a smile to our faces.

Today the world is a little sadder with the loss of Charles Schulz, but it will always be a better place because he has provided us with his enduring gifts of Charlie Brown, Snoopy and company.

* * *

CLAYOQUOT SOUND AND REDBERRY LAKE

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the communities of Clayoquot Sound in British Columbia and Redberry Lake in Saskatchewan on their recent designation as international biosphere reserves.

Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial or coastal ecosystems which are internationally recognized within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Man and Bio-

sphere Program for promoting and demonstrating a balanced relationship between people and nature.

This is an incredible honour for the communities involved and the many partners that contributed to the success of these nominations.

The declaration of Clayoquot Sound and Redberry Lake as biosphere reserves is recognition of our substantial progress toward a sustainable future for the regions, including their biological, economic, social and cultural values.

• (1410)

Canada has six other biosphere reserves: in Quebec, Alberta, Ontario and Manitoba making the Clayoquot Sound and Redberry Lake biosphere reserves the seventh and eighth such reserves in Canada.

* * *

YUKON ACT

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Yukon government leader Piers McDonald and opposition leader Pat Duncan are in Ottawa in a co-operative effort to lobby to modernize the Yukon Act.

The Yukon Act does not but needs to recognize the current system of democratic government and give effect to the devolution of power over land and resources to the elected legislature. This transfer is critical to the future of the Yukon and must include first nations and the federal government.

The Yukon needs the support of parliament to update the Yukon Act for economic development and to create a fireweed fund, the first labour sponsored fund in all of the north.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-20

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, arrogance is increasingly becoming the trademark of the Prime Minister and his government.

After weakening health care and education systems throughout Canada by slashing provincial transfer payments, and ignoring the legitimate requests from the premiers, after invading provincial jurisdictions and adding to waste and duplication with its \$95 billion surplus, after using discretionary job creation funds to reward its cronies, all the while denying doing any such thing, and laughing off opposition and public concerns, now, with Bill C-20, the Liberal government is claiming the virtue of clarity and the right to be sole arbiter of the future of the Quebec people.

The common thread in all this is arrogance. But so full of arrogance is this government of clarity that the future it offers Quebecers is sombre indeed.

Oral Questions

Arrogance reigns supreme. I salute the master of arrogance.

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[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, lately the official opposition and the media have focused their attention and energies on the human resources department and its minister.

The Ottawa *Citizen* reported that the minister was seen in Niagara Falls on Friday having a fundraising breakfast. It informed us that the minister misused the Challenger jet at a great cost to Canadian taxpayers.

Let us be truthful with the people of Canada. The minister was in Niagara Falls for round table discussions scheduled months ago that had to do with the Business Education Council of Niagara. This organization, well-known for the excellent work it carries out throughout the peninsula, provides young Canadians with the hands on training necessary to make the transition from school to employment.

Fundraising indeed. Those who are seeking the truth and who often use methods reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition should be aware that it is wrong to embellish the truth and in doing so to mislead Canadians.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, few Canadians are aware that more than 4,600 infants are born each year with congenital heart defects. That means that one in every one hundred children are born with these sometimes life-threatening defects making it the number one birth defect in Canada. Congenital heart defects affect more children than cancer, kidney disease, diabetes and junior arthritis.

The number of adults living in Canada with congenital heart defects is between 70,000 and 100,000. Of these adults, 12,000 are currently receiving follow-up care. Approximately 3,000 pediatric and 300 or more adult cardiac surgeries are performed each year in Canada for congenital heart disease. These numbers are expected to double by the year 2006.

I will soon be introducing in the House a private member's bill to officially recognize February 14 as a day for hearts. This bill will recognize and increase the awareness of congenital heart defect.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, despite years of public education, heart disease and strokes remain the leading killers of Canadians. The Heart and Stroke Foundation

and medical specialists like Dr. Vicky Bernstein and Dr. Larry Barr of Vancouver are the unsung heroes in the battle against heart disease.

However, they cannot do it alone. Canadians young and old need to help minimize the risk of heart disease or stroke. We can reduce the risk by living a healthy lifestyle, by exercising daily and by not smoking.

• (1415)

Allow me to thank all Canadians who continue to fight the battle against heart disease and stroke. Their contributions will save lives.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development says that she was only briefed on her department's billion dollar boondoggle on November 17. That is by no means certain.

Let us look at her first response to the scandal. On November 18 the minister hauled out her chequebook and signed off on six more grants worth almost \$1 million.

Why did the minister dole out another \$1 million less than 24 hours after receiving a damning audit?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said on a number of occasions, we are working on this issue. We are taking it very seriously and taking a strong response to it.

The auditor general agrees that the approach we are taking is the right one. We will fix this problem.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here is how seriously the minister took the matter. Her spending spree did not stop with the first 24 hours. In the two weeks following the minister's official briefing on the billion dollar boondoggle she signed grant cheques totalling over \$3 million. The minister had an audit on her desk highlighting gross mismanagement of public money in her department, but she just kept doling out millions of tax dollars anyway.

Did the minister even stop signing cheques long enough to read the audit?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed I read the audit. That is why we have prepared a six point plan to implement across this country, that we have worked on with outside experts who have given us advice that we have included in the response.

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We have taken this matter seriously. The response is a strong one. We will fix this problem.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has a very strange idea of taking things seriously.

What was the first thing she did when the audit hit her desk? She shoved it aside because it was sitting on her chequebook.

Within 24 hours of receiving the audit she signed off on \$1 million worth of grants. By December 3 the tally had reached over \$3 million.

Why was the minister so unconcerned about the mismanagement of \$1 billion that she just kept cutting cheques?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, let us understand that the moneys we invest go to communities and individuals, and they make a difference in the lives of those individuals and those communities.

We know that on that side of the House they do not accept that the federal government can have a role at the local level. But on this side of the House we know how important these loans and contributions are. That is why we are working hard to build a stronger foundation for this program.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the minister again has not answered a single question that has been put to her today.

I would think that when somebody hits the panic button maybe she would think that the boondoggle in her department has to come to a halt, but this minister did not skip a beat. The boondoggle continued. In fact, she cut cheques totalling \$1 million the day after she found out about the problems, with no thought about trying to fix the system, no thought about freezing the spending, no plan, no concern and no one held to account.

Why was it business as usual for this minister when that audit sat on her desk damning her department?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we received the audit. We took it seriously. We built, with the help of outside experts, Deloitte & Touche, with the advisory committee to the Treasury Board Secretariat and with the auditor general himself, over the course of time, a strong management response that will deal with this issue once and for all.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let us remember what the internal audit which sat on that desk actually said. It said that 15% of the grants did not have an application on file, 8 out of 10 did not have any financial monitoring, and 87% showed no evidence of supervision.

What was the minister's response? I would have thought it would have been a crisis, but she did not put an immediate freeze

on spending, she did not argue that enough was enough, she did not say "Let us shut off the taps. Let us stop it now". No, she swept that audit off her desk, got out the chequebook and started spending \$1 million.

Why did she continue to spend money on these same grants when that audit said there was a spending control problem in her department?

• (1420)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at what we did. We reviewed the audit. We identified, with the help of outside experts, a six point plan—

Mr. Jim Abbott: A six point plan.

Hon. Jane Stewart: Thank you very much. I am glad you are starting to read it. Even the auditor general says that it will be effective in managing this problem.

* * *

[Translation]

BILL C-20

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has made numerous requests, including to the government House leader, to allow the legislative committee on Bill C-20 to travel. I made the same request to the Prime Minister yesterday.

Does the Prime Minister intend to ask or instruct his government majority on the committee to let the committee travel to hear as many testimonies and people as possible across Quebec?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to reply to that question. I thank the hon. member for having sent me a letter today.

My decision remains unchanged. This bill concerns all the provinces of Canada. Since we want to move along with this legislation because people do not want us to discuss it endlessly, we do not want a committee that will have to travel in all ten provinces of Canada, particularly since it is relatively easy for people from Quebec to come to Ottawa.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are a few contradictions here. We are told this bill concerns all of Canada. This means that people would have to come to Ottawa not only from Quebec but also from all over the country.

In addition, if it is important to travel across Canada to consider the issue of fishery and to visit prisons, and if it is important, as claimed by the government majority on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, to travel to the Caucasus to define a Canadian policy, would it not also be important to travel to Quebec and to the rest of Canada to define a policy that appears to be rather important, according to the Prime Minister himself?

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Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when a constitutional change was made regarding denominational schools, the Bloc Québécois did not want to travel.

A decision has been made. Those who take an interest in this issue know full well that the House expressed its opinion very clearly last week, at second reading. Those who have something to say can come to Ottawa to share their views. The committee will gladly hear them.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will continue along the same lines.

Parliamentary committees travel a lot as part of their responsibilities. When, for example, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs wanted to make recommendations on the WTO Seattle round, it went to Quebec for four days. It travelled to Montreal, Quebec City and Saint-Hyacinthe.

If a House committee can travel to take the pulse of Quebec on an international issue, why is the legislative committee on Bill C-20 deprived of the right to travel to Quebec and to Canada?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the committee is not deprived of anything. It is sitting here in parliament and will be entitled to hear witnesses.

In the letter I wrote to the House Leader of his party, we indicated that we were open to a broadening of the usual narrow definition of technical witnesses. We took steps to allow witnesses to be heard. We were clear about this. Committee meetings will also be televised.

The government is acting in a reasonable manner on this issue, unlike the opposition.

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again yesterday, in Montreal, there were groups saying that what would be reasonable would be for the committee to be able to come to Quebec to hear from them. There are also groups in Canada who have said the same to the government.

Given the increasing number of groups in Quebec and in Canada that are wanting to be heard, does the Prime Minister not feel that it is the responsibility of this House to hear these groups, and that this objective will be better met if the committee travels to Quebec and to Canada to hear them?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way is well aware, having attended a press conference in this Parliament a few days ago with groups from pretty well all over Quebec, which were demanding to be heard.

If they were able to come to Parliament to demand this, surely they could come back to make presentations.

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now two weeks away from the federal budget. Already the finance minister is orchestrating the usual games, orchestrating the leak to the upcoming budget.

• (1425)

This is a deadly serious issue. Canadians are very concerned about the future of health care.

No more games. My question is simple: Will the federal government once again become a 50-50 partner in health care, and if so, over what period of time?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there will be a budget. As everybody knows, last year we put a lot of resources in health care, more than everybody expected.

I had the occasion last week to read quotes from the Premier of Saskatchewan and the Minister of Finance for British Columbia and others congratulating the government on what we did last year in the budget.

There will be another budget and it will be on Monday, February 28. Perhaps there will be some money again, I do not know. I will talk to the Minister of Finance about it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are not looking for hot tips for day traders; we are looking for a fundamental policy direction on health care from the government.

Federal underfunding of health care has put Canada on the track to an Americanized two tier privatized health care system.

I ask whether the government will continue to take us backward or move us forward. Is the federal government content to remain a junior partner in health care or will it once again become a 50-50 partner?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I answered the question earlier that we are very preoccupied.

I received a letter from the premiers 10 days ago. I replied last week. We are having a dialogue. The decision about how much more we can do will be known by the time of the budget, if we can do more than we have done in the past. We have restored all the funding that existed in 1993 and 1994. That is the only program that has been restored out of all of our programs because we are preoccupied with health care.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday in response to a question during

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question period, the Minister of HRDC stated that the transitional jobs fund was “One of the first areas of interest to which I turned my attention upon becoming minister”.

Will the minister now tell us what was the exact date that she turned her attention to the program, and on that day were the problems with the program discussed?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a new minister I was briefed over the course on a number of issues: employment insurance, Canada student loans and a number of other things. But in the House, when we returned, there were questions about the transitional jobs fund, so of course I had to prepare myself for this very important place.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have seen better skating on the canal.

On Friday the minister made reference to the Privacy Act and the protection of information when it came to the HRDC money that went to her riding.

Will the minister please tell us who authorized the release of personal correspondence between members of this House and the department which were read into the record by the Prime Minister on Monday? Why the double standard?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, letters between a member of parliament and ministers about projects, not about individuals, are not subject to the Privacy Act.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the human resources minister has a peculiar sense of urgency.

In most circumstances the news of a \$1 billion bungle would send shock waves through any organization. Immediate action would be taken, accounts would be frozen and people would be hauled up on the carpet. Not the human resources minister. She just gets upset if she cannot find a chequebook.

Why should Canadians have any faith that this minister will solve the problem?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers again to a billion dollars. Members opposite use figures very easily.

As I said to the House, there were 37 cases that needed further investigation and we have received more reports. Now, out of the \$33 million, we have received final reports for \$12.5 million. We have a number of reviews completed, with a total amount in overpayment of \$251.50. They are still the same figures.

• (1430)

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to imagine being so cavalier about a billion dollar bungle.

At the same time as the human resources minister was boasting about her little six point plan she was cutting cheques for millions of dollars in more grants. She tried to cover up the audit and she got caught. She said she had a strategy to get out of the mess, but she blew millions of dollars more on the same grants. Instead of taking months to announce her six point plan, why did she not just quit signing the cheques?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even the auditor general did not suggest that we suspend these important programs. What he did do was agree with our six point plan and agree that part of our six point plan and its implementation should include reviewing the files and ensuring that we have the appropriate paperwork before additional moneys are spent.

Let us be clear. The first thing we did was ask for a stronger management response that included going out and getting the advice of outside experts including the auditor general.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in March 1999, the Bloc Québécois unveiled a quota system for recovering EI overpayments imposed on all Canada employment centres in Canada. Rates of recovery regularly exceeded 100% of targets.

How does the Minister of Human Resources Development square such efficiency in the battle against the unemployed with the systemic leniency that characterizes the management of over \$1 billion in job creation funds?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a correction is in order, because the member has quoted yet another figure. Two weeks ago, it was \$3 billion. Now it has fallen to \$1 billion.

But the fact is that the auditors have reviewed \$200 million. Of the projects to which this \$200 million went, they have found 37 cases with additional problems, representing \$33 million. So far, their final review of how \$12.5 million was spent shows one overpayment in the amount of \$251.50.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is all very well for the Prime Minister to say week after week that the department is keeping tabs on every unemployed worker in the country.

But how does he explain that it kept no tabs at all on a \$500,000 grant to Wal-Mart for several months? Is a double standard also becoming systemic?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again let us be clear. We know where the cheques have gone. They have gone to important organizations, small and medium size businesses. They have gone to individuals.

A billion dollars has not disappeared. What we are doing, and I repeat again, is improving our system of administration so that this problem will not happen again.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is always assuring us that the only money that is going out in the jobs grant is going to the poor and going to the needy. Yet what do we hear today? The developer for Wal-Mart received \$500,000.

Would the Prime Minister kindly explain to Canadians what is poor and what is needy about Wal-Mart?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was an initiative taken in a riding in Cornwall where this grant of \$500,000 was for a big building construction.

There were 300 jobs created. Three hundred people got jobs because we helped the development, and these people are very happy to work today.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we just heard the minister say that it is small and medium size businesses and then we have the Prime Minister saying that they are huge. The minister is throwing taxpayer moneys at companies whether or not they need it.

Let us take the \$80 million firm of RMH Corporation. It received \$1.6 billion to set up shop in, guess where, the minister's riding even though, first, it did not qualify for a grant and, second, it admits it did not need the money in the first place.

• (1435)

Why did the minister hand out millions to foreign companies when they admit they did not need the money in the first place?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify again that the transitional jobs fund did apply in my riding. Let me say too that I have had the pleasure not only of understanding and appreciating the role that the program has had in my riding, but also for those who happen to live in the city of Cornwall.

If the hon. member would do as I have done and go to the city of Cornwall and meet with Team Cornwall, the men and women who for years have been trying to improve and diversify the economy in

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that city, he would know how important this investment is to the men and women who live there.

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was as early as October 1997 that the Corbeil matter sounded the alarm on dubious project management practices at Human Resources Development Canada.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that the use of lists of beneficiaries of the Department of Human Resources Development grants for the funding of the Liberal Party was a strong indication of major administrative shortcomings even then at Human Resources Development Canada?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the question, because the question itself is in order, although the preamble is something of a mixed bag.

The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the case of the incident mentioned by the hon. member, the minister acted immediately. The RCMP was informed immediately, and the person in question was taken to court. The individual pleaded guilty and has served the sentence handed down.

In all of that, we acted very quickly, and the person who abused the system was obliged to appear before the courts of Canada.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister thinks that by shifting the players the problems will disappear.

They promote Mel Cappe to the highest position in the public service and transfer the minister to international trade.

Does the Prime Minister really think that this camouflaging is enough this time to save his government?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an unfounded insinuation. There was a change in Cabinet, and I asked the minister to assume responsibility for which he was specifically trained, that is, international trade.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: You need only read the papers. I am not the one saying this.

Today in the paper there was a very long article on the management skills of the Clerk of the Privy Council, Mr. Cappe, who was praised by those who know about these things, here in the City of Ottawa.

[English]

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the human resources minister and Team Liberal have been throwing

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good money after bad. She has doled out millions of dollars to profitable firms even though those companies would have set up shop anyway.

What was the minister's motivation for all this generosity? In a word slush? The Ekos audit showed there has been political interference in spreading the Liberal wealth. That wealth is the taxpayer's. Is it not the case that the human resources minister ignored that internal audit because she just could not bear the thought of losing that slush fund?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have indicated time and time again, if the hon. member would speak to his own colleagues he would see that the transitional jobs fund was a program that was made available for areas of high unemployment, including those represented by Reform members of parliament, those by the New Democrats, those by the Bloc, those by the Tories and, yes, those by this side.

The program was there to help individuals. It has done a good job of making sure that 30,000 men and women who were not employed before the introduction of this program now have gainful employment.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the matter of who those individuals are is questionable. The human resources minister spent months trying to cover up that audit.

Most people would be concerned that maybe their boss would be mad about that, but the minister knew that her boss would not care and in fact would approve because they both have a vested interest in flexibly shovelling large sums of money into their ridings as hastily as possible.

• (1440)

Is the real reason the minister did not worry about the audit that she knew the Prime Minister would be pleased with this mismanagement?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I suggest to the hon. member that he perhaps ask the men and women in British Columbia, represented by Reform members of parliament, what they think about the transitional jobs fund and the opportunities it has given them.

I would suggest that those 30,000 men and women who thankfully are now gainfully employed are grateful that the federal government, at least on this side of the House, understands that there is a role for the Government of Canada when times are difficult in helping them find a job.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade was Minister of Human Resources Development at the time of the Corbeil affair.

Obviously it is his administration that is referred to when the current Minister of Human Resources Development describes the administration she has inherited as right out of the dark ages.

My question is for the Minister of International Trade. Since there is a precedent for former ministers testifying, is the Minister of International Trade at last going to agree voluntarily to come before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the rules of this House, the government speaks through the minister responsible for a department.

Ministers defend the files of their predecessors. That is how it is done and how it has always been done. That is the custom. The Minister of Human Resources Development is completely capable of answering all questions on the programs concerned.

There have been four ministers of that department since we became the government. The present minister is responsible for answering for the other three.

* * *

[English]

MERCHANT NAVY VETERANS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Some merchant navy vets in Peterborough have told me that their compensation payments are disappointingly low and others are concerned that their compensation will be clawed back through taxation.

Could the minister tell us the current status of the merchant navy veterans compensation program?

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the sensible question of the day.

It is exempt from taxation and it is a non-reportable item on income tax. I think the credit here belongs to two groups: first, the veterans themselves who came up with this plan and, second, our House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs that unanimously came up with the solution. To both these groups I say congratulations on a job well done.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, you do not need to win at Lotto 649 if you live in a minister's riding. If you own a business, even if it is from another country and is worth billions of dollars, you will qualify for grants.

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It does not matter if the money is needed. The human resources minister will find a way to cut a cheque. It is not about jobs. It is about pure slush. There is no other explanation. Why should Canadian taxpayers tolerate this flagrant abuse of their hard earned money?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I say again that the grants and contributions from my Department of Human Resources Development are used in ridings right across the country.

Let me tell the House what Dr. Allan Mandel of Calgary says about a project in the riding of Calgary—Nose Hill. He says “I have never donated to the Liberal Party. To me this is a program to stimulate getting young workers into the workforce. I think that is great. They are”, meaning the Reform Party, “painting everything with the same brush and they don’t even know what it is being used for”.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that my huge riding, which does not happen to be a Liberal riding, received the staggering sum of \$720.

• (1445)

The Minister of Human Resources Development has invented a new kind of extreme sport. She can blow a billion bucks, get caught and slip another one out of her chequebook.

I ask the Prime Minister, why will he not take away the chequebook from the Minister of Human Resources Development and give it to the agriculture minister? We really need some money.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago we announced a program of \$500 million every year for the next two years because we are very concerned about the situation.

I would like to point out to the hon. member that in the program of his party, the program it used to get elected, there was a clause which said that we should cut the subsidies to farmers.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Brant received \$1.7 million of transitional jobs fund money because of what the minister called a pocket of high unemployment. Brant’s unemployment rate is 7.6%. Inner city ridings such as Winnipeg Centre and Vancouver East that also have pockets of high unemployment were not able to qualify for transitional jobs fund money. Why did unemployed workers in these ridings not qualify for the transitional jobs fund? Was it because the minister is not in those ridings?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to clarify the record. I

would like to tell the House what the unemployment levels were in the riding of Brant during the year of 1995 when the transitional jobs fund statistics were collected. In the month January, it was 10.3%; in the month of February, 11.8%; in the month of March, 14.4%; in the month of April, 14.5%; and in the month of May, 14.2%. Brant was a pocket of high unemployment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development is not the only Liberal minister who has received funding from the transitional jobs fund even though her riding is not eligible.

The Minister of Justice and the Indian affairs minister, the President of Treasury Board, the former solicitor general, and the Liberal Party whip have also circumvented the rules.

How can the minister justify that the poorest ridings—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The word circumvented is a bit strong. I would like the hon. member to withdraw that word.

Mr. Yvon Godin: How can the minister justify—

The Speaker: Does the hon. member withdraw the word?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

How can the minister justify that the poorest ridings in Canada, like Winnipeg Centre and Vancouver East received no money from the transitional jobs fund, while ministers’ ridings did?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these accusations are absolutely unbelievable.

In the case of Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh this was a riding with 18% unemployment, but unemployment is dropping, and we can list lots of ridings for you.

When we started out, unemployment was at 11.5%. It has now dropped to 6.8%. When we started out, the deficit was \$42 billion. Now we have a surplus. When we started out, the interest rate was 11%. Now it is 6%.

That is what good administration is all about, and throughout all this we have not forgotten the poor and the ridings where there was unemployment, such as the riding of the hon. member.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development acknowledges having been aware in August 1999 of serious administrative problems in the management of programs.

In view of the scope of the situation, why did she not order a stop to payments immediately and not six months later, that is, on January 29, 2000?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I point to the record. We have implemented a six point plan. We will deal with the challenges before us. Canadians want this problem fixed and we are going to do that.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, I had another question, but I am going to go back to this one.

The minister was advised that there were problems with the TJF in August 1999. Why did she not put a stop payment then and not six months later on January 29, 2000?

• (1450)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, let me remind the hon. member that we have implemented a six point plan that has got the endorsement of the auditor general. I remind the House that the auditor general did not say these programs should be completely stopped. He understands the value of them. He agreed that the strategy we are putting in place is the right one and that it will work.

* * *

TRADE

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

On Friday the World Trade Organization released its decision regarding Canada's auto pact claiming that it gives favourable treatment to U.S. manufacturers while discriminating against other manufacturers.

Can the minister tell the House on what basis does he plan to appeal the decision?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday my colleague the Minister of Industry and I announced that Canada will appeal the panel's decision. We believe there are compelling legal grounds to certain elements of the panel's ruling. We essentially want to seek clarification on the reasoning and the scope of the panel's decision and report.

The government will continue to consult closely with the provinces and key industry stakeholders throughout the appeal process.

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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote Michael Scharff, executive vice-president of RMH

Teleservices in response to questions about why his company got \$1.6 million in grants. Listen to this: "I am sure we would be in Brantford one way or another. That was kind of the icing on the cake".

Why do profitable companies get the icing while the taxpayers pay the bill?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member of the circumstances facing the riding of Brant, a community that had to diversify its economy having lost the major employers that closed and were all gone.

The transitional jobs fund and the Canada jobs fund were identified precisely for communities like the riding of Brant. The investments that we have made as a result of these programs have been well received by the community members there because they have provided opportunities that were not going to otherwise exist.

* * *

*[Translation]***SUDAN**

Mrs. Maud Debieu (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Minister of Foreign Affairs unveiled the Harker report on links between the civil war in Sudan and oil development by a Calgary firm.

The report confirms that oil is fueling the conflict in Sudan and recommends that the minister use the Export and Import Permits Act to ensure that the firm acts ethically and respects human rights.

In the light of Mr. Harker's harsh words regarding Talisman, why is the minister refusing to use this legislation?

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are using the legislation. We have very major exclusions under the Export and Import Permits Act for all military supplies and daily use supplies. The hon. member does not know her facts.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and is on Sudan.

The minister's envoy, John Harker, has said that there can be no peace in Sudan while oil revenues keep flowing to that brutal regime.

Why has the minister rejected the call by Harker to take all necessary steps to stop oiling the war machine and to cut off the oil revenues? Why is the Liberal government shamefully lining up with Talisman to put corporate oil profits ahead of the human rights and the human lives of the people Sudan?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I suggest the hon. member take the occasion to actually read the report rather than hallucinate, as he always does, about its conclusions.

The reality is that Mr. Harker did not recommend economic sanctions. Mr. Harker recommended a number of steps, including: going to the United Nations, which we are doing; setting up a mechanism to monitor, which is what we are doing; establishing arrangements with the IMF, which is what we are doing; and establishing major codes of ethics for business, which is what we are doing.

We have engaged this issue very seriously, unlike the hon. member who simply wants to be offensively extreme at all times.

* * *

● (1455)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of agriculture.

During the ice storm the federal government reimbursed farmers for their agricultural losses. During the Red River Valley flood the government contributed \$26 million to farm losses in the Red River Valley. The flooding last spring in southwestern Manitoba still has not been addressed by the government. Will the minister of agriculture please tell me why his government was Johnny on the spot with those other disasters yet nothing has come forward with this disaster?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight. He knows very well that this government was there last year to assist in unseeded acreage coverage in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We worked with the provincial governments there. We put in place hundreds of millions of dollars for targeted support not only for the producers who are suffering from serious financial difficulties in that area. We continue to adjust those criteria and we recently put another \$500 million a year forward.

I would ask the member to encourage not only the producers in his province but the producers in his neighbouring province to encourage their provincial governments to come forward with our federal—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Essex.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, air pollution contributes to the untimely death of more than 5,000 Canadians and sends thousands more to hospital each year. The city of Windsor

and the county of Essex have some of the worst air pollution in Canada. This is a serious matter that requires immediate attention. This week Canada and the United States begin negotiations for an ozone annex to the Canada-U.S. air quality agreement. How will this help all Canadians including those from Windsor and Essex county?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sadly the hon. member's number of 5,000 is likely on the low side. However, I point out that these are largely preventable deaths due to air pollution and we fully intend over the next decade to cut that number in half.

The negotiations with the United States are to establish a protocol with the United States to reduce smog thus improving the quality of air in Canada and in the United States with substantial improvements in the life expectancies particularly of young children and older people who are specifically affected to a greater degree by air pollution problems.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, one week ago in the House the minister said the following: "Mr. Speaker, let me review again what has transpired. I as the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada received the report of an internal audit. I was not happy with the reports of that audit. I insisted on a strong management response".

Less than 24 hours later she cut a cheque for six more grants totalling almost a million dollars. I guess that was the origin of her six point plan, six more new grants. How can the minister call this a serious management response?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a serious management response takes time to build. That is why we enlisted the support of the private sector expert Deloitte & Touche. That is why we presented our ideas to the private sector board that advises the Treasury Board Secretariat. That is why we took the plan to the auditor general. That is why we took their advice and built it into the plan. That is why we are now implementing it.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following a consensus among premiers at the February 3 meeting, it was decided to ask Ottawa to restore health transfer payments to the 1994-95 level, and to make up the \$4.2 billion shortfall predicted for next year.

Privilege

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Does he intend to respond favourably to the unanimous request of the provinces, stakeholders in the health care sector and the public, and restore health transfer payments to the 1994-95 level?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the hon. member that provincial transfer payments have been restored to the 1993-94 level. When we formed the government, we were forced to cut them a few years later, but now we are back to the same level as in 1993-94.

In addition, the Province of Quebec and the poorest provinces have received larger equalization payments than they did before we formed the government.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another scandal the government must come to grips with is its failure to flow any money to victims of hepatitis C as promised by the Minister of Health 23 months ago. To date, no money has flowed.

● (1500)

Today lawyers are in court demanding increases in fees to the tune of a 4.29 multiplier, representing about \$55 million in fees for lawyers.

My question is for the Minister of Health who is responsible for the terms of the compensation settlement. Can he not bring closure to this issue, put an end to this legal wrangling and ensure that every penny of the \$1.2 billion goes to victims and not lawyers?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, lawyers for the Government of Canada are in court asking that every step possible be taken to make sure that money goes to claimants at the earliest possible moment.

Lawyers for the government oppose the payment of any fees to lawyers until claimants are paid, and will continue to do that. Lawyers for the government are in court asking that an administrator be appointed as soon as possible so we can start flowing the money to claimants that this settlement provides for.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

When Richard Klassen was commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board, he was given a huge settlement package so that if he left the wheat board he would not go to a competitor with sensitive information for two years. One year later, he is now working for one of those competitors.

Is Mr. Klassen in breach of his severance agreement with the Canadian Wheat Board?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Canadian Wheat Board to review this situation to make sure that all the rules between the wheat board and this particular employee with respect to his new employment are completely satisfied.

I am confident that the wheat board will make absolutely certain that all legal rules are complied with.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Judy Junor, Saskatchewan Associate Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I seek your guidance on this point of order.

In response to a question that was put to the Prime Minister by my colleague from Edmonton North, the Prime Minister gave an answer in which he insinuated that I had written a letter on behalf of an organization in my riding requesting support from one of these transitional jobs fund grants.

● (1505)

I can assure the House and assure you, Mr. Speaker, that no such letter exists nor was one ever written.

I would like your assistance, Mr. Speaker, in determining how the record—

The Speaker: I would take it with regard to all traditions that you have just cleared the record. It stands.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, in question period today, the Minister of Human Resources Development made statements which I believe appear to contradict her earlier statements made in the House.

I would like to give notice of my intention to raise this serious matter after an opportunity to review *Hansard* of today's question period. I want to reserve that right and pursue this matter at greater length when I have had an opportunity to review the record at length.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: The hon. member is on record.

• (1510)

This key element in the debate is of concern to us today because it eloquently shows the Liberal government's contempt not only for the population as a whole, but also for the legislative process and the work of this House.

On behalf of the Bloc Quebecois and Quebecers as a whole, I accuse the Liberal government, especially the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, of having acted in bad faith with regard to the last segment of the review of the Export Development Act.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Quebecois has always been very open and has contributed to the smooth running of House proceedings. However, on December 14 things changed for the worse.

I must deplore and condemn in the strongest possible terms the cavalier, contemptuous and expeditious attitude of the Liberal majority, based on more than dubious procedural considerations, which, in collusion with the Reform Party, approved the report now before the House.

In view of the significance of this report and the time the committee spent listening to the many witnesses who enlightened its members, it is unacceptable that the report was adopted in less than 10 minutes. You heard right, Mr. Speaker, it took the chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs less than 10 minutes to have the report adopted.

An hon. member: This is horrible. I cannot believe it. It is incredible.

Mr. Richard Marceau: This is scandalous. It leaves us speechless. It sends shivers down our spine. We are dealing with an organization worth \$34.7 billion. In 1998 its net profits amounted to \$135 million. And yet it only took 10 minutes to expedite the matter. It makes no sense whatsoever. I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are nodding in agreement. You are right, it is completely unacceptable.

Worse yet—I see that the Chair is listening very carefully—the Liberal members of the committee had been replaced by members who had not followed the committee's proceedings and who were acting on the orders of their whip.

Not only did they take ten minutes to adopt the report on the EDC, an organization with activities totalling nearly \$35 billion, but most people who were there had not even followed the work of the committee. We can see what kind of attention that report was given. Like you, I am outraged.

I think this shows contempt for the business of the House. Also, the chair of the committee insisted on holding meetings on the very

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (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 20 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ) moved that the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade presented on Thursday, December 16, 1999, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today but, unfortunately, we will have to explain to those who are listening to us how business is conducted in this parliament.

We often hear that it is a parliament that works in a very democratic fashion, that everyone has an opportunity to rise and to express his or her views, but this is completely false.

We know full well, and most parliamentarians in this House agree, that since it first came here, in 1993, the Bloc Quebecois has been very serious and open during the proceedings of this House and of all of its committees. I feel we have made an effective and constructive contribution, as was pointed out many times in the House and elsewhere.

However, the situation deteriorated a great deal when the report on the Export Development Corporation was tabled. Let me briefly explain to what happened. The last meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on the EDC was held on December 14, a few hours before the government decided to adjourn the House until February 7.

The House adjourned well before the scheduled date, probably because the government was so embarrassed by the fact that Bill C-20 was an insult to the democratic rights of Quebecers and by the uproar caused in Quebec by the introduction of this legislation.

Routine Proceedings

day Bill C-20, which deals with the clarity issue in a future referendum in Quebec, was debated in the House. It is outrageous. As a Quebecer, as the representative of a Quebec riding, it was my duty to speak out against Bill C-20 on behalf of my constituents and to support the Bloc Québécois, whose mandate it is to defend democracy for Quebec here in the federal parliament.

But what was the committee doing at the same time, in the building next door? It was ramming through a report which, after all, did not have to be adopted so hastily. It could have been studied more thoroughly, but no. While Bill C-20 was being debated here, the Liberal majority was in another building ramming through this committee report with people who had not even followed the work of the committee.

The people who are listening to us at home have every reason to be disgusted by the way parliament works when the Liberal majority decides to ignore democratic rules in this House.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Since I have been here, we have always worked closely with other parties in committee. We often disagreed, but we could still talk, exchange views and try to advance ideas that sometimes were contradictory. But the clash of ideas often generates the spark of understanding.

• (1515)

For the first time since my arrival here, there was animosity, anger, the air was so thick you could cut it with a knife in this committee.

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Acrimonious.

Mr. Richard Marceau: The atmosphere was acrimonious, as my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has so eloquently put it.

This is not how a parliament and committees should work.

I can see members coming into the House to hear this bitter criticism of the way the Liberal government operates. It is a shame to bring in what I call puppets to get a report like this passed.

However, on many issues, on many points, the Bloc Québécois agreed with the Liberal majority. We presented a dissenting opinion, because we completely disagreed on other points. I see my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert supporting me on this, and am grateful.

We agreed on a number of points, and there was the possibility of talking and taking time to reach a consensus in this committee. But no. This highly undemocratic government violates not only the rights of Quebecers to decide their future, but also the democratic rights of the members of this House to express their points of view

properly, democratically, thoughtfully and coherently. All of this warrants the sharpest criticism possible.

The Bloc Québécois, which drew on invaluable testimony gathered at public hearings, considers that there is an obvious lack of transparency in the operation of the EDC. There is a serious lack of access to information. Discussions could have continued at the report stage of the committee.

I am sure that some members of the Liberal majority, had they simply not followed the orders of their whips like robots, would have agreed with us. But no, to use a latin expression, they rubber stamped it.

They said “That is what the government has decided to do”. In any case, for the Liberal majority, everything from the government is good. In my opinion, it is overly injurious. I expected the work of the committee to be conducted in a way that would allow Liberal members to freely express their views.

However, the Liberal members, even those who were sitting on the committee, often came to the meetings unprepared. They simply followed the minister’s orders, passed on by the parliamentary secretary, while opposition members, particularly Bloc Québécois members, came prepared. In fact, in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes, who was there at the very beginning, the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, and my colleague for Mercier have always been among the best prepared. We took our responsibilities seriously, we were prepared—

Mr. Yvan Loubier: We are the best.

Mr. Richard Marceau: We are the best, as the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot just said.

But then what happens? Liberal members are mere bodies. They come unprepared; they are just like puppets. They often ask totally inane questions. They rubber stamp a report like that one in ten minutes. It is unbelievable.

Mr. André Bachand: I agree.

Mr. Richard Marceau: I am pleased to see that members of the Progressive Conservative Party agree with my assessment of the Liberal performance in many committees.

During the hearings, witnesses expressed their delight that the EDC was not required to make public potentially damaging information about deals. The Bloc Québécois is sensitive to these concerns. However, we find it entirely unacceptable that such a situation persists and we are worried that maintaining these standards will undermine the positive effect of the Export Development Act.

Once again, since I am certain that this is the case, I would like to repeat that we could have convinced the few Liberal members of the committee able to think for themselves that our view was the right one.

Routine Proceedings

It is entirely normal and legitimate to worry that, with such a lack of transparency, the EDC's activities could serve ends entirely inappropriate and even contrary to the objectives of the bill. As an example, even as the bill was being reviewed by the committee, it was impossible for a Bloc Québécois member to obtain a breakdown of the EDC's financial activities in Quebec.

• (1520)

If there is one place such information should have been available, it is in committee. When a bill is being examined in depth, it should be possible to get the answers to such questions. But despite repeated requests, the hon. member for Mercier was unable to obtain a breakdown of the EDC's activities in Quebec. Once again, it sends shivers down one's spine.

We therefore think it essential that the government retain the proposal of its task force to the effect that the EDC should be subject to the Access to Information Act. In my opinion, that is a minimum requirement.

Furthermore, in our opinion, this report is incomplete and the committee has not fulfilled its mandate properly, because the connection between the activities of the EDC and the question of human rights was pushed aside in favour of issues that were mainly economic.

The Bloc Québécois has some serious reservations about how human rights are respected by the EDC. I would like to address this touchy point a bit further.

Although the EDC does provide financing services, it is particularly active in credit insurance. Among the risks it assumes are political factors. Even in assessing political risks, the EDC does not take the human rights situation into account, which leads us to say that, before providing its support to a company, the EDC should, as a bare minimum, ensure that the company in question subscribes to the OECD code of conduct relating to human rights.

It seems to me that a country that boasts of being a beacon for the world as far as the respect of human rights is concerned should ensure that one of its arms, namely the EDC, is making sure that companies with which it does business ensure that human rights are respected.

It would be unacceptable for the legislation to be used as a way to evade the precepts that guide our society in order to provide largesse to companies that are very often involved in developing countries.

Before I conclude, there is another aspect of the report we cannot let go without comment: the delicate issue of environmental standards. I can sense that the hon. member for Jonquière is riveted to her seat, because for her the environment is something that is fundamental.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: That is true.

Mr. Richard Marceau: The Bloc Québécois is of the opinion that the committee's recommendations on the environmental responsibilities of the EDC are limited to wishful thinking. We think, rather, that they should be based more specifically so as to further reflect the EDC's duties in this regard.

I would remind the House of what is written in the report. We shall see the best recent example—there are a number; we could have chosen others—of Liberal blah blah in such matters.

At pages 52 and 53 of the report, I will read their recommendations. Mr. Speaker, if you are able to understand what these recommendations say, I would like to speak to you. I quote:

The Committee accepts that EDC's environmentally-related plans are a good start but agrees with the Gowlings review that they are insufficient in themselves. At the end of Part I of this Report, we suggested a general amendment to Section 10 of the Export Development Act which would add language requiring EDC to give due regard to "the commitments and obligations undertaken by Canada under international agreements". In our view, this would include internationally-affirmed principles of sustainable development and obligations under multilateral environmental agreements. If there is any doubt on that point, wording to this effect could be added to Section 2 (Interpretation) of the Act. We also see merit in adding language elsewhere in the Act which would impart statutory weight to EDC's environmental review framework and establish some basis of environmental criteria on which to determine the eligibility of project proposals for EDC support. While EDC may see such measures as "redundant", in light of the perceived weaknesses in its present Environmental Review Framework, we believe that EDC could further enhance its public credibility by conducting—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, on a point of order.

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member has moved concurrence in this particular committee report. I can only think that he is arguing against it now. He is actually reading the report instead of debating its concurrence. All I am hearing is him reading the report. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to direct your attention to that.

• (1525)

The Deputy Speaker: I do not think the hon. member was intending to read the report. I trust he was quoting from something in it that we wanted to refer to in debate. I know he will do that, very briefly.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I am only quoting one recommendation, Recommendation No. 21. I think I am allowed to quote. I see that the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is gesturing to tell me that it is a very long recommendation.

We wanted it shorter and we wanted it stronger on environmental rights. Thank goodness they are not the ones who will draft the next referendum question in Quebec, because their recommendation

Routine Proceedings

does not even pass the clarity requirement they want to impose on Quebec.

So, if the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has something against the length of the recommendations of his Liberal majority, let him say so. We wanted it shorter and also stronger on the issue of the environment.

So, I continue to read the recommendation; it is only one recommendation. I feel like starting all over again, because he does not seem to have understood anything, but I will continue for the benefit of those who are listening to us.

We also believe that independent public oversight—reporting to Parliament at regular intervals on EDC's performance in respect of the implementation of its Environmental Review Framework—would be enhanced by adding a provision to the Auditor General Act establishing the Office of the Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development as the Government's designated agent for that purpose.

I am still quoting the recommendation.

In regard to disclosure and accountability issues, the Committee takes the view that disclosure of environmental impact assessments which allows sufficient time for preventive action—i.e., identification and mitigation of potential problems as early as possible in the course of the proposal approval process and the project cycle—should be the operating rule, subject only to any commercial confidentiality and viability requirements that the Government deems essential.

In addressing this matter in its forthcoming public disclosure framework, we would urge EDC to carefully consider all of the arguments and relevant international experience. Finally, as we suggested in the previous section, EDC should explore the option of creating an ombudsman post within its organization to respond directly and in a timely fashion to public inquiries and appeals regarding sustainable development impacts.

This is one recommendation, and the government hopes, with this kind of mumbo-jumbo, to advance the cause of international environmental rights. It is ridiculous and proves, as the member for Jonquière said, that they do not want to do much when it comes to the environment.

I see you are asking me to hurry up, Mr. Speaker. That is unfortunate, because I could go on for hours about the disgraceful way the Liberal majority has behaved in this business. Not only is the report so much lip service, but when it came time to adopt it, ten minutes was all it took, when we were talking about a entity with some \$35 billion in business. Puppets who had not followed the committee's work were brought in to rush the bill through.

So, to those who are listening, and I am addressing you, Mr. Speaker, as much as I am addressing those listening, it is very unfortunate that, when it comes to things as important as this, the Liberal majority has decided to trample any semblance of democracy. But who can be surprised?

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised both by the tone and by the content of the member's speech for whom until now I had a lot of respect as a member of our committee.

I am a little astonished for a number of reasons. First, he rose to move that the report be concurred in by the House, but he spent his time not so much attacking the report as attacking the behaviour of our Liberal colleagues on the committee.

I regret what he said all the more because, until now, I thought that members of our committees worked rather well together. Attacking the behaviour of other committee members seems to me somewhat out of place in this House.

• (1530)

As far as the substance of the report is concerned, I believe it stands on the strength of its very responsible recommendations. I might remind members of what was happening when the House was about to rise, last year.

[English]

Members of the House will recall what occurred at the end of the last session. The committee met with the intention of adopting a serious report which had been the subject matter of a long series of reviews.

I totally disagree with the member's analysis as to the comportment or attention of any of the members. Many members followed these debates with a great deal of interest. All members on all sides were very interested in ensuring that there was a balance in the report of the role of the EDC both in guaranteeing that corporations and individuals who export from this country receive adequate financing to enable them to carry on their business globally and at the same time ensuring that the EDC respected human rights values and the other concerns members rightly raised before the EDC.

The report strikes a good balance between the needs of the EDC to ensure that Canadian exporters are well served by financing tools outside this country and at the same time to ensure that the human rights and environmental concerns of our citizens are met. It is a balanced report. It is a responsible report which has the support and the concurrence of members of the House.

Since the member saw fit to challenge the way in which the report was adopted, let me remind the member that the report was adopted in the absence of members of the Bloc Québécois. They knew that the meeting was taking place. They were aware that it was taking place and they chose not to come.

[Translation]

It seems to me disingenuous to say that the report was approved by the Liberals in attendance, the Reform members and the other parties present, in the absence of our Bloc colleagues. Bloc members were boycotting the meeting precisely because at the time they did not want any committee report to be approved before the House adjourned for the holidays.

I have a lot of problems with what the member said. I respect his opinion as far as the substance is concerned. I am ready to debate it on its merits, but as far as the form is concerned, we can criticize neither the committee nor the procedures it adopted.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comment of the hon. member for Rosedale. We did not choose to boycott. We were in the House because we were debating a fundamental bill, Bill C-20, which is an unprecedented attack on Quebec's future.

We were not boycotting the committee, far from it. My assistant in committee was even calling me to let me know when it was time to go there. In the meantime, I had to attend the House. I was not boycotting, and neither was any other member of the Bloc, because the Bloc never did. We participate in committee work in a productive way.

Previously, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice, which is said to be a committee where tempers sometimes flare up, because it deals with issues that affect very directly the lives of Canadians and Quebecers.

I always made an effort, along with all the other Bloc members who sat on the Standing Committee on Justice, to ensure the bills move forward reasonably fast when we were in agreement. In a few minutes, I will address Bill C-7. The five political parties gave their support to this bill. We all worked together to move forward a bill whose objectives we support.

When I was appointed to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, I was told this was the least partisan of the House of Commons committees. I was pleased, because I do not like it when it is too partisan and I like it when we can work together.

I was most surprised and disappointed to see this was not the case when the report was adopted, on December 14 of last year. I was disappointed.

• (1535)

We can disagree with the substance of the report, and I am prepared to debate it further, but I find it totally unacceptable that it was adopted in ten minutes, at a time when we had to be in the House to counter an unprecedented attack against the democratic rights of Quebecers.

People in my riding ask me "Mr. Marceau, what can we give you as a Christmas present?" I always ask for the ability to be everywhere at the same time. But I do not yet have that ability.

I had to be here, in the House, and therefore I could not attend the committee meeting at the same time. But I ran all the way, and my colleague from Repentigny will recall that he and I ran from this House to the East Block to try to make it in time. But between the time we received the call saying "Come quick, you need to come" and the time we got there, the report had already been adopted.

[English]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to ask some questions on the review of the Export Development Act.

My colleague and his party are committed to the separation of Quebec. Given the fact that they want to pursue it and that one of their objectives is to ensure the strength of the French language and French culture in North America, what would happen if Quebec gained independence and was trying to engage in bilateral economic relations and trade with the United States, an entity many times larger than the province of Quebec? What would this do to the strength of the French language and culture in North America?

Does my colleague think that one of the things that prevents Canadian companies, be they in Quebec or in one autre province, from being as competitive as they can be is the fact that high taxes and egregious rules and regulations are making Canadian companies less competitive than what they could be?

What would be the fate of the French language and culture when Quebec is forced to engage in trade as an independent entity with the United States? Are the taxes, rules and regulations as they currently stand choking the life out of companies in Quebec and the rest of Canada?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I am astounded to see that the members of the Reform Party are for the first time showing some interest for the French language. It is a bit surprising.

I will be brief. Since 1760, and even before, Quebecers have always been challenged to excel, if I can put it that way. Being a minority people in North America and living right next to the world's biggest economic, cultural and military force, Quebecers are challenged to excel. Since the Quebec people began to exist, this challenge has always been addressed by Quebecers.

When the debate on free trade became an electoral fight in 1988, Quebecers were the ones who made it come true. Quebec supported free trade while our friends on the other side were against it. But, what did they do as soon as they were elected? They began to support it. As members can see, if we repeat things often enough to them, they finally see the light, at least this is what I hope.

The majority of Quebecers are in favour of free trade. The sovereignist movement wants to be at the crosspoint between the two main movements, the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, which means political independence and economical interdependence. This is why we were in favour of the free trade in 1988, why we were in favour of NAFTA in 1992 and why we were in favour of the Free Trade Area of the Americas until 2005, because we will take up the challenge to excel. We have done it before and we will do it again.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

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

• (1540)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1625)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 670)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Axworthy	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bailey	Baker
Bélaïr	Bélangier
Bertrand	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Borotsik
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Caplan	Carroll
Catterall	Cauchon
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Clouthier	Coderre
Collette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dion
Doyle	Dromisky
Drouin	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duhamel	Eggleton
Folco	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Gouk	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Grewal
Guarnieri	Harb
Harris	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Johnston
Jones	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson

Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
Lunn	MacAulay
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Malhi
Manley	Mark
Marleau	Matthews
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	Meredith
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Morrison	Muise
Murray	Myers
Nault	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proud
Proulx	Redman
Reynolds	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rock	Saada
Schmidt	Scott (Fredericton)
Scott (Skeena)	Serré
Sgro	St. Denis
St-Julien	Stewart (Brant)
Strahl	Szabo
Thibeault	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Vautour	Whelan
White (North Vancouver)	Wilfert
Williams —137	

NAYS

Members

Alarie	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Bigras
Blaikie	Brien
Canuel	Cardin
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	Crête
de Savoye	Debien
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe	Dumas
Fournier	Gagnon
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Godin (Châteauguay)	Guay
Guimond	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Loubier	Marceau
Marchand	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough	Ménard
Mercier	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Proctor
Riis	Sauvageau
St-Hilaire	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Venne
Wasylcia-Leis—43	

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

The House resumed from February 11, 2000, consideration of the motion relating to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago, I took the floor in order to show how a committee can be a little mean. I think it was a sad day for parliamentarism and for parliamentary committees in Canada.

Bill C-7 is a very different story. Initially, this bill was introduced during the first session of the 36th Parliament. It was then called Bill C-69.

The Bloc Québécois made an outstanding contribution on that bill. In fact, that contribution was acknowledged by the parliamentary secretary to the solicitor general. I have to tell the House he also did an excellent job. For once, he did not have to obey the Liberal majority. He was willing to discuss.

In the debate on Bill C-7, the five political parties have shown openness, flexibility, and diplomacy. Thus, the bill got the support of the five parties in the House.

I would be remiss if I did not say how regrettable it is that the government does not show openness more often in parliament, whether in committee or in this House. Lack of openness and narrow-mindedness are the main features of this government, as we can see with Bill C-20.

If the Liberal majority showed a bit more openness, if it took off its blinders and stopped being so highly partisan, as it is all too often, I believe we would see more often bills like this one, which has the support of the five parties in this House.

Is it not a worthy cause to bring all the political parties to support a bill? Is it not worthy cause to try to reach a consensus on a given subject? Should any government, any parliamentary majority not have as a rule to get opposition parties to support everything that can be supported, all elements upon which there can be some agreement? This is what I call leadership.

A government should always reach for the widest consensus possible. But because of its lack of leadership, its lack of vision and its narrow-mindedness, this Liberal government refuses to reach

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for a consensus even if it would be much better to do so, as was shown in the case of Bill C-7.

On May 14, 1999, this bill got the support of all the political parties in this House, it was deemed to have been read a third time and passed. Through a motion passed on October 14, 1999, the House permitted that bills that had not yet received royal assent be reintroduced during the second session and, on October 18, 1999, what is now Bill C-7 was passed by the House of Commons.

We will recall that, last fall, the government had decided to postpone the opening of parliament, because of its very poor legislative performance. Indeed, its legislative agenda was so thin that it was not sure it would take us to the Christmas recess.

The Prime Minister took advantage of this to keep his patronage machine rolling and appoint a friend of the government as governor general, as well as several other cronies. Thus, Bill C-7 came back from the Senate with several amendments. It is now again before the House to be read a second time as amended.

• (1635)

The main objective of Bill C-7 is both very simple and very noble. Its purpose is to prevent serious cases of sexual re-offending against children or vulnerable members of society.

If protecting young people, children and the less advantaged members of society is not first and foremost for lawmakers, I do not know what is.

During the hearings of the Standing Committee on Justice, we heard and listened with great interest and a lot of respect to the opinions of social groups involved in rehabilitating criminal offenders. We had to properly determine the safeguards included in this bill in order to ensure the preservation of society in general and at the same time of the reputations of those who have committed serious offences and have been pardoned. It is the balance between protecting human rights, including those of pardoned offenders, and protecting society, particularly its weaker and younger members, that we had to seek.

Offenders whose record include criminal acts of a sexual nature are therefore directly concerned by this legislative measure. Although there is a relatively low proportion of repeat offenders, even the slightest doubt is too much.

Parents who send their children to day care, to a playground, to school, to Scouts, to a club for children or teens need to be sure that these places are not teeming with sexual deviants.

There is no worse thought for a parent that the prospect of his or her child being the potential victim of a sexual aggressor. There is nothing worse. It is essential for every parent who decides to hand over responsibility for a child to any kind of organization to have

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absolute certainty that this child will be safe and cannot be preyed upon by some sexual pervert. And this does not only apply to the present. We are aware of all of the physical and emotional scars borne by adults who were victims of sexual abuse as children.

The bill also covers vulnerable members of society as well as children. These are some of the weakest members of our society, people of sometimes limited capacity who could also, like our children, fall prey to sexual predators.

There are cases as recent as this very week of sexual predators in positions of trust or authority with children, and these justify rapid passage of this bill. It is not a question of limiting the right to privacy of those who have been granted a pardon, far from it, but rather of going beyond lip service and taking concrete action to keep our children safe.

During committee deliberations, the Bloc Québécois was assured by government members that the solicitor general's authority would be used with the greatest circumspection. The Bloc Québécois also supports the amendments proposed by the Senate and hopes that the implementation of these new legislative provisions will make it possible to ensure that our children and other vulnerable persons are protected effectively.

As legislators and guardians of democratic legitimacy, it is the duty of all members of the House to protect society's weakest and most vulnerable members, and the children who are its future. This bill is a concrete, first step in the direction of this laudable and noble objective, which should be paramount in our society.

• (1640)

That is why the Bloc Québécois wholeheartedly supports the bill, why the Bloc Québécois is glad to see that the five opposition parties support it, and why the Bloc Québécois is disappointed that the government has absolutely no interest in taking a similar approach to other matters.

When we operate by consensus, when we, as a society, set a goal that cannot fail to meet with general agreement, all Canadians and all Quebecers stand to gain, as do the weak and disadvantaged members of our society.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud and honoured to speak in favour of this bill. I want to congratulate all the previous speakers, particularly my colleague for Charlesbourg who gave a very impassioned and very eloquent speech. He cares deeply for children. Recently having had two young sons, twins, he knows of what he speaks.

Bill C-7, formerly Bill C-69, will further protect the public upon the release from prison of a pardoned sex offender with the

disclosure of what would be relevant information should the circumstances so dictate.

It goes without saying that children are the crown jewels of our country and our future. A number of young children have appeared here on the Hill. I am speaking of young people like Ashly MacLean of Hopewell. They have so much to offer, so much promise and need our protection in every possible way.

Bill C-7 is a step in that direction, a step toward protection of our most vulnerable citizens. It amends the Criminal Records Act and makes criminal records for pardoned sex offenders which would normally be sealed available for background checks from interested parties. It uncovers information that is of vital importance to those individuals and organizations who work to protect children. Information is certainly power in these instances.

We have all heard of the high profile cases involving the horrific crimes of the Bernardos and the John Robys and the public outcry for tougher legislation to protect children and protect society in general. Tolerance is at an all time low, I would suggest, for deviant sexual abuse of any kind but particularly that involving our children.

Sexual assault is often not an issue of sex; it is an issue of power and control, the dominance of an offender over an individual. This dominance, this sexual violence or perversion and the exploitation of children is perhaps the most cowardly and heinous act that one can imagine.

The need to disclose information and protect children, those who are most vulnerable, and expose to individuals information of a past record will allow the relevant and connected organizations to do everything in their power to prevent the contact which could lead to this type of abuse.

Sadly, recidivism occurs often with those who involve themselves in this type of activity. It goes without saying that the lasting effects are almost incalculable in both the long and short term. It is not the physical but the emotional and psychological scars that individuals carry throughout their life when they have been subjected to this kind of abuse.

The high rate of recidivism among sex offenders in particular is most troubling. The potential for unknowing parents, organizations or individuals for leaving their children in the care of a pardoned sex offender is addressed to a large degree by the bill.

Presently community organizations or police departments would be prohibited from accessing files that involve the names of pardoned sex offenders. Bill C-7, in vetting each request and striking a balance between those who have the right to know and those who have the right to be protected and the right to confidentiality, is certainly a bill that we can all embrace. Access to previously unavailable information on pardoned individuals in these circumstances is what we strive to achieve.

Last year all members of the Conservative Party supported this bill as did all members of the House.

• (1645)

The successful passage of the bill through parliament before the recess was again a strong signal of non-partisanship and the co-operative effort that can result in very positive change. Previous members have spoken to it, and it was certainly a feeling that prevailed at committee and in the House, given the level of support the bill has received.

By the end of 1999, Bill C-7 returned from the Senate with amendments. The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs cited some obvious and very reasoned concerns. One of those was the lack of expressed reference to the intent of the bill to pertain to records of pardoned sex offenders. Therefore the word sexual was added to clause 6 of the bill in order to make it clear that only sexual offences would be flagged under this proposed system.

Definite rules are then put in place, listing the sexual offences that may be flagged and the making of notations with respect to the records of those convictions. Police must have the consent of the offender and the solicitor general for the release of offender's records to potential employers or inquirers if the offender is in fact applying for a job.

Schedule of offences and the important terms such as children and vulnerable persons were removed from the regulations and placed in the bill. This allows these offences to again be subject to parliamentary scrutiny as opposed to being left to the discretion of the governor in council.

The term handicap has also been deleted from the definition and replaced with vulnerable person. It goes without saying that the term handicap is no longer acceptable in today's society, and it is more than just semantics to ensure that this bill reflects a modern view.

The Senate's position set out some very useful and poignant amendments that put a greater emphasis on what the bill seeks to achieve. It ensures a clear, narrow and limited exception in the Criminal Records Act. The changes with respect to sections 7 and 8 of our constitution and charter to protect privacy are reflected in the changes proposed by the Senate that maintain the balance between rehabilitation and the objectives of the pardon system and the need itself to protect children and others who are vulnerable.

I would now quote from Senator Beaudoin, a very renowned constitutional expert and prominent Conservative senator, who spoke to the bill when it was in the other place:

In closing these remarks, I must state that, when the committee studies any matter relating to criminal records, as is the case with this bill, or some related subject such as DNA, we always step up our efforts to be assured of compliance with the Canadian

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Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As we all know, sections 7 and 8 of our Constitutional Charter protect privacy. This is a fundamental value of our system. I believe that it can be stated that Bill C-7, which we have before us, respects the Constitution, including the 1982 Constitutional Charter, to the best of our knowledge.

As acknowledged by members who have spoken previously, it demonstrates that the Senate has made a very significant and important contribution in the amendments that we are speaking to today.

Child care organizations, those hiring new volunteers or paid employees, will now be able to identify a candidate who has received a pardon of a sexual offence. It is only permitted if the position is one of authority or trust relative to those children or vulnerable persons and the applicant has consented in writing. This is a very important safeguard that has now been inserted into the bill by our senators.

Organizations such as Scouts, Guides, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, coaches, day care workers and others will benefit directly where there is an implicit element of trust in the good work they do.

Flagging these sexual offenders will also alert police doing background screening checks to submit fingerprints with a request for any pardoned record that may exist. If the existence of an applicant's pardoned sexual assault record is confirmed, the RCMP or the police force that did the screening can request the commissioner then provide the solicitor general with any record of conviction of that applicant.

Proposed subsection 6.3(5) allows the solicitor general to dispose of all or part of the information contained in that record if he so decides. The RCMP or police forces may disclose the information to the organization that requested this verification.

However, in accordance with new subsection 6.3(7) the organization may only use this information in relation to its assessment of the job application. Also the new subsection 6.3(3) stipulates the following:

Except as authorized by subsection (2), no person shall verify whether a person is the subject of a notation—

• (1650)

This is very technical in nature but I would suggest very important because these safeguards and the balance sought are addressed by these very useful amendments.

Access to the offender's information is limited to authorized police officers and law enforcement personnel. The consent form must be signed pursuant to subsection 6.3(6) by the affected individual. By requesting consent the applicant could choose to either agree or refuse to allow the record to be unsealed. Refusal would be a signal to the organization wishing to conduct the search that the applicant may not be the appropriate person for the position. If the applicant gives consent obviously the authority of

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the solicitor general would still be needed to unseal the record in question.

Many volunteer agencies engage in a screening process of the applicant's background. However, screening is not done with the same degree of precision or thoroughness that we know occurs with a police check. Under Bill C-7 we will be permitted to put this information into the hands of those most in need, the organizations that by their very nature can potentially set up a situation where a young person could be exposed to a person with a prior sexual assault conviction.

Police record checks are not always effective. The CPIC system has been gutted in many instances in terms of the funding. Although the solicitor general has spoken with great ballyhoo about the injection of new funding, this is less than half of what is needed to bring the CPIC system up to par.

With that said, there is a sad reality to all of this. Research confirms that the vast majority of people who perpetrate sexual abuse against children are often those who do not seek out employment in that area. Oftentimes there is no prior conviction, that is to say they have never been convicted of a crime and therefore they would not show up on a police record system. This highlights the need for education and the need for participation in a public education effort to let people know there is more that can be done to protect children. The bill therefore is not a panacea by any stretch of imagination but it is certainly significant progress.

Volunteer organizations throughout the country are obviously aimed at the enhancement of children's lives. To this end I believe the legislation very much enhances the ability we have as legislators and people of this country who have been entrusted with the responsibility to put into effect laws that will help our law enforcement agencies. This will enhance protection for children.

Pardons themselves are very much an important part of the justice system. They serve a very important purpose. They are obviously of great benefit both to the pardoned offender and to society in terms of the stigma in allowing an individual to get on with life after having served a debt to society.

With respect to sexual offences the new legislation very much strikes that balance. In terms of priority and where we in this place should be focusing our attention the bill puts it very much in the hands of our legislatures and very much in the hands of our law enforcement and volunteer agencies to protect children in every possible way, to use all means, to use extreme caution, to go that final step to see that children will always be first and foremost in our efforts to protect them.

This is not a universal remedy or solution that can be found in the legislation but it can offer this additional mechanism of

protection. It does not erode the integrity of the parole system. The exceptions it now provides in the parole system may appear small but they are very justified.

In the last 28 years nearly one-quarter of a million pardons have been granted for all offences in Canada. In relation to Bill C-7 only 4,500 of those pardoned concerned sex offences. The need to protect society has to be given greater strength. The bill moves us in that direction.

It is unfortunate the government of the day would not put forward the same effort, the same resources and the same strident timetable that we have seen with respect to the bill. It should somehow rebalance its priorities in putting its resources into efforts such as this instead of into efforts such as gun registration which obviously do not seek out and do not particularly protect society in the way it would have us believe.

• (1655)

This type of public protection initiative and the support it has received here is an indication of the type of co-operative effort that can occur in parliament. It should renew some faith and restore some lost hope that we can, when the cause is right, rally around to pass legislation quickly and effectively that is aimed at protecting society.

As long as the government can ensure systematic and effective scrutiny of the police control processes and ensure that Bill C-7 is used only for checking criminal records and those involved in sexual offences, Bill C-7 is very much acceptable and necessary as a violation, a minor infringement, I would suggest, of the charter of rights and freedoms. It is certainly one that can be exercised in the interest of public safety.

We know the age-old adage that talk is cheap. This is action that speaks volumes. It is an unusual occurrence when we can do so in such a unanimous and unified fashion.

The greater good is what we must constantly strive for. Law enforcement agencies must strike a balance of equal treatment under the law always with a mind to protecting the innocent. We can do that in this place. A Progressive Conservative government would very much like to see the opportunity to move on laws such as this one, laws that put the emphasis on protecting society.

In conclusion, from St. John's, Newfoundland, to St. Peter's, P.E.I., to Victoria, British Columbia, and all places in between in this vast country, this is a positive and laudable piece of legislation that the Conservative Party supports whole-heartedly.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): 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 New Brunswick Southwest, Drug Approval.

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[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I have received notice from the hon. member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge that he is unable to move his motion during private members' hour on Tuesday, February 15, 2000.

It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence. Accordingly I am directing the table officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence. Private members' hour will thus be cancelled and the House will continue with the business before it prior to private members' hour.

* * *

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion relating to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have just returned from a very enlightening meeting with about 200 young people who are here with Encounters with Canada. They were asking very reasonable questions, having just spent some time in the Speaker's gallery watching question period, such as what in the world is going on. Why is there so much hostility? Why are we always going at each other?

It therefore gives me a tremendous deal of pleasure to speak very briefly to this bill and just recount how we arrived at this point. The bill and the co-operation there has been within the House of Commons among members of parliament are examples of some of the good legislation that we can work together on, that we can co-operate on.

I give special acknowledgement to my colleague from Calgary Centre who entered the House in 1997. He became the critic for the Reform Party responsible for issues surrounding families. He arrived without any parliamentary experience and very quickly studied and came forward with a very useful piece of legislation not dissimilar to this one. As a matter of fact, I suggest in a spirit of co-operation with the government that perhaps it was a catalyst on the part of my colleague from Calgary Centre that this legislation saw the light of day.

It went through the Private Members' Business process and was referred to committee following second reading. The solicitor general's department came forward with legislation that was very similar to my colleague's bill. Again, through a spirit of co-opera-

tion in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, an agreement was struck to co-operate and ensure that the same process being used for the solicitor general's bill would be used for the private member's bill, while negotiations went on behind the scenes to try to blend these two together.

• (1700)

It is not infrequent for members of my party and perhaps some Canadians to have nothing complimentary to say about the other place, but today I will say something complimentary. The other place is part of the Canadian government and the government process as it presently stands in Canada, and whether we have questions about that or not is irrelevant. It is there and it does a do its job with this bill. I think it made improvements to the bill which has now been referred to us here.

This shows the kind of work that can happen when there is unanimity and agreement on vital issues such as this. This shows that even when a bill like this comes forward from an opposition member, my colleague, the member for Calgary Centre, that the House can respond in a positive way to his initiative.

It would be unseemly for me to take any partisan shots at this point in talking about the actions behind the scenes and the negotiations that took place. The bottom line to this exercise is that everyone in the process should be complimented for having seen it come to this point, and that the protection of children in Canada will be stronger as a result of this. As I said, I particularly want to acknowledge the tremendous hard work, dedication, perseverance and foresight of my colleague from Calgary Centre.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Amendments read the second time and concurred in)

* * *

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

Hon. Robert D. Nault (for Minister of Industry, Lib.) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-6, 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

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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.

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill C-6, the personal information protection and electronic documents act.

I will begin by putting things into perspective. The government is committed to fostering the growth of an electronic based economy in Canada, to prepare all Canadians for a new global economy and electronic commerce and to ensure that we are ready, willing and able to compete against the best the world has to offer.

• (1705)

For Canada to do that and to become a leader in the knowledge based economy and in electronic commerce, consumers and businesses must be comfortable with the new technologies and with the impact that these technologies will have on their lives.

Trust is very crucial. Canadians want to know that their transactions are private and secure, that legal and financial networks exist to support transactions and that the information infrastructure works.

A recent survey by Angus Reid found that 80% of Canadians think that their personal data should be kept strictly confidential. A 1998 Ekos survey also found that four out of five Canadians want the government to work with businesses to set rules for privacy protection.

Canadians have called for legislation that would define a single set of rules and establish a level playing field where the same marketplace rules apply to all. The direct marketing industry, information technology companies, telecommunication companies and banks all realize that we need a clear federal legislative privacy framework in Canada. They also recognize that flexible but effective legislation will help customers accept electronic ways of doing business and, of course, less expensive for them.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize for interrupting the member's speech. On the last vote that was carried unanimously, I believe the Reform members had five members standing and they wish a recorded vote,

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I accept your point of order. However, I was in the Chair at the time and I did not see five members standing. We were very careful to make sure of that case. The motion was carried unanimously. If there was to be a point of order on that it should have been made at the time.

Obviously through unanimous consent we could revert back. If the hon. member cares to move a motion requesting the Chair to ask for unanimous consent to revert, I will do so. It is up to the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, this only happened a few minutes ago and it appears that there will be no unanimous consent. There were five members standing and, as you can appreciate, I consulted with you on the proper procedure. We have taken a few minutes to bring this point of order forward because it appeared that you had not observed the five of us standing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I appreciate that but I just said that I did not see five members standing. If that was the case, and I could very easily have been wrong, it seems to me that the member should have made the point at that time. However, I will be happy to put the question to the House if the member requests it. If not, it is over and done with. We are not going back. We are on debate.

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, just before the interruption I pointed out some data. It was in response to demands such as this that the government developed a strategy for electronic commerce that the Prime Minister announced in September 1998. This strategy, designed to establish Canada as a world leader in the development and use of electronic commerce, was built around seven firsts in the areas of: consumer protection, tax neutrality, cryptography policy, standards, secure electronic commerce, digital signatures and privacy.

Today I am proud to report that with the final passage of this bill we will have achieved the seven firsts.

The protection of personal information has been recognized as a fundamental pillar of the global information society. For example, the European Union has a directive that came into force in 1998 that requires member states to block the flow of personal information to countries without adequate data protection. They are looking for the same elements that we have included in Bill C-6. The EU and Canada consider that legislative frameworks for the protection of privacy and personal information are a vital component of electronic commerce strategy and are beneficial to the evolution of the information society. Internationally, the European Union and Canada have committed to supporting a standard based approach to complement national frameworks.

• (1710)

Bill C-6 has already cleared the House and many hours have been devoted to its debate and passage. However, I would be remiss if I, on behalf of the Minister of Industry, did not take a moment to personally thank the Standing Committee on Industry for the excellent and exhaustive work it did to ensure that this legislation met the needs of all the stakeholders, including industry, consumer groups and Canadian citizens.

The Senate unanimously supported the bill's principles and agreed with its broad based approach to the protection of personal information. The standing Senate committee on social affairs, science and technology, the committee that studied the bill,

described the bill as a masterpiece of electronic commerce that struck a very significant and delicately drawn balance between business and consumer interests.

While the bill was being examined by the Senate, Canada's health sector voiced serious concerns. This sector, uncertain as to the scope and applications of the bill, was concerned that it would not be able to get its systems and procedures under way in time. Many within the health care sector felt that they should be excluded from the legislation altogether. In response to these concerns, the Senate has proposed amendments to the bill that will allow the health sector one extra year from the time of proclamation to meet the requirements of the bill.

It should be stressed that the health sector is not being exempted from the legislation, nor should it be. Personal information is just too sensitive to be left unprotected. In no way do these amendments change the basic tenets of the legislation. The health sector is simply being given more time in which to prepare. As the bill is scheduled to be proclaimed and come into force on January 1, 2001, the amendments will give the health sector until January 1, 2002 to prepare for the coming into force of the legislation.

During this additional transition period, Industry Canada is ready to work with the entire health care sector, including commercial organizations, the provinces, Health Canada and other stakeholders to clarify any uncertainties on how Bill C-6 applies to them. Reasonable and practical solutions exist within the framework provided by the bill to ensure that the personal health information that is collected, used and disclosed in the course of commercial activities is protected by law.

Time is of the essence. This is a message that the government and stakeholders, including provincial and federal privacy commissioners, have voiced repeatedly. The Minister of Industry recently received a letter from the Information Technology Association of Canada. Letters were also received from Canadians in support of Bill C-6, which included the Public Interest Advocacy Group, B.C. Civil Liberties Association, B.C. Freedom of Information and Privacy Association, the Canadian Health Coalition, Electronic Frontier Canada and Democracy Watch. The Canadian Marketing Association and the Insurance Council of Canada have also recently written to the federal government urging it to give royal assent immediately.

I agree with these stakeholders who are supportive of the bill. Consumers, businesses and the government are calling for royal assent of Bill C-6. The bottom line is that Bill C-6 is too important for the future of Canadians to delay it any further. For that reason, the government concurs with the amendments made by the Senate. Let us all work together to make this happen.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on Bill C-6, the privacy in electronic commerce bill.

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The Reform Party supports the thrust of the bill, but we had a couple of concerns which we put forward in the form of amendments. Had the government seen fit to adopt these amendments they would have strengthened the bill. However, the government chose not to adopt them. One of the reasons we put these amendments forward was the importance they had to social concerns, particularly in health care and welfare.

• (1715)

As it stands, this bill the government has put forth really is comprised of two bills. One deals with electronic commerce which we ardently support. The Reform Party recognizes that the government unfortunately has failed to support our business sector in the world of electronic commerce. Our e-commerce business is falling far behind that of our colleagues to the south. The government needs to do much more to give business the ability and power to compete internationally in the global e-commerce market. We support the parts of the bill that deal with electronic commerce.

We wanted to strengthen the first part of the bill that deals with privacy. There is a need to deal with the privacy aspects of the bill, in particular the aspect that deals with health care issues. The bill does not do that at all. In the coming era of e-commerce, globalization and sharing of information by electronic means, it will become increasingly important for the government to introduce legislation that protects individuals and records concerning them, particularly in health care issues. Privacy in this area is a right of Canadians. Unfortunately that is lacking in the bill. We put forth amendments to deal with that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Before a subject of such importance, I think the members should be present, especially those of the party in power. I would therefore call for a quorum count.

And the count having been taken:

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Chambly has requested quorum. We do not have quorum.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

• (1720)

Mr. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, thank you for calling in the members on this riveting Bill C-6. I am disappointed at the Bloc members who have left after they chose to call quorum. It shows their interest in e-commerce and Bill C-6.

Government Orders

The Minister of Health would find this very interesting because he has proposed plans and solutions to develop a mechanism whereby patient records can be shared by medical practitioners across the country. This is a good idea. However, it is very important that the medical information on these records be protected. There is very little in the bill to protect patient records from individuals who have no business whatsoever getting that information and dealing with the personal medical records of individuals.

That is why the Reform Party proposed amendments to Bill C-6. They would have ensured the personal health care records of Canadians remained protected so unscrupulous individuals who have no business whatsoever in knowing about another individual's personal medical records would not have access to them. This is not included in this legislation. The Canadian Medical Association and civil liberties groups have asked the minister repeatedly to amend the bill so it will protect the personal health care records and personal information of individuals.

A number of things have to be drawn up since the feds have failed to do this. The provinces should take the bull by the horns.

A code of conduct, a code that governs personal health care information should be implemented. It should involve the following aspects.

Health care information should be defined. Who owns this information? Individuals should be permitted to identify specific aspects of their records as sensitive. Patients could indicate that certain aspects of their records are sensitive and absolutely nobody could have access to that information.

It would require restructuring the health care records to allow different levels of access by different individuals. It would require electronic health care records to separate the fields that can be used to identify individuals. A uniform consent form to release personal information should be established. The keeping of audit trails would be required. Obligations respecting the security of information should be imposed. Protocols for third party access to personal information must be developed. Oversight mechanisms should be established or existing data protection oversight bodies should be used to review legislation and policy issues relating to this. Transparency of the collection, use and disclosure of personal information must be ensured.

Those holding personal health care information would be required to inform individual patients of their rights relating to their information and provide civil rights to redress the statutory penalties and misuse of this information.

Not only should this be applied to health care information, but it is important that it be applied to banking information, personal

information relating to finances, welfare payments and other social issues the federal government relates to individuals.

I want to deal with the larger issue of e-commerce in Canada. Our country is significantly lacking in our ability to compete in the dot-com world. Dot-com companies are taking the world by storm and they are on the cutting edge of the new economy today. The vast majority of dot-com companies are in the United States. We can see by corollary that very few of the dot-com companies are in Canada. Why is it so few of the dot-com companies are in Canada?

It speaks to a lack of innovation. It does not rest with the people in our country; it rests with a structural problem in Canada which starts with the education system which has provided many of our finest individuals. Individuals who have studied and taught in Canadian universities such as McMaster which has an excellent program, or Waterloo which has a better one. Students on the cutting edge of information technology are flocking to the United States.

People at these universities and in the private sector tell us that they yearn for these people to stay in Canada. Unfortunately very few of them do, not because they do not want to stay in Canada and not because they do not feel compelled to contribute to our economy. They find that Canada's economy and the environment under which they work in the information technology field are so far behind those of the United States and other countries that they leave Canada. They leave with a broken heart. They would like to stay here but we are very far behind.

● (1725)

It is critically important for the Minister of Industry to work with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Revenue. They must develop an acute strategic emergency plan to ensure that our students who are graduates from our fine universities and are experts in computers and information technology stay in Canada. The government must address the issue of taxes, the rules and regulations which are choking off the ability of our companies to compete in this new IT world. If we fail to do that, we will have a serious problem on our hands in the future and there will be a vacuum in our economy which will be very difficult to fill.

I impress upon the government the urgent nature of dealing with the privacy issues that I have mentioned. It must institute with the provinces rules and regulations to govern privacy issues. It is also equally important to develop an urgent strategic plan of action to work in connection with the private sector and the educational leaders, the academia. An integrated program must be developed with the government and educational facilities on the tax structure and rules and regulations at the federal, provincial and municipal levels to ensure that Canada can take advantage of today's IT wave.

The longer we hold out, the more we as a nation will fall behind in our industrial capabilities.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are again debating Bill C-6 or rather the amendments by the Senate. This bill is important to the government, which promised it in its throne speech.

The government decided to speed up the process and hurry the bill through in the fall. It has decided now to adopt the Senate's amendments. Bill C-6, it must be remembered, is legislation to protect personal information, but its primary intent is consumer or individual protection. In fact, in nine provinces in Canada, with a few exceptions, there was no legislation where the parties could be covered.

In the case of Quebec, there is a consumer protection act. The federal government decided to bring in a personal information bill, which is a bit misleading. The intent behind it all is to promote, particularly, from what we have seen in the definitions, to promote the development of e-commerce, even if it means at times rounding off corners and not properly protecting personal information that an individual might provide in the course of such transactions.

Initially, the situation was examined in the bill. The debate began over two or three years ago—at the time my colleague from Mercier was shepherding the matter within the Bloc Québécois—and many groups told the federal government they were not in favour of its meddling in this area. Why? For a variety of reasons.

As I said earlier, as far as Quebec is concerned, we have to understand that a consumer protection legislation is in place, which has been regulating for a number of years the whole issue of protecting personal information, among other things, in the context of e-commerce. Naturally, this area is evolving fast, but there are definitions, including those of consent and signature. A signature on a traditional document is no problem, but consent in the context of electronic transactions is something else. We have our own definitions, based on the tradition of civil law. Our approach is clearly different from that of the federal government, which is based on the common law.

• (1730)

In its legislation, the federal government has to define these concepts. What is a consent? What is a signature? There are many terms to define.

The first difficulty arises from the definitions being different. Our approaches are different. It is important to know that, in Quebec, every business and person was covered by the consumer protection legislation. Even businesses and institutions under federal jurisdiction complied with that legislation.

Some will say “Look, it is clear to everyone that federal legislation applies to everyone”. What is not clear is, in the absence of a federal legislation, do they legally have to comply with the Quebec one? They did not take a chance and they did so. Of course, they did not take the risk of going to the courts, being turned down and being told that Quebec had jurisdiction in this area and that, because the federal government did not take up this jurisdiction, the Quebec government had been able to do so.

There are different supreme court decisions, and I do not want to get into the whole technical debate on this, but some people say it is possible they were legally subjected to the legislation; others say no, the courts should decide on the issue.

This would have been a good opportunity for the federal government members, these great champions of flexibility, such as the intergovernmental affairs minister and those in front of us here, who are telling us they have an extremely flexible regime. If that is the case, why then does the federal legislation not say that, in the case of provinces, such as Quebec, that have consumer protection legislation, such legislation applies? It would then take precedence. It was becoming clear for everyone in Quebec that it was the Quebec legislation that applied, including for federal institutions.

What must be understood is, it is very rare that businesses are not engaged in commerce elsewhere: in the Canadian market, in the American market and everywhere else in the world. Most of a company's activities can be subject to provincial jurisdiction in some cases, and to federal jurisdiction in others as a result of this bill, because there are some aspects that deal with foreign trade.

In practical terms, we will have many problems because businesses will sometimes be subject to one jurisdiction and sometimes to another. If the government wants to protect the consumer, surely it is not by making things more confusing that it will provide better protection. People will have great difficulty understanding their options; when someone feels he has been wronged, he must understand what remedies are available to him. And things are much clearer and simpler in Quebec's legislation than they will be in the federal act.

Therefore, depending on the type of information involved and on the legislation to which it is subject, people will have a particular recourse against a business, a different type of remedy or another organisation to turn to defend them.

Again, we will have a concrete example of the problems we face when two jurisdictions are involved in one area. There are many problems. First of all, for the consumers we want to protect, but also for businesses that have to abide by the legislation.

Business people tell us constantly “Look, let us do our work. We are entrepreneurs. Stop bothering us with all this paperwork”. But now, in Quebec, this bill will add a second level of jurisdiction

Government Orders

regarding personal information protection. And businesses will have to deal with both.

Basically, the Liberals want to push Quebec aside. They want sole jurisdiction, as they will have outside Quebec. They want to legislate for Canada as a whole. The fact that Quebec already has legislation is the least of their worries. Indeed, none of the Liberal members on the other side has risen to remind this House that Quebec already has a solid jurisdiction that deserves to be recognised. They probably did not know about it. They did not say anything.

And these are the people who speak of flexibility, who tell us that things must be clear. These people, who are also apostles of clarity, are the ones who give us legislation that will make the protection of personal information very confusing. One need only read the minutes of the most recent hearings of the Senate committee, to see that the experts do not agree on jurisdiction, on the scope of the legislation and of the definitions. It is a real jumble.

• (1735)

This is what the so-called experts were saying, those lawyers from whom we will be seeking advice. Businesses that need advice go to legal firms. The people we heard all had different versions of what that meant in practice. But we should not worry about that. The federal government did not wait long to go all over the world claiming that it had an act protecting privacy and electronic documents. That was the objective. Then, they can say "Look at how good Canada is". They will go and brag all over the place.

We are not supposed to worry if the system does not work in practice. This is the least of their concerns. All they want is to be able to say that there is something in place.

People from the health sector in Ontario have been critical of the bill from the beginning. They were very worried about the transfer of personal medical files, and they ought to be since the objective of the bill is to promote electronic commerce. They were saying that the commercial approach does not exist in the medical field and that the bill would not have any application in their sector.

The government that said no will support the Senate amendments and exempt the health sector for one more year. This decision is a direct consequence of the lobbying by the Ontario health sector. We will wait one more year. Finally, that will give the health sector almost two years to think of ways to better define consent in the context of the electronic transfer of personal medical data. The amendments exclude the sector.

From the very beginning, we said that there were a lot of problems with this act. The government was in a rush. It wanted to act fast. We have known that since the beginning. These groups

from Ontario who have won their battle in the Senate had come to the committee to say so. They had written to all the members sitting on the committee. They had repeatedly phoned our offices to tell us that it did not make sense.

The government was in a great hurry. It did not want to talk about such amendments here in the House, or as little as possible. It wanted things to move quickly. It wanted the whole thing submitted rapidly to the Senate where they have a bunch of friends controlling the situation. There are not too many problems on that side. They wanted to allow them to give the impression that they do work from time to time. So they suggested amendments.

I am very curious to know who wrote those amendments. Let us presume that they were done in the Senate, although they could very well have been inspired by the Department of Health or the Department of Industry.

So we have the Senate amendments. We cannot support those amendments, even if they represent an improvement over the present act, because this act makes absolutely no sense.

There were all sorts of things. Later, I will quote the Minister of Industry. It is true that, in theory, the act could allow the minister to exempt certain sectors or areas of activities. It is not in the act. The minister is keeping some leeway to do so—

An hon. member: Behind the scene.

Mr. Pierre Brien: Exactly. Cabinet could, behind closed doors, exempt certain sectors. It might say "Quebec will indeed have jurisdiction over that area, and we are recognizing your ability to make such a decision".

The person responsible for this in the Quebec government is David Cliche, the minister responsible for the information highway and government services. He wrote to the minister, and his letter was not filled with insults, to request a meeting, saying "I wish to meet with you to review the situation, which is of concern to you as it is to us".

It must be pointed out that, among the organizations that appeared before the committee during the hearings—not the Senate committee hearings but those of the House committee—were groups from Quebec, including the Commission d'accès à l'information, the organization supervising the Quebec legislation, which came to tell us "We already have legislation in Quebec; be careful of what you are going to do. We do not think your bill is a very good idea, it will cause confusion". This warning was ignored.

Other organizations came, organizations like the Conseil central de la CSN, which the minister referred to as "mothball clubs". I do not know that expression also applied to the Conseil du patronat. It

Government Orders

too came and it told us that our legislation did not make sense. A group of friends of the minister came to say that the legislation would cause problems. They presented a brief to this effect.

The Chambre des notaires came to say the same thing. The bar, the organization representing lawyers, those who advise businesses and interpret this legislation, said “No, do not do that, do not pass Bill C-6, or else exempt Quebec from its application”.

• (1740)

These groups went as far as to ask that Quebec’s jurisdiction be recognized in the federal legislation. They said “Everything will be clear. We will know what to expect. We will know what to do and we will comply with Quebec’s legislation. If Quebecers wish more or less rigorous legislation, they will put pressure on their provincial government. We have a democracy in Quebec. There are election campaigns. There are pressure groups. There is a public consultation process with parliamentary committees, for example. We live in a democracy. Groups will be heard. But it will be clear that there will be only one piece of legislation”. But, this advice went unheeded.

I was saying that, on October 19, Mr. Cliche wrote to the Minister of Industry. But the government made sure the bill passed second and third readings first. Then the minister replied “I wish to thank you for your letter”, and went on to explain how Canada badly needed the legislation. “The bill has already been read a third time in the House of Commons, he said. It has just been passed”.

How unfortunate, the minister had not read his mail earlier. He had just realized that the bill had been passed and wrote “I agree that we should meet to talk about this”, once the bill had been passed. Could he not have met with the minister to list his arguments or even just to hear what the minister had to say, incorporate amendments into the bill at that time, and come back with more amendments, as required? He could have kept some leeway and told us: “Whatever can be done through order in council will be done that way.” Instead, he says: “Our officials should work together in order to discuss the exemption that will apply to organizations subject to the Quebec legislation”, because he would be in a position to grant some exemptions.

At the beginning, the industry minister said: “Yes, Quebec will be exempted. We could meet to find out which sectors could receive an exemption.” The speech has taken a very different turn. In a few weeks he will be telling us: “In the end, nobody was exempted; the legislation will apply to one and all.”

We know them. It is always the same process and the same conclusion. These people are steely-brained. According to them, the federal government has a monopoly on truth, efficiency, etc. and it knows best what is good for us and what it should impose on us, in that area as in others.

We have seen that before. I have been here for six years and for six years things have been the same. Some have witnessed that for much longer. It has always been the case and things are even getting worse. I could speak about many other areas, but, in this case, we are talking about a statutory area.

Imagine the areas where the federal government can spend its money. The temptation to control is even greater, even more so because the federal government holds the financial levers. That is why, for example, the federal government is withdrawing from areas like health and education and has almost stopped making the transfer payments it used to make before.

The federal government itself decides how the moneys will be primarily allocated in education and health. It leaves the provincial governments stuck with major administrative problems in the management of basic services, including in health. I am also concerned about education, because with the whole debate on health, we must not forget what is happening in the education sector, which is just as important.

But their one concern here is visibility, visibility and visibility for the federal government. As for the rest, including effectiveness, the provinces will administer the programs and, therefore, will be the ones criticized if things do not work. The federal government is saying “We are keeping what is good to manage, they can have the rest”.

We cannot support the various amendments, particularly those that are in response to the pressures of the Ontario lobby in the health sector. Such criticism was not voiced in Quebec. Why is that? It is because we have a consumer protection act. We also have, through the supervision that can be done by Quebec’s access to information commission, processes and recourses, which means that the communication of personal information is already regulated.

In Quebec, no one phoned our offices to say “Listen, we need federal legislation to protect personal information”. This is clearly an area that people must know about. The Quebec government will have to increasingly promote an awareness of its act and of the possible remedies for individuals, because electronic commerce is developing at an incredible rate.

• (1745)

Of course, from time to time there are problems, as we saw last week—there will always be smart guys, faster than technology, who can paralyse the system—nevertheless e-commerce is bound to expand at a phenomenal rate. It is all right to have regulations, but we have ours already.

If Canada wants its own, this is all right too, but why impose its views, its way of doing things on us, especially in an area that comes under what the Prime Minister himself calls the Napoleonic Code, that is to say the Civil Code. The Prime Minister is still stuck

Government Orders

in the past, but true enough, it is inspired by the Napoleonic tradition.

We are told that we, in Quebec, are distinct, that it has been recognized, and that there is even a resolution of this House recognizing the distinct character of our institutions and the Civil Code. And yet, the bill before us does not recognize the Quebec government's ability to manage something which clearly comes under, which should directly come under the Civil Code.

This is worrisome because it is probably the beginning of an increasing trend on the part of the federal government to move in a roundabout way. A nudge here and a nudge there, and it occupies more and more space, a little bit in the area of health, a little bit here and a little bit there. What is worrisome with regard to the amendments concerning health care is that when the federal government comes to an agreement with Ontario in a couple of years, will it come up with a new way to deal with transmitting personal information that it will then impose on Quebec?

What will happen? It is very worrisome. Are we going to give the government a blank check and say "Yes, in a couple of years, not necessarily through legislative channels, cabinet will make regulations in the area of health care, which could have an impact on what we do in Quebec". This government is telling us it wants to give the provinces enough leeway in the area of health care, but it will not do it in this particular instance.

Therefore, we will vote against these amendments. Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

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

• (1835)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 671)

YEAS

Members

Alarie
Bellehumeur
Bigras
Canuel
Crête
Debien
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Dumas
Gagnon
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guimond
Laurin
Marceau
Ménard
Perron
Sauvageau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Venne—35

Asselin
Bergeron
Brien
Cardin
de Savoye
Desrochers
Duceppe
Fournier
Girard-Bujold
Guay
Lalonde
Lebel
Marchand
Mercier
Picard (Drummond)
St-Hilaire
Turp

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Baker
Bélaïr
Bennett
Blaikie
Bonin
Boudria
Brison
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll
Catterall
Chan
Clouthier
Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Eggleton
Fontana
Godfrey
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Grose
Harb
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Iftody
Jennings
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
Lunn
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Manley
Marleau

Adams
Anderson
Augustine
Bailey
Bakopanos
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Coderre
Coppes
Cullen
Dhalliwal
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Folco
Gagliano
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Graham
Grewal
Guarnieri
Hart
Hill (Macleod)
Hubbard
Jackson
Johnston
Jordan
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lastewka
Leung
Longfield
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)

*Government Orders**(Division No. 672)*

Matthews
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna
Muise
Myers
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Penson
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Price
Proud
Redman
Richardson
Ritz
Robinson
Saada
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Strahl
Thibeault
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Ur
Vanclief
Vellacott
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood—163

McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Mifflin
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
Obhrai
Paradis
Patry
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proctor
Proulx
Reynolds
Riis
Robillard
Rock
Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)
Sgro
St-Julien
Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney
Valeri
Vautour
Wasylcia-Leis
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

MUNICIPAL GRANTS ACT

The House resumed from February 11 consideration of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6.35 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of Bill C-10. Is it agreed that the members are in the Chamber?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.*And the bells having rung:***The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on Motion No. 4.

● (1845)

(The House divided on Motion No. 4, which was negated on the following division:)

Abbott
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bigras
Canuel
Crête
Debien
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Dumas
Gagnon
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guay
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Lalonde
Lebel
Marchand
McNally
Mercier
Mills (Red Deer)
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Ritz
Schmidt
St-Hilaire
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Turp
Venne
Williams—57

YEAS

Members

Alarie
Bailey
Bergeron
Brien
Cardin
de Savoye
Desrochers
Duceppe
Fournier
Girard-Bujold
Grewal
Guimond
Hill (Macleod)
Johnston
Laurin
Marceau
Mark
Ménard
Meredith
Obhrai
Perron
Reynolds
Sauvageau
Scott (Skeena)
Strahl
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Augustine
Baker
Bélair
Bennett
Blaikie
Bonin
Boudria
Brison
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll
Catterall
Chan
Clouthier
Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Eggleton
Fontana
Godfrey
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Guarnieri
Hardy
Hubbard
Jackson
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lastewka
Leung
Longfield

Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Bakopanos
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Coderre
Coppes
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Folco
Gagliano
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Graham
Grose
Harb
Herron
Iftody
Jennings
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay

Government Orders

MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Richardson
Riis	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Serré	Sgro
St. Denis	St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Vautour
Wasylcia-Leis	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood—142

Picard (Drummond)
Ritz
Schmidt
St-Hilaire
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Turp
Venne
Williams —61

Reynolds
Sauvageau
Scott (Skeena)
Strahl
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Bélaïr	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Borotsik
Bradshaw	Brison
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Casey	Catterall
Cauchon	Chan
Charbonneau	Clouthier
Coderre	Collenette
Copps	Cotler
Cullen	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Dion
Doyle	Dromisky
Drouin	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duhamel	Eggleton
Folco	Fontana
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Hardy	Herron
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jones	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Longfield	MacAulay
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Richardson
Riis	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Serré	Sgro
St. Denis	St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Vautour
Wasylcia-Leis	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood—142

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 4 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 5. A negative vote on Motion No. 5 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 6.

● (1850)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 5, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 673)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Alarie
Asselin	Bailey
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bigras	Brien
Cadman	Canuel
Cardin	Crête
de Savoye	Debien
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe	Dumas
Fournier	Gagnon
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Grewal	Guay
Guimond	Harris
Hart	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Johnston
Lalonde	Laurin
Lebel	Lunn
Marceau	Marchand
Mark	McNally
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Obhrai
Penson	Perron

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 6.

● (1900)

(The House divided on Motion No. 6, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 674)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Alarie
Asselin	Bailey
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bigras	Brien
Cadman	Canuel
Cardin	Crête
de Savoye	Debien
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe	Dumas
Fournier	Gagnon
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Grewal	Guay
Guimond	Harris
Hart	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Johnston
Lalonde	Laurin
Lebel	Lunn
Marceau	Marchand
Mark	McNally
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Obhrai
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Reynolds
Ritz	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
St-Hilaire	Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Vellacott
Venne	White (North Vancouver)
Williams —61	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Bélaïr	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chan	Charbonneau
Clouthier	Coderre
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Doyle

Government Orders

Dromisky	Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Duhamel
Eggleton	Folco
Fontana	Gagliano
Galloway	Godfrey
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Goodale
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Hardy
Herron	Hubbard
Iftody	Jackson
Jennings	Jones
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knudson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marleau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Matthews	McCormick
McDonough	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney	Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Mitchell	Muise
Murray	Myers
Nault	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Price
Proctor	Proud
Proulx	Redman
Richardson	Riis
Robillard	Robinson
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Serré
Sgro	St. Denis
St-Julien	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Thibeault	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Vautour	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood—143	

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 6 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 7.

● (1905)

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 7, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 675)

YEAS

Members

Abłonczy	Alarie
Asselin	Bailey
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bigras	Brien

Government Orders

Cadman
 Cardin
 de Savoye
 Desrochers
 Duceppe
 Fournier
 Girard-Bujold
 Grewal
 Guimond
 Hart
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Lalonde
 Lebel
 Lunn
 Marchand
 McNally
 Mercier
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Obhrai
 Perron
 Reynolds
 Sauvageau
 Scott (Skeena)
 Strahl
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
 Vellacott
 White (North Vancouver)

Canuel
 Crête
 Debien
 Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
 Dumas
 Gagnon
 Godin (Châteauguay)
 Guay
 Harris
 Hill (MacLeod)
 Johnston
 Laurin
 Lowther
 Marceau
 Mark
 Ménard
 Meredith
 Morrison
 Penson
 Picard (Drummond)
 Ritz
 Schmidt
 St-Hilaire
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Turp
 Venne
 Williams —62

Murray
 Nault
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Peric
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proctor
 Proulx
 Richardson
 Robillard
 Saada
 Serré
 St. Denis
 Stewart (Brant)
 Szabo
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Wasylcia-Leis
 Wilfert

Myers
 O'Reilly
 Paradis
 Parry
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Proud
 Redman
 Riis
 Robinson
 Scott (Fredericton)
 Sgro
 St-Julien
 Stewart (Northumberland)
 Thibeault
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vautour
 Whelan
 Wood—142

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

NAYS

Members

Adams
 Anderson
 Augustine
 Baker
 Bélair
 Bennett
 Blaikie
 Bonin
 Borotsik
 Brison
 Bryden
 Caccia
 Cannis
 Carroll
 Catterall
 Chan
 Clouthier
 Collenette
 Cotler
 De Villers
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
 Eggleton
 Fontana
 Gallaway
 Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
 Graham
 Grose
 Harb
 Herron
 Ifody
 Jennings
 Jordan
 Keyes
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lee
 Lincoln
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marleau
 Matthews
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McWhinney
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
 Mitchell

Alcock
 Assad
 Axworthy
 Bakopanos
 Bellemare
 Bertrand
 Blondin-Andrew
 Bonwick
 Bradshaw
 Brown
 Bulte
 Calder
 Caplan
 Casey
 Cauchon
 Charbonneau
 Coderre
 Copps
 Cullen
 Dhaliwal
 Doyle
 Drouin
 Duhamel
 Folco
 Gagliano
 Godfrey
 Goodale
 Gray (Windsor West)
 Guarnieri
 Hardy
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jones
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
 Knutson
 Lastewka
 Leung
 Longfield
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Malhi
 Manley
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan (Edmonton West)
 Mifflin
 Minna
 Muise

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 7 lost. The next question is on Motion No. 8.

• (1915)

(The House divided on Motion No. 8, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 676)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Asselin
 Bellehumeur
 Bigras
 Cadman
 Cardin
 de Savoye
 Desrochers
 Duceppe
 Fournier
 Girard-Bujold
 Grewal
 Guimond
 Hart
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Lalonde
 Lebel
 Lunn
 Marchand
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Ménard
 Meredith
 Morrison
 Penson
 Picard (Drummond)
 Ritz
 Schmidt
 St-Hilaire
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Turp
 Venne
 Williams —63

Alarie
 Bailey
 Bergeron
 Brien
 Canuel
 Crête
 Debien
 Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
 Dumas
 Gagnon
 Godin (Châteauguay)
 Guay
 Harris
 Hill (MacLeod)
 Johnston
 Laurin
 Lowther
 Marceau
 Mark
 McNally
 Mercier
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Obhrai
 Perron
 Reynolds
 Sauvageau
 Scott (Skeena)
 Strahl
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
 Vellacott
 White (North Vancouver)

Government Orders

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Bélair	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chan	Charbonneau
Clouthier	Coderre
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Duhamel
Folco	Fontana
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale	Graham
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Hardy	Herron
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jones	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keys
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Longfield	MacAulay
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Richardson
Robillard	Robinson
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Serré
Sgro	St. Denis
St-Julien	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Thibeault	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Vautour	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood—141	

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 8 lost.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, in the interest of the love and kindness that Valentine's Day has come to represent, would you seek unanimous consent to apply the remainder of the votes?

The Deputy Speaker: That is a pretty generous request. I am not sure which way I am asking to apply them, but is there a disposition on the part of the House to deal with these votes more expeditiously?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Apparently not. The question is on Motion No. 10.

[Translation]

A negative vote on Motion No. 10 requires the question to be put on Motion No. 16. The vote on Motion No. 10 applies as well to Motions Nos. 11, 13, 14, 17 and 18.

• (1920)

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 10, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 677)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Alarie
Asselin	Bailey
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bigras	Brien
Cadman	Canuel
Cardin	Crête
de Savoye	Debien
Desrochers	Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe	Dumas
Fournier	Gagnon
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Grewal	Guay
Guimond	Harris
Hart	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hillstrom
Johnston	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Lowther	Lunn
Marceau	Marchand
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McNally	Ménard
Mercier	Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)	Morrison
Obhrai	Penson
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Reynolds	Ritz
Sauvageau	Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)	St-Hilaire
Strahl	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Turp
Vellacott	Venne
White (North Vancouver)	Williams —64

*Government Orders***NAYS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Bélair	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chan	Charbonneau
Clouthier	Coderre
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Duhamel
Eggleton	Folco
Fontana	Gagliano
Galloway	Godfrey
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	Goodale
Graham	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Hardy	Herron
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Jennings
Jones	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	Lee
Leung	Lincoln
Longfield	MacAulay
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Pratt
Price	Proctor
Proud	Proulx
Redman	Richardson
Robillard	Robinson
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Serré
Sgro	St. Denis
St-Julien	Stewart (Brant)
Stewart (Northumberland)	Szabo
Thibeault	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Vautour	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood—141	

PAIRED MEMBERS

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 10 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 11, 13, 14, 17 and 18 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 16.

• (1930)

(The House divided on Motion No. 16, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 678)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Alarie
Asselin	Bailey
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bigras	Brien
Cadman	Canuel
Cardin	Crête
de Savoye	Debien
Desrochers	Duceppe
Dumas	Fournier
Gagnon	Girard-Bujold
Godin (Châteauguay)	Grewal
Guay	Guimond
Harris	Hart
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Johnston
Lalonde	Laurin
Lebel	Lowther
Lunn	Marceau
Marchand	Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	McNally
Ménard	Mercier
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Obhrai
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Reynolds
Ritz	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Scott (Skeena)
St-Hilaire	Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp	Vellacott
Venne	White (North Vancouver)
Williams —63	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Bélair	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chan	Charbonneau
Clouthier	Coderre

*Nil/aucun

*Government Orders**(Division No. 679)*

Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Eggleton
Gagliano
Godfrey
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Herron
Iftody
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lastewka
Leung
Longfield
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Manley
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
Mifflin
Minna
Muise
Myers
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Price
Proud
Redman
Robillard
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Sgro
St-Julien
Stewart (Northumberland)
Thibeault
Torsney
Valeri
Vautour
Whelan
Wood—139

Copps
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Folco
Galloway
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Graham
Guarnieri
Hardy
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
Matthews
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McWhinney
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proctor
Proulx
Richardson
Robinson
Saada
Serré
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Ur
Vanclief
Wasylcyia-Leis
Wilfert

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 16 lost. The next question is on Motion No. 33.

[Translation]

A negative note on Motion No. 33 requires the question to be put on Motions Nos. 34 to 37.

● (1935)

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 33, which was negated on the following division:)

Abbott
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bigras
Cadman
Cardin
de Savoye
Desrochers
Dumas
Gagnon
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guay
Hart
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Johnston
Laurin
Lowther
Marceau
Mark
McNally
Mercier
Mills (Red Deer)
Obhrai
Perron
Reynolds
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Bailey
Bergeron
Brien
Canuel
Crête
Debien
Duceppe
Fournier
Girard-Bujold
Grewal
Guimond
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
LaLonde
Lebel
Lunn
Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Ménard
Meredith
Morrison
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Ritz
Schmidt
Strahl
Turp
Venne
Williams—60

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Augustine
Baker
Bélair
Bennett
Blaikie
Bonin
Borotsik
Brison
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll
Catterall
Chan
Clouthier
Copps
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Folco
Gagliano
Godfrey
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Herron
Iftody
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson
Lastewka
Leung
Longfield

Alcock
Assad
Axworthy
Bakopanos
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Eggleton
Fontana
Galloway
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Graham
Guarnieri
Hardy
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay

Government Orders

MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Matthews
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Reilly	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peterson	Pettigrew
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt	Price
Proctor	Proud
Proulx	Redman
Robillard	Rock
Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Serré	Sgro
St. Denis	St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Thibeault
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Vautour
Wasylycia-Leis	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood—136

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 33 lost.

* * *

● (1940)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

DRESS CODE

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the Standing Orders, I found this:

Turtlenecks are not permitted.

The Speaker has already indicated to a member wearing a turtleneck that his vote could not be recorded. I therefore ask you to ask the member wearing a turtleneck to leave the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The House has a new book of procedure and I refer the hon. member for Rimouski—Mitis, and all other members, to the citation on page 514, which reads as follows:

The contemporary practice and unwritten rule require, therefore, that male Members wear a jacket, shirt and tie as standard dress. Clerical collars have been allowed, although ascots and turtlenecks have been ruled inappropriate for male Members participating in debate.

I refer to note 86, which says: "On occasion, male Members not wearing a tie have been permitted to vote".

So, for the time being, we may continue with the practice described in the new book.

[English]

MUNICIPAL GRANTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The next question is on Motion No. 34. A negative vote on Motion No. 34 requires the question to be put on Motions Nos. 35 to 37.

● (1950)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 34, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 680)

YEAS

Members

Asselin	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Bigras
Canuel	Cardin
Crête	de Savoye
Debien	Desrochers
Duceppe	Dumas
Fourmier	Gagnon
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Guay	Guimond
Lalonde	Laurin
Lebel	Marceau
Marchand	Ménard
Mercier	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Sauvageau
St-Hilaire	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Turp —31	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Augustine	Axworthy
Bailey	Baker
Bakopanos	Bélair
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Borotsik
Bradshaw	Brison
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Caccia
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Cauchon	Chan
Charbonneau	Clouthier
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	Duhamel
Folco	Fontana
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Hardy	Hart
Herron	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hubbard	Iftody
Jackson	Johnston
Jones	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keys
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Leung	Longfield

Government Orders

Lowther
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McNally
 Meredith
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
 Minna
 Morrison
 Murray
 Nault
 Obhrai
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peric
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proctor
 Proulx
 Reynolds
 Ritz
 Rock
 Schmidt
 Scott (Skeena)
 Sgro
 St-Julien
 Stewart (Northumberland)
 Szabo
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vautour
 Wasylcia-Leis
 White (North Vancouver)
 Williams

Lunn
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan (Edmonton West)
 McWhinney
 Mifflin
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Mitchell
 Muise
 Myers
 O'Reilly
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Penson
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Proud
 Redman
 Richardson
 Robillard
 Saada
 Scott (Fredericton)
 Serré
 St. Denis
 Stewart (Brant)
 Strahl
 Thiabeault
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Vellacott
 Whelan
 Wilfert
 Wood—160

Sauvageau
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)

St-Hilaire
 Turp—32

NAYS**Members**

Abbott
 Adams
 Assad
 Axworthy
 Baker
 Bélair
 Bennett
 Blaikie
 Bonin
 Borotsik
 Brison
 Bryden
 Caccia
 Calder
 Caplan
 Casey
 Charbonneau
 Collenette
 Cotler
 DeVillers
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
 Eggleton
 Fontana
 Galloway
 Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
 Graham
 Grose
 Harb
 Hart
 Hill (Macleod)
 Hilstrom
 Iftody
 Johnston
 Jordan
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Lastewka
 Leung
 Longfield
 Lunn
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Malhi
 Manley
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McNally
 Meredith
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
 Minna
 Muise
 Myers
 O'Reilly
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Penson
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Proud
 Redman
 Richardson
 Robillard
 Saada
 Scott (Fredericton)
 Serré
 St. Denis
 Stewart (Brant)
 Strahl
 Thiabeault
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Vellacott

Ablonczy
 Anderson
 Augustine
 Bailey
 Bakopanos
 Bellemare
 Bertrand
 Blondin—Andrew
 Bonwick
 Bradshaw
 Brown
 Bulte
 Cadman
 Cannis
 Carroll
 Chan
 Clouthier
 Copps
 Cullen
 Dhaliwal
 Doyle
 Drouin
 Duhamel
 Folco
 Gagliano
 Godfrey
 Goodale
 Grewal
 Guarnieri
 Hardy
 Herron
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jones
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lee
 Lincoln
 Lowther
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan (Edmonton West)
 McWhinney
 Mifflin
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Mitchell
 Murray
 Nault
 Obhrai
 Paradis
 Patry
 Peric
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proctor
 Proulx
 Reynolds
 Ritz
 Rock
 Schmidt
 Scott (Skeena)
 Sgro
 St-Julien
 Stewart (Northumberland)
 Szabo
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vautour
 Wasylcia-Leis

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 34 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 35. If Motion No. 35 is defeated, the next question will be on Motions Nos. 36 and 37.

● (1955)

(The House divided on Motion No. 35, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 681)

YEAS**Members**

Asselin
 Bergeron
 Brien
 Cardin
 de Savoye
 Desrosiers
 Dumas
 Gagnon
 Godin (Châteauguay)
 Guimond
 Laurin
 Marceau
 Ménard
 Perron

Bellehumeur
 Bigras
 Canuel
 Crête
 Debien
 Duceppe
 Fournier
 Girard-Bujold
 Guay
 Lalonde
 Lebel
 Marchand
 Mercier
 Picard (Drummond)

Government Orders

Whelan
Wilfert
Wood—161

White (North Vancouver)
Williams

Hardy
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hubbard
Jackson
Jones
Karetak-Lindell
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kraft Sloan
Lee
Lincoln
Lowther
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Minna
Muisse
Myers
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Penson
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Price
Proud
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Saada
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
Strahl
Thibeault
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Ur
Vanclief
Vellacott
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood—161

Hart
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Iftody
Johnston
Jordan
Keyes
Knutson
Lastewka
Leung
Longfield
Lunn
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
Obhrai
Paradis
Patri
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proctor
Proulx
Reynolds
Ritz
Rock
Schmidt
Scott (Skeena)
Sgro
St-Julien
Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Torsney
Valeri
Vautour
Wasylcia-Leis
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 35 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 36. If Motion No. 36 is defeated, the next question will be on Motion No. 37.

• (2005)

(The House divided on Motion No. 36, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 682)

YEAS

Members

Asselin
Bergeron
Brien
Cardin
de Savoye
Duceppe
Fournier
Girard-Bujold
Guay
Lalonde
Lebel
Marchand
Mercier
Picard (Drummond)
St-Hilaire
Turp —31

Bellehumeur
Bigras
Canuel
Crête
Debien
Dumas
Gagnon
Godin (Châteauguay)
Guimond
Laurin
Marceau
Ménard
Perron
Sauvageau
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Adams
Anderson
Axworthy
Baker
Belair
Bennett
Blaikie
Bonin
Borotsik
Brisson
Bryden
Caccia
Calder
Caplan
Casey
Chan
Clouthier
Coppes
Cullen
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Drouin
Duhamel
Folco
Gagliano
Godfrey
Goodale
Grewal
Guarnieri

Ablonczy
Alcock
Augustine
Bailey
Bakopanos
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Cadman
Cannis
Carroll
Catterall
Charbonneau
Collenette
Cotler
DeVillers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Eggleton
Fontana
Galloway
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Graham
Grose
Harb

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 36 lost.

The next question is on Motion No 37.

• (2010)

(The House divided on Motion No. 37, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 683)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Asselin
Bellehumeur
Bigras

Ablonczy
Bailey
Bergeron
Brien

Cadman
 Cardin
 de Savoye
 Duceppe
 Fournier
 Girard-Bujold
 Grewal
 Guimond
 Hill (Macleod)
 Hillstrom
 Lalonde
 Lebel
 Lunn
 Marchand
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Ménard
 Meredith
 Obhrai
 Perron
 Reynolds
 Sauvageau
 Scott (Skeena)
 Strahl
 Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
 Vellacott
 Williams—59

Canuel
 Crête
 Debien
 Dumas
 Gagnon
 Godin (Châteauguay)
 Guay
 Hart
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Johnston
 Laurin
 Lowther
 Marceau
 Mark
 McNally
 Mercier
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Penon
 Picard (Drummond)
 Ritz
 Schmidt
 St-Hilaire
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Turp
 White (North Vancouver)

Peterson
 Phinney
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Proud
 Redman
 Robillard
 Saada
 Serré
 St. Denis
 Stewart (Brant)
 Szabo
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Wasylcia-Leis
 Wilfert

Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Pratt
 Proctor
 Proulx
 Richardson
 Rock
 Scott (Fredericton)
 Sgro
 St-Julien
 Stewart (Northumberland)
 Thibeault
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vautour
 Whelan
 Wood—134

Adjournment Debate

PAIRED MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare Motion No. 37 lost.

[English]

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

NAYS

Members

Adams
 Anderson
 Axworthy
 Bakopanos
 Bellemare
 Bertrand
 Blondin-Andrew
 Bonwick
 Bradshaw
 Brown
 Bulte
 Calder
 Caplan
 Casey
 Chan
 Clouthier
 Copps
 Cullen
 Dhaliwal
 Doyle
 Drouin
 Duhamel
 Folco
 Gagliano
 Godfrey
 Goodale
 Grose
 Harb
 Herron
 Ifody
 Jones
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
 Knutson
 Lastewka
 Leung
 Longfield
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Malhi
 Manley
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McDonough
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McWhinney
 Minna
 Muise
 Myers
 O'Reilly
 Paradis
 Patry

Alcock
 Augustine
 Baker
 Béclair
 Bennett
 Blaikie
 Bonin
 Borotsik
 Brison
 Bryden
 Caccia
 Cannis
 Carroll
 Catterall
 Charbonneau
 Collette
 Cotler
 DeVillers
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
 Eggleton
 Fontana
 Gallaway
 Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
 Graham
 Guarnieri
 Hardy
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jordan
 Keyes
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lee
 Lincoln
 MacAulay
 Mahoney
 Maloney
 Marleau
 McCormick
 McGuire
 McLellan (Edmonton West)
 Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
 Mitchell
 Murray
 Nault
 Pagtakhan
 Parrish
 Peric

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

DRUG APPROVAL

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I am up tonight in relation to a question I asked the

Adjournment Debate

Minister of Health in the House in December 1999, just a few short months ago. It was on the drug approval process, the very cumbersome time delayed process that we have in the country. In that question for the minister I was talking specifically of a cancer drug called Rituxan, which has been approved in 40 other countries of the world but not yet in Canada.

• (2015)

In my hand I have a number of letters supporting the approval process of this drug. We have patients in Canada who could use the drug at this very moment, but it is not available to them simply because of the very cumbersome time delay that the drug approval process has to go through at Health Canada.

The drug in question, Rituxan, is what we call an immunotherapeutic monoclonal antibody which has a unique ability to bind itself to cancer cells without the toxic effects that are often associated with other cancer treating drugs.

What is so disturbing about this process is that other countries have had this drug for the last couple of years. I want to go through the 40 some countries that I mentioned previously. Some of the countries that presently have the drug are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the U.S. In total 40 countries can now use this drug to treat patients with non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

The argument could be that we can get the drug under special warrant in Canada, which is absolutely true, but that is a very cumbersome process and a very expensive one. Until that drug is approved by Health Canada no insurance company will cover the its cost. Nor will any health jurisdiction in the country cover it through the medicare system in Canada. In other words, the drug is denied simply because it is not approved. We have to improve upon that process.

We always have to exercise caution in the approval of any drug, but we are talking about a drug that was approved in 40 other jurisdictions. I want to give the minister credit as well because I did speak to him on this privately outside the Chamber in addition to the question that I asked and he has paid some special attention to it.

The information I am now receiving from Health Canada—and we have to be very careful on this because there is no way of saying for sure that this is going to happen—indicates that probably within the next couple of weeks this drug will be approved. I hope this is the case. I am going to give the minister credit for speeding this process along.

The problem is we have to come up with a better way of doing it, realizing that safety always has to be paramount. I want to suggest that we take a very close look at the—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt, but the time is up.

[English]

Mr. Greg Thompson: Madam Speaker, you did not signal me that I had a minute left. Can you give me an extra minute? I want to finish my speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): This is not the rules at this point. The time is over and that is it.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Could I have unanimous consent to finish? I am giving the minister and the government credit. Madam Speaker, members are entitled to a warning when they have a minute left. I want unanimous consent to have a chance to finish my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member knows very well that at this point there cannot be any request for unanimous consent.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to reply on behalf of the Minister of Health to the question from the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest concerning the process for approving drugs, specifically Rituxan.

• (2020)

[English]

Drugs are authorized for sale in Canada once they have successfully gone through the drug review process. This process is the means by which a drug application is reviewed by scientists in the therapeutic products program of Health Canada to assess the safety, efficacy and quality of a drug.

Throughout the process the safety and well-being of Canadians is the paramount concern. Health Canada strives to make significant therapeutic advances available to Canadians as quickly as possible consistent with public safety.

[Translation]

Health Canada's objective is to be competitive internationally with respect to drug review and approval and, during the past five

Adjournment Debate

years, it has cut in half the time needed to review the average presentation. [English]

[English]

Health Canada has been and continues to be committed to ensuring the greatest efficiencies in the drug review process. To do this, the therapeutic product program in consultation with stakeholders is pursuing several initiatives to further streamline the process.

[Translation]

Rituxan is a new drug for the treatment of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. So far, it has not been approved in Canada, but patients can obtain it through the special access program. Practitioners sometimes resort to drugs not approved in Canada for the treatment of serious or life-threatening illnesses, when conventional treatments have been unsuccessful or are not appropriate.

[English]

In such situations the therapeutic products program of Health Canada has a mandate to authorize the sale of these drugs to practitioners. This mandate is administered by the special access program of the TPP. This special program is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am afraid I must interrupt the hon. member as the time is over.

[Translation]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8.22 p.m.)

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