



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 30, 2000

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 30, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

“RESULTS FOR CANADIANS: A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA”

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table on behalf of the government, in both official languages, a document entitled “Results for Canadians: A Management Framework for the Government of Canada”.

* * *

ESTIMATES, PART III

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I table part III of the estimates consisting of 84 departmental reports on plans and priorities.

These documents will be distributed to members of the standing committees to assist in their consideration of the spending authorities sought in part II of the estimates.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 15 petitions.

PETITIONS

BREAST CANCER

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by numerous people from the province of Ontario.

It points out that Canada has the second highest incidence rate of breast cancer in the world, second only to the United States, and that the United States has had mandatory mammography quality assurance standards since October 1994.

• (1010)

Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to enact legislation to establish an independent governing body to develop, implement and enforce uniform and mandatory mammography quality assurance and quality control standards in Canada.

IRAQ

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions this morning. The first is with respect to the issue of economic sanctions on Iraq. It is signed by residents of Nova Scotia.

The petitioners note that the sanctions have resulted in serious shortages of food, clean water and medicine; that water and sanitation systems have collapsed spreading disease; that there have been over one million fatalities according to United Nations estimates, mainly children under the age of five; and that sanctions, even under the oil for food program, continue to cause the deaths of approximately 250 people each and every day according to UNICEF.

Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to end all Canadian support, including military personnel and equipment now involved in the blockade of Iraq, and to ensure that the Canadian government use effective diplomatic pressure to urge the UN to end the economic sanctions against Iraq.

CHINA

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present another petition which is signed by residents of my own constituency of Burnaby—Douglas, as well as others in British Columbia, on the issue of religious freedom in China.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners note that Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese Qi-gong practice for physical and mental health, the practitioners being guided by the principles of truthfulness, compassion and tolerance, striving to become better people and responsible citizens.

They note as well that the Chinese government has conducted a campaign against Falun Gong and its founder. They set out some very serious concerns about abuses taking place with respect to Falun Gong.

Finally, they appeal to parliament to strongly urge the Chinese government to release all arrested Falun Dafa practitioners in China immediately, to lift the ban of Falun Gong practice, to withdraw the international arrest warrant for Mr. Li Hongzhi, and to begin a peaceful resolution through open dialogue.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present which contains the signatures of 2,283 frustrated Canadians who want the government to recognize the work of the Special Joint Committee on Child Custody and Access.

The petitioners request that parliament amend the Divorce Act immediately, taking into account the consideration of the recommendations of the special joint committee, as well as Reform's minority report.

The petitioners are irritated with the ineptness of the Minister of Justice in dealing with the federal Divorce Act and unwillingness to make necessary amendments until 2002.

[Translation]

LABELLING OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by approximately 50 persons in the ridings of Champlain and of Saint-Maurice, the riding of the Prime Minister. This is another in the series of petitions already presented relating to genetically modified organisms.

These citizens are calling upon parliament to promptly pass legislation making it mandatory to label all foods that are wholly or partially genetically modified.

[English]

IRAQ

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many citizens of the Peterborough area who are concerned about the sanctions against Iraq.

The petitioners point out that there have been enormous civilian casualties, that the children have suffered since Desert Storm

because of the sanctions, and that oil is one source of revenue for Iraq which would help children.

They know that Canada through humanitarian efforts is helping the children in Iraq, but they call upon the Parliament of Canada to demand the immediate cessation of sanctions against Iraq and substantial support for civilians, particularly children, in the country of Iraq.

[Translation]

LABELLING OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting, in both official languages, two petitions from residents of my riding asking parliament to promptly pass legislation making it mandatory to label all foods that are wholly or partially genetically modified.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a supplementary answer for Question No. 10. If that answer could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 10—**Mr. Gilles Bernier:**

With respect to the Québec ministerial tour taken by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, the Minister of National Revenue, the President of the Treasury Board, the Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development) and the Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) from September 22 to 24, 1999, could the government advise the House of the costs of this trip including: transportation to, from and during the ministerial tour, accommodations, communications, meals, entertainment and alcoholic beverages for each of the ministers, their support staff and departmental staff?

(Return tabled)

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1015)

POINTS OF ORDER

USE OF PROPS

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, right after the voting, my colleague, the whip of the New Democratic Party, raised a point of order about my friend from Calgary West who, when rising to vote, held up sign which had a message on it. In terms of the rules of the House of Commons, that is not really appropriate.

What the whip of our party wanted to do, was to have you rule on whether or not that was appropriate, or whether or not that vote should be counted and what the future behaviour should be in the House. If that is permitted for one member, then other members should feel free to do the same thing.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, no more loan guarantees. I opposed the bill. I wanted everyone to know why I opposed it. I am sure there are some value differences among myself and members of the New Democratic Party. If I had been holding up a sign which said soak the rich, it probably would have been something the NDP would have been okay with.

I do not think there is sufficient demand for the ships to be built. Therefore, the loan guarantees would make little economic sense. It is not my fault that there are politics when it comes to right and left, but in economics there is right and there is wrong.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair regards the using of props in the House with the utmost seriousness. It has been consistent practice in the House for many years to enforce the rule that members may not use props. Occasionally, members are able to get away with it because either it is not noticed or sometimes the member uses it before the Chair can intervene, not realizing it is about to happen.

I must say to the hon. member for Calgary West, who gave what I regard as a wholly insufficient explanation of his conduct, that this problem has arisen before. When I have personally been in the chair I have had to deal with the fact that he has held up signs, in particular during the course of voting in the House.

As the hon. member and all hon. members know, points of order are generally not permitted during voting. It is for that reason that the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst was not permitted to pursue the matter last evening. When the voting was complete, the hon. member for Calgary West had left the House, so I directed the matter to stand over.

Last night was the second time I personally warned the hon. member and I know that one of the other occupants of the chair has

Government Orders

had this difficulty. It is not something which the Chair can lightly tolerate because if one member, as the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has said, can hold up a sign, so can other members. In my view, it is entirely inappropriate and out of place in the House. We are here to carry on a legislative function, not an advertising function. If the hon. member wishes to make his views known on a bill, he can do so by participating in debate, by making a speech or by putting a question or making a comment on another hon. member's speech. I invite him to do that if he wishes his views to be known. Or, better still, he could put it in his householder, which he is allowed to do four times a year in his constituency.

The Chair will say that if members persist in using signs during voting or some other demonstration of that kind which is inappropriate in the House, the Chair will have no reluctance in directing the clerk to strike the hon. member's name from the list of those who have voted and continue to strike it if the conduct persists and, if necessary, take further measures.

I hope that it will not be necessary to revisit this issue. In the Chair's view, it is entirely inappropriate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

BILL C-6—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That in relation 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 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, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the stage of consideration of Senate amendments to the bill and, fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the allotted day of the consideration of the said stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

• (1020)

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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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.

• (1105)

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

*(Division No. 1258)***YEAS**

Members

Alcock	Anderson
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Axworthy
Baker	Bakopanos
Barnes	Bélaïr
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Charbonneau	Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Cloutier	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Cullen	DeVillers
Dhaliwal	Discepola
Drouin	Duhamel
Easter	Eggleton
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Fry
Gagliano	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)	Grose
Guarnieri	Harb
Harvard	Hubbard
Ianno	Iftody
Jennings	Jordan
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lastewka	Lee
Leung	Limoges
Longfield	MacAulay
Mahoney	Malhi
Manley	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Matthews
McCormick	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
McTeague	McWhinney
Mifflin	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell	Murray
Myers	Nault
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney

Pillitteri	Pratt
Proud	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Reed	Richardson
Robillard	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Sekora
Serré	Sgro
Shepherd	Speller
St. Denis	St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Szabo	Telegdi
Thibeault	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Volpe	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood—130

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Alarie
Anders	Asselin
Bailey	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bergeron
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Brien
Borotsik	Cadman
Brison	Chatters
Cardin	Dalphond-Guiral
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	Debien
de Savoye	Desrochers
Desjarlais	Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Dockrill	Dumas
Duceppe	Earle
Duncan	Epp
Elley	Gagnon
Forseth	Gilmour
Gauthier	Goldring
Girard-Bujold	Grey (Edmonton North)
Grewal	Guay
Grunding	Harvey
Guimond	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hill (Macleod)	Hoeppner
Hilstrom	Johnston
Jaffer	Konrad
Keddy (South Shore)	Laurin
Lalonde	Lill
Lebel	Lowther
Loubier	Marceau
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mark
Marchand	Mayfield
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Ménard
McDonough	Meredith
Mercier	Morrison
Mills (Red Deer)	Nystrom
Muise	Pankiw
Obhrai	Price
Perron	Ritz
Proctor	Rocheleau
Robinson	Schmidt
Sauvageau	Stinson
Solberg	Strahl
Stoffer	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Turp
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Wasylycia-Leis
Vellacott	White (North Vancouver) —93
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	

PAIRED MEMBERS

Copp

Nunziata

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

• (1110)

[*English*]

SECOND READING AND CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

The House resumed from February 14 consideration of the motion in relation to the 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 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. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place between all parties and pursuant to Standing Order 45(7), I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on the consideration of Senate amendments to Bill C-6, all recorded divisions to dispose of the said motion be deemed requested and deferred until the end of Government Orders on Tuesday, April 4.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the chief whip have unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words about Bill C-6 dealing with electronic commerce that is before the House.

As we all know the bill we are dealing with today has already passed third reading in the House of Commons and our party voted in favour of it at third reading stage. We think it is the right way to go.

The bill is supported by a number of consumer groups and by a number of other groups and agencies around the country, such as the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and so on. It is a bill that is seen as going in the right direction. It sets out a legal framework for electronic commerce, commerce on the Internet, commerce online in this country and it deals with such issues as privacy and security for individuals who are dealing on the Internet.

The reason this bill is back again before the House is because the Senate has dealt with this particular legislation and has submitted amendments to the bill, in particular one dealing with medical records. This amendment is actually a good amendment that we support in terms of medical records being part of this legislation. That is the right way to go.

I find that very difficult to say because I do not think in principle that the Senate should be amending any legislation that comes out of the House of Commons for the very simple reason that the Senate is not elected, it is not democratic and it is not accountable to anyone. The Senate is an appointed body made up of cronies and friends of the Prime Minister of Canada. Therefore, I do not feel very comfortable supporting anything that the Senate has done, even if it is a good amendment to this bill. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you feel the same way because you are a true Democrat.

It is very unfortunate that we have in this country a legislative body that is not elected, a legislative body that is appointed and a legislative body that will spend \$60 million in the next fiscal year and not be accountable to anyone in the country, in the House or anywhere as to how it will spend that money. It was with those caveats and those reservations that I rose to support this amendment that is before the House today.

After seven years in office, the Liberal Party, which at one time was very critical of an unelected Senate, is now very silent on the Senate. Every time the Senate wants an increase in its estimates, the Liberals just get up and support the estimates of the Senate. I see the member for Saint Boniface who is a cabinet minister. I am sure that at one time he would have stood up and complained about a legislative body in this country that is appointed.

The Senate is not an ordinary commission like the Canadian Wheat Board, the CRTC, the Canadian Transportation Commission or what have you. It is a legislative body that can make legislative change without accountability. It is a throw back to the last century, a throw back to the old British system, a system we should be getting rid of by abolishing the Senate.

I think my good friend from Calgary West will probably rise in this debate a few minutes from now and say many similar things about the Senate and about it initiating amendments and legislation. Maybe the member for Saskatoon-Humboldt will do the same thing.

• (1115)

I look forward to those speeches. I see that they are getting edgy and agitated. They are ready to get to their feet to say a few words about the legislation before the House today.

That being said, we support the amendment and we support the bill. Electronic commerce is becoming a more important part of our country and the world. We have evolved from an agricultural

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society into an industrial society. We are now in the so-called post-industrial society, or the technical age, the online age, the digital age, however one wants to put it, and it is growing by leaps and bounds.

Currently it is still only a very small part of our economy. Online commerce is estimated to result in the sale of goods and services of about \$3 billion in the year 2000. That is less than 1% of the \$600 billion of goods and services that will be purchased by Canadian consumers in 2000. That is a small amount proportionately but that amount is going to grow very rapidly in the days, weeks and years ahead. It is very important to have legislation that deals with electronic commerce.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would be very interested in that the first province to pass legislation to deal with electronic commerce was Saskatchewan. The justice minister, Chris Axworthy dealt with it. When Mr. Axworthy was a member of the House of Commons he sat right behind the member from Burnaby and I. He was very concerned about electronic commerce, about protecting privacy and providing security for people who used the Internet for the purchase of goods and services. He has become the first minister to introduce legislation that passed a legislative body. Once again it is another first for the Government of Saskatchewan.

When looking at electronic commerce one is reminded that the world is getting smaller. Indeed we are living in a global society. The time has come to not only deal with security and privacy issues around electronic commerce but also to deal with a new vision about the global society we are now living in.

One thing which is obvious is that commerce has become globalized. Big corporations and companies have globalized. On the other side of the ledger a lot of the people's organizations have not globalized. For example there are no international standards for the environment, labour issues or social programs.

In the world of tomorrow many of the things that used to be done by the nation-state are going to be done at the international level. That is something which is very important. I am sure the member for Calgary West would like to say a few words about that when he rises to speak in a few minutes.

That brings me to the whole issue of the Tobin tax. This House made a step in the right direction a year ago March 23 when it endorsed by a vote of 164 to 83 the idea of a so-called Tobin tax. This is a small tax on the speculation of currency in order to bring some order to currency rates and values around the world. The proceeds would be used to build up a development fund to help the third world, to help clean up the environment, to help get rid of land mines and to do other useful things for human beings around the globe.

There was overwhelming support in that vote. It was my private member's motion that the House voted on. There was overwhelm-

ing support from the government, from all the NDP members present, from one of the Conservatives, from a couple of Reformers and about a dozen or so members of the Bloc Quebecois. Even though the motion was opposed overwhelmingly by the Reformers and the Conservatives it still had supporters in the Reform Party and the Conservative Party. It shows that it is a growing issue around the world, that we have to bring some order and some regulation to the international marketplace on behalf of the common good globally.

Now that parliament has expressed itself, it is important that the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and other ministers and members of parliament in international forums express and advocate the will of parliament.

I am sure as true democrats even members of the Reform Party who talk about reflecting grassroots and reflecting the people of this country, when they talk internationally would advocate the will of parliament and advocate the Tobin tax. I look forward to hearing the member for Calgary West tell us how he has been advocating the Tobin tax or a small tax on the speculation of international currency, as he talks to people around the world.

• (1120)

That is the expression and the will of parliament. This body spoke overwhelmingly by a margin of two to one that we needed a small tax on currency speculation. Maybe it will be 0.1% or a \$1 per \$1,000 to cool down the hot money around the world and to develop an international fund to help deal with some of the important development issues we are faced with around the globe today.

These are the issues of the tomorrow. These are the issues we are going to have to deal with. These are the issues the churches around the world are concerned with. These are the issues young people are concerned with. These issues are going to have to be solved if we are going to have a globe where people live in harmony and peace. These are reasons the bill before the House is a positive one and one that is on the right foot and which is going in the right direction.

As I said earlier, the leadership on this issue came from the Saskatchewan government. It was the first legislature in the country to pass a bill providing a legal framework for electronic commerce. That will be followed very closely by the House of Commons passing a bill to protect the privacy and security of people who use electronic commerce. Let us use this debate to get into other international issues that are important for the development of humankind.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice that the hon. member made reference to the fact that the bill has been amended by the unelected and appointed Senate. It is a Senate that the Prime Minister made

references to in his 1990 leadership bid. He said he would do what he could to change the Senate. He said he wanted to see an elected Senate too. He even said it in Calgary.

The province of Alberta will have a resignation of a Senate seat on March 31. Bert Brown received more votes than any other federal politician in Canadian history and was duly elected by the people of Alberta in the second ever Senate election in the country. I wonder if the hon. member figures that Bert Brown would like to receive his seat in the Senate pending this whole vote. What exactly are the hon. member's thoughts on this whole idea of an unelected appointed chamber that is totally out of touch with what everyday Canadians want?

The hon. member and I have tried to draw representatives before the procedure and House affairs committee to hold the Senate accountable for its egregious increases which are well above and beyond the public service, the Government of Canada, the parliament and the House of Commons. I would like his perspective on the egregious spending with regard to the Senate and its total lack of accountability.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member for Calgary West that there has been reckless spending in terms of the other house. I do not have my estimates with me but my recollection is its estimates for the coming year will see the Senate budget go up by 21% or 25%. That is much higher than any other government department or agency I am aware of. It does this without being accountable to anyone.

A year or so ago a few of us, including the member who just spoke, tried to get the chair of the Senate internal economy committee to come before the relevant House of Commons committee to justify its estimates. After all, departments such as agriculture, industry, HRDC or whatever have to. Of course, the senator refused. He said they were not accountable to anybody in the House of Commons. It is not right or proper that the Senate can get this increase in funding without being accountable. I agree with the member on that.

Where the member and I disagree is that the member wants to reform and elect the Senate and I want to abolish the Senate. Public opinion today is split roughly 50:50 between those who want to abolish the Senate and those who want to reform it. That debate should continue. In the last few years public opinion has been shifting more and more toward the abolition side after having gone toward the reform side before. It is a debate well worth pursuing.

• (1125)

The one thing we do agree on is that the existing Senate should go. All the polling I have seen shows that about 5% of the people in the country support the existing Senate. Five per cent would be the senators, their families, a few friends, a few others and not many more.

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The member asked me about Bert Brown. I am sure Bert Brown would like to take a seat in the Senate. Why would he not? But that is the wrong way to go because I do not think the place should be reformed and elected. It should be abolished. I am also concerned about the Alberta solution, about the provincial government having elections for the Senate under the present powers and composition of the Senate.

For example, New Brunswick has ten senators and Alberta and B.C. have only six each. If we started electing senators under the present structure and representation in the Senate, what would happen if Ontario and Quebec started to do the same thing? They each have 24 senators. All of a sudden we would be locked into a Senate that is legitimate because its members are elected and Ontario would have 24 senators and Alberta, Saskatchewan, B.C. and Manitoba would have only six each.

We would have a very unfair Senate locked permanently into our structure. That Senate would be elected. Therefore it would be more difficult to change and more difficult to get rid of it because it would have been legitimized by virtue that those people were elected.

If we followed the Alberta solution the existing Senate powers would also be legitimized. Most people do not realize that the Senate has almost as many powers as the House of Commons under the constitution. It does not use them because senators are appointed and are not legitimate. If we were to elect them under the present powers we would have two very strong Houses. We would invite gridlock between the two Houses. Also the Senate would be very unequal in terms of its representation in that New Brunswick with about 600,000 people gets ten senators and British Columbia with three million plus people gets only six senators.

With respect, that is the danger of what Mr. Klein is doing in Alberta in trying to elect senators under the present representation and the present powers. That is almost anti Saskatchewan, anti Albertan in nature because of the population shifts.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in hearing the member opposite speak about Bill C-6 and its importance and the kind of information protection that is available as a result of the leadership shown by our government in this all important area.

I wanted to remind him in case he did not know, because I heard him go on at length, he and the member opposite from the party whose name I forget right now, I think it is the alliance and before that it was CCRAP and before that it was the Reform Party, were going on with respect to—

Mr. Jim Pankiw: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the benefit of the member opposite, we are the Canadian Alliance.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member is quite correct. The party is known as the Canadian Alliance.

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Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I understand that is so at this point in time. I guess we will see what the courts say with respect to Mr. Kingsley's ruling as well as the higher court. We will see where that goes.

In any event I wanted to point out on this very important bill that the Senate plays a very important role. It has a recommendation where the health sector will be exempted somewhat for the next little while. Instead of kicking in on January 2001, because of the Senate's position, the health sector will comply a year later than that. As chairman of the all-party health committee I can say this is very important. It is most important that the Senate would play such a useful role in this very interesting debate.

I found most interesting that the member for Calgary West in his comments talked about the Senate. I remember not so long ago that the party opposite, whatever its name is, said it would bring a fresh start to parliament. They are the people who during—

Mr. Philip Mayfield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member continues to attempt to make points but the Speaker of the House has indicated that in this Chamber our party will be known as the Canadian Alliance. I would expect that kind of respect.

• (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member is trying to be respectful, but perhaps he is confused. The hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington knows this is the Canadian Alliance and I know he will try to remember to use that name.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. Would it be in order for you to ask the member if in fact he does know that we are the Canadian Alliance?

The Deputy Speaker: It is not for the Speaker to ask questions. I think the point has been made.

I would ask the hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington to be brief because we have to give some time to the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle to reply.

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and all Canadians that it is not I who is confused but those members opposite. They do not seem to know quite where they are going on this important matter.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member opposite is still alleging that he does not know the name of our party and, as a result, says that he is confused. I think that you need to straighten him out one more time.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member has done that very nicely.

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, they are certainly thin-skinned.

The member for Calgary West was part of the nonsense when Senator Thompson was in Mexico. They marched with sombreros in these hallowed halls of parliament, with burrito juice and all manner of things running on to the floor of this great democracy. He was part of that. He was part of denigrating this great Parliament of Canada. This is from the people who were going to bring a fresh start, a new way of doing business to parliament. It is unbelievable.

Where was the leader from Calgary Southwest when we voted on Nisga'a and when we voted on the clarity bill? He was on the beaches of Mexico.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I know the hon. member is trying to be helpful, but the comments and questions are to be directed to the speech of the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, who was not part of that march. The comments seem to be going around a bit. Perhaps we could have a quick question and then a quick response from the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member of the NDP this. He talked about the Senate. Did he agree with the member for Calgary West, who, when Senator Keon from the heart institute found himself in a little trouble, demanded the resignation of Senator Keon? I was at the heart institute not so long ago as the chair of the Standing Committee on Health. Did the hon. member agree with that member?

I also want to ask him whether he agrees with me that those people opposite were strangely silent when their own member from Crowfoot found himself in some trouble. Why is it that those people opposite would be silent on one—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the question has gone on long enough.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, if I could try to respond to the member across the way, I do not comment on individuals in the other place.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member from Regina—Qu'Appelle has the floor.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I did not comment on Senator Keon. He is a brilliant heart surgeon. I do not attack individuals in terms of their personal performance in either place.

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What I attack is the fact that we have an institution which is not elected, not democratic and not accountable to the people of this country, which is the institution of the Senate. I wish the hon. member would join us in that crusade.

Some 95% of the people of the country do not support the existing Senate. He should ask his constituents how they feel about it. They would tell him in no uncertain terms that they do not support the unelected Senate down the hall. It is not a democratic body. If he was reflecting the views of the people of Welland he would say that in the House of Commons.

I challenge him to go out on the main street of Welland and ask the first 10 people he sees whether they support the existing unelected Senate. I would be surprised if anybody said yes. They either want the Senate to be abolished or they want the Senate to be reformed. They do not support the existing house. The member should know that if he is in touch with his own constituents.

• (1135)

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to discuss the amendments to Bill C-6, the electronic commerce legislation.

There is significant opportunity facing Canadians at this juncture as we look forward to a brave new century. In my opinion we will see the greatest levels of opportunities available to Canadians in this bold new interconnected world that we have ever seen. The changes occurring globally, in terms of technological advances relative to the Internet, will rival those of any technological developments in the history of mankind. They will make other technological developments, including the railway, the airplane and even the telephone, pale in comparison.

These are the types of challenges and opportunities that we face as individuals in Canada, which is increasingly a very connected country. It is a connected country largely based on the interests and innovation of individual Canadians and, in many ways, despite the continued malaise, inattention and efforts by the government to hinder and impede technological adaptation and opportunity for Canadians with new vehicles such as the Internet.

I was appalled at the recent national Liberal convention, which I attended as an observer for my party. I also was a commentator for CBC and CTV. I was there for the weekend and I felt a bit like an undercover rabbi at a PLO conference.

It was an interesting experience, to say the least, but the fact is that what I learned disappointed me about the leadership of the Liberal Party at this time. Frankly, I had expected that the Prime Minister would have had a better idea of where the world was going in terms of some of these new technologies.

On Friday night the leader of the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister—

Mr. Bob Speller: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if the hon. member could tell us the relevance of this matter to the bill before the House. He is talking about a party convention that he, no doubt, was very pleased to attend, but what relevance does that have to the business which is before the House?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member is quite correct. When I took the chair I had to ask the Deputy Speaker what we were debating because none of the debate seemed to be relevant to the bill at hand. Therefore, I would ask hon. members to concern themselves with the relevancy of their words.

Mr. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his typically erudite suggestion that I get to the point on this issue, and I shall.

The point I was making was that on the Friday night of the convention the Prime Minister of Canada referred to this brave new economy in a way which disturbed me. He referred to e-commerce as a problem. He said that we have to deal with the problem of e-commerce; not as an opportunity, but as a problem; not in terms of how the Government of Canada can enable Canadians to access the levers of this brave new world and this brave new economy, but how we can deal with the problem of e-commerce.

This legislation, to a certain extent, indicates that the government is in fact more capable of dealing with regulations and their implementation than it is with the other part of e-commerce, and that is dealing with its opportunities and reducing the intrinsic impediments which hold back Canadian individuals and companies from full participation and success in an increasingly interconnected, digital highway globally.

• (1140)

The government is very slow to respond to some of the tax issues which continue to hold back Canadians in terms of our global competitiveness, but is quick to respond on the regulatory side. I think that speaks volumes about a government that is far too quick to regulate and far too slow to bring down the barriers to unimpeded commerce and greater levels of opportunity.

The legislation addresses some important issues relative to personal privacy in Canada on the Internet. The battle between privacy and protection is an ongoing battle with regard to e-commerce on the Internet. These issues have partially been addressed by the government. I believe that the amendments from the other place were appropriate and helpful. Again the Senate has provided a level of constructive intervention and benefit to the legislation of the House.

It seems that time and time again we see this kind of constructive interaction between both houses. We need to be reminded that there

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is a reason for the current structure and for the nature of the Senate. Sometimes when I am discussing issues of this importance with members of the upper house I am reminded of the incredible level of knowledge and expertise that we have in that other place to deal with some of these increasingly complicated issues, whether we are dealing with e-commerce or more traditional issues, such as finance. I believe that in many ways the Senate banking committee has a significantly greater level of expertise than the House of Commons finance committee. I would argue that members of the Senate banking committee, by and large, have forgotten more about finance than members of the House of Commons finance committee know. I speak as a member of that committee and it is just a reflection on the high quality of membership we have on some of the committees in the other place.

The onus with this legislation is on the government to utilize laws and regulations to protect the rights and privileges of consumers. We support this legislation and we support these amendments, but I see some concerns about the government's efforts on an ongoing basis to regulate but not to recognize the opportunities.

One Canadian success story of an e-commerce Internet company was Zero-Knowledge, which recently raised a significant amount of money and is pursuing an IPO opportunity in the U.S. Its business is Internet privacy.

When we look at Internet privacy, if it can be provided increasingly by private sector entities like Zero-Knowledge, I would urge the government, the ministry of industry and the industry committee to study some of these private sector alternatives. There does not always have to be a heavy level of regulatory burden to achieve some of these privacy or protection ends. Sometimes companies like Zero-Knowledge, a Canadian success story, can help provide the tools to consumers.

The issue regarding health information is particularly important as we see companies like Healthion and Dr. Koop.com involved, as we see the continued integration of e-health vehicles with hospitals and, as time goes by, the technologies that will provide effectively the ability for health professionals to diagnose and treat illness increasingly via media, including the Internet.

In my home province of Nova Scotia there are start-up companies that are developing increasing levels of expertise in these areas, companies like Techknowledge and Caduceus. They are developing technologies that will enable health care professionals to provide a greater level of comprehensive service to patients, which ultimately will be more cost effective.

• (1145)

When we are dealing with health care information clearly privacy issues are very important. Again I urge the government to investigate all private sector opportunities or vehicles to protect

privacy as opposed to always going the government regulatory approach.

When we are dealing with the issues before us relative to e-commerce we have to keep in mind a few basic principles. First, e-commerce and the Internet are based at this juncture on private sector leadership. There should be a minimalist government role and we should avoid unnecessary restrictions. Privacy is important. We have acknowledged that some private sector entities provide products which can be used to establish privacy.

In the area of e-commerce and Internet in general we have some real Canadian success stories with bid.com and some of the enabling technologies. There is a company now in Saint John, New Brunswick, called iMagicTV, which is developing technology to transmit television signals through traditional copper wires. I believe the technology has already been rolled out in parts of New Brunswick and will be in Halifax shortly. It will revolutionize and be a very commercializeable initiative.

Some activities are happening on our financial markets, for instance, with the automation of our financial markets, whether it is with E-TRADE Canada, a Canadian entity, or e-commerce friendly investment banking such as Yorkton Securities in Canada or Wit Capital in the U.S.

We have seen great strides made in terms of venture capital for e-commerce in Canada, whether it is Digital Harbour or EcomPark that are providing the type of seed money required by Internet entrepreneurs to achieve their next step and ultimately, hopefully, public offerings. In that light we see a new CDNX, which I believe will emerge as Canada's NASDAQ north.

All these opportunities are existing now and are helping to spawn some of Canada's technology stars, whether it is Leitch Technology or Versus Technology. Whether it is a more traditional or technological leader like Nortel and JDS Uniphase, all these great things are happening because we are an innovative people. We have innovative individuals and innovative companies across Canada that are doing amazing, interesting and successful things.

Unfortunately I am concerned that we are not being led by an innovative government. Again, as I mentioned earlier, I was surprised to hear the Prime Minister refer to e-commerce as a problem in a way that did not seem to recognize from his perspective that in fact e-commerce represents more of an opportunity.

If we look at the degree to which the government is embracing some of the fundamentals of the new economy, particularly relative to tax issues, I think we can see that we are falling behind other countries.

Members opposite may look at the recent budget and say that there has been some tax reduction. However, before the recent

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budget Canada had the highest personal income taxes in the G-7 and the second highest corporate taxes in the OECD. After the budget Canadians will still have the highest personal income taxes in the G-7. After full implementation of these tax measures over a five year period, Canadians will have the fourth highest corporate taxes in the OECD. This is assuming that none of the other 31 countries reduce their corporate taxes when in fact 27 of them already have stated plans to reduce their corporate tax levels.

Members opposite may say that we are heading in the right direction. However a tortoise heading in the right direction on the autobahn will still be road kill. In the global environment and on the interconnected digital highway of the global environment we cannot afford to be a nanosecond behind.

• (1150)

My concern is that as other countries make these gigantic leaps we continue to take these baby steps in Canada. This incrementalist, caretaker, day to day poll driven style of government is holding back Canada at a time when other governments are being increasingly innovative, governments like Ireland, for instance.

Ireland has enjoyed over the past 10 years a 92% increase in GDP per capita. I believe the U.S. has enjoyed about a 20% increase in GDP per capita and I think the U.K. has been in the same ballpark. Canada has had during that same period a 5% increase in GDP per capita.

In the 1990s Canadians have seen their personal disposable incomes drop by about 8% during a time when Americans have seen a 10% increase. Again, wealth being a relative thing, as individuals in other countries get richer we get poorer in Canada.

These phenomena are reflected in the Canadian dollar. Since 1993 the Canadian dollar has lost almost 10 cents of value under this government. Every time we see a drop in the Canadian dollar it is a reduction in the standard of living of Canadians.

All these things point to a greater issue: the inability of the government to embrace the new economies and to embrace the opportunities, not just the challenges or the problems of the new economies, of the new economy and to actually present the types of policies that will reduce the impediments to Canadians for full participation and success in that economy.

While there are some difficulties in relating the Irish example to Canada as a whole, there are some significant opportunities in making a direct comparison of what is capable in Atlantic Canada with the Ireland example. We could look at what we would do by reducing corporate taxes and even capital gains taxes, specifically in Atlantic Canada, and perhaps adjusting over a period of time our current system of equalization, which actually provides impediments and barriers and bootstraps individual provinces on the recipient end. These are some of the things we need to be looking at.

With the Internet and with e-commerce, borders are less relevant now. This is a challenge. It seems there is almost a decline in the role of governments in people's lives as the Internet and other vehicles connect people individually. This is both positive and negative.

It is positive from the perspective that as individual citizens are connected, even from a social perspective, there will be more difficulty for countries or for leadership in countries to wage war on each other. It will be increasingly difficult to convince people based on ethnicity or language that they do not like other people if they are already communicating with them via the Internet.

It will be increasingly difficult for the Milosevics of the world, the Karadzics and the Tudjman type leaders in the former Yugoslavia to wage war on each other as the citizenry is empowered and connected.

Let us not always talk of the Internet and e-commerce as problems. Let us talk about the brave new world that is available. Let us talk about the free market working most efficiently in the history of the free world with individuals, regardless of borders, having access to the same information, immediate price flexibility, and the ability to trade based on that information immediately. It is a very exciting time.

While I recognize that the legislation is a step in the right direction on the regulatory side, I wish the government would be more responsive on the other side, the opportunity side of e-commerce, as opposed to always dealing with what it perceives to be the problem of e-commerce. If we actually get out of the way I expect Canada can participate and succeed globally in this exciting new world.

• (1155)

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member opposite. He had some interesting points to make, at least he thought in his own mind he did.

I want to comment briefly on the fact that it was our Prime Minister who in October 1998 first announced this very important initiative. From there it was developed over the course of time, ultimately came to the House and then went to the Senate. I was somewhat pleased the member indicated that the Senate had a role to play. I think we all know that in fact is the case and rightfully so in terms of the recommendations it has made, especially on the health side. As chairman of the all party Standing Committee on Health I was very pleased that it did so.

I was interested in the member's comment that somehow the government was holding back Canada in this area. I thought at the time that if anyone was holding back Canada today it was Mr.

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Clark. Mr. Clark is the leader of the Conservative Party. When it came to Bill C-20, the clarity bill, where was Mr. Clark? Why was he not standing up for Canada? He was nowhere to be seen. Why does he not stand up for Canada on this all important issue?

When it comes to the whole issue of health care in Alberta and Mr. Klein's bill-11, where is Mr. Clark? Mr. Clark is siding with Mr. Klein and talking about the importance of for profit private health care in Canada. He should be ashamed. It is not this side of the House that is holding back Canada. It is that side and Mr. Clark in particular.

Could the hon. member comment on some matters with respect to Bill C-6? Could he comment on the role of the privacy commissioner and whether or not he thinks the provisions contained in Bill C-6 vis-à-vis the privacy commissioner is an appropriate check and balance for this all important privacy bill? Does he agree that the one time five year review is of importance and necessary based on the proceedings of the House and what Canadians wherever they live in this great country of ours expect, demand and otherwise want?

I would be interested in listening to the hon. member's comments on the one time review as well as the privacy commissioner's role.

Mr. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, as always I appreciate the hon. member's non-partisan and constructive comments. I would like to address his initial comments on my party's position on Bill C-20 and that of our leader, Mr. Clark.

The fact is that the Right Hon. Joe Clark does not need to take lessons on national unity issues from some young pup in the backbenches of the Liberal government. The near toxic level of arrogance that emanates from that side of the House is encouraging to members on this side of the House because it indicates that great change is coming.

Preceding great change and the decline of any entity, whether it is a society or in this case a government, there is always a near toxic level of arrogance: people are convinced that what they are doing is right because they are doing it. I am pleased to see that developing and would suggest it is almost an overdeveloped arrogance gland on that side of the House which will precede great opportunities for this side.

When Mr. Charest was leader of our party and there was an opening in the provincial leadership of the Quebec Liberal Party, the federalist party in Quebec, not one member on that side of the House could muster up enough leadership ability to go into Quebec and lead the federalists. Where did they have to go? They had to go to the Progressive Conservative Party because we had more abilities and credibility with Jean Charest to lead the Quebec Liberals than that party over there with its 160-odd members and I mean 160 odd members.

• (1200)

Beyond that, in my opinion the best federalist positions in Ottawa were the ones that helped Jean Charest become the next premier of Quebec. That is the most important and commonsensical approach to this. We need to ensure and work with the top federalist in Quebec and that is Jean Charest. I believe Bill C-20 continues to emasculate the provincial leadership in the Quebec Liberal Party. It continues to attack our federalist partners in Quebec and undermines the efforts of Jean Charest to succeed as the next premier of Quebec. Instead of those people focusing on short term poll-driven pragmatism, they should be focused on leadership that keeps Canada together and not anti-Quebec rhetoric that divides Canadians and hurts Canada.

The second point relates to the Klein government's initiative on health care. The Klein initiative is being demonized by the Liberals opposite. They are referring to it as two tier health care because either they do not understand or they are intentionally misleading Canadians about the intentions of the Alberta government's legislation on health care. I hope the Liberals are not trying to intentionally mislead Canadians by demonizing what is being done there. I hope they are not trying to throw some label on it as being anti-American.

As members are aware, patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels. When these individuals talk about an Americanized health care system as being negative, they should take a look at the Canadian health care system right now and what they have done to it over the past several years. This government and this Prime Minister have been the Dr. Kevorkians of the Canadian health care system. They have done everything they can to euthanize the Canadian health care system. At the same time, these pompous, arrogant Liberal individuals, who are pounding their chests like Tarzan and walking and strutting around Ottawa like roosters so proud of what they have done with health care, have in fact decimated health care.

For them to try to operate some type of policy of brinkmanship and standing up to the provinces, whether it is Ralph Klein or the province of Quebec or any other province that is trying to innovatively approach some of these complex issues that their government has put in front of them, is absolutely ridiculous, rhetoric driven and dangerous for Canada.

I think the sooner we get these guys out and solid Progressive Conservatives in, the better for all Canadians.

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the member by saying shame on him and his party for referring to the Prime Minister and the government as being the Dr. Kevorkians. Members of his party cannot even make up their mind how to vote on the clarity bill. They flip-flop every day.

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The Kevorkians are those Conservatives, those Brian Mulroneys, those Kim Campbells and those Jean Charests who could not even balance a budget in nine years. They had that opportunity. They left us a country that was sadly described as almost a third world banana republic. Today, I can look at the member in the face and say that we are a country that stands above the rest.

I was in Germany and the finance minister said “What a miracle, how you guys turned things around”. That is what this government has done for this country. It has brought in surpluses, balanced budgets, employment and dignity to the household. Yes, we are trying to turn around and rebuild that health system that they initially began to destroy.

Mr. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his softball question. I assume he was trying to help me and not hinder me with that kind of light and fluffy intervention.

The fact is that the previous Progressive Conservative government, the Mulroneys, reduced the deficit as a percentage of GDP from 9% in 1984 to about 5% when it left office. What the Mulroneys inherited was a huge problem, in that it was like that old country and western song “give me forty acres and I will turn this rig around”. It took nine years just to slow down the velocity that Canada was heading in and in the wrong direction.

• (1205)

During that period not only did the government reduce the deficit as a percentage of GDP, but the government also implemented some of the most important and visionary structural changes to the Canadian economy in the last 50 years, including free trade, the GST and deregulation of financial services, transportation and energy. These were policies that recognized where Canada needed to be in the 21st century.

I wish I had an opportunity to ask the hon. member what his position was on free trade and on the GST. I believe, and correct me if I am wrong, that the hon. member was, as were most of the Liberal members opposite, vociferously opposed to some of those initiatives.

I would ask all members of the House, particularly those opposite, to recall their intransigence in opposition to some of those visionary changes. Today *The Economist* magazine is saying that it was those structural changes by the previous government that were responsible for the elimination of the deficit in Canada. It was not the pontificating Liberals on the other side of the House, but those in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry, time is up.

Before we get to the next orator, I want to remind all members, because I am sure other members are just as confused as your Speaker at the moment, that we are really on Bill C-6 moved by the Minister of Industry, the personal information protection and

electronic documents act. I happen to have a copy of the Senate amendments that we are debating if anyone is even in the least interested.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I am very interested in this very important Bill C-6. As chairman of the health committee I was very interested in the amendments that the Senate recommended with respect to this all important area as it relates to privacy and other matters in our very globalized and commercialized area.

I want to say however to the member for Kings—Hants, who made comments with respect to Dr. Kevorkian, euthanasia and other matters, that it is far better we talk about those kinds of issues than the slow death of the Mulroneys era and who and what they represented in terms of the strangulation of our great country.

I also want to point out to him that I was very pleased to be called “a young pup” by him; far better a young pup than an old dog. The Conservatives are nothing under Joe Clark than an old dog with no teeth. I can assure the House that dog will not hunt.

I do want to point out that Bill C-6 is a very important bill. It was first announced by the Prime Minister in October 1998 and it underscores a commitment by the Government of Canada to bring forward legislation of importance to all Canadians wherever they live in our great country. I want to point out by way of background information that approximately 80% of Canadians think that the government has a key and lead role in this all important area. It is important to note that—

Mr. Philip Mayfield: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did not major in mathematics but I cannot count anywhere near 20 people let alone 20 Liberals listening to this wonderful speech. I think it would be a good idea if this gentleman's colleagues were here to listen to what he has to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin has called quorum.

And the count having been taken:

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

• (1215)

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have quorum.

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, that took some time but I think it was worth waiting to hear my speech. I appreciate the fact that you would call in a number of people who would be able to partake.

I was saying that Bill C-6 is important legislation that will apply to all federally regulated private sector areas in Canada. It will also

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apply to crown corporations. It will cover federal entities which are not covered under existing federal privacy legislation.

I also want to note this very important point because it gets to the very essence, the very pith and substance of what the bill tries to do. With respect to interprovincial trading of personal and private information and the international trading of information, it wants to control that and make sure there is a system in place where that kind of privacy is assured. That is very important. I think Canadians wherever they are across Canada want to see us take a lead role in this area.

I think I noted prior to the quorum call but I will emphasize and reassert the fact that in a recent poll, and I think the polling has been consistent with what Canadians have wanted, 80% of Canadians have indicated that they would like to see us have this kind of legislation. It is important in that sense that we act quickly and accordingly because it underscores the willingness and the urgency of the Government of Canada to move in this all important area in a way consistent with the values of Canadians.

• (1220)

When reading the legislation it seemed to me that it was consumer friendly and rightfully so. It was something that ordinary Canadians wherever they are in Canada could listen to and deal with.

In reading the bill and taking a close hard and fast look at it, I found it was not something that was burdensome and cumbersome to industry, especially small and medium industry. Small and medium businesses are the engines for Canada. We do not want to put something in place that would be cumbersome and which would detract from their ability to do what they do best, which is to be entrepreneurs and to make profit. Profit in entrepreneurship is what makes this country great. As a result of their good efforts and as a result of what entrepreneurs do in small and medium businesses, they create jobs which in turn helps the economy.

Canada's economy is going pretty much at full tilt these days as a result of the good management and sound fiscal and monetary policy of the government which has done the right things. It is appropriate that we move in that sense accordingly. It underscores the commitment of the government to work in a manner consistent with what Canadians not only want but quite frankly deserve. This makes for better lives for them and their families. That is part and parcel of what we on the government side want to provide for all Canadians wherever they live in this great country.

The member for Calgary Northeast is heckling, caterwauling and bellowing, as members of the Reform Party often do. I am sorry, I guess that party has gone through two name changes. It went from the Reform Party to the CCRAP and now it is the alliance party. Whatever those members call themselves, their party is really the same old thing recycled. We understand that for who they are and for what they represent.

Quite frankly I think Canadians reject their extremist views. They reject what they try to do repeatedly, which is they try tear at the very fabric of Canadian society, tear people apart, tear regions apart and tear populations and groups and all kinds of Canadians apart. Canada is not like that. Canada is above that.

I listened on Monday past when the member for Calgary Northeast got up on a tirade. This was from the very people who said they were going to bring a fresh start to parliament, a new way of doing business, a new approach. The member accused me, among other things, of being unchristian and not following in the footsteps of Christ. I reject that. Never mind I am a devout Christian, but I reject the kind of nonsense the member opposite would try to spew out.

He or she who is without guilt will cast the first stone. Those people opposite who live in glass houses should be very careful in terms of what they do and how they do it. I think it is written somewhere very important, and the hon. member should listen accordingly and attentively for a change, that judge not lest ye be judged.

The hon. member should think hard and long about the kind of venom he is prepared to spew. He should think hard and long about casting judgments on other people. That is so typical of that holier than thou group that sits opposite, no matter what its name is. That is so typical of who those members are and what they represent, extremists to the nth degree. People of their ilk and those who associate with them understand fully that they will go nowhere fast.

Fair-minded, compassionate, tolerant Canadians see through that party no matter what it calls itself. They see through those members for who they are and for what they represent.

• (1225)

I want to get back to the issue at hand, Bill C-6, and how very important it is with respect to the agenda of the Government of Canada in terms of providing safety and security regarding the privacy issue for Canadians.

The government has been very intent on ensuring that the legislation deals with issues of concern to the Quebec government. We have tried, and I think we have been very successful, to complement the Quebec legislation in this area with respect to covering international and interprovincial flows of personal data.

The Government of Canada is committed to work consistently and hard when it comes to dealing with the government of Quebec because it has made some good notations in this area. As a result of good, solid federal-provincial co-operation on this very important Bill C-6, we will be able to work constructively. After all that is what Canadians want.

We can talk a great deal in this House of Commons. We can talk at the federal level about what we should or should not do. We can talk about the great issues that confront Canada, but Canadians

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wherever they live in this great country of ours, in all the regions, expect governments at all levels to work together. They expect their federal government to take a lead role often.

Witness health care for example. Canadians expect the federal government to take a lead role in that, to work constructively with other provincial and territorial partners and all stakeholders. Canadians expect this not only in health care, but in e-commerce and all areas of importance. Canadians are typically people who like to see partnership and co-ordination instead of the politics of blame and finger pointing like Mr. Harris is doing right now on health care.

Imagine what Mr. Harris is doing. It is outrageous when we see the kind of finger pointing that is taking place on health care. It really should not happen. Canadians quite frankly expect more from their premiers. What they should be doing as provincial and territorial partners is coming together and meeting constructively. Instead of the politics of blame, they should be looking forward to the politics of hope.

The politics of hope underscore what Canadians want, which is for all people, Canadians of good faith wherever they are in this country, to work together. They expect their government leaders to work together constructively to ensure that the right thing is done at the end of the day. Why do they do that?

Canadians know that this is an enormous country geographically and in many other ways, with huge physical and human resources. They know too that with a small population it is incumbent upon governments wherever they are in Canada to work together to ensure that the Canadian way is respected, that Canada's great values, symbols and institutions are ultimately respected in a way which is consistent with what Canadians expect from their leaders and their governments.

I want to take a moment to talk about the code in terms of Bill C-6, and the 10 principles that are inherent in that code. The 10 principles are noted as follows.

Number one relates to accountability. Accountability is very important. Canadians expect their governments in legislation on all matters to include accountability and transparency in a manner consistent with what we believe as a government. All Canadians expect it in legislation and rightfully so.

Number two is to identify purposes and make sure it is done in a manner consistent with the kind of information collected. Again Canadians expect that that be done in the very important area of privacy. I think it is important and expected that government include it.

• (1230)

Number three in the code is consent. Consent of the individual is required because people in Canada genuinely deserve privacy.

They want it and they need it. People expect that if there is to be a sharing of knowledge it will be done with consent. I think that underscores exactly what the government is prepared to note and put in by way of the ten codes.

Number four is the limited collection code principle. It will be limited to what is necessary for the purposes of identifying organizations or others for a lawful purpose. That too is an important principle and one which underscores the commitment of the government to do the right thing in this very important area.

Number five is the limited use, disclosure and retention principle. It is used because it is important to note and it is important that Canadians have this, by way of principles, codified. Personal information shall be retained only as long as necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose for which it was collected. Again, I think that too is important.

Number six is accuracy. Canadians expect the information given to be accurate. The mechanisms are built in whereby if there is misinformation it can be corrected. I believe that Canadians expect that kind of accuracy to be part and parcel of this very important bill.

Number seven is the principle of safeguards. The information will be protected by security safeguards appropriate to the information presented. That too underscores the commitment of the Government of Canada to ensure that safeguards are in place and that those kinds of checks and balances are part and parcel of this very important bill.

Number eight is openness, which concerns itself with the readily available information to individuals of policies and practices relating to the management of personal information. Again, this is part of transparency. This is part of accountability. This is part of openness. This too underscores the government's wish to ensure that this is in place in a meaningful way.

Number nine is individual access. Upon request, I should note because it is important, that an individual shall be informed of the existence, use and disclosure of his or her personal information and shall be given access to that information. An individual shall be able to challenge the accuracy and completeness of the information and have it amended as appropriate. That is important. Again, Canadians want to see that as part of this law. It is a principle which we are prepared to put in place.

Finally, number ten is the challenging compliance principle. Again, an individual shall be able to address a challenge concerning compliance with the above principles to the designated individual or individuals for the organization's compliance. That too is a good principle and is part of the approach of the Government of Canada.

Taken in total, these ten principles are very important and they underscore the level to which the government is prepared to act. I believe it is ultimately in the best interests of all Canadians.

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I want to talk a bit about the role of the privacy commissioner and the important role that he plays in this all important Bill C-6. I think it is incumbent upon all members of parliament, from all across the country, to understand that the role of the privacy commissioner will be consistent with what Canadians expect and want and, quite frankly, the role which they have become used to. I think it is important that we proceed in this very important area in a manner consistent with the values of Canadians. I think it is important that we do so and that we do so as soon as we can because this is an important bill and we need to pass it expeditiously.

There is a five year review built into the bill. That too is important and again underscores the role of the government to do the right thing in this all important bill.

• (1235)

Therefore I urge all members of the House to get on with the business at hand, to support Bill C-6 and to recognize it for what it is; that is, a good piece of legislation which follows on what the Prime Minister said in October 1998 and follows in a way which I believe Canadians not only can identify with but also support.

I would ask all members of the House to move expeditiously to pass this bill as soon as possible, knowing that it is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to use this opportunity to question my colleague.

A lot of the Ontario members are nervous. A lot of things are happening in this country. This government has a very slim majority, after winning almost all the seats in Ontario. I would be tempted to advise my colleague to control his disdain.

In his speech and in a question he addressed to one of my colleagues in this House a few minutes ago, I heard him mention our leader, say that our party was like a sick dog. I think the hon. member should be very careful, because a number of governments have faced election upsets.

The member has not been in the House long, I understand that, but I advise him to temper his disdain for the opposition parties. He could be in for some big surprises.

In this spirit, I would ask him what he plans to do after the next elections.

[English]

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the sensitivity which Conservatives feel when it comes to the leadership of Mr. Joe Clark, and sensitive they should be.

I think of the importance of Bill C-20, the clarity bill, on which we voted, literally, around the clock for a number of days. In my heart of hearts I felt proud; tired yes, but proud to be a part of this great period of history, following the lead of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who led this country in a manner consistent with what Canadians want and expect. I felt proud to a part of that great bill.

Mr. André Harvey: Terrible. It is the beginning of the end.

Mr. Lynn Myers: The member opposite can say what he will, but his leader was absolutely shameful in supporting and cozying up to the separatists. That is what Mr. Mulroney did. That was a shameful period of Canadian history when Mr. Mulroney cozied up to the separatists. He tried to build an alliance, and look what happened to him. He talks about where I will be after the next election. I would challenge him as to where the Conservatives will be after the next election.

We saw what happened when they played toe to toe and cheek to cheek with the separatists. They were reduced to two seats. Why? Because Canadians ultimately reject that kind of nonsense. They reject it because it is not consistent with the party of Sir John A. Macdonald. It is not consistent with the party of Cartier. It is not consistent with what Canadians want and believe.

We will govern on the government side consistent with what the people expect, and the people expect a united and strong Canada.

Where is Mr. Joe Clark and why is he not standing for Canada?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a more specific question so that the member can at least address the bill and not go on the rant that we have just heard promoting his government and what he believes are strong credentials.

I would like him to specifically address this bill as it pertains to the concerns the provinces have raised, especially on the jurisdictional issue.

• (1240)

My colleagues in the Bloc have raised this issue, as well as a number of the provinces. This bill may in fact encroach on provincial responsibilities in areas of the management of health documents and other forms of really important information.

Recently the industry minister received a letter from the Alberta government, criticizing the government on this bill. It said that there was inadequate consultation on the bill to this day, that the federal-provincial-territorial working group of officials had not met in over a year, and that their officials have repeatedly requested that the group reconvene to discuss issues related to the bill and the regulations that would be required if it were passed.

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I would like the hon. member to assure the House of what sort of commitment his government would have in dealing with the jurisdictional problems which may arise. With all of the criticisms being relayed to the government from various provincial governments, will it commit to work, throughout the passage of this bill, to overcome the problems of jurisdiction, especially when it comes to privacy?

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, had the member been listening to my speech he would have heard me deal with the issue of Quebec and some of the concerns that were outlined.

An hon. member: He did not talk about Quebec.

Mr. Lynn Myers: The Bloc member opposite said that he did not talk about Quebec. He actually raised it. He said that the Bloc indicated that it had concerns.

What I would point out, and not only as it concerns Alberta and Quebec, is that we on the government side have crossed our *ts* and dotted our *is* in terms of whether this bill is constitutional and respects the jurisdiction of the provinces. In fact, it will not infringe on provincial jurisdiction. We have made that very clear.

Is it not typical of the member opposite to stand in the House and talk about what the Bloc might want to ask? Is that not typical of the party which not so long ago, at its convention in London, Ontario, organized as its keynote lead-off speaker Mr. Biron, who is nothing more than a separatist?

Let us think about that for a minute. We have a western populist reform party, which now calls itself CRAP, which has all of a sudden metamorphosed into something called the Alliance Party, which had a separatist as the lead-off speaker at its convention.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are debating a particular bill. The hon. member, to the huge gathering on the opposite side of the House, is seeking to exercise a predominant dose of arrogance, which is exactly what is going to kill that party. The information I get is that this arrogance, as they attack my colleagues, is exactly the thing that has killed parties in the past—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I suspect that could have a little debate in it. We will go to the next question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to put a question to the hon. member for Waterloo—Wellington. I will put it slowly because I think he has difficulty hearing or understanding, I do not know which.

My Reform colleague talked about Alberta. Alberta is not a city in the province of Quebec. Alberta is not a city inhabited by

separatists, who are born separatists and who die separatists. Alberta is a province in your beautiful great country.

My Reform colleague's question concerned Alberta. It is not separatist, it is not wicked and it will not kill the member in the night.

My second comment will be along the lines of the one made by my Reform colleague. It concerns provincial jurisdiction. I will remind—I dare to hope that I will remind him, or at least inform him—the member for Waterloo—Wellington that Quebec has had legislation entitled an act respecting personal information for the past five years. This legislation is considered effective the world over.

• (1245)

In Quebec, a province which I must admit does have some sovereignists there is the Barreau du Québec. This is not a group of separatists. I simply want to explain this so that the member will understand. The Barreau du Québec is an organization that is made up of lawyers, sovereignists or otherwise, and which administers the law. It is opposed to Bill C-6.

There is also the Chambre des notaires. It might have been infiltrated by a few nasty sovereignists but it is not a separatist group. It is opposed to Bill C-6. The CSN—there are a few more of them in that organization—, the National Assembly and other organizations are also opposed to Bill C-6.

I would like to hear what the member for Waterloo—Wellington thinks about the unanimous opposition in Quebec and Alberta—which is not a city in Quebec, by the way—to Bill C-6.

[*English*]

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I really do not need a geography lesson from the member opposite, nor do I need a spelling lesson, nor do I need an elocution lesson for that matter in speaking slowly.

What I would ask the hon. member to do, however, speaking of geography, is to take some time to travel our great country and find out exactly what it means to be a Canadian and learn what it means to be a Canadian and where the values of Canada are consistent and part and parcel of our great land.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have not managed to commit Montpetit-Marleau to memory, but if I am not mistaken, citation 416 of Beauchesne's states that a member's reply must address the topic being debated in the House and not wander all over the place, as the member for Waterloo—Wellington is doing.

[*English*]

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite jumps the gun. I was getting to the point where I was going to answer the

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question. It is really interesting how the Bloc members are so thin-skinned. They are really quite sensitive. We can only imagine that it must be because they do not know why they are here in this parliament any more.

In direct response to him, if he had been listening and paying attention to the minister he would know that the minister, in tabling Bill C-6, announced publicly that Quebec will be exempted from the application of Bill C-6 because it has similar legislation in place. This will be done by an order in council once the bill becomes law.

The member claims to be protecting the interests of his constituents. He claims to be protecting Quebecers wherever they live. Why would he not do his homework and know that this was happening? I find it shameful that he would do what he is doing.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is quite ironic that when we ask questions the hon. member opposite continues to say “If the opposition had only been listening”. It is very difficult to listen to a rant continued by the hon. member. Our eyes tend to gloss over and we tend to fall asleep over here because it is the same old rhetoric that we hear from this government and from this member. Nothing, unfortunately, is new, nothing is insightful and nothing has vision, which most of us in the official opposition always like to challenge in the House. Mr. Speaker, I know you know that and value that.

I am proud to stand today in the House to speak to Bill C-6. I actually had the opportunity, prior to my colleague from Peace River who has now taken over the industry file, to work on this bill in committee when it was formerly known as Bill C-54. I enjoyed working on the bill, particularly because it dealt with bridging the gaps, as we often have in this country, between the jurisdictional issues and trying to actually deal with a bill that has issues on a global level.

When one deals with privacy as it relates to electronic commerce and privacy as it relates to any other form of important information, there is in today's electronic commerce an endless amount of information travelling everywhere through different channels, whether it is through the media, the Internet or other forms of communication. There is often sensitive information being transferred not only within a city, within a country and across provincial boundaries but also globally. That is why this particular bill is of unique importance to Canadians. We are actually showing some leadership.

• (1250)

While I was working on the committee I commended the industry minister for bringing forward a bill that shows some leadership. Through my travels and talking with various people in industries that deal with electronic commerce and privacy, I found

that many other countries were looking at Canada to produce something that could set an example for the rest of the world.

One of the things we continuously criticize the government for is its refusal to deal with many of the concerns of not only the provinces but also the opposition. When I was sitting at committee I put forward many amendments that would have strengthened the bill as it pertains to health care documents and the privacy of specific information on health care. Unfortunately, even though many of the members opposite would have paid lip service in supporting these amendments, they did not do so, which was quite disappointing.

However, this particular bill, as we know it and understand it, is well within the proper function of government to create a civil and criminal law framework and regulatory regime to allow electronic commerce to flourish in Canada. Legislation governing the commercial use of private and sensitive information is important and necessary to create a healthy and stable business environment in Canada. It is not the proper role of government to foster business through the creation of interventionist government programs that are costly to taxpayers and largely ineffective. Engaging in electronic commerce and especially the growth that we have seen in this particular area, there is no doubt that the government has a role to play in putting together a framework to regulate sensitive information being transferred over those channels.

Even though we are supporting this bill in principle and trying to make it better during the course of debate here in the House and in committee, we in the official opposition did have some specific criticisms and ones that I would like to raise now.

We wanted to see the bill separated into two parts. As it now stands, the government has rolled the section on electronic commerce together with the one on privacy. It would have been preferable to arrive at a consensus with the provinces to do this co-operatively rather than use the trade and commerce provisions in the constitution to unilaterally introduce legislation.

When challenging the minister on this particular issue of provincial jurisdiction, he was sensitive enough to say that even though federal legislation would be put in place to govern privacy and electronic commerce on a national level, he would encourage provinces that would like to have strong privacy legislation because under the constitution privacy is a provincial responsibility and that jurisdiction is in the hands of the provinces. Quebec currently has strong privacy legislation. If other provinces wanted to follow suit and create privacy legislation that was stronger than this federal legislation, the minister's commitment was that this legislation would be complementary to that of the provincial legislation.

This gave me a sense of satisfaction, especially after talking to some of my counterparts in Alberta. I told them that there was a role for this particular bill to govern the rules surrounding privacy

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and electronic commerce on a national and global level. However, I encouraged my colleagues, especially those in Alberta, if they saw flaws or weaknesses in this particular bill, to see if they could come up with stronger legislation and maybe even take examples from Quebec because it does have strong privacy legislation. Alberta could then perhaps create something that would be more specific to the province.

My counterparts encouraged me at that time and said that they were planning on doing this in fall. Since then I know that there has been much work done in that particular area and in that particular jurisdiction.

• (1255)

There have also been a lot of concerns and criticisms from the Alberta government, especially on the process of dealing with the government when it comes to coming to a consensus. This, unfortunately, seems to be a common theme with the government. We have seen it in so many other forms of legislation in the House and in so many other ways when this particular government tries to put legislation through the House, often without proper democratic debate and without the proper consensus across the country. It just does not care about dealing with the provincial concerns. If it did, it would be so much easier to build consensus. However, in its arrogance, it is just not committed to that, as my colleague mentioned earlier.

To go back to some of those criticisms, the official opposition has supported the e-commerce part of this bill. This section is needed to facilitate business resulting from the new technologies and the increasing growth in air freight. It shortens the time for payment for suppliers because they can use electronic signatures. That is an area that will be further developed in this bill.

One of the areas in the first section of the bill that we wanted strengthened was area dealing with privacy, especially providing extra protection for health care records. As I mentioned, when I sat on the committee I remember introducing a number of amendments that were supported by a number of organizations, especially in the health care field. I remember the Canadian Dental Association, the Canadian Medical Association and a number of other groups that really wanted to see medical health records, especially the privacy surrounding those records, strengthened in this particular bill.

I was very disappointed, when I did introduce those particular amendments at the committee, that for some reason the committee did not want to make the commitment to health care. We have seen that, obviously, in the way that health care is funded, because the cutbacks have been radical regarding transfers to the provinces when it comes to the funding of health care. That is why we have the problems that we do today where provinces are trying to make up the difference in government cuts.

It would have cost the government relatively nothing to strengthen the privacy of health care records in this particular bill but it refused to do so. At least now, in debating the Senate amendments to this particular bill, I know that the Senate actually added a particular amendment to deal with personal health information. It inserted a separate and detailed definition of personal health information as opposed to lumping it with all personal information. This is at least a step in the right direction toward what we would like to see. We hope that will be supported by the House because it does help to make this bill a little better.

One of the things I also want to touch on is the criticisms by the provinces, which have been quite significant during this process. I would like to quote, as I did when I asked the hon. member opposite to respond to some of the concerns that the Alberta government raised. I want to get to that and read some of the other quotes that they had identified as potential problems with this legislation.

To address the other amendments put forward by the Senate before I get to the criticisms, one of the second amendments provides for a moratorium of one year before the legislation applies to organizations which deal with personal health information. This is similar to a postponement of one year given to provincially regulated industries. It is a step in the right direction but the Alberta government has raised some concerns about this.

The sooner this legislation is up and running, in the Senate's view, the better. The two moratoriums are somewhat regrettable as they create a temporary patchwork implementation regime for e-commerce and e-document.

Federally regulated enterprises and organizations will be subject to the legislation first, then provincially regulated and health related organizations one year later. It is unfortunate that the government did not do its homework with respect to both the provincial governments and health privacy advocates before imposing time allocation to rush the third reading debate in the House of Commons. Nevertheless, Reform is pleased to see that personal health information is better protected for a change, thanks to the Senate.

I will get to some of the criticisms, especially as raised by some of the provincial jurisdictions, namely Alberta.

• (1300)

I talked briefly about this point earlier. It seems to me that the government, especially when it comes to promoting democracy, consensus and using the House of Commons for a place of healthy debate, even if it means criticizing legislation to make it better, is so arrogant that it often refuses to allow debate to happen in the House.

We have seen time allocation moved on almost every bill since I have been here. If we spent a little more time on some bills that I

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think could become very good legislation and if we had input in a fair and democratic way from all members of the opposition, we would see this piece of legislation and others like it actually become better. The government would be better off to allow that.

Time allocation has been moved on third reading of the bill. It has also been moved in many other circumstances. We saw it moved on Bill C-20 in committee, which was disgusting. The government does not allow the democratic process to work or further the democratic process with its lack of commitment to democracy at the root level in the House of Commons.

As a young person trying to make the country better, trying to make it more democratic, and trying to get the involvement of elected parliamentarians and Canadians, I ask how it can be justified to Canadians that their democracy is working and that their members of parliament are effective when the government refuses to even engage in the democratic process at this very fundamental level of representation in our country. In any case we hope that it might learn and listen to some of the provincial concerns.

The Government of Alberta is a strong proponent of privacy principles in electronic commerce. It remains concerned about the flaws in the process pertaining to Bill C-6 and the extent of the consultation that occurred with regard to business readiness, issues of jurisdiction, the scope of coverage of the proposed legislation and the provisions relating to substantially similar provincial legislation.

I hope the minister was true to his word when he talked about the commitment to make this legislation complementary to the provincial legislation. This was obviously one of the concerns raised by the provincial Government of Alberta in its letter to the minister.

I remember the hon. member opposite in his response to a previous question said that everything in the bill was within the constitutional realm of the federal government and did not conflict with any form of constitutional rules pertaining to the provinces. However, it is obvious that the Alberta government, my colleagues in the Bloc and the Quebec government have felt quite differently about that.

I will quote from a letter sent from the Alberta government. It was actually sent by two ministers, the minister of international and intergovernmental relations and the minister of municipal affairs. It stated that there was a disturbing trend in this federal legislation toward the use of provisions similar to the substantially similar clause to extend federal legislation into areas of provincial jurisdiction. It went so far as to say that if the bill were passed the Government of Alberta would be forced to consider a constitutional challenge to preserve its authority under the constitution. It is obvious that the provinces have major concerns with the jurisdictional issue.

We have made a great effort when dealing with the bill to put forward our concerns and to have the government deal with them. The member opposite stands in his place and claims that there are no problems of jurisdiction in the bill, that the government has done its homework and that it is committed to dealing with the provinces. This is absolutely false, especially when a number of provinces are saying that they would challenge the legislation unless improvements were made. It is time the hon. member who always claims the opposition may not have done its homework to do his own. The government refuses to do that and continues to throw out the rhetoric we continuously see in its place.

Another criticism raised by the provincial government in the letter to the Minister of Industry was the fact that there was inadequacy of consultation on the bill which continues to this day. The federal-provincial-territorial working group of officials has not met in over a year. Alberta government officials have repeatedly requested that the group reconvene to discuss issues related to the bill. The related regulations that would be required if it were passed have come to no avail. They indicated that there has been no willingness on the part of the ministry or the minister to enter into meaningful discussions with provincial counterparts on the very real issues that the bill raises but does not address. There is still no clarity whatsoever about how the ministry would propose to effectively address outstanding issues such as those related to personal health information.

• (1305)

This information was contained in a letter dated March 16, 2000. It is barely two to three weeks old and the Alberta government still has concerns in this regard.

On the issue of health care documents, we saw Senate amendments coming in to strengthen that. At least on that level the Alberta government might be happy. My colleague from Peace River and I will be discussing with our counterparts in Alberta their final thoughts on the bill. At least it moves in the right direction.

We need some form of commitment from the government. Quite frankly none of us in the opposition really believe the government when it talks about working with the provinces. As I have said before, we have seen lip service on many issues such as the Kyoto deal, other forms of legislation and now Bill C-6. It says it has a commitment to working with the provinces in dealing with provincial jurisdiction and taking it seriously. However, even from what the Alberta government is saying, in over a year the working group has not even bothered to meet with the province of Alberta to discuss some of the concerns.

We could only imagine that, if in fact the group would have met with the province, the bill would have been able to take care of some of the problems the Alberta government has raised and perhaps we could have had a better piece of legislation. What a

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shame it would be if not only from Quebec but from the province of Alberta we have a basic constitutional challenge to preserve the authority of the province under this legislation. That would be a shame, especially when the bill could have done so much to deal with setting the stage internationally for a piece of legislation that could have led the world in electronic commerce and particularly in privacy.

It is very important to raise these issues today. We often forget how important it is in dealing with specific legislation that especially touches on areas of provincial jurisdiction but may well have a mandate federally. In fact the government should become more focused when trying to build consensus in the country. It is obvious for my colleagues from Quebec, many of whom have criticized the bill because of the jurisdiction, and it is obvious for my colleagues from Alberta who have the same criticisms, that the government has failed in its mandate to be able to successfully deal with the provinces in trying to build consensus on one of the most important pieces of legislation heading into the 21st century.

I encourage all members in the House to take the time to look over these particular amendments by the Senate. As I have outlined, they are moving in the right direction. Obviously the bill is a good one, but let us see in this final stage if we can actually make it better. Let us hope that the government opens its eyes to try to work with the country and try to unite the country rather than divide it as it continuously does all the time.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate and compliment my colleague on his discussion of the Senate amendments to the bill.

He mentioned that the federal government in dealing with this issue had not been very co-operative in discussing it with the provinces that have the broad jurisdiction, in particular with issues of privacy. However there are privacy issues that come under the federal government. I am thinking of federal institutions such as banks and interprovincial communications, protection of personal property and lists that are transferred through lease, loan or sales agreements.

Could my colleague comment on the federal government's dealing with privacy issues relating to federal institutions?

• (1310)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very pertinent question. This is one of the reasons the official opposition in the House has actually supported the principles behind the bill.

As my hon. colleague pointed out, there are areas of jurisdiction concerning privacy that are within the federal realm, especially as

they pertain to federal institutions and the exchange of information among those institutions.

It is interesting that when it comes to the particular area of privacy among federal institutions, not even mentioning the provincial areas that I made some criticism about, there has also been great criticism in the way the government tries to deal with building consensus. It is the same thing over and over again, the arrogance and the lack of wanting to try to look beyond their own scope to improve conditions in the House and in the country.

I know of some of the greatest criticisms concerning the bill or at least the fears. Many banks and other companies dealing with Internet service, at least when it comes to dealing with private information and as we continue to deal with federal regulations that apply to those institutions, have been critical in that they feel the government refuses to try to hear them out, especially to see what they have done to ensure that privacy is respected.

Surprisingly enough I remember when I sat on the committee that many of these organizations came before the committee to talk about how they had customers for whom they were responsible. Many of them have people to whom they provide services. They deal within confidential information every day. In order to have the confidence of those consumers and those people, they need to ensure that privacy is respected.

In trying to craft the legislation they hoped the federal government would consult them to see what they have accomplished in building public confidence in privacy. It was to no avail. A lot of their suggestions and improvements for the bill fell on deaf ears on the other side. That is why we are so skeptical about the government in dealing with many of the stakeholders in the bill.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for a very good speech. He is the first speaker I have heard today who actually spoke about Bill C-6, which was a nice change. I have one concern about Bill C-6 and I would like to get the member's opinion on whether he feels that Bill C-6 satisfies my very legitimate concern.

In this era of downsizing of public sector agencies and the wholesale privatization of many aspects of government, we have seen in many provinces that the data services aspect of government, the agencies that take care of health records, employment data or any of those things, are now being privatized through the private sector.

In the case of Manitoba it went to an agency which then further subcontracted to a company in Dallas, Texas, so that now all my personal medical records are being held by a company I do not even know the name of in Dallas, Texas, two or three steps removed from the original agency.

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It is a very grave concern because obviously there are people who would like to know who holds the personal private health records of Canadians. Whether it is drug companies doing research or even if people are applying for a job, the employer might want to know if they have any serious medical problems that would make them a less likely employee.

Is there anything in Bill C-6 that would safeguard Canadians from the trend toward taking public records and putting them into the private sector? Is there anything to make sure that they do not go any further, to be misused or abused? Is the member satisfied, if he is in favour of Bill C-6, that very real concern has been addressed by Bill C-6?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I think that was an excellent question posed by my hon. colleague from the NDP. I remember when we were dealing with the particular issue in committee that same question was raised by a number of people especially concerned about, as the hon. member mentioned, the transfer of public sensitive documents to the private sector.

He and I may disagree at least on some of the philosophy behind that sort of trend happening, but what I will try to address is his particular question on whether or not the bill extends to protect privacy, if this is continuing to happen, to whoever is managing the particular information.

• (1315)

To my knowledge, when we dealt with this in committee that was the case. The goal was to strengthen privacy particularly in areas where there was sensitive documentation, whether managed publicly or privately, and that the same rules would apply, especially in the transfer of that information. Currently we have strong regulations in place in many cases for privacy in dealing with the sale of that information to other organizations, especially if it is treated as confidential. On that level, I was satisfied with the direction of the bill. I think it does deal with the hon. member's concern.

One thing I will reiterate, and I mentioned this to my hon. colleague before, is that we should not necessarily be afraid of some of these private companies that are dealing with sensitive information because they are bound by confidentiality. They are providing a service and in order for them to continue to do business and to have the public confidence, they have to make sure that they are very strict about those regulations.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Edmonton for his proposal, his outlook and the honest and frank way in which he not only presented his position but also answered the questions.

I am pleased to note that he understands, contrary to the former speaker, that there are many ways in which we could improve the

bill and that maybe we still need to improve it. I do not take the attitude of the member for Waterloo—Wellington that the government dotted every *i* and crossed every *t*. I believe that in a bill such as this one, if the federal government wants to build support across Canada, there is nothing wrong with sending the bill out and asking people for their reasons for not approving it and how it could be improved. To leave the people who are going to be most involved with it out of that very simple process is a lack of basic understanding in a country as wide as Canada.

Would my colleague agree in dealing with information like this, that the government should be in total contact with its counterparts across Canada? Should it let them look at the bill and give them a period of time to come back with their solutions and propositions so that we could study it further in the House? Constitutionally or by any other means would there be anything wrong with that?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, there would be absolutely nothing wrong with that. My hon. colleague has asked a perfectly legitimate question.

As I mentioned during the course of my speech, it seems that the government refuses to want to deal with its provincial counterparts in a sincere manner. It gives lip service and continually talks about respecting provincial jurisdiction.

I raised the example that was pointed out by the Alberta government. A working group was set up to deal with the provincial jurisdictional issues and bridge the gap with the provinces on privacy legislation. The government did not call that group which was mandated by the government for a whole year to try to build consensus and deal with the problems that the provinces were raising. That gives me no confidence that the government is sincerely trying to build consensus and trying to deal with the provincial jurisdictional issues.

I still hope that the government has the wisdom, but unfortunately I do not think it has, to open its eyes and try to make the legislation better by getting the input from the people who will help make it better.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in the debate with a great deal of interest and excitement. Excitement may be too strong a word given the nature of the debate that has taken place this morning.

I want to comment on a statement which was made in the questions and comments. The issue of how one deals with this information and the importance of this information in the growth and functioning of our economy over the next decade or so is vitally important.

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• (1320)

I support some of the statements that were behind some of the questions and the response I just heard. I applaud the members for actually discussing the bill. When I sat in the House this morning I was quite disturbed that we were not talking about the bill. We were using it to play the kinds of games that are played in the House.

This is a critically important issue. I have spent an enormous amount of time working on and thinking about this issue. I want to walk through some of that. I want to suggest to members including the member for Souris—Moose Mountain who in his intent in his questions is absolutely right, that this is an issue which, in all of its forms and this privacy bill slices through one small aspect of it, will come before the House many times over the next decade. It is an issue that will, it is my belief, cause some fundamental restructuring in how democracy functions in this country.

I have argued as recently as a couple of weeks ago in a speech I gave here in Ottawa that unless government begins to get its policy mind around what is happening with its use of information technologies, we will simply continue to fail in the introduction of information technology to government. I want to preface those remarks by saying one thing. This is not to say that this government and this government alone will fail. This issue affects democracies all around the world.

I have spent 20 years working in this area, 13 years as part of a research group that studies these issues on an ongoing basis. One of the things we discovered back in the late 1980s was that despite the fact that government was introducing information technologies, was investing in computers and connectivity and the high speed networks and all of those things, government was not demonstrating any of the structural changes that we were witnessing in the private sector.

It is interesting that if we look at what has occurred in the private sector over the last couple of decades, we can certainly see the precursors of this in very large organizations. Back in the 1960s they began to adopt mainframes and started to automate some aspects of their operations. The real explosion began in the 1980s with the introduction of personal computers. Their low cost gave companies the ability to adopt the technology and spread it widely among their employees.

One of the things that is observed after some period of time with the technology is that the organization begins to change. It does not just change in terms of its cost structure or the way it delivers services; it begins to fundamentally reorganize physically. It was an interesting phenomena.

People who are interested in this have heard about how organizations become flatter, they de-layer, they push some decisions out to

the point of contact with customers. They take other information back to the centre. Senior management is involved in decisions that otherwise would have been delegated to middle managers and fewer managers are intermediating. We see that.

We turn to government and we have seen in the same period that government spent hundreds of millions of dollars on information technology. However we have not witnessed any of these changes that are so common in private sector organizations.

That is not to say government has not made use of technology. We can send out 10 million cheques with ease. We can do very large transaction based operations. The departments shuffle around a bit, but essentially the structure of departments is pretty much what it has been for the last 20 or 30 years. The way this place operates is not that radically different from the way it has operated historically. But the outside world has changed enormously.

Bill Gates in his latest book posits in the opening chapter that the 1980s was the decade of quality and the 1990s was the decade of restructuring and the decade we are currently in will be the decade of velocity. What he is really saying is that change is taking place so rapidly in the private sector that the challenge for any organization functioning in the economy is to deal with the issue of constant evolution and change. We need to be able to manage that as part of our ongoing environment in order to be successful.

• (1325)

I like his framework for that. We heard a lot about quality in the 1980s. Dr. Denning was all around the world and there was lots of work on quality movements in government.

The fundamental issue with quality movement was the ability to have low cost networks that were powerful enough to collect information and feed it back to the point of decision in real time. If in a supply chain or a production chain defects were seen in the output, the process could be modified while operating in order to improve the quality. We saw the rise of ISO-9000, 9001 and 9002 as organizations became better at heading toward defect free operations.

It also brought a lot of information back to the decision point. Information in and of itself has some unique characteristics worth thinking about. This takes us into the decade of restructuring. The big difference was that in the mid to late 1980s as they began to develop networks, they were not just bringing back the information from one production chain but from a whole lot. All of a sudden the information could be accumulated if they had the strength, the power and the tools and they could see their organization differently. For the first time they could actually visualize their organization. That allowed them to make changes and receive feedback and see what happened. In the same way we would

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change the production system in some ways we would be able to actually look at and change the structure of the organization.

A very good study was done on this in a book published by MIT in 1990. It talked about the issue of networking and the building of tools that allowed us to see the organization in a way which allowed one to affect it.

What happened in government? What is the nature of the quality movement in government? What is the system that looks at interaction with a client, be it a tax filer, an EI recipient or someone who has a complaint? What is the feedback on how that is processed? What is done to improve the quality of that interaction so that the client gets better service? Some attempts have been made to do that but they have not been terribly successful to date and there is a body of thought on that.

I have already mentioned the lack of any appearance of physical restructuring. Re-engineering in government tended to become privatization. A number of members in the House were active on the transport committee which I chaired when we dealt with the privatization of the ports. There were arguments that I supported at the time although I now have come to think about them.

The argument was that we had to separate the port from the government because it needed to innovate more rapidly. It needed to make changes in real time. It needed to be more responsive to local conditions in order to deal with the issue of increasing demand for change. It was the velocity issue coming at us.

We ended up taking the ports away from government. We said we would privatize the airlines, the ports, anything that could be justifiably privatized. If we turn that argument around, we really said that government was too slow and incapable of functioning in today's world. We lose something by not challenging ourselves to look at how these information tools can assist us.

As we accumulate information, we have an ability to view the organization in more holistic ways. I want to lay out one other argument before I try to pull them together.

• (1330)

There is a Canadian economist by the name of Harold Innis who wrote extensively during the thirties and forties. He started by doing standard economic studies, but as he got into one area, the study of the forest industry, that led him into the study of one of the great consumers of forest products, newsprint, which led him to look at communications. I think he is one of the most brilliant thinkers that Canada has ever produced. The work which he produced actually underpinned the work which Marshall McLuhan did later. Marshall became much more famous for it, but I think it was Mr. Innis who really pointed the way.

What he noted was that throughout history the dominant groups and cultures have been able to monopolize the knowledge and the information. They maintained their control by monopolizing that information until another group came along with a new technology which knocked them off the pedestal. Historically those were fought through wars, conquests and all of those other things.

He also noted that with the arrival of systems that started to break down those monopolies, the classic one being the printing press, all of a sudden, at a low cost, people could get information. More people could have it, which would educate people. It was no longer simply the priests handwriting books in a few back rooms. All of a sudden books could be distributed to a lot of people. A lot of people could become educated.

It is interesting. There are those, and I count myself among them, who draw a line between the availability of the information and the ability to educate ourselves and the rise of modern democracies as we see them.

For those who go back as far as I do, they will recall that during the late sixties and early seventies there was a lot of talk about the problems with dictatorships in South America. One fellow wrote a book, which I still have and quite like. He said that if we want to solve the problem of dictators and oppressive regimes, we should not send the population guns, we should send them books. If we educate them they will sort out all of the other problems. When a lot of people have access to the information, and when a lot of people have a common base of understanding, they will take charge of their own lives.

Think about that for a second. There is a modern example of that. There is a man by the name of Peter O'Toole from the University of California who wrote an article about how the Berlin wall fell as a result of the existence of fax machines. The East German government could no longer control the flow of information, hence the people could organize and communicate in ways they never could before. After a while a population which does that cannot be controlled. They cannot be oppressed in the same way.

The same thing is happening in China. I have spent a lot of time in China in the last few years and I am always a bit bemused, which is a polite word, at how every now and again they shut down the Internet. There is a huge struggle going on in China between those who would modernize and those who would keep the old system. Just recently there was an article about how they want to build a fire wall on the Internet to prevent the Chinese people from getting access to disturbing information.

In a funny way, as I was reading that article, I had one of those enlightening moments. In many ways we are not different. I want to be very careful and say that by "we" I mean modern democracies; Europe, the U.S. and Canada. We tend to hold too much informa-

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tion about the operation of the government and the exercise of power in the country in one central little group.

I argue strongly, and I believe strongly, that one of the reasons we have not been able to introduce information tools to government successfully is because we have not confronted one of the underlying issues, which is the democratizing effects they have.

I would be prepared at another time to debate direct democracy because I think there is a huge argument there. I am one who believes that it is inevitable in some form. But even now I think that some of the resistance is no different.

If we think about it historically, when the nobles took hold of King John and said he had to pay attention to them, they had a comfortable system for a few centuries until the landed began to get a little more knowledge, more education and better organized. They said they wanted in too, and the Commons came into existence.

• (1335)

As people in the middle class developed and became wealthy, women became educated. All of a sudden they said “Wait a second. What is this nonsense?” and the Suffragette movement arose. The same thing happened with aboriginals, and it happened just recently with apartheid. It is this issue of education and access which I think is a very, very powerful force.

I do not want to suggest that what is happening in Canada or in the U.S. is akin to something as severe and grotesque as apartheid, but there are elements of the sense of trying to control everything and own everything.

I argue that is why we cannot introduce information technology to government, because it is too disturbing. It will always be disturbing until we turn the paradigm around.

I will tell the House where the issue of privacy arose. When we looked at the issue of how we could introduce this, we kept hearing that privacy was the reason we could not do it. Privacy was the thing that would stop it. I always thought that was simply security. I have no fear of the hackers. We can keep the information secure, in large part. That to me is a false issue.

We organized a bunch of individuals from departments that were thoughtful about this and had big client service loads. We brought in some of the experts, the privacy commissioner, Mr. Phillips, whom I think is an extremely important thinker on this subject, along with others from this Chamber and the other Chamber, and we workshopped this.

What emerged from the privacy issue that I thought was so important was that it was not a concern about security. People accept that we can do that. It was a concern about rights. It was a human rights argument. It was: “What are my rights relative to the government? Until we satisfy that question I will not be a co-opera-

tor in this”. Once more it has that democratizing effect. “I will give you information, but I want information back”. That is what poses the challenge to us, and I believe it is a challenge which the House will have to confront and which the government will have to confront.

I was recently invited by members of the Dutch government to speak to them on the subject, because they are having exactly the same problem in the European community.

What is interesting about the bill is that it is not a public sector bill but the same issue arises. When the Department of Industry started going down this road, I argued with the minister. I said that we needed privacy legislation. He said “We want the regulation to be light. We want to do like the U.S. We want to have a voluntary system”.

There is all this pro-government, anti-government, government is a bad thing nonsense that goes on in some of the ideological debates that take place here, so the department was headed down the road of having no regulation, following the voluntary model, until the people who were at the front edge of the e-commerce world said that if we did not have a decent privacy regime people would not play. It is a powerful force when it comes to government, but it is the same force in business. “I will not go to your business unless I have some guarantees about how I will be treated”. It was the community which came back and told us to forget about not having regulations. We need regulations because it is a customer driven business and the customers want protection.

This is an important piece of legislation. It does not go all the way, but I think it is fundamentally important to getting Canada further down the road in terms of not just e-commerce, but understanding and using these very powerful information tools and understanding the relationship between individuals and large powerful organizations, because I think all of us in the House want the control to remain with the citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is as far as I will go. There might be a question or two and I am prepared to go down any of the roads I have opened.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg South on a great job. It is too bad that more people could not listen to his speech.

It has been a pleasant relief today to hear a speech from an intellectual, someone who has dealt with this issue without throwing some of the things that have been thrown in the House this morning, and for that I want to thank him very much.

The hon. member has studied this a great deal. It seems to me—and correct me if I am wrong—that we are going to have some problems as this evolves. The hon. member used the term

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“educate”. Will we not have to educate people about what we can do in this field to protect the personalities of people, their bank accounts and everything else? We have to build some trust into the system and somehow apply the new technology so that it includes a touch of a personality at the same time.

• (1340)

It seems like every time we move into these fields the rank and file people who are not sure complain that it is impersonal when they make a phone call to be told to press button one, button two and so on, or they get a message on the fax.

Would the hon. member not agree that it is the responsibility of the government first to educate and second to put a human touch to what we are doing as it relates to the people?

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the first thought to go through my mind was that it used to be when we phoned someone and we got their answering machine we said “I don’t want to talk to a machine. I am tired of this”. Now when we phone someone, if they do not have voice mail, we say “Damn it, I can’t leave a message”. Again, our understanding is shifting.

The hon. member raises a really good question. When the member was speaking about the buttons and the voice mail, I am not certain whether he was speaking about the specific aspect of service to citizens by government. In that I agree completely.

I always want to say this. I have worked with a lot of technicians and the information policy folks in the Canadian government and I think they are trying as hard as they can to change the understanding of this. The argument I make is that this is a much more fundamentally important issue than anyone realizes.

That is why it is bedevilling to government. If it were easy to do we would have done it or someone else would have done it already. Having said that, I have a lot of sympathy for public servants because they are beset upon all the time by the vagaries of this place and the hot debate that takes place in any democracy. Therefore, they tend to build systems that are rules based, in part to protect themselves.

The hon. member and I would do the same thing if we were subject to the same pressures. It is not a criticism. When we put them into a very rigid system, a computer, we have a sort of doubling of the effect. We have a rigid set of rules to begin with and a very rigid system. All of a sudden we create service systems that do the exact opposite of what we want.

I bet the hon. member’s files are full of examples. I know mine are. I actually started writing columns on stupid government. I hope that over the next few years we will see, as the understanding improves, a change.

The hon. member’s point about education was absolutely right. This is new turf for all of us. We are all just feeling our way around on this. We think it is simple because we see the boxes and we understand it, but the boxes are just the collectors. The real power lies in the fundamental information and how it gets used. It will tell us things about our government and our country that will surprise us.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Liberal colleague for his obvious dedication to this topic and his knowledge of it.

He mentioned our information commissioner, Mr. Phillips, as being one of the important thinkers on this subject, and I agree.

There was a time when we were concerned, as Mr. Phillips said, about personal knowledge being carried back and forth across the continent. There has been very little attempt that I know of to protect, as he has suggested, this right of a person to private knowledge.

The technology grows in both directions. It was not that long ago that I first heard about identity theft and had it explained to me. Now identity theft is something I hear about fairly regularly. I am wondering, in light of this, if the hon. member sees in this legislation any of the fundamental tools which are necessary to protect people from great damage to their personal lives and to their families.

I think this is fairly specific and very important and I would like to hear the hon. member’s comments about how this bill might help protect people.

• (1345)

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the member raised an important concern and I want to treat it in two ways. I suggest to him that reality does not support some of the stuff we read about the incredible power of the hackers, the widespread nature of all these fanciful problems and some of the scary images that are drawn. That is not to say it is not a real issue. The member touched on an incredibly important area. It poses all sorts of challenges to how we communicate when we communicate electronically. Like any new technology there is a star wars scariness which the media seem to like to latch on to.

Does the legislation solve all those problems? No, it does not. I have probably been as immersed in this issues as any person, certainly any person in the Chamber if not in this city, and I am still having these little connections as I walk down this road. It sets in place a framework. It has the paradigm the right way around. It says that citizens have the right to be informed. We must not forget that this is largely voluntarily collected information.

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The health area is an interesting one. There has been a change by the Senate which I can support. Is that information really voluntarily given? We go to the doctor and he says that he needs to take a test. Are we going to say no? We have no choice but to give it. Largely this is in the commercial system. It is like not government information that is often collected.

It has the paradigm right. I have the right to be told why the information is wanted. I have the right to prevent them from sharing it except under conditions that I have been informed of. It puts a lot of control in the hands of the consumer.

The issue of identity theft is one that the world will have to deal with. We can do some things. I noticed a number of companies are now working with key infrastructures that allow them to know that when an item came in it actually came from the person. There are ways to build secure mail systems which allow that to happen. The post office is working on one and there are other private sector examples.

A classic problem, which the member for Huron—Bruce was concerned about, was child pornography on the web and how to prevent and control the proliferation of it. It is very difficult. How do we do it if the picture is taken in one country, sits on a server in another country, the payment is processed in a third country and goes to someone in a fourth country? There are issues which I believe have to be taken to international forums if we are ever to solve them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure and an honour for me to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois on Bill C-6, formerly known as Bill C-54.

Bill C-6 is an act to support and promote electronic commerce by protecting personal information that is collected, used or disclosed in certain circumstances, by providing for the use of electronic means to communicate or record information or transactions and by amending the Canada Evidence Act, the Statutory Instruments Act and the Statute Revision Act.

Today we are addressing a fundamental question in a society claiming to be as civilized, as ours does. At the same time, we are addressing something that is in a way the price of modernity, the price of progress. The most sophisticated of technologies now enable us to access what are considered the private affairs of individuals, and we can do so in a very subtle, very insidious and, let us face it, a very dangerous way.

• (1350)

Addressing this type of issue requires a fairly lofty debate. We need to realize that we are drawing here on the Declaration of Human Rights, passed 50 years ago now by the United Nations and

subscribed to by Canada, which says that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person and which states the following:

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

We are drawing at the same time on the Quebec charter of rights and freedoms, which provides that “Every person has a right to respect for his private life”.

To give an idea of the scope of the question and the extremely important issues here, I would like to quote a very important passage from a statement by the executive director of the Commission de la protection de la vie privée du Québec, Julien Delisle, of Quebec, summarizing the issues facing us today. These remarks were made in 1996 and are still current. He said:

Privacy protection is nothing less than the idea that we cannot live in a democracy in a free society without protecting our intimacy.

Ten years ago, it was easy to live incognito. At that time private enterprise and the government sector had access to a lot of personal information but in unrelated bits.

Telecommunications and the growing amount of information have totally upset this delicate balance by eliminating two natural mechanisms protecting privacy: the volume of paper and the impossibility of cross checking information from various files or agencies.

We have here before us a very important law, which has been debated in this House and which has been referred, as procedure would have it, to the other House, commonly known as the Senate. The other House also addressed the issue with witnesses, as did the Standing Committee on Industry. The result, the other House having shifted the debate to health and thus muddied the waters even further in the view of a very great many people, is greater confusion than ever.

Numerous experts were heard, including lawyers who waded into the issue. Their views were so divided and conflicting—with all due respect for lawyers, of which there are many, maybe too many, within the ranks of the Bloc Québécois—that the debate was more confused than ever, and opinions often ranged widely, when they did not contradict one another outright.

Having gone through all that, we are back at square one. What this means to us is that there is a major flaw in the federal government’s approach, in its shameless attempt to once again trample the Constitution of Canada, which is supposed to govern the actions of this government and of the provincial governments.

This does not come from us. It comes from no less than the Conseil du patronat, one of the many bodies I will list later that supported the Government of Quebec. The Conseil du patronat does not have very much in common with the present Government of Quebec, as we know, but it supported it and Quebec received incidental, intelligent and qualified support.

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Having given the matter some thought, the Conseil du patronat made the following statement when it appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry:

In so far as there is no challenge to the constitutional jurisdiction conferred on the provinces with respect to the protection of personal information and privacy under section 80.13 of the British North America Act, and in so far as Quebec's lawmakers have already passed their legislation in this regard, it is to be expected that numerous disputes over jurisdiction will ensue.

So said the Conseil du patronat, and there is every reason to think its prediction will come true.

• (1355)

Another a very competent person, Jacques Frémont, a well-known constitutional expert from the Université de Montréal, appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry and said:

In my opinion, Bill C-54, now Bill C-6, violates the spirit and the letter of the division of powers as it should be understood in this country. It proposes an arrogant and intrusive approach to provincial jurisdictions. Privacy protection is essentially under provincial jurisdiction. In Quebec, for example, it is property and civil rights. It is the Civil Code. It is Quebec law that applies in addition to the Canadian and Quebec charters.

This allows us to say that on the very face of it there is a technical flaw in this bill which, to some extent, could be viewed as unconstitutional since it respects neither the letter nor the spirit of the constitution, more specifically section 92.13.

Moreover, the bill takes a giant leap that is a very serious infringement on what has so far been done by the provinces in this area, as provided for under the constitution. That leap is found in clause 3 of the bill, which reads as follows:

The purpose of this Part is to establish, in an era in which technology increasingly facilitates the circulation and exchange of information, rules to govern the collection, use and disclosure of personal information in a manner that recognizes the right of privacy of individuals with respect to their personal information and the need of organizations—

And here is what is new:

—to collect, use or disclose personal information for purposes that a reasonable person would consider appropriate in the circumstances.

The important thing in this clause is that far from recognizing the fundamental nature of the right to privacy, it now tries to balance this right with the right of companies to do business. That leap is a very serious infringement, almost a business-like move, which fits very well into the current neo-liberalism where citizens no longer count, where they are only of interest to the economic system as consumers, and where—

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the hon. member. He has 11 minutes left. Since it is almost 2 p.m., we will now move to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

BUILDING DUFFERIN TOGETHER

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 21st century presents us with many exciting opportunities and challenges. Technological progress affects everything in our lives from the size of our population, the condition and use of our land, our health and medicine, to the speed and convenience with which we can communicate with each other over vast distances. Communities need to build strong partnerships and make strategic investments to meet these changing needs.

I am pleased that constituents, local leaders and business people in my riding will have an opportunity this weekend to share their ideas and innovative approaches to help our communities. The sustainable community symposium, “Building Dufferin Together”, provides a forum to discuss and share ideas on a wide range of topics from agriculture, the environment, economic development, recreation, education, heritage to conservation.

There are many excellent examples of community led projects and concepts in my riding and across Canada. Now more than ever it is important to pool our ideas and share our resources so that Canadian communities can look forward to continued long—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Prince Albert.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Monday evening I spoke with a young man from my riding on a recurring issue. This young man like so many others is caught in the jaws of the divorce industry.

He has children and until now was able to claim equivalent to spouse on his income tax while they were separated. Now his wife is suing for divorce and custody of the children and the forces are arrayed against him. He will lose the tax exemption at the same time his wife seeks additional support. Parents may divorce each other but they cannot divorce their responsibility for their children.

• (1400)

But consider this injustice. While this young man's children will receive only a marginal increase in support, the Minister of Finance will reach deep into his pocket and take out almost \$2,000 in additional taxes.

This is not an isolated instance; it happens all too often and it is a national disgrace. The government must act now for the good of children of divorce and both of their parents.

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[*Translation*]

MULTIMEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the few minutes available to me to draw attention to an excellent initiative taken by our government to provide additional support for the already promising multimedia industry in Quebec.

Last Monday, the Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada announced an additional \$800,000 investment in the Fonds d'expérimentation en multimédia, thus bringing our total contribution to \$2.3 million.

This fund is intended specifically to support young creators and entrepreneurs in the crucial start-up phase of innovative projects. Already more than 40 young entrepreneurs have been able, as a result, to bring their projects to the final marketing stage.

Judging by the initial results, a number of successes can be expected to ensue in this booming sector of activity.

This announcement is evidence of our government's clear commitment to the future of young people within the new global economy.

* * *

FUEL TAXES

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance and member for LaSalle—Énard is prepared to reduce fuel taxes for Canadian consumers, provided all Canadian provinces are in agreement to do the same.

Why is the premier of Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, refusing to reduce fuel taxes, particularly since the Government of Quebec receives \$1.5 billion annually from them, from Quebecers?

Messrs Bouchard and Landry, you are invited to come to Ottawa to discuss this problem on behalf of consumers. Let us work together to cut the tax on gasoline, diesel and fuel oil.

* * *

[*English*]

DOWN'S SYNDROME RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Vancouver Kingsway I am pleased to report that the Down's Syndrome Research Foundation announced last week a \$3.5 million capital campaign to build a new facility in Vancouver.

This new centre will be the one and only of its kind in North America.

Allow me to congratulate all the volunteers, staff and donors who have supported this project for our community. Their work and dedication is an inspiration to all of us.

* * *

HIGHWAY 97

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, recently in the House I asked the Minister of Transport to join me and the civic leaders of the southern interior of British Columbia to facilitate the continued growth and development of this dynamic and progressive part of Canada.

By designating Highway 97 as part of the national highway system, specifically the portion between Osoyoos on the United States border and the junction with Highway 1 at Monte Creek, the minister would be recognizing the highway as an extremely important trade corridor to British Columbia.

Number 97 is one of the great highways of North America, running from Alaska to California, joining our homes and businesses in the Okanagan Valley with other vibrant and progressive areas of Canada and the U.S.

In recognition of its importance, this portion of Highway 97 must be designated as part of Canada's national highway system. It is an important initiative which we must all pursue with vigour.

* * *

[*Translation*]

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 22, 2000, the Knights of Columbus celebrated the centenary of the founding of the fourth degree of their order.

One of the goals of this fraternal, family organization is to promote patriotism within the movement and within the community.

[*English*]

Last Thursday my colleague the hon. Don Boudria and I received members of the Knights of Columbus on Parliament Hill to mark this significant event. During this official ceremony we presented them with the Canadian flag that flew on top of the Peace Tower on the day of the 100th anniversary of the fourth degree of their order.

[*Translation*]

This flag will be proudly put on permanent display at the Knights of Columbus museum in New Haven, Connecticut.

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On behalf of all members of the House, I wish to congratulate the Knights of Columbus on the centenary of the founding of the fourth degree of their order.

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: Just a gentle reminder, colleagues, that we should not call each other by our names but by our riding names.

* * *

[Translation]

CELANESE

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker:

So? So how are things, Jane? Fill me in.
The way I see it, all is well
Although one item I should tell.
So small, so lacking in import
And hardly worthy of report,
The Celanese plant shut its doors,
Finito, but apart from that,
Just fine, just great, so worry not.

So how are things, Jane? Fill me in.
Is Celanese a goner then?
What can we do for all those men
Laid off, to help them start again?
We hardly have a cent ourselves.
Tell me your version of events,
I am quite shaken, truth be told.
It goes like this, if you must know:
Because of grants not processed right
And billions gone, right out of sight,
What workers feel is not delight—
Betrayed, abandoned, used, more like—
They want to see you take a hike,
A long one, but apart from that,
Just fine, just great, so worry not.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one can imagine the surprise last Thursday, when Air France made English the mandatory language of communication between pilots and its air traffic controllers.

And yet in Quebec and Ottawa, bilingualism is not an issue. The Liberal government in Ottawa made French mandatory in the air in 1976. We are still proud of that fact today.

Let us hope that the separatist government in Quebec and the Bloc Quebecois in Ottawa will support the Government of Canada so that French may remain in use in the air.

[English]

THE SENATE

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Alberta Senator Ron Ghitter is resigning. He is giving the Prime Minister an opportunity to actually fulfill an election promise, this one regarding the Senate.

Some time ago the Prime Minister sent a task force out to Alberta to find out why Albertans will not vote for him. The simple answer is that Albertans do not feel the Prime Minister is listening to them.

They are frustrated for example, that in the middle of Alberta's Senate election the Prime Minister appointed a man who was not even on their ballot. Undaunted, Albertans gave Mr. Bert Brown more votes than any other federal politician in history.

Last week in Calgary the Prime Minister asked Mr. Brown if he wanted to be appointed to the Senate. Mr. Brown humbly replied "Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, I do on behalf of Albertans and Canadians".

On behalf of those Albertans, Canadians in general and Mr. Brown, the Prime Minister should show respect for them and have the courage to listen, to change and to appoint Bert Brown to the Canadian Senate.

* * *

[Translation]

BOMBARDIER

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the economic good news continues. Yesterday, Bombardier unveiled a record making contract of nearly \$3 billion for the sale of 94 regional jet planes. This contract will mean 1,000 new jobs in the Montreal area.

Bombardier also signed an agreement in principle worth \$2 billion U.S. with two Delta Airlines affiliates.

Bombardier also intends to create 600 jobs at its Canadair plant in Montreal, and 400 others in its network of suppliers clustered around the city.

This phenomenal order shows clearly that Canada and Quebec have met the challenge of specialization in small jet planes.

Our Canadian government is delighted with such good news, which confirms the renewed confidence in the Canadian economy.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two days ago I rose in the House to remind the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans that the auditor general had said that his department was managing the shellfish industry in the same way the groundfish industry was managed

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prior to the collapse of the cod stock, which by the way has cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

I also reminded the minister that his scientists are now telling him that the present snow crab stocks off Newfoundland could be gone in three years.

Finally, let us not forget about the lobster and the Marshall decision. The season opens very soon and all we hear from the minister are very vague statements, the same vague statements we had prior to the supreme court decision.

First it was west coast salmon, then east coast salmon, cod and now possibly snow crab. Will lobsters be next?

When the minister was asked how he would protect our precious marine resources, his response was "Liberal times are good times". I can only hope that Canadians do not wake up with the loss of another fragile resource in our oceans and with a taxpayer hangover.

* * *

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 17, 2000, the Minister of Human Resources Development released the findings of an internal audit that was devastating for her department. It called into question the quality of management at the department during the period when her predecessor, the current Minister for International Trade, was in charge.

For the Prime Minister, this was a minor problem involving a mere \$251. Two months later, the grants given by Human Resources Canada are the object of numerous police investigations, including three in the Prime Minister's riding. We learned that a \$150,000 grant intended for the riding of Rosemont ended up in Saint-Maurice, but we do not know how the money was used. The auditor general calls this situation of one of the most serious he has seen since taking up his duties.

Worse yet is the fact that the Prime Minister appointed Mel Cappe, the deputy minister responsible for this administrative mess, to the position of top public servant in the federal government. Enough is enough.

People are outraged, they want a major cleanup, and this is urgent.

* * *

[*English*]

DR. JAMES LANGSTAFF

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a founding father of Richmond Hill, a

gentleman and a country doctor, Dr. James Langstaff, who passed away at home last Sunday.

He graduated from medical school at the University of Toronto in 1935 and for a time set up a small hospital in his home. Caring for patients 24 hours a day was too much to handle with such a busy practice, so he campaigned for the building of a new hospital, York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill. He was the first chief of staff, a post he held for four years.

The first Dr. Langstaff opened his practice in 1838 on Yonge Street in the same house where James was born, lived in and died. In fact, the only time that Dr. Langstaff changed addresses, he did not move, the house did.

For 162 years there has been a Dr. Langstaff in Richmond Hill. My condolences to his wife, his children and his many friends. We will miss him.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration has worked hard since November on the issue of border security and refugee protection in Canada.

The report, which was tabled in the House last Wednesday, contains two amendments that I had proposed: first, that a photograph and the fingerprints of each refugee claimant be taken upon their arrival and, second, that the government pursue its efforts to conclude treaties for the safe return of some to their country. It was requested that progress be reported to the committee and to this House.

Earlier this month, excerpts of the new Immigration Act were leaked, and that concerns me. I hope that all the work done by the committee, the amendments proposed and the testimonies of witnesses will not have been in vain.

Will the minister follow up on the report tabled by the standing committee on March 22?

* * *

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us examine the government's record in dealing with the issue of illegal migration.

Eight months after 600 illegal migrants arrived by boat, only 5% have had their cases finalized. Does the government send a strong message to illegal migrants that people smuggling will not be tolerated? No, quite the opposite. It allows 80% of those who come to Canada illegally to stay, whether they have been accepted as refugees or not. It seems that the government will make it easier for

Oral Questions

people smugglers by allowing certain groups from certain countries to stay no matter what.

While other countries carefully respect the UN's definition of a refugee, this government will greatly expand that definition.

As unbelievable as it might sound, the government will give full charter protection even to those who may seek to enter our country.

What this hard-hearted government is doing is entrenching a system where queue jumpers and people smugglers must be rubbing their hands in delight while genuine refugees are left out in the cold.

* * *

GUN REGISTRY

Mr. Mark Muike (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada is now deliberating the legality of the government's controversial gun control legislation. This follows a challenge that was launched by a number of provincial and territorial governments, including my home province of Nova Scotia.

The challenge was launched on the grounds that the registration provisions of the Firearms Act are an invasion of provincial jurisdiction over property and civil rights.

The Liberal gun registry is nothing less than a colossal waste of taxpayers' money. The legislation will not reduce crime in Canada. Those intent on committing crimes are not going to register their firearms. If anything, the gun registration process punishes responsible gun owners.

● (1415)

The Liberal government said the new gun registry would cost \$85 million. To date costs have exceeded \$300 million. I ask myself how much safer would our streets be today if the government had invested the money in more policing rather than wasting it on the registry.

It is time the government acknowledged its costly mistake and repealed this useless gun registry.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked the HRDC minister to explain why neither she nor her predecessor did anything to address the damning indictment of her department's ethics in the 1998

audit. Her response was "That was 18 months ago", basically, "Who cares".

The point is that she should care because it was her government that was in power for the five years leading up to that audit. It created the problem and then it ignored it.

Why are ethics not of concern to this government?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ethics are of concern to this government. From my point of view, the actions that we have taken on this particular audit that I have received as minister are exactly the right things to do. We got the information and we made it public. We told the Canadian public that we will improve our operation and, from my point of view, that is exactly what should be undertaken.

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is a little story tale here. She said that she wanted to make it public and she made it public. In fact we had to wait beyond the imposed limit of law, a month beyond that, before we even got this audit. She was not exactly parading it around as a success story.

That audit was an internal warning that there were serious ethical problems in the department. I will quote from it. It says "Employees were not convinced that they could report suspected contraventions without fear of reprisal". This is nothing to brag about; they are talking about fear.

How is forcing honest employees to keep quiet any benefit to the minister?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at some of the other things that this report said. For example, it says "Senior management has taken steps to clarify roles and responsibilities where weaknesses have been identified". We continue to build a strong public service.

What is interesting to me is that on that side of the House, they, day after day, attack us for taking action, for making an audit public and for implementing a new strategy of action that will change the relationship that we have with the Canadian public.

Which way would they have it?

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the way we would have it is that honest public servants would be proud of the job they are doing without political interference.

The audit said that control was a four letter word. The audit said "The old virtues of prudence, probity, economy, efficiency and effectiveness are not as deeply embedded in the HRDC culture as they could be", or probably as they used to be. Things are much different there now.

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The minister's response was that she would "find modern methods" of control. What is the important modern method? Is it incompetence? Is it patronage? Is it waste? Or, is it this boondoggle that this government—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is important to me is acting on information when I receive it.

Let us go through this one more time. An internal audit was done by the employees of the Department of Human Resources Development Canada, itself a control mechanism, itself a reference to ethical behaviour. Within the context of our department we made that information public and are acting on it.

Would the opposition have us do it any other way?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, 18 months ago a shocking HRDC audit made no bones about the fact that the department fell far short in prudence, honesty, economy, efficiency and effectiveness, yet the Liberals hid that damning audit and the Liberal minister has repeatedly denied that there was any serious problem.

Why should Canadians trust a government that hid this appalling situation for so long?

• (1420)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why should the Canadian public trust an opposition that refuses to talk about the positive things in this audit and only talks about the negatives? Why do they not talk about the fact that we did a successful job of designing and implementing Canada's education savings grants, or that we deliver services consistently even when making significant program and organizational changes, or that we are able to resolve problems once they are identified as having operational consequences? Why did they not talk about the department doing a good job of implementing program review?

There are always two sides to the coin. I would like the opposition to also recognize the good in this audit.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this minister must be the only person on the planet who can find something positive in a lack of prudence, honesty, economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The bad part is that the Liberals did absolutely nothing to fix the problem. Only months later, when threatened with public exposure, did they begin to admit that they had been derelict in their duty. Nothing had changed from the time of the first audit to the time of public exposure just a few weeks ago.

I ask this question again. How can Canadians trust a government that let them down?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been wondering what the Canadian Alliance is an alliance of. I wonder if it is an alliance to restore those who were kicked out of the party back into the party.

When I listen to these questions, I have a feeling it is an alliance of destruction, of negativity and of elitism. They show it day after day in the extreme.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Human Resources Development acknowledged that the fact that a company has placed itself under the protection of the Bankruptcy Act constitutes a breach of the contract signed by her department.

This is the case with Placeteco, according to section 10.1 of the contract. The minister made reference to section 10.2, so we will speak of this. According to it, the minister may issue a notice of breach or impose a recovery plan.

Has the minister called for a recovery plan? Has the minister produced a notice of breach, as was her duty under the section 10.2 she mentioned? This is a clear question, and I trust that I will receive a clear answer.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the contract, 10.1 and 10.2, there is a discussion of the issues of bankruptcy or potential bankruptcy. What is clear is that the government has options in this regard. We sit down, we look at the files, we look at the intended results and we make our decisions.

As a result of continuing to be in partnership with these companies, 170 people, including 92 in the Bloc riding of Trois-Rivières, continue to be employed.

Is the hon. member saying that he would rather not have those people employed?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, Placeteco is in Saint-Maurice. There were 81 jobs and now there are 78. The minister must stop clouding the issue. The loan was to Placeteco.

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The minister decided not to make use of section 10.2. Instead, she decided to appoint Gilles Champagne, the Prime Minister's buddy, as trustee for Human Resources Development Canada. Gilles Champagne is the lawyer for Gauthier, the future purchaser of Placeteco, and another of the Prime Minister's buddies. Champagne and Gauthier were also creditors in the bankruptcy. It would be pretty hard to find a nicer set-up.

Why has the minister chosen a plan brought forward by some of the Prime Minister's buddies rather than doing her duty and requiring a recovery plan, as she is empowered to do?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder how the hon. member opposite would respond to the 170 people who continue to be employed because of this relationship. Would he say to them "Sorry your jobs don't count. Sorry, you don't count?"

Whether we are talking about Placeteco or Techni-Paint, two companies that were part of our original contract, let us remember that 170 people are working and, from our point of view, that is a positive result.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's arguments have no credibility. The facts are clear: not only did the grant to Placeteco not create jobs, some were actually lost.

Worse still, everything was done in violation of the minister's duty, which is to protect taxpayers' money.

In light of all these damning facts, why does the minister not avail herself of clause 10.04 of the contract, which enables her, today still, to withdraw the grant given to Placeteco?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why does the hon. member not ask his colleague from Trois-Rivières if he would have wanted us to do that?

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to divert attention not to discuss the serious Placeteco affair involving friends of the Prime Minister.

If the minister refuses to use clause 10.04 of the contract, is it not because that contract is now meaningless, since the minister did not

avail herself in due time of the provisions that might have allowed her to manage this grant properly?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just go through the facts again. Indeed, we monitored this file very closely. Indeed, a senior administrative review was done of this file. Indeed, there were administrative errors and I talked about those on a number of occasions in the House. Most importantly, men and women in the riding of Saint-Maurice and in the riding of Trois-Rivières continue to be employed as a result of the partnerships that we forged with the private sector, with the Government of Quebec, with the communities and with yourselves.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Markham meeting will shape health care in Canada for a long time to come.

The provinces say that we need federal money. The federal government says that we need a plan. Why will this government not admit that we need both? We need a plan to restore health care funding. We need a plan to transform health care for the 21st century based on the commitment to a not for profit, public, single tier system.

When Canadians so desperately need both, why has the government provided neither?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as usual the hon. member is wrong in the premise of her question.

I will quote the federal government's advertisement yesterday. It said "Canadians know that governments need to work together on a plan. The Government of Canada will put more money into health care once governments work out a common plan to strengthen health care, now and for the future. The Government of Canada will play its part". Those are the facts.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with answers like that no wonder Canadians are deeply worried that the outcome of the Markham meeting will be market medicine.

With so many key issues unresolved: privatization, home care, pharmacare, primary care and prevention, the success of the health ministers meeting depends on what the federal government puts on the table.

How can the federal government pretend that it is providing leadership in tackling these issues if it leaves its chequebook at home?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no wonder the NDP is on the verge of disappearing from the political scene. It is simply out of touch. It is simply not listening.

Oral Questions

I just said that if there is a common plan to strengthen health care, now and for the future, the Government of Canada will play its part. This means, and again I quote the advertisement of the government, "The Government of Canada will put more money into health care once governments work out a common plan. We say "Health care: let's pick solutions not fights".

This is what we are asking the provinces to do, to join with us in finding the solutions we need to maintain our publicly funded, single tier health care system, something that is one of the glories of Canadian life.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, last night Canadians watched in horror as the CBC's *Fifth Estate* told the story of Stephen Truscott, a man who may have been wrongfully convicted of murder on scant and unreliable evidence. It appears that investigators fit the evidence to the guilt of the crime. Much of what went wrong occurred in the handling of the matter by members of the Canadian armed forces in conjunction with the OPP.

• (1430)

Will the Minister of National Defence instruct his officials to undertake a thorough review of all files relating to the involvement of the Department of National Defence in the Stephen Truscott case?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday in the House, we have not heard from either Mr. Truscott or his lawyer. If and when we do hear from Mr. Truscott or his lawyer, we will take any allegations or any submissions made very seriously.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, that is encouraging because the Truscott case, as we know, has been a festering wound on the psyche of this nation and casts a shadow over the entire criminal justice system.

The case against Truscott was based on ambiguous, circumstantial and inconsistent testimony from children, impossible medical analysis of the murder victim and Mr. Truscott himself.

It seems obvious that the irregularity surrounding the investigation and subsequent trial and the new evidence warrant a full inquiry. In the pursuit of justice and public confidence, will the Minister of Justice commit to conducting a full public inquiry upon receipt of Mr. Truscott's application?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member knows that we take any allegations of wrongful conviction very

seriously. If such allegations are submitted to me by Mr. Truscott or his lawyer, we will review them expeditiously and seriously.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the minister's six point plan is there mention of protection for HRDC employees who want to blow the whistle on unethical behaviour, but according to the audit seven out of ten employees in her department felt that they could not expose that type of behaviour without fear of reprisal.

If the minister is so concerned about cleaning up the problems in her department, why is there nothing in her plan to protect employees who want to expose that kind of wrongdoing?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my approach would be to encourage employees to come forward with areas where we can improve our undertakings.

I want to remind the hon. member that it was the department that identified shortcomings in the internal audit and we made it public. I would ask the hon. member opposite if he thinks that his daily chastising of the department for coming forward and taking action to make improvements is helping to encourage employees to come forward in the future.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. I blame the minister for the problems in the department, not the employees.

Seventy per cent of the people in her department fear that they will lose their jobs if they expose wrongdoing in her department. This is a department that handles tens of billions of dollars every year and every protection should be put in place to protect taxpayer money. How does the minister expect her plan to work if employees are afraid to expose wrongdoing in her department?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me point out that employees were not afraid to expose areas for improvement. That is what these audits do.

From our point of view the strength of a government can be seen in its ability to be transparent and accountable. We are doing that, but I would say to hon. members opposite every day pointing fingers at the Department of Human Resources Development Canada and its employees, undermining their confidence, undermining the relationship they have with communities, is destructive. It is debasing and building on the negative, and that is not appropriate.

The Speaker: Once again, the microphones are on two desks. Sometimes it is difficult to hear the answer either from the minister or the question from the other side. I appeal to members.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our questions for the Minister of Human Resources Development concern the payment of a grant of \$1.2 million to Placeteco in the Prime Minister's riding, and no other business.

We know that \$1 million was paid to the bank and \$200,000 cannot be accounted for. These are our questions.

I would ask the minister whether her main mistake in this matter involves the conflict of interest arising from the threefold role played by Gilles Champagne, the friend of the Prime Minister, who is the government trustee, a creditor of the company and the lawyer of the individual purchasing it—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will go through it again and I will say to the House that indeed we reviewed this file. We have undertaken, along with our partners, to ensure that the invoices that were required to satisfy the investments made have been obtained.

We also know that employees are working in this undertaking as well as its former sister company in Trois-Rivières. From our point of view, continuing to invest in this undertaking is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about Trois-Rivières. The minister is intentionally mixing the files. We are talking about Placeteco. That is quite clear.

An hon. member: P-l-a-c-e-t-e-c-o.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Placeteco got \$1.2 million from the government. That is what we are talking about.

My question to the minister is: Where did the \$1.2 million go? Where are the invoices? Where is the truth in this matter?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say again, the administrative—

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Show us so we can check them.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

Hon. Jane Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member again that one of its partners was the Government of Quebec.

[Translation]

Ms. Harel said "This project meets Quebec's job creation priorities and was initially discussed by our two organizations. I understand that you will be paying this amount over three years".

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: It is a scheme.

The Speaker: Order, please. Let us hear the minister's answer.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart: Mr. Speaker, my only point being that along with other partners we believe this was a good investment. We have confirmed that again by doing an administrative review of the files, by determining that the appropriate invoices supporting the investment are clear, and by supporting those people in the ridings that those companies exist in for a period of time so that the companies can become stabilized and grow and develop.

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EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if you are a debt plagued American company and your own government turns off the money supply, where do you go to secure a desperately needed line of credit? The Export Development Corporation. Canada will help.

EDC officials confirmed this morning that the sky is the limit for Amtrak loans. Why does the government continue to write Amtrak blank cheques with taxpayer money? Why?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear on this particular file. The government does not write blank cheques, as the opposition is alleging.

The EDC is an arm's length corporation. The government is helping Canadian exporters to export around the world. In this particular case the EDC has had Amtrak as its client, EDC has said, since 1985. It buys good Canadian products, creating jobs in Canada in transportation.

• (1440)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, arm's length, my foot. The EDC signs cheques faster than the HRDC minister after she has had her fifth cup of coffee. If \$1

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billion for Amtrak were not enough, how about an additional \$145 million for good measure? There is plenty more where that comes from and your privacy is guaranteed.

The government continues to write blank cheques for Amtrak. Why?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the EDC has existed for 56 years. It has helped Canadians export more than \$300 billion of goods and services around the world. There is no blank cheque there.

Everything EDC is doing in its corporate account is at the commercial interest rate and EDC has made money, \$118 million last year. The EDC is well run and well managed and it helps Canadian exporters.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I have appealed to members two or three times in this Oral Question Period. If hon. members do not wish to take part in Oral Question Period, please just wait in the lobbies until we are finished. This yelling cannot go on. It cannot.

* * *

[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICING

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we realize that the higher gasoline price provides the federal government with more tax revenue, when it is already collecting over \$5 billion annually, not counting the income tax paid by the major oil companies.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Can he who is using the provinces as the excuse for his inaction tell us what concrete action he plans to take in order to help consumers?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all very pleased that OPEC has already announced increased production. It is obvious that taxes are a matter for the provinces and for the federal government, because there is more than one level of government, but only one taxpayer.

There has been co-operation between the federal and provincial governments in a number of areas, for example the infrastructure program, the child tax benefit, taxation of revenue rather than taxation of tax. That is what federal-provincial co-operation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Témiscamingue.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is not shy about bulldozing the provinces when it suits it to do so, but when it can act by itself in its own area of jurisdiction by lowering the tax and dealing with the matter of competition, it does nothing.

Why this double standard?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to discuss the matter of a lower gas tax, perhaps he would like to talk to Mr. Landry about it.

Second, we must also point to the outstanding report by the Liberal caucus, headed by the hon. member for Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge. The report stated that New Brunswick lowered the price by two cents a litre in 1992 and that this cut was not—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago the Minister of Health committed a drive-by smearing in Alberta. Now the Prime Minister is retaliating against Ontario with a propaganda campaign.

How could the government be so arrogant to say it wants solutions for health care when it keeps picking fights with the provinces?

• (1445)

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is in the usual dream world of the Reform Party.

The federal government ads simply establish the truth in response to the misleading advertising of the Ontario government. Why does the hon. member not admit that? Those are the facts.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member cannot even get our name right.

The health minister claims that there is no money for the ailing health care system. Perhaps he should talk to the finance minister who says there is money if the provinces submit to Liberal harassment.

We have a mismanaged HRDC department. We have a health care system in shambles. What does the government do? It places a gun to the heads of the provinces.

Why does the health minister not simply go to the HRDC minister and ask for a grant?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, listening to that question I can understand why Canadians are not clear whether the new C-C-R-A-P group is a party or a movement.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CELANESE

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Celanese in Drummondville is closing its doors tomorrow. Of the 310 employees who will lose their job, 55 are over 55 years of age. For them active measures are not a solution.

How can the Minister of Human Resources Development simply sit back and do nothing for these workers, who find themselves without a job, without a support program and who have contributed all their life to the employment insurance fund but have not taken a cent from it? What is she going to do for them?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the Celanese plant is closing, but I want to convey that we are not crossing our arms.

I want to remind the hon. member that we have now devolved our active measures program in the value of \$2.9 billion over the next five years to the Government of Quebec. It now has the resources to assist in this regard.

With particular reference to older workers, we are working with the provinces and are investing \$30 million to develop pilot projects, province by province. I would ask the hon. member to talk to his counterparts in Quebec and ensure that there are opportunities through them to help these employees.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if you have ever heard of the black hole. Perhaps it is here today.

In any case, in New Brunswick seasonal workers have periods of time between their EI benefits and the time their season begins for work.

I would like to ask the minister today if there are any special measures to help these people who find themselves in the black hole when they have no income for their families during that period of time.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of travelling to Miramichi and the Acadian Peninsula with the hon. member.

I have talked to seasonal workers who find themselves in difficult circumstances because they are attached to the seasonal sector.

The member knows, as does the House, that in 1997 we signed a labour market agreement with New Brunswick.

To date we have invested through that province \$253 million to help get people, including seasonal workers, back to work. Over the next two years that province will receive \$80 million per year for such undertakings.

● (1450)

The unemployment rate in New Brunswick has dropped from 12.1% to 9.7%. It is clear that the Government of New Brunswick has the necessary means to undertake active labour measures as well as targeted measures to address labour market difficulties in that province.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, with the provincial health ministers meeting with our federal minister, the provinces want one question answered, and that is, why in priorities would this government spend more on cash for grants and contributions than it spends on cash for health care? Why would it do that?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is really off base. Last year we put \$11.5 billion into health care; in this year's budget, \$2.5 billion. There are billions and billions of dollars of equalization and adjustments under the cap on CAP to resolve that problem.

The hon. member is really off base in what he is saying. We are putting very substantial funding into the health care system through the provinces, but then why do provinces like Ontario not spend the money on health care when we give it to them?

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from an unbiased health care activist: "The total transfers, cash and tax points together, are still less in real terms per capita than seven years ago when this government took office".

Who was that? The Deputy Prime Minister's wife.

Why do they not tell—

The Speaker: I am not sure what the administrative responsibility is. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has proven that he and his party are not even in the 20th century. They are back in the 19th century. Spouses are not extensions of their spouses. They have independent careers, and if my wife is speaking on behalf of the Health Care Association, then that is something she is doing on behalf of her organization. We should be willing to accept that in the 21st century.

The hon. member ought to go off to sensitivity training before he gets to his feet—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a ship called the *Wan Lay* is on its way from Japan to the port of Vancouver. It is carrying 90 tonnes of toxic military waste containing PCBs and they are bound eventually for northern Ontario.

This waste is from an American military base in Japan, but the Americans will not touch it in the United States because it is too toxic. The Government of Ontario has made it clear that it does not want it in its province either.

Will the Minister of the Environment intervene to stop this shipment of toxic waste from being unloaded at the port of Vancouver?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Ontario, as the member correctly points out, yesterday indicated that it would not accept this waste in Ontario. We were in touch, in fact previous to that, with the United States department of defence. It will be approximately a week before this vessel gets near the west coast. We expect to have this matter dealt with in conjunction with the United States by that time.

I can assure the hon. member that if the level of contaminants in the shipment is above Canadian regulations we will not accept it in Canada and it would then have to be returned to Japan.

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that, but let me ask a more general question. Canadians want to know why they are in the business of cleaning up after the cold war: first plutonium from old nuclear warheads and now toxic waste from U.S. military bases overseas. Our environmental laws actually make it possible for companies to set up shop here when it is illegal for them to do so in the United States.

• (1455)

Will the minister commit to improving Canada's environmental laws to end this disturbing trend toward turning us into the world's toxic waste dump?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is perhaps unaware that we have altered the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, which was brought into force in 1992. We had a review of it, which took many years. We now have the revised act coming into effect, which will

improve substantially on the previous regime of the last century. I look forward to being able to deal with shipments such as this effectively under the new legislation.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister expressed disappointment in the lack of questions in the last number of weeks concerning his budget, but he was not as disappointed as Canadians were in his budget. The \$2.5 billion dedicated to health care in this country will keep our system running an average of three days in each province.

Is that the best the government can do after seven years, keep our system running for a mere three days?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Prime Minister said, in last year's budget we devoted \$11.5 billion in transfers to the provinces. In the last budget we devoted another \$2.5 billion. That is a 25% increase over two years.

In addition to that, we said that we wanted the provinces to sit down with us. If we can work out a way to save the principles of medicare, then there will be more money on the table.

Canadians do not want provincial and federal governments bickering. They want quality health care for Canadians.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, we all realize that we want quality health care for Canadians. The health ministers and the premiers recognize that. But the government is escaping the responsibility that was given to it seven years ago. It has taken government members seven years to realize that there is a problem and there is still finger pointing, name calling and blaming someone else other than themselves.

I remind the minister that his government has taken \$30 billion out of the system. They selectively remember what they want to remember. The fact is, they have taken so much money out of the system that they have buried the health care system. They killed it. We want it fixed.

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that our transfers in the CHST to the provinces are now at the level of \$31 billion, the highest ever. In addition, we are transferring the highest amount of equalization ever, which is close to \$10 billion. That is over \$40 billion. When we consider that the total amount spent by the provinces on health care is around \$56 billion, it is not an unsubstantial amount.

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As I said before, working in harmony and co-operation with the provinces we are prepared to do more.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is one of the most important issues facing the world and our nation today. I understand that over the last two days federal, provincial and territorial ministers of energy and the environment have been meeting on this subject in Vancouver.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources please inform the House about the discussions that took place?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had useful discussions with the provinces. Together we are moving beyond frameworks and strategies to produce specific business plans by this fall, dealing with matters like emissions trading and testing the concept of credits for prompt action.

The Government of Canada is going further. From our own federal operations we will reach an emissions reduction level that is not 6% but 20% below 1990 levels. We will reach that not by 2010 but by 2005. In addition, there was \$625 million in the budget earlier this month.

* * *

• (1500)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the government House leader could bring us up to date on the business for the rest of today and more important, the business for next week. It is my hope that the Canadian Alliance will get a supply day and we can hold the government accountable in that way at least for one day in this place.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has to be the most precise question of the week to which I will give a very precise answer.

This afternoon we will conclude consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-6, the electronic commerce bill.

Tomorrow we will debate second reading of Bill C-26, the airline legislation.

On Monday we will commence report stage of Bill C-23, the modernization of benefits and obligations bill.

The news that my hon. colleague across the way is waiting for is that Tuesday shall be an allotted day.

Starting on Wednesday we will call second reading of Bill C-22, the money laundering legislation, followed by Bill C-25, the income tax amendments from last year's budget, followed by Bill C-19, the war crimes bill and then back to Bill C-23 for third reading.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the 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 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. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, before Oral Question Period, there is a fairly significant leap in Bill C-3 from Bill C-54. Bill C-54 dealt only with the basic nature of the right to privacy be recognized.

With Bill C-6, we are making a leap to the recognition of the need of organizations to gather information and to use or communicate personal information for purposes that a reasonable person would consider acceptable under the circumstances. It is a good idea to repeat this because it transfers fairly significantly concern about and responsibility for what was in the past a matter of privacy and becomes a matter of information that may be useful to business.

• (1505)

This ties in with the fact that societies, and the individuals who are part of them, are increasingly losing power and respect in our life as a society.

The Quebec government and the Quebec society reject this bill. In that area as in many others, a consensus was achieved whereby the federal measure is being condemned by everyone, by all those who take an interest in that issue, in Quebec.

When I say everyone, I do not mean just anybody. Here is a partial list of the stakeholders. There is the Barreau du Québec, which is not close, except in certain circumstances, to the Quebec government. The Chambre des notaires vigorously opposed this bill, and so did the Action Réseau Consommateur, the Quebec

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Interprofessional Council and the Commission d'accès à l'information. The Quebec government itself formally opposed this legislation, through two of its ministers.

One thing that particularly struck me in this coalition—we might call it the labour management coalition—was to see the Conseil du patronat which, except under particular circumstances, is not close to the Quebec government, and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the CSN, which tends to be close to government, get together to denounce this bill. That in itself is enough to make one wonder, provided one is acting in good faith.

This is perhaps what we should question about the federal government in this matter as in others: its good faith. In light of the very reasonable criticisms made, and given that Quebec's legislation in that area has been in existence since 1994, has proven its usefulness over the past six years and is well known all over the world, Quebec's legislation should have served as a basis for the federal act, but it did not.

One wonders why the federal government turns a deaf ear in such a context. It may have reasons to do so. I am sure that many in Quebec share that view. If we make the intellectual effort, we can only wonder where we are headed. Why does the federal government insist on introducing such a bill?

It is part of an operation, a vision, a new way of doing things in this new Canada now taking shape, this underhanded Canadian nation building we are now seeing here. This came up one or two years ago.

By signing the social union agreement, the Canadian provinces gave the federal government permission to interfere in areas that, according to the Constitution, come under provincial jurisdiction. The only open opposition to the plan came from Quebec, through its premier, Mr. Bouchard. But the federal government forges ahead.

It worries us. There are signs that this is all part of implementing the social union.

As proof, I wish to cite the comments made by a representative of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association before the Senate:

In Ontario and in other provinces, legislation is now being drafted which would make it possible to obtain health information from all existing sources and create a medical e-file on every Canadian.

The federal government, together with the provinces, plans to create a national health information system in which these medical e-files would be available, along with other information, under the watchful eye of whomever is chosen to run it.

It is because Bill C-6 threatens to thwart this plan that stakeholders from the health sector have brought such strong pressure to bear on the Senate and the other place—

i.e. the House of Commons.

• (1510)

When someone who undoubtedly has privileged information uses an expression like “national health information system”, it is based on something. And while we are on the topic of vocabulary, the bill states that, if a province wants to pass privacy legislation, it will have to be legislation, and I quote, “essentially similar to the federal legislation”. The federal government is taking on a role for which it has no mandate and which is not supported by the Constitution.

It must be kept in mind that, under section 92.13, this is a clearly recognized provincial jurisdiction. The anglophone provinces allow the federal level to act freely in an area that belongs to them, and the federal government tells them they must enact legislation that is essentially similar to its own.

So here we are setting up a pattern to have everything in this country done, increasingly, slowly but surely, the way the federal government wants it. In 5, 10 or 20 years from now, decisions are going to be made here in Ottawa and no longer in the provincial capitals. The provinces will all be considered on an equal footing, Quebec included, and will become, slowly but surely, nothing more than great big regional county municipalities.

The choice that is clearly going to be offered to Quebecers will be to become either an authentic sovereign country, master of its own destiny and its own future, or a simple province like the others, one in which the Quebec people will have no recognition.

This leads us to the conclusion that this is a cleverly and insidiously worded bill, clandestine, non-transparent, which the leaders of the present federal government do not have the courage to defend publicly. We have seen the initiatives it takes, for instance, in the area of young offender legislation, where Quebec has an exemplary law of its own, which will be trampled under foot by Ottawa's initiatives and Ottawa's dogged insistence on interfering in the area of health research with its Health Research Institutes. The Bloc Québécois has put the government's will to the test.

While it can be agreed that the federal level does have some legitimate involvement in research, it constantly stresses matters pertaining to health instead. It insists on using the expression matters pertaining to health instead of limiting its intervention to health research, as the Bloc Québécois would have preferred.

This is highly significant, and we clearly feel, despite the weakness or the underhandedness of the federal leaders, that they are increasingly getting involved, in an underhanded way, in nation building.

We see it with the millennium scholarships in education, which is well managed in Quebec with a system of loans and grants that is unique in Canada. The federal government, trampling on Quebec's rights once again, treating it with contempt and passing over the

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Quebec model and structure, has taken upon itself to intervene in a field of jurisdiction that is not its own.

We can see this with assistance to transients, which goes directly to the public. We see it in assistance for home care, which goes directly to the public, even though home care is a provincial prerogative. These sectors are sacred in Quebec and, furthermore, they are well managed by Quebecers. The federal government is using its spending power to intrude.

This, therefore, is an insidious instance of nation building, something that is very current in the problem raised by Bill C-20, for example. In order to better crush Quebec, the federal government passes legislation, but when it comes to recognizing distinct society, nothing happens, because never was there mention of a distinct society.

Not with the transients, not with the millennium scholarships, not with young offenders, not with the institutes did they say "Quebec has special status; it is a distinct society", a distinct society that is the subject not of a bill, but of a motion. To crush Quebec, they passed Bill C-20.

The distinct society exists on condition that it be nothing more than a hollow shell, because English Canada would not agree to a distinct society such as the Prime Minister liked to talk about following his commitments at Verdun, where he dropped Quebec like a hot potato, just like his predecessor Mr. Trudeau, at the time. We must remember that. We must have some sense of history, because the stakes are too high.

• (1515)

We cannot take a piecemeal approach to these issues. We must know where the Privy Council is headed, and talk about the Privy Council. We must talk about what is Canada's motivation right now, what is responsible for this contempt toward the Constitution of Canada. The government despises the existence of the people of Quebec, it does not recognize it. This bill on personal information is yet another illustration of that contempt.

I hope Quebecers will take note of this type of behaviour, which may appear insignificant but is actually very meaningful.

* * *

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget

tabled in parliament on February 28, 2000. I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion. I would also request, because there has been so little disagreement with the budget in the House of Commons, that we could pass this bill on all three readings right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We will just table the notice of the ways and means motion, because we have to have some time on debate.

* * *

[Translation]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the 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 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. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Trois-Rivières for his speech.

Looking at my notes on Bill C-6, I was wondering, and I put the question to my colleague, how parliament could pass legislation that has been condemned by the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Action réseau consommateur group, the Quebec Interprofessional Council, the Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec and the Quebec government itself.

Quebec is several years ahead in the area of personal information protection. Why did neither the House of Commons nor the other place, which reviewed the bill and paid particular attention to health related issues, take into account all the representations made by Quebec?

Is this not an insidious manifestation of the fact that the federal government clearly realized that the whole issue of personal information protection is tied to a society's culture?

What this government wants is to cast a single culture, the Canadian culture. As part of the Canadian system, Quebecers would have no choice but to fit in and give in to this vision, in spite of the fact that we, in Quebec, have had legislation in effect for several years, legislation that is very effective in meeting its objectives, and does not have a purely commercial approach, but truly seeks to protect personal information.

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I wonder if the hon. member for Trois-Rivières could comment on this.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his question.

I think my colleague raises a very important problem, which should be at the heart of some later debate on the future of Quebec as a sovereign country in the context of the Canadian federation, because clearly—and I tried to get this across earlier in my remarks—the federal government is not quite so determinedly setting course for centralization, excessive and almost unconstitutional intervention.

We know that the Constitution is clear and that section 92.13 says so, the Conseil du patronat talks of it, the Quebec bar refers to it and the major stakeholders concerned with this sort of question criticize it. The government refuses not only to withdraw its bill, but also to make an exception at least for Quebec.

It might perhaps be time to speak of distinct society. Why does it not? That is what all Quebecers wonder. I notice the Minister for International Trade—a good Quebecer—who should be distressed by the attitudes of his government, which denies Quebec's distinct character, despite the motion on the distinct society.

This motion is a hollow shell, because if the federal government were consistent in its action, it would waste no time in the matters of personal information, young offenders, the health research institutes, the transients and so on, as is its practice, in finding out whether the concept of distinct society it proposed applies.

• (1520)

If it does not, this means that it does not believe in it. If it does not believe in it, that means it believes in centralization as the way of the future. If I were a Canadian, I would be a centralist.

An hon. member: You are one.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau: I am a Quebecer, let there be no confusion about that. I am here by accident.

If I were a Canadian, I would be a federalist and a centralist. My federalism would be a Pierre Elliott Trudeau-style federalism, in order to have a strong central government, one capable of making decisions to enhance Canada's competitive position in the world. That is logical.

This is a virtual necessity for the other provinces, but this is what is so traumatic for Quebec and the Quebec people, to be caught up in the infernal workings of a system in which, minority that we are in terms of representation, we can never gain the upper hand and escape being crushed.

If we do not take control, then we must call a spade a spade: Quebec will become another Louisiana. That situation did not come out of the blue, nor did this one.

There is a process going on, one that those in power do not want to talk about, and I am thinking of the Minister for International Trade. There is a process going on here in Ottawa, that has been entered into in order to centralize powers, to make Canada a unitary state, not at the expense of Alberta, Ontario or Nova Scotia, but at the expense of Quebec. Quebec is not a province, but a people, and this is the whole issue.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to understand today's debate, one must understand why the Senate sent this bill back to us.

The minister introduced Bill C-6 and it was rammed through the House. It was rushed through for all sorts of reasons, some of them undoubtedly having to do with the political agenda of the Liberal members opposite. But the bill raised many questions in Quebec.

Many people came right out and said that the bill was not only ineffective but ill-timed, given what was being done in Quebec.

I do not wish to repeat what my Bloc Québécois colleagues said, but they have raised the important point of the bill's constitutionality. If I can put it this way in the House, we all but pleaded the case. Had the senators wanted to do something useful, they perhaps should have spent a bit longer on the bill and tried to bring the Liberal members opposite around to their way of thinking, since they also hold a majority in the Senate. They could have woken the House up. It is often the Senate that is asleep at the switch, but this time it is probably the government members across the way, or perhaps they know what they are doing and once again have it in for Quebec.

Witnesses who appeared before the committee raised an important constitutional point. I will read a passage from the testimony of Jacques Frémont, a constitutional expert at the Université de Montréal. This is what he said:

In my view, Bill C-54 violates the spirit and the letter of the division of powers, as it must be understood in this country. It takes an arrogant and ill-timed approach to provincial jurisdiction.

I think that this is fairly clear. These are the words of an emeritus professor, a recognized constitutional expert, not something that came out of the mouth of a member of the Bloc Québécois or a nasty sovereignist.

He went on to say:

Privacy is basically a provincial jurisdiction in theory. In Quebec, for instance, property and civil rights, the Civil Code, and Quebec law apply, in addition to the Canadian and Quebec charters.

• (1525)

This is not from someone who is directly involved in the issue. This is a professor who studied the bill and who, based on his experience, came to that conclusion.

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The Conseil du patronat du Québec told the committee more or less the same thing, albeit in different terms. It said: doc.

Because the constitutional power given to the provinces by section 92(13) of the British North America Act regarding the protection of personal information and privacy is not at issue, the Quebec lawmaker has already passed its own legislation in this area. It is to be expected that many jurisdictional conflicts will surface.

The representatives of the Conseil du patronat told the government opposite not to legislate in this area, because it is not one of its jurisdictions. However, the government did so, as it always does, sometimes for suspicious reasons. In this case, it is rather striking.

One would have thought that the senators would have examined this issue. If they did, it is not reflected in their amendments today.

In Quebec, as we mentioned several times, but it is worth repeating, we already have similar legislation, which has proven effective over the past five or six years, which is extremely effective and which protects all personal information relating to Quebecers within the province's territory. This legislation is recognized and used as a model all over the world.

When I checked with the National Assembly, I was told that several other assemblies and parliaments have asked for copies of the act. They have asked about the philosophy behind it and how it works. I think the legislation we have in Quebec is an example.

Had the federal government done things the same way as Quebec, it would not have been so bad, but this bill is an intrusion and creates interpretation problems in this particular case.

Let us be clear. The federal act intrudes into areas under Quebec's jurisdiction. Let us take a concrete example. Which act is going to apply to a business in Quebec that has information pertaining to individuals? Will it be the federal act or the provincial act? Will both acts apply?

That is more or less what witnesses came to say, that the way the two acts will be enforced makes no sense.

I will give examples of duplication that may lead to serious conflicts. At the end of the day, it is the taxpayers who will end up footing the bill.

I will give an example with regard to individual consent. Whereas the Quebec act says that such consent must be given obviously, freely, in an informed manner and for specific purposes—it is pretty well defined—Bill C-6 says that it can vary depending on the circumstances. The wording is quite different. It can vary from one situation to the next and it should be explicit when dealing with personal information that can be considered sensitive. There is a big difference just on this important part of the act regarding consent for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

It is a lengthy bill. I will not go through all of its clauses because we have had ample opportunity to discuss all that already. But how will the courts interpret it? This is always my main concern, especially as justice critic. I think it is not going to be clear.

● (1530)

The Senate has examined this bill and returned it to us with amendments that, overall, change nothing, nothing at all. What is added on? A year longer before it comes into effect, just as far as health is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to let me know if I do indeed have 20 minutes, because I am being given the two-minute sign, when I thought I had 20.

There are several amendments proposed by the Senate. It is unanimous in its opposition to Bill C-6 in its present form, sometimes for reasons that are totally contradictory, and one might wonder why.

It also feels this bill is poorly drafted. This is not surprising; we said so on numerous occasions. It also finds that medical information, which it considers more sensitive than other information, is not being sufficiently protected. This too we have said on numerous occasions.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Order, please. The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm is correct. There is a 20 minute slot. The Chair made a mistake because I thought the time was being split with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. The Bloc then ended up with two slots.

The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm has another 12 minutes to go, and it will be sorted out after.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: Thank you for the clarifications, Mr. Speaker. I shall try to start where I left off.

These Senate amendments are a good example of the fact that what they do is often highly inefficient.

I think they could have sent the government a far clearer message about this bill. We MPs have received certain messages, and no doubt the senators have received the same ones. They originated with all the people who will have to apply this bill, or have it applied to them, at some point.

They have said nothing about them. The federalists in the other place could have dealt with flexibility, which is a catchword these days. Nearly every bill makes some reference to flexibility, this one included.

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I will quote from several letters, which will show you the flexibility of the federal government.

On October 19, 1999, the minister responsible for the Quebec personal information protection act, David Cliche, and Robert Perreault—because these two ministers supervised this legislation—wrote to the Minister of Industry, warning him that legislation already existed in Quebec and not to infringe on Quebec's jurisdiction.

I will quote the second paragraph of this letter:

In fact, as ministers responsible for this matter, we have written on several occasions to express Quebec's position in this regard. Without reiterating all of our arguments, we remind you that this bill would not complement the Quebec legislation. It would duplicate it.

And the ministers sought an emergency meeting with the minister to examine the bill and make the necessary corrections or just to try to convince the minister he was off track. This was on October 19, 1999.

• (1535)

On November 18, 1999, the minister wrote to David Cliche and Robert Perrault to say:

I agree that we should meet, but in the short term it would be appropriate for our officials to work together to discuss the exemption that would apply to the organizations covered by the Quebec legislation and any technical issues relating to the bill.

That was his acknowledgement of receipt. On February 10, 2000, the Government of Quebec wrote Minister Manley to say "Listen, we have not met, and the bill has been passed. We have a problem. You are telling us someone is looking into this issue at the federal level and the officials should be meeting soon to discuss exemptions and the Quebec organizations to which the law will not apply".

That is where we stand now. I heard a Liberal member mention earlier that, in Quebec, they will be exempt. Such is the flexibility of the act. Since we have our own legislation in Quebec, the federal legislation will not apply. This is false and I hope the member who said that did not say it knowingly. I dare hope he was misinformed.

As of now, the ministers concerned, both in Quebec and Ottawa, have not come to an agreement, they have not even met, because the arrogant minister across the way refused to meet the Quebec ministers to discuss the matter.

Consequently, the federal legislation will apply in Quebec. Only by order in council will some Quebec organizations be able to obtain an exemption. We will have to negotiate on a piecemeal basis for every organization. The minister, the big cheese, will have total control. He will say yes or no to individual organizations, as he pleases. This is what this government calls flexibility. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case.

At the industry department, this so-called but non-existent flexibility is not an isolated case. I see it in the department for which I am my party critic, namely the justice department.

Currently we are reviewing a bill on youth criminal justice to replace the Young Offenders Act. Here again, the minister told us repeatedly in the House "The flexibility is there for Quebec to keep on doing what it has been doing for the past 30 years. The Quebec model is not in danger; there is flexibility". This is not true either. It is not true when we examine bills, whether in the case of the Department of Industry, the Department of Justice, or other departments. Flexibility is a word catchword, these days.

It is not true that there is flexibility or, if there is, it is always one-sided. Flexibility always works to the advantage of the federal government. I think this needs to be noted and, had they wanted to do something useful, the senators could have set this government straight and told it that the flexibility it refers to does not exist. But they let the opportunity pass. What is the point? What sort of work are they doing in the other place? The amendments they have submitted to us change absolutely nothing in the application of the bill.

I mentioned earlier that many people had spoken to us and I suppose they also spoke to the senators. Their comments were very revealing, and very carefully thought through as well. They had taken the time to examine the bill in depth. I have been here since 1993 and I have great admiration for those who testify before committees.

• (1540)

Some people are disturbed by the fact that we have been here since 1993, but we will be here for a few more years, that is until Quebecers say yes to sovereignty, particularly since we will have a clear mandate from them.

An hon. member: You will need a lot of votes.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: As a member of parliament from Quebec who won with some 60% of the votes at the last federal election, I feel much more legitimate than the hon. member, who got elected by the skin of his teeth.

So, I have a great deal of admiration for the witnesses who, after thoroughly examining an issue or a bill, come to tell us about the impact of that bill. In this case they told the government "You are headed the wrong way". They all said it one after the other, but the federal government turned a deaf ear, did as it pleased and passed the bill without taking into consideration anything these witnesses said. Indeed, I have a great deal of admiration for them because they keep coming back in the hope that, this time, the government will listen to them.

The Quebec Interprofessional Council, which includes 43 professional groups regulated by Quebec's Professional Code, came and told the government "We are opposed to this bill. Do not do

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that". We also heard the Conseil du patronat. We had the Barreau du Québec, which said "You are headed the wrong way with such a bill". We also heard the Chambre des notaires and various associations.

But the government did as it pleased anyway. I find it very deplorable that this government is not listening to the public, and particularly that, once again, is trampling on Quebec's jurisdictions and the Quebec model.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague from Berthier—Montcalm to tell us whether this is the first time he has seen the federal government totally thumbing its nose at a Quebec consensus, in all his experience here since 1993?

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty easy question, because we encounter the same thing on a regular basis, just about daily. One has only to listen to oral question period to see clearly that the government over there is a very arrogant government, one that refuses to answer our questions.

I see the Minister for International Trade laughing. If I were him, I would not be too quick to laugh, considering everything that is going on at Human Resources Development Canada, since he is in large part responsible for it, even though he is now in hiding. In your place, Mr. Minister, I would not be laughing.

That said, yes, the government over there is indeed arrogant. It does pretty well as it pleases, despite a consensus against it, sometimes even across Canada.

I will give an example that very much involves Quebec: the Young Offenders Act. I see two Quebec MPs and I am sure they are not going to contradict me. There is a very broad consensus on that bill. I have not to date seen a single organization in Quebec calling for changes to the legislation on young offenders, yet the government over there is preparing to make some extremely significant changes in order to totally alter the nature of the Quebec approach and the Quebec model we have had for the past 30 years.

Comments have come from defence lawyers or crown attorneys, the Institut Pinel, legal commissions, even judges—magistrates have abandoned their usual reserve to tell the government "Hands off the Young Offenders Act". But it carries on regardless.

This is a government which is not listening to the population, and I am really anxious for the next federal election. At some point they are going to get what is coming to them, just like their predecessors did. Before there is an election, there will certainly be some changes at the top. We know how much discussion is going on among the Liberals at present. I am dying to see the Quebec MPs doing the rounds in their ridings to tell people how they have defended Quebec in certain matters, while they have hidden out

when asked to intervene. I am dying to see how they will defend their great record in Quebec.

• (1545)

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to this bill and to say that, in my opinion, members of the Bloc have made a great contribution to this very important debate. I congratulate them on that.

[English]

I do not think many of the fears the Bloc Québécois have raised in terms of the sovereignty of Quebec in this particular issue are fears we have to worry about to a great degree. Where their contribution has been best is in analysing the shortcomings of this bill as a bill that purports to protect personal information.

Myself, I come to this bill at this stage with the point of view that it is an interim measure. I do not think it has even begun to address the vast problems of privacy in a world where so many thousands of households are connected through the Internet to other sites that they have little knowledge of.

Just to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, you can do this yourself on your own computer. You can be surfing the net, Mr. Speaker, going to sites in Canada, the U.S. and abroad. You can do whatever kind of net surfing you like. I have a program on my computer at home that is not a Windows program. It is a computer search program. What I am able to do with the program is, after having surfed the net, I can go into the deep files of the computer and I can get a readout, to some degree, only a limited degree, of the so-called cookies that have been left behind wherever I have visited sites, and also something called preferences.

I have a classic example of what happens. I was using a search engine. You know how you are just searching around for this, that and the other thing. I saw a site that said redheads so I called up the site. It was just a picture of pretty women with red hair. It was not a porn site, Mr. Speaker, I have to assure you.

I went back after and found that topics pertaining to redheads kept on coming up whenever I used the various search engines for some weeks following. I used the search program and went into the data bank. What I found was, it was not a cookie because cookies are something quite different, but it was still data that had been deposited in my computer that biased my computer for searching topics that had to do with redheads.

When I further analysed this particular data bank of information in my computer, I found that it had an extensive list of my tastes in terms of what I had been calling up on the Internet. In fact, I call up a lot of science subjects because I have a particular interest in certain fields of science. These were reflected in the list of these so-called preferences.

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There are other things. If you go to a stock site, or to a porn site for heaven's sake, all these things are recorded on your machine. They are recorded to tell your machine to bring certain types of data forward when you use a search engine.

Mr. Speaker, if these so-called preferences are recorded on your machine, they are recorded on other machines. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that when you use your search engines in your home computer, what in effect you are doing is you are creating an intimate profile of yourself that is available not just in Canada but internationally.

• (1550)

Mr. Speaker, the problem with this legislation as I see it is it does not go deeply into this whole issue of how we put a filter on this type of information. As far as I can see, the legislation does not actually deal with this problem of distributing personal information that goes abroad and is obviously used commercially.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, the legislation as I see it does try to put controls when you take out a newspaper subscription for example or when you buy certain products like automobiles and so on and so forth. This legislation provides for certain controls on the use of that kind of data, but it does nothing as far as I can see to address the larger problem of controlling personal information that is going out on the Internet worldwide. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a fundamental problem that I am not sure there is any solution to.

Yet we have legislation before us that I think was created with the very best of intentions. I have studied it actually at some length. I felt that basically it spins out of the existing Privacy Act which pertains to the documents held by government agencies chiefly about government civil servants and anyone who has had anything to do with the government or worked for the government.

Mr. Speaker, that is a pity because that legislation desperately needs an overhaul. It does not reflect the changing world where we have the possibility of knowing a great deal about one another. I would have been much happier if this legislation had directed itself toward putting controls on Internet service providers and those who stand at the various stages at which they can intercept personal information and sell it.

Mr. Speaker, what it does instead is it basically uses a commercial standard, I believe it is called. Organizations which are handling commercial personal information are supposed to conform to these standards. Basically the principal one is if they have collected the information, they are not to distribute the information without your consent. But, Mr. Speaker, I still do not see how this is going to be addressed when it comes to international service providers collecting information every time you go outside the

country or even within the country when you are using your computer at home or your laptop in the office. It is very difficult to control these things.

On the other hand, and this is why I do not agree with the opposition, particularly the Bloc Québécois' opposition to this bill, it does do some very positive things. It advances the desire for openness. I know that sounds odd when we are talking about privacy legislation, but it advances the cause of openness in government agencies very significantly. Mr. Speaker, it does this because for the first time it brings crown corporations under legislation that determines how they should use information.

Mr. Speaker, crown agencies currently are exempt from the Access to Information Act. You cannot find out what crown agencies are doing. Canada Post, AECL, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and many other organizations are exempt under the current Access to Information Act. You cannot find out the details of their budget. You cannot find out what the salaries are. You cannot find out whether they have a problem with nepotism, that they are bringing people in as a result of who is a friend of whom. You cannot find out that kind of thing. I think the Access to Information Act desperately needs to be reformed in that area.

The nice thing about Bill C-6 is what it does do is that for the first time it brings some of these crown corporations under privacy regulation. It includes Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the new port corporations that were created by the recent port authority bill, Maritime Atlantic and VIA Rail. The theme being is it is looking at broadcasting, financial and transportation industries that exist as parent corporations.

• (1555)

Mr. Speaker, this is an incredibly positive step in the right direction. We can no longer tolerate arm's length government agencies that use taxpayers' money and are not in any way accountable to the taxpayer. You cannot find out information on these various organizations if you want to examine their books because their books are not available to you.

This bill puts them under certain requirements of the Privacy Act in terms of the type of personal information they may collect. The irony there of course is because they are protected under the Access to Information Act, I am not quite sure whether we have the other side of the equation to make sure that they are actually implementing the Privacy Act, as explained in the notes we have before us.

On the one hand, symbolically, it is a wonderful thing for the government to do but it does not go sufficiently far enough. I suspect as I regard this entire bill, we should take it as the government's intent to try to find a way not only to open up government documents of all kinds, but to also build a proper

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regime of protecting personal information. But we still have a long way to go and I think this is only a very first step.

I should talk a little about the amendments that have come back from the Senate. These amendments pertain to defining personal information. There was concern expressed in the Senate that the definition of personal information was far too broad.

The various representations before the Senate were seeking better clarification of what is meant by personal information in terms of health related information. The problem is that in the existing act the definition of personal information is very broad, Mr. Speaker. It does not specify anything more than your name and address. It is not personal information, and just about anything else you disclose is.

I see you yawning, Mr. Speaker. Do I need to pick up the pace a little? I will do my very best. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, forgive me. There must be a House rule against drawing the attention of the country to the Speaker. I am going to get myself into terrible trouble. I will get control of the debate again.

The personal information clause that comes from the Senate was originally a very important clause in this bill. I think the senators were right to challenge this particular clause and to demand that it be defined more clearly. The definition that has come to us from the Senate is a definition that expands the idea of personal information in terms of health related information. When you go to a doctor and give information, that should be personal information and should be specifically protected in this legislation.

I would suggest, and I do not want the Senate to send the bill back after we send it up there, but I think it put its finger on something very important. My problem with personal information is when you make it too broad. The reality is that there is a lot of personal information that we divulge that we do not care about. I come back to the whole idea of commercial information. When you purchase something at Radio Shack it asks us for our name and address. Obviously, it is going into a data bank that is building up a personal profile. Most people are not bothered by that.

This legislation is directed precisely toward that sort of thing and says that this should be regulated and that information should not be distributed without your prior consent. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that nobody cares about that kind of information. Nobody cares about what kind of automobile you buy because when you buy a brand new Buick or a Volvo or an Audi or a cheap Ford, if you will, you advertise your purchase every time you drive that car. It is no secret. So why that data should be subject to this legislation I do not know.

• (1600)

On the other hand, where the senators are correct, there is a type of personal information that we do guard. One of the types of

information that we do want to guard and protect is medical information. Hence, I believe this amendment is apropos, but I would have pursued it further. I would have suggested that another type of information that we would have like to have safeguarded and we should specify in legislation like this is financial information.

The problem is that we are not very certain. There is a huge difference between people knowing how much is in your bank account or how much is on your credit card or what your indebtedness is than what purchases you make. I would have thought this bill would have been far stronger if it had specified that financial information is something that should be specifically protected.

Again, I would have thought in terms of personal information what a religion is should be specified as something that should be protected. It is no one's business knowing what religion, what denomination or whether you have a religion in terms of what is available in terms of personal information that can be bought and sold.

I will switch back to my suggestion about the Internet. I see there are some members from the Reform Party who are watching this.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Canadian Alliance.

Mr. John Bryden: There are quite a few members and I am very pleased. I know that they have a particular type of constituency, not 100% this type. I do not want to characterize them too specifically, but there are a lot of people who support the Reform Party who are associated with Christian fundamentalist organizations. They would be appalled to know that their religious association is easily identified by the way they use the Internet.

For instance, as I was saying before, Mr. Speaker, where you go on the Internet leaves a trail that is recorded not only on your machine but on parent machines elsewhere. It can be in the United States or anywhere else. I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that the religious denomination, be it Christian, Muslim, be it whatever, by the way you actually search the Internet becomes part of your profile. Suddenly people in the United States, people anywhere in the world who are the masters of this information can profile you wherever you are because you have used your computer to go to various sites that are related to your particular religious interest.

You can see, Mr. Speaker, that I have been doing a lot of work on the Internet. Similarly you can do the same thing if you are an ethnic Canadian and you are interested in, say, India. You go to various sites that are either in India or are related to people who are from India who have been in the country for some time, organizations that may exist in Canada or wherever. You go to those sites, Mr. Speaker, and you build a profile so someone can tell who you are.

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The thing about this legislation, the fact that it does not aim at this type of personal information and it does not specifically protect this type of personal information I think is an inadequacy. It does not go far enough.

I got interested in this in the second reading debate. I have to say that the minister was very receptive to this type of criticism. One of the things that happens in a debate in the House of Commons is that we do not all get our way because of course it takes time to make an amendment and you do not know the impact. Sometimes, even if the minister likes an amendment or something is proposed from the opposition, you cannot implement it immediately simply because you do not know the full ramifications.

I was able to persuade the minister to accept an amendment that I put forward. That amendment was actually to the definition of commercial activity. What it did was it expanded the definition of commercial activity to include non-profit organizations and political parties. The reason I did that was because I am aware, as so many members are and other people, that many charitable organizations and even political parties collect fundraising lists. When you donate to them they collect that information and they give that information to central suppliers, central information moguls in the United States, who then send out direct mail advertising missives usually to senior citizens and the vulnerable. A lot of people have lost a lot of money as a result of this program.

• (1605)

The minister accepted an amendment that brings that type of activity under this legislation. I think that is very positive, but it does not go anywhere in addressing the problem of people using the Internet and these information czars in who knows where, in some hyperland that may be hovering somewhere over southern California. They collect that information and they know, Mr. Speaker, about you, about you, about you and about me. That is a very dangerous thing. This legislation moves in the right direction, but we have a long way to go.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I caught only portions of the speech of the hon. member to whom I always enjoy listening. I just want to correct him. We have a new name. It is the Canadian Alliance. We are quite proud of it. I might even make the same mistake too because we kind of get used to one thing.

I appreciate what the member has said. I have been a consensus commissioner. Members already know what a commissioner has to do for those who have failed to file their forms, saying that it was confidential information. In some cases I agreed with them, but it was on the census form. I have done other surveys too.

Would the hon. member not agree that the government should always consider the information it seeks from an individual and apply it to the act, which will undoubtedly be passed, to make sure the information it is seeking is in total accord with the bill?

The reason I mention that is that recently people in Saskatchewan are in hard times and they have filed AIDA forms. One of their fears was the bottom of the form where it is indicated that if they file the form incorrectly they are subject to the usual fines. They went ahead and filed the forms and then by coincidence or otherwise they were at the same time or within a few months being audited by Revenue Canada.

Does the member see what I am getting at? Did that one government form fall into the hands of Revenue Canada? We will never know. How do we guarantee that information is not shared when statistics about the number of cattle a farmer has on hand is collected?

I know these forms are valuable. They are of help to Canada. They are of help to the government. However, how do we guarantee to Canadians that when such forms are filled out they will not be shared with other departments and will be kept strictly in the department of statistics or whatever? That is the key. I am worried about that because I have not fully convinced myself that there is not cross-government sharing. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, Statistics Canada is covered by the Statistics Act. That act provides for absolute confidentiality. It is actually quite an interesting piece of legislation because that confidentiality is supposed to go indefinitely.

The member is probably aware that there is quite a movement in Canada right now to try to open some of the very old census records. Contemporary Statistics Canada data are absolutely protected. He should certainly assure his constituents that they do not have to worry. It is protected from other departments. Otherwise, I would have to say, if it is not protected when collected by Statistics Canada there would be a serious breach. I think we have to take it at face value.

The member raises another issue that is related to that, and that is this whole question of when a farmer, say in the Saskatoon area, has to sign on to a government program, the disaster relief program or whatever other program. He has to disclose by the very act of signing on to a program that he has financial difficulty. This is the kind of financial information that I was talking about. It is very, very clear that when information is collected that reflects on the financial status of individuals it needs to be protected.

• (1610)

I am sure this kind of information is protected under Canada's Privacy Act as it pertains to this kind of program, but remember Bill C-6 actually goes beyond the government and goes into the general community. It is really talking about corporations and private enterprises.

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That is where we have the problem, or at least I have the problem. I think that is where the member raises a very, very serious point, because you can be a small entrepreneur, a farmer or whatever else, and as a result of running on hard times you may be making purchases or not making purchases. Not making purchases is a form of information. Not buying seed grain in a particular year is an indication of what you are doing. It is that kind of financial information that may be moving around there that would enable people commercially to create a profile. Then you know what happens, Mr. Speaker. They cannot borrow. Then they are stuck.

I just think the member raised a really important issue. Again I believe this bill is an interim bill. I know the minister is listening. I think this is a point that needs to be examined, because we all know the trouble that is happening out on the prairies and I think these people need the protection of a good privacy law.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree that there is a need for the protection of privacy act laws with regard to agriculture and individual people, but the protection we need to a certain extent is protection from big government collecting ever more information on the activities of average Canadians.

Many farmers in my riding have called me saying that they have received phone calls. A strange person on the phone wanted to know how many cows and how many calves they had, whether they had grain in the bin and what they had for breakfast that morning. A lot of people do not know who is calling them and resent that type of information gathering.

When we hear resentment in the west toward the government we find that one of the biggest most recent causes is somebody phoning from some unknown source in Canada, the United States or wherever, representing who knows whom. Statistics Canada and the whole operation of the Liberal government have to be examined and seen for what they really are.

I also resent some of the activities of the member for Wentworth—Burlington. He makes a point of trying to put the new Canadian Alliance into a pigeon hole on which to further base the deception that the Liberal government will continue with over the course of time.

Does member support the government legislation with regard to same sex benefits? Does he support the Liberal government that is continuing to promote and advance abortions in the country? Is he in fact saying anything on behalf of Canadian farmers with regard to rail transportation?

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This has nothing to do with the piece of legislation we are discussing.

Where is this member coming from? I think you should bring him to order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): If the member for Wentworth—Burlington needed someone to be a defender, I certainly would have intervened. Knowing the hon. member for Wentworth—Burlington as I do and being assured that he can keep me awake at all times, I did not think that he needed anybody to defend him. He is quite able to look after himself so we will let the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake finish.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Mr. Speaker, my final point is that the statistics that are gathered enable the government to advance its social agenda, which to a lot of Canadians is extremist in nature, and I would like him to answer that.

• (1615)

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite complains about government collecting data before it agrees to award grants to organizations. That is precisely the Canadian Alliance's complaint with respect to the HRDC file. It is because the HRDC bureaucrats failed to do their homework in some instances, failed to get enough data about who was receiving money and failed to examine the credentials of those people receiving the money, that we have some problems in HRDC right now. If the government is going to give money to anyone it has to find out who that person is and whether they are entitled to the money. So it has to ask close, probing questions.

The problem is that we have passed through a terrible age of political correctness in which too many bureaucrats have failed to ask the questions they should have asked. If people go to borrow money from a bank they darn well have to answer certain questions about how much acreage they have under cultivation and what are their basic assets.

What Bill C-6 is all about is that the existing privacy act protects this kind of information when the government collects it but when private corporations collect it there has not been adequate protection. The member is quite right. If the people in his community are answering phone calls from someone that they do not know, maybe someone from the United States, that is precisely the problem and that is precisely the problem that Bill C-6 addresses, except, in my view, it does not address it quite specifically enough. I think it has to be much harsher, much more direct and much more specific than what currently exists.

At least this party on this side of the House does want the government to ask those probing questions of any organization or any person it is going to give money to because it is taxpayer money. We are entitled to know how that money is being spent. If people want money from the government they darn well had better show some evidence as to why they deserve that money.

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I would argue that, except in cases where a person's real personal financial information will adversely impact on the person's future, then of course it should be protected. I wish this legislation protected that kind of information more specifically. Nevertheless, it is going in the right direction.

As far as the member's other remarks, they are a little off topic. However, I have to say that I think Bill C-23 is an excellent piece of legislation, particularly because finally it defines marriage in law as a union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. I think that is a very fine thing that the government did.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to Bill C-6. I would like to begin my remarks by reminding members of a terrible reality.

This bill found virtually no support in Quebec because Quebec already has legislation dealing with the protection of personal information. It came into force five years ago and it goes a lot further than the bill before us.

Earlier, I listened to the exchange between my two colleagues from the Canadian Alliance and from the Liberal Party. I could see all the difference there is between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Quebec, having reached a consensus, passed legislation on the protection of personal information that strikes a balance between supporting trade and ensuring that individuals are protected with regard to personal information pertaining to them. That legislation is used as a model throughout the world. It is one of the first acts of this kind ever to come into force and it is the most balanced.

At the same time, here, in the House, members of the Canadian Alliance say that it is government interference. Now we understand better why the bill proposed by the federal government is so bland. It proposed a bill that deals with the issue of electronic commerce without dealing directly with the protection of personal information. That is probably why the Conseil du patronat du Québec and the Confédération des syndicats nationaux or CSN—employers and unions, and that says a lot—all expressed their opposition to this bill.

• (1620)

The Quebec bar and the Chambre des notaires du Québec, those who deal daily with information and contracts, whose job it is to advise employers, business people and industrialists on how to manage information are saying this is a bad bill, and we already have our own legislation in Quebec.

Why such duplication? A few years down the road, we will probably have two court cases to try to decide which one prevails, and to find out what to do in such or such a situation.

Even if the federal government decided the Quebec legislation applied in Quebec, not the federal one, nothing would prevent an employer or an individual who felt unfairly treated by the act, to claim that the federal government's decision was not valid. It would be a terrible legal mess.

Action Réseau Consommateur is another opponent to the act. It got the picture right away. The federal act will protect people involved in e-commerce, but it does not protect them the same way the Quebec act protects every citizen. Today, people who look at consumer issues know the importance of telemarketing and the way the new technologies are being used, and abused, to reach people.

Also, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec and the Quebec access to information commission are opposed to the bill. The members of the commission are experts who, in the past, developed an interesting approach to dealing with personal information. They analyzed the situation and testified before the committee that, in their opinion, the bill was not acceptable.

Several years after the Quebec government acted responsibly and passed legislation which has been well received across Quebec, the federal government is stepping in. Quebec can see the legal and administrative complications that will stem from such duplication.

Not surprisingly, Bill C-6, which was formerly known as Bill-54, was hardly changed at all at that stage. Today, the bill is being amended by the Senate. This is why it has come back to the House of Commons. The Senate has proposed amendments to exempt for an additional year the health sector from the provisions of the bill dealing with the protection of personal information.

In a way, this is proof that the bill was hastily thought out and has not been fine-tuned. Even after C-54 and after C-6, we are now seeing amendments being tabled by the Senate to exempt the health sector when this problem was resolved a long time ago in the Quebec legislation.

We are a bit surprised that the federal government did not use it as a model from the start. This was all covered in the Quebec act. If the federal government wanted appropriate legislation for the rest of Canada, this was the way to go.

The Quebec act applies to all sectors. It applies to the health sector. It is very clear on the matter of consent. Section 21 states that, with the permission of the Commission d'accès à l'information, organizations may disclose without consent information from which personal information has been removed.

If the minister had used the Quebec legislation as a model for his bill on the protection of personal information in the private sector, we would not be in the mess we are in right now.

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The Bloc Québécois will oppose the Senate's amendments, because they do not change the principle of the bill, which the Bloc vigorously opposed in order to protect Quebec's jurisdiction in the area.

These amendments could result in one of three things: they may change nothing because there is no consensus and the boondoggle, as described to the senatorial committee, will continue; future amendments will be consistent with Quebec's legislation and will not cause any particular problems in Quebec; in the worst case scenario, the proposed amendments contradict Quebec's legislation, and once again the federal government will establish national standards in a strictly provincial area, which will create duplication and confusion.

• (1625)

We realized, when reading the proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, that the most reputed experts give totally different interpretations of the legislation. This bill was drafted initially for consumers, to give them confidence in e-commerce, but reputed Canadian lawyers have diametrically opposite interpretations of the bill. How will consumers figure it out?

Also, the Senate's discussions raised a number of problem areas that had already been identified by the Bloc Québécois: jurisdictional duplication, confusion, and contradiction.

Finally, the Bloc Québécois notes that the minister has agreed to bring forward, at the report stage, amendments to satisfy the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and announced that he approved the amendments recommended by the Senate to deal with the concerns expressed by the health sector.

But he dismissed out of hand numerous requests from the Quebec government and the civil society, asking unanimously that Quebec be exempt from the application of the legislation in order to avoid constitutional problems and duplication of regulations. In so doing, the Minister of Industry, like his government, is taking a hard line against Quebec.

We are faced with the evidence. This bill was put through by closure. The government made a decision. For Quebecers, this is a good example of the kind of country they live in.

A decision was made by the federal government to build the kind of Canada it wanted for all of Canada, to the detriment of any other form of development. While the Quebec society gives itself its own tools and is ahead in many areas of social policy, the federal government fails to take an approach flexible enough to give Quebec the breathing room it needs to reach its goals and put in place its policies, and Bill C-6 is an example of that.

I refer to a paper prepared by the hon. member for Mercier, entitled "Bill C-6 Promoting E-Commerce at the Expense of

Privacy". That is really the spirit that we found in the bill. It is best illustrated by the fact that it emanated from the Department of Industry.

It is quite normal for that department to adopt a commercial approach, but nowhere do we see the balance found in Quebec's legislation, which has been in effect for several years and has made the protection of privacy one of the highlights of government action in Quebec. It has allowed for proper decisions that have led to adequate jurisprudence and interesting results.

Bill C-6 is another case of the federal government deciding to impose its perspective and to refuse to confirm in its legislation that Quebec's legislation will take precedence in Quebec. A clause of this bill deals with equivalent legislation, and there is probably one in Quebec which could be recognized as such.

However, during debate in the Senate, it was realized that even if Quebec's legislation is substantially similar to Bill C-6 and will probably be designated as such, since it is set out in a different scheme than Bill C-6, it would be helpful to know on what basis the decision was made, although, in the absence of any criteria set out in the legislation we are, in a sense, operating in a bit of a vacuum. This is what Anita Finnberg, Counsel, Legal Services Branch, Ontario Ministry of Health, pointed out.

Senator Murray added that this was a very good point, and wanted to know on what basis the department, or perhaps the minister himself, could indicate that Quebec's legislation met the criteria of the clause dealing with "substantially similar" provincial legislation.

Even if the federal government were to say "It has been decided that the Quebec legislation was sufficiently similar and that it is to be considered the legislation that will apply within Quebec", a lawyer might well defend the interests of his client by saying "There was even discussion in the Senate, when the bill was passed, to the effect that it was very difficult to identify whether a statute could be considered similar. It appears to me that, in the present case, the federal government has erred and the Quebec legislation ought not to have been considered similar, and consequently I choose to take this to all levels of the court system". This would cost a considerable amount.

• (1630)

This is probably the situation the Conseil du patronat had in mind when it expressed opposition to the bill, saying "If there is one thing we at the Conseil do not need, it is more duplication, more ways of doing things so that we cannot operate properly and are stuck dealing with an inadequate bureaucracy".

If the only thing involved had been facilitating e-commerce, we would, of course, all have been in favour. The other side of the coin, protection of privacy, would, however, have had to be well developed, would have had to be working properly, and we would

have needed the assurance that the legislation will be well balanced and will offer sufficient protection, both to consumers and to business operators.

In conclusion, we are dealing with a bill much debated in the House of Commons, first as Bill C-54 and now as Bill C-5. Yet never have we had the impression that it was a bill that had been properly fine-tuned, one that would achieve the desired results.

The hon. member who spoke before me concluded by describing this as an interim bill—and this was a member of the Liberal majority. He called it an interim bill, and thus one that would need considerable improvement.

I think that, at this stage, we should say to people in Quebec and in Canada that we have not completed our work, that we should look at this again and find a more balanced solution, instead of passing an interim bill that will have to be reviewed in two, three, four or five years.

The legislation on electronic commerce must be flexible and, at the same time, it must send clear messages. The bill before us does the opposite. Here is an example where the federal government is intruding in an area where the provinces could easily have taken action, as Quebec did.

If it is true that, elsewhere in Canada, people want the same legislation enforced across the country, why was it not mentioned in the bill that a province can, if it so wishes, be exempted from the application of the act.

Then all the organizations opposed to this bill—the Conseil du patronat du Québec, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires, Action réseau consommateur, the Interprofessional Council, the Commission d'accès à l'information or the Government of Quebec—would have supported it.

Members can imagine how different things would have been if the federal government had just admitted in this bill that, because Quebec already had its own legislation and because this is a matter under its jurisdiction, its choice would be respected and that Quebec would be allowed to enforce its own legislation. It also could have taken from the Quebec legislation everything it found beneficial. We would have avoided debate on amendments by the other Chamber to exempt health, when Quebec has already provided in its legislation a practical way that has been in effect for several years.

Possibly in view of its disproportionate taxation capacity and bureaucracy compared to its mandate, the federal government feels obliged to draft this type of bills, when we do not really need them. In particular, it tries to ram them in the House, forgetting that the Canadian mosaic contains an important element, Quebec, which has its own personality, its own approach, its own Civil Code. Instead of taking this into account, it decided to impose federal

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legislation on Quebecers within an area of jurisdiction already well covered by Quebec.

For all those reasons, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against Bill C-6.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[*Translation*]

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

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

March 30

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Honourable Ian Binnie, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy Governor General, will proceed to the Senate Chamber today, the 30th day of March, 2000, at 5.00 p.m. for the purpose of giving Royal Assent to certain bills.

Yours sincerely,

Judith A. LaRocque
Secretary to the Governor General

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the 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 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.

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 Sarnia—Lambton, Justice.

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I simply cannot pass this one up.

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This bill conflicts with legislation that already exists in Quebec and which received unanimous support. Not too long ago, another bill received unanimous support in Quebec, which the federal government tried to undermine by imposing its own view. I am referring to the young offenders bill.

All of Quebec, all those involved with young offenders were unanimous in saying that the existing legislation in Quebec is working because it is well enforced and that it can usefully contribute to the rehabilitation of young offenders.

Yet, the federal government introduced in the House a bill designed to standardize the way young offenders are dealt with. They want to deal with them differently, based on some unproven philosophy. It would have been advisable to include in this bill a provision stating that Quebec may continue to implement its own legislation, which has proven to be effective.

Today, we have another bill that is reminiscent of how Ottawa reacted to Quebec's young offenders legislation. Bill C-6 does not suit Quebec, because we already have legislation that protects our citizens well.

We have suggested that the federal government use Quebec's legislation as a model, that it draw what was good from it and apply it to other provinces willing to use it. Quebec would be able to use this act for its own benefit, without any discrimination, without prejudice to the other provinces. But things did not turn out that way.

I would like to ask a question to the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. Why does he think the federal government always tries to force on Quebec legislation that is different from legislation that already exists in Quebec and which works well?

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comment and his question.

It is a good question, particularly if one thinks about what is now going on at the federal government level with respect to access to information. The access to information commissioner testified before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities that the federal government's management of information was in a state of crisis. Those were his words.

We also heard the privacy commissioner. I brought forward a motion that received unanimous approval in the House proposing that all crown corporations be subject to the Privacy Act. This motion received unanimous approval here a few years ago. Since then, the federal government has been dragging its feet and has done nothing about making crown corporations subject to the Privacy Act, despite the unanimous approval the motion received.

This situation has to be looked at in the broader context. There is also the way in which the federal government handled the social

insurance number issue. Things had reached the point where there were more people over the age of one hundred in Canada than in China or in the United States, because of the very poor monitoring of social insurance numbers.

• (1640)

The bottom line is that it is not a very good idea for the federal government to be legislating in this sector where its own track record is not very good.

The member for Joliette was asking me what this situation tells us.

I think that it tells us that we are dealing with a central government that wants to control how things are seen in Canada. There is only one way to see things and it is the one imposed by the concerns and wishes of the top federal bureaucrats, who have their own vision of Canada and of the way things should be done, and who definitely do not want to stop, because other people have already developed approaches as efficient as theirs.

We have a perfect example of that attitude in this case. The Government of Quebec has a good legislation on personal information protection. It has been adapted, revised and it works. It is one of Quebec's finest piece of legislation. It is cited as an example world-wide.

In spite of representations made by all stakeholders in Quebec, organizations such as the Canadian Bar, the Conseil du patronat du Québec, labour unions, consumer advocacy organizations, the Quebec government and the Commission d'accès à l'information, which are familiar with the information protection sector, the federal government could not make a decision.

All those people came to tell us "We do not mind you passing a law for the rest of Canada, which will meet your expectations. If what you want is to provide greater protection for e-commerce than for consumers, that is your business, but leave our legislation be".

The federal government would not, that is why the Bloc Québécois will vote against the bill.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques talked about duplication.

For the benefit of those watching us, I would like to ask him this: Could such duplication place extra costs on taxpayers in Quebec, where there is already an act on personal information protection, now that the federal government has decided to interfere in its jurisdiction?

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, two situations can occur: either it will be recognized as similar by the federal government or it will not.

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In both cases, it could happen that an individual or an entrepreneur, someone involved in electronic commerce for example, would go to court and say "The fact that the federal government has made its legislation similar to the Quebec legislation seems unacceptable to me. The criteria are not clear and well defined. Therefore, I do not accept this recognition by the federal government and want the federal legislation to apply in my case because the Quebec legislation is more restrictive for me". We could see this kind of situation, and it would create duplication.

There is also the other situation where this bill will probably be passed. The Liberal majority seems intent on imposing it on us. Well, there will be a period where it will apply and where the Quebec legislation will not necessarily have been recognized as similar. During that period where both acts apply, we could have very serious legal complications.

In today's society, most people do business through the Internet. We do not know what kind of situation will occur. Which legislation will apply to an electronic commerce transaction between a client from a Quebec-based business dealing with an Alberta-based business, or between a resident of New Brunswick and a Quebec-based business?

It is not very clear, unless there is explicit recognition by the federal government, which should have been included in the bill. It would have been clear and would not have been open to interpretation. We are now left with a bill that is too vague and that will be open to interpretation and will lead to considerable legal costs and perhaps, ultimately, to people being hurt by an interpretation that does not guarantee adequate protection of personal information, like the legislation passed by the Quebec National Assembly, contrary to the one this parliament is about to pass.

• (1645)

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak again today to this important legislation, Bill C-6. Once again, this bill shows that the federal government is not minding its own business.

Since 1993, when the Liberal government took power in this House, we have seen that they stepped up their invasion of provincial areas of jurisdiction. But before going any further, I would like to say how abused I feel once again today, in this parliament, how I figure there is less and less democracy, as yet another gag was imposed this morning.

Time allocation motions limit debate for all members of the House. We feel more and more that this government has a centralization agenda designed to invade practically all the powers of the provinces, since the Canadian Constitution is not enforced anymore.

When one looks at all series of bills that have been passed since 1993, one realizes that the situation is becoming dangerous. One wonders how far this government will go to attain its goal.

This project dates back to the time when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was elected, in 1968. The present Prime Minister was one of his loyal henchmen. They started a process to make this country a centralized one, a country taking over provincial powers. I will not recall the dark moments that marked democracy in Quebec. But the same thing is happening with Bill C-6. When the history of that party is being written, it will be said that it has constantly applied itself to invading areas of provincial responsibility.

What is more, if only Bloc Québécois members were denouncing this situation in today's debate on Bill C-6, it could be said that this is because of our specific character, our specific nature as a party. But no, I have here a list of all those who are opposed to this bill.

There is an increasing realization that there is a consensus in Quebec from all communities. They are joining forces in opposition to this bill. I will give a few examples.

There is the Conseil du patronat, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, better known as the CSN, the Barreau du Québec, the Chambre des notaires du Québec, the Conseil interprovincial du Québec, the Commission de l'accès à l'information du Québec, and finally the Government of Quebec. It can be seen that employers, labour unions, professional associations and the Government of Quebec all oppose this bill, now known as Bill C-6.

Once again, why create a precedent, when Quebec already has the necessary tools to do this? Why create one more tool, when Quebec has what is necessary, and what is more it is more efficient than what is being proposed in this bill today?

We realize the government never takes the time to consult its associates or its potential partners. That too has been a trademark of this government since 1993.

• (1650)

One only has to look at how the current Minister of Health is about to try to impose his national vision. There again, the provincial health ministers and premiers will have to get together and create a consensus to try to prevent this intrusion into the health sector.

The same goes in the case of Bill C-6. Some might say that every time Bloc Québécois members rise they raise such issues. I often think I should make copies of the Canadian constitution and distribute them to all the Liberal members opposite. They would learn that this constitution, their constitution, gives exclusive rights to the provinces. But these rights have been ignored and the federal government is increasingly trying to dismiss the constitution. This leads to friction and disputes with Quebec and with the other provinces.

I would like to discuss some of the amendments made to Bill C-6, formerly Bill C-54, which died on the order paper when the first session of this Parliament was prorogued. Members will

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remember that my colleague, the hon. member for Mercier, had worked very hard to prevent passage of that bill. Now, Bill C-6 is back with the amendments proposed by the Senate.

As members know, the Senate proposes the following amendments:

Because the health sector is unanimously opposed to Bill C-6 in its present form, sometimes for totally contradictory reasons; because it feels that, in its present form, the bill does not adequately protect medical information, which it deems more sensitive than other types of information, and because the notion of commercial activities in the context in which the bill applies is almost impossible to define in the health sector.

This means that the senators in the Upper House were made aware of the fact that the bill does not at all respect the Canadian and Quebec reality.

In a motion that he brought forward in the House on February 7, the Minister of Industry indicated that he would accept certain amendments from the Senate. We then thought that the minister would follow up on the concerns expressed by the various stakeholders who will have to live with the consequences of Bill C-6.

Bill C-6 is a fundamental piece of legislation. With the changes happening in the multimedia area, the issue of personal information is one that must be looked at. We do not have the necessary tools to protect privacy because information is being transmitted at such a high speed.

Around 20 years ago, the fax machine was introduced. Today we have digital radio. We can receive radio and TV programs anywhere in the world thanks to satellite dishes. Then there is the whole issue of Internet.

Sure, people are increasingly concerned when they have to deal with these new media and these new ways of communicating such as Internet. They wonder whether all the information they have will be protected.

Recently, more and more people have been shunning traditional ways of doing business. They use the Internet. When they see a bill taking away things that are guaranteed by the current legislation in Quebec, there are worried.

• (1655)

It's very difficult to understand the attitude of the Liberal government who, month after month, has been multiplying its efforts to centralize and just about take away the powers of the provinces.

What is this government looking for? There is not one piece of legislation currently before the House that reflects the reality in Quebec or in Canada. Where do they get their ideas, all these ministers, their officials, their researchers, all those who gravitate around government circles, all those who gravitate around the Liberal government? Why do they not consult the provinces and the people concerned more often?

We are always having to fight in this House to correct the injustices that are increasingly flagrant in this government. Recently, it again imposed a bill on us, Bill C-20. The government also tried, in its effort to meddle in health matters with Bill C-13 and today with Bill C-6, to redo what Quebec has done.

Another law dear to my heart is the one on young offenders, the one that once again everyone in Quebec unanimously opposes. Basically, all the government is trying to do is substantially amend the Young Offenders Act.

Quebec truly gives effect to this law, and the Liberal government will try with these amendments to meddle and change the rules. Basically Quebec and English Canada are very different, and this becomes clear with this legislation on young offenders.

The situation is the same with Bill C-6. Why penalize Quebec, which is out in the lead? Why penalize the Government of Quebec, which always puts forward more realistic and appropriate laws that truly meet the needs of the people of the 21st century? Why does the federal government insist on taking away the rights of the people of Quebec and the National Assembly?

For the past two years in this House, whether with Bill C-54 or with the current Bill C-6, the members who have opposed it since it was introduced have not budged. They have continued to oppose Bill C-6 openly, while across the way, they continue their bulldozing and their desire to have the bill passed quickly.

We realize that this government never takes time to consult. If there is a consultation, and I am again thinking of the famous consultations in which I participated, which were at least two cross-Canada prebudget consultations—one realizes, when one listens to the Minister of Finance reading the budget, that the Minister of Finance himself has strongly advised those at the head of the Standing Committee on Finance to have a strong hand in writing the report, which then has nothing to do with what members heard or what the public, groups, citizens and organizations want.

In addition to becoming increasingly anti-democratic, this government is no longer listening to the public. The gulf between Quebec and English Canada continues to widen, and passing a bill such as Bill C-6 is not going to close the gap between the needs of Quebec and those of the rest of English Canada.

• (1700)

Once again, I urge the Minister of Industry, his cabinet colleagues and all federal Liberal members from Quebec, those who should normally understand what is going on in Quebec, but who do not, to think about what they are doing.

Normally, they should be on their feet in the House speaking out against the federal government's frequent intrusions in Quebec's jurisdictions. But they are silent; there is not a peep out of them.

The only members rising in the House to defend the interests of Quebec are Bloc Quebecois members.

In the coming months, I think that Quebecers will realize that Bloc Quebecois members are the only ones capable of defending Quebec's interests. Since my election to this House, in June 1997, I can recall no event, no legislation nor any action which demonstrated that this government is listening to Quebec.

When one runs a country like Canada and is no longer responsive to the true needs of the population, this is a dangerous situation. It is dangerous for democracy. Besides being no longer responsive, this government has been resorting to closure increasingly to all kinds of procedural means in the House of Commons. It is trying to prevent people from expressing their views.

Again, the Quebec National Assembly is increasingly aware that there is not much to be expected from the House of Commons. This Liberal government continuously takes powers and jurisdictions away from Quebec.

I would like to come back to Bill C-6, which is not different from other legislation introduced in this House. This bill will directly encroach on legislation which is normally enforced by Quebec.

As far as information and privacy are concerned, given the constant evolution in computer technology, protection measures become necessary to prevent dramatic situations. The system could create information problems and leaks. Anyone and any organization using computer systems must be protected against all those nets, which are invading society more and more.

In conclusion, since there are only a few hours left before the bill is passed, I ask the Liberal government to be, for once, responsive in its undertakings. I ask it to be responsive to Quebec but also to admit that it was wrong in introducing a legislation like Bill C-6. It would show courage if it withdrew this bill today.

Despite our constant appeals to our colleagues across the way, we get no answers. The people of Quebec are increasingly aware that when they talk to the federal government, they get no answers.

• (1705)

Not only do the 26 federal Liberal members from Quebec give no answer, they remain mute.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

[Translation]

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

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

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

• (1720)

[English]

And being returned:

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

Bill C-7, an act to amend the Criminal Records Act and to amend another act in consequence—Chapter 1.

Bill C-202, an act to amend the Criminal Code (flight)—Chapter 2.

Bill C-29, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2000—Chapter 3.

Bill C-30, an act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2001—Chapter 4.

Bill S-14, an act to amend the act of incorporation of the Board of Elders of the Canadian District of the Moravian Church in America.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION AND ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the 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 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.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier this day the question to dispose of the Senate amendments to Bill C-6 is deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, April 4, 2000, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

[Translation]

It being 5.20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[Translation]***INCOME TAX ACT**

The House resumed from February 14 consideration of the motion 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.

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-205 introduced by my colleague, the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans.

When my colleague introduced his bill last February, we were a few weeks away from the day the Minister of Finance was scheduled to bring down his budget. At that time my colleague was hoping the minister would respond to his concerns, but he did not make the commitment to amend the Income Tax Act to allow auto mechanics to deduct from their taxable income the cost of the tools they have to buy, update and maintain as a condition of their employment.

I must emphasize the fact that auto mechanics are the victims of an unfair situation that has been going on for too long. In that context, on February 17 of this year, the Automotive Industries Association of Canada sent to the 301 members of this House a letter asking the government to correct this injustice done to Canadian mechanics.

Since the finance minister failed to deal with this issue in his last budget, I doubt very much whether he took the trouble to read this group's recommendations. For his information, I will read some very interesting quotes from their letter which I hope will enlighten the finance minister, and I quote:.

—the automobile aftermarket industry is very concerned because we might not be able to meet our future labour needs. Indeed, the tax system is hampering our efforts to convince young people to consider the excellent job of automotive service technician.

I am not saying this; a Canadian association representing 140,000 mechanics across Canada is saying this. According to the association, young people are shunning this trade because the job conditions are not attractive.

Indeed a basic set of tools costs at least \$4,000, while an apprentice makes less than \$25,000 a year. During their first four years at work technicians will invest around 15% of their net income, in tools.

I would like the finance minister, but I believe it is asking too much of him, to put himself in their shoes. I believe he is above all that, but I appeal to his nobler sentiments, and I hope he will listen carefully to what I have to say.

• (1725)

An apprentice earns only \$25,000 gross. Gross means before taxes, before paying for his rent, his food, his student loan if he has one. Once all this has been deducted, he has very little money left. And on top of that, he has to find \$4,000 to pay for his tools.

Members can see how unjust and unacceptable it is for this category of workers. I believe it is a question of common sense, and I appeal to the common sense of all members. The minister should look at this issue with an open mind, especially since he has known about this injustice for several years. These people have been the victims of this injustice for a long time, and the finance minister, who has been in that portfolio for seven years, is familiar with the problem, but he has not done anything yet.

Could anybody give me another profession where workers have similar problems? I would like to know. But there is none, of course. Chainsaw operators, musicians and artists may claim a deduction for the cost of their tools or instruments.

Let me quote the same letter again:

Year in and year out, the demand for automotive technicians goes up, as consumers keep their cars longer because of increased durability and other factors. Modern vehicles are also more complex than ever, and their maintenance requires qualified technicians.

We should realize that these technicians do not need just a couple of screwdrivers. As I said earlier, those who want to specialize could spend between \$4,000 and \$30,000 on their tools.

This is the second hour of debate on this bill. I have been listening intently to the objections of members opposite. Objections have only been raised on the government side. There is a consensus on this bill on opposition benches. Four parties out of five support my hon. colleague's bill, a support that translates into a 60% support in the population, if we refer to the 1997 election results.

In our system, a party can win a majority of seats without getting the plurality of votes. The government should be sensitive to this, but when we look at how it rammed Bill C-20 through, its sense of democracy is all too apparent. The rules of the House were stretched to the limit to get this bill tabled in December. The work of the legislative committee studying the bill was abruptly curtailed and a gag was imposed to speed the bill through. Democratic this government is not.

But I am straying from today's topic. I was saying that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance had said that the

bill could not be passed because allowing mechanics such a deduction would be unfair, since other workers would not receive the same treatment.

At the risk of repeating myself, I wish to remind him that the situation of mechanics is completely different, given the huge amounts they must spend compared to what they earn. Furthermore, I find this argument completely unfounded because musicians, chain saw operators and some office workers are allowed certain tax deductions. The government should realize that it is contradicting itself on this issue.

In addition, I know that one of the government's big fears is that mechanics will put some of their tools to personal use. This is naturally something that deserves our attention. All the same, I would like to point out that even though musicians are entitled to deductions for the purchase of their musical instruments, I would be very surprised if they did not use them outside the work context, just like chain saw operators, or office workers who must do the odd bit of personal business on their laptop.

• (1730)

There is no way to guarantee that mechanics will limit use of their tools to job-related work. This is perfectly normal. I still think that hiding behind this sort of argument to reject the bill is sticking one's head in the sand.

In conclusion, I wish to mention that over 35,000 post cards have been sent to the Minister of Finance. Since there are 140,000 mechanics in Canada, I think the message is clear. They want action. I hope that the government will listen to reason on this issue and I really hope the government will support the bill introduced by the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Îles-d'Orléans.

[English]

Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to have any opportunity to discuss tax relief. It is a subject that is very important to me and tax relief for all Canadians is a cause that I care passionately about.

The proposed legislation must not be considered in isolation since it will no doubt set a precedent for other groups that follow. When we discuss tax relief, we must ensure that it is tax relief that is practical and that will benefit all Canadians, particularly low and middle income Canadians and those raising families. To suggest anything else would be less effective and lack any sense of priority.

[Translation]

Even if we now have balanced budgets or surpluses and a strong economy, our financial resources are not unlimited. This government is committed to ensuring a rational and conscientious use of

these resources, in the interests of the greatest number of Canadians possible.

[English]

That is why in last fall's fiscal and economic update the Minister of Finance set out clear and concrete principles that set the priorities for federal tax relief.

First, tax reductions must be fair and give priority to those who need them most, middle and low income Canadians, especially families with children.

Second, broad based tax relief should focus first on personal income taxes.

Third, the business tax system must be internationally competitive.

Finally, broad based relief should not be funded with borrowed money.

In other words, the type and size of any tax action we take must be managed so as to never endanger our continuing commitments to balanced budgets. These are the principles that have governed our actions.

Hon. Lorne Nyström: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With great respect to you, as a very knowledgeable Speaker, there is an old and ancient rule in the House of Commons, of which I am sure you are fully aware, that when an hon. member is speaking he or she is not supposed to read a speech but to only refer to notes from time to time. I wonder if you could inform the hon. member of that ancient practice. I know you have a lot of experience and can cite the particular rule.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marceau): I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for what he said, but I believe the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair is referring to his notes in a proper manner. I think he deserves to continue his speech, and I hope the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle will listen to him very attentively.

[English]

Mr. Rick Limoges: These are principles that have governed our actions, highlighted by the multi-year tax cutting plan announced in the February budget.

However, even before that, in the update itself, we announced steps that provide concrete benefits to every Canadian employee, not just a single group like mechanics. We announced that for the sixth year in a row employment insurance premiums would be reduced from \$2.55 to \$2.40 for the year 2000. This means that employees and employers will save an additional \$1.2 billion this year, bringing total annual savings relative to the rate that prevailed in 1994 to \$5.2 billion.

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We then followed up with budget 2000 and its proposed five year tax reduction plan. This is a plan to provide real and lasting tax relief for all Canadians, providing accumulative savings of at least \$58 billion over the next five years with a particular emphasis on families with children.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

The plan is based on two measures that break with the past to implement the two most important structural changes made to the tax system in more than 10 years.

First, the plan provides for full re-indexation of personal income tax, retroactive to January 1, 2000. This measure will benefit all Canadians, particularly low and middle income earners.

[*English*]

Second, the plan will reduce the middle income tax rate to 23% from 26%, beginning with a two point drop to 24% on July 1, 2000. This will cut taxes for nine million Canadians. I would expect that many mechanics would fall into this category.

These changes anchor a range of other actions to help reduce working Canadians' tax burden.

Personal income taxes will be further reduced within five years by increasing to at least \$8,000 the amount Canadians can earn tax free and by raising the income amounts at which the middle and upper tax rates begin to apply to at least \$35,000 and \$75,000 respectively, again, to the lasting benefits of all Canadians.

To assist families with children, the Canada child tax benefit, CCTB, will be enriched by \$2.5 million a year by 2004 to more than \$9 billion annually. Maximum benefits will reach \$2,400 for the first child and \$2,200 for the second child.

Personal tax cuts alone will not deliver new jobs and growing incomes over the long term. A growing economy centred on innovation is an important part of the equation. That is why budget 2000's five year tax plan takes additional measures to help Canadian businesses become more competitive internationally by making the tax system more conducive to investment and innovation. This will help to ensure continued growth and job creation in a global economy that is increasingly knowledge based.

To that end, the plan proposes to reduce the corporate tax rate to 21% from 28% within five years for the highest taxed businesses, such as high technology, with a one point drop to 27% effective January 1, 2001.

To assist small businesses the corporate tax rate will be reduced to 21% from 28% on small business income between \$200,000 and \$300,000 effective January 1, 2001.

The net effect of these measures will be to create jobs and improve the lives of Canadians from coast to coast.

As members can see, the goal of the five year tax reduction plan is clear and concrete: more money in the pockets of Canadians, stronger economic growth and enhanced job creation.

Taxes will be reduced by a cumulative amount of at least \$58 billion, with personal income taxes being reduced by an average of 15% by 2004.

While all Canadians will benefit from the tax plan, it recognizes the needs of low and middle income Canadians who will see their personal income taxes reduced by an average of at least 18%. In particular, relief will be provided to families with children. Including the enriched benefits under the CCTB, families with children will see their personal income taxes reduced by an average of 21%.

Accordingly, the immediate tax relief under the plan will grow over time. Consider, for example, that in 2001 a typical one earner family of four with about \$32,000 in income will receive more benefits from government, thanks to the CCTB and the GST tax credit, than they will pay in personal income taxes. What this really means is that this family will pay no net tax. By 2004, that family could earn up to \$35,000, or \$3,000 more, and still pay no net tax.

Here are two more examples of the tax plan at work. In the first full year of the plan, a typical one earner family of four with \$40,000 in income will see its net federal income taxes reduced by at least 17%. In 2004 their taxes will be cut by at least 48%, a savings of over \$1,600 compared to what they would pay without the plan.

A typical two earner family of four with an income of \$60,000 will see their taxes reduced by almost 9% in 2001, and by \$1,546 in 2004. That is a 27% savings relative to what they would have paid had the plan never been established.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

Full indexation of personal income tax will put an end to automatic and hidden tax increases that result from what is called bracket creep and to the erosion of tax benefits that has characterized Canada's tax system since the middle of the 1980s.

This means that salary increases that simply correspond to the inflation rate will no longer automatically put many taxpayers in a higher tax bracket. In other words, taxpayers will no longer see their taxes raise when their real buying power has not increased.

[*English*]

Moreover, benefits, such as the Canada child tax benefit and the GST credit, will automatically increase to offset inflation.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Derrek Konrad: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like a ruling from the Chair on the relevance of talking about the child tax benefit when we are talking about a tax break for mechanic's tools. Could the member possibly be a little more relevant to the topic at hand?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marceau): I think the hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair was making an analogy. Given the time allocated to the member, I believe this is a totally acceptable analogy.

The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair. He has 45 seconds to finish his speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Limoges: Under the leadership of this Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, we have a fiscal situation in this country today that allows this government to build on the foundation secured by the many sacrifices of Canadians in my riding and across the country. We must avoid the temptation, no matter how well-intentioned, to advocate tax cuts that depart from the plan which set out principles for tax action, principles that were acted on in budget 2000.

I recommend to all hon. members that we vote against any proposed legislation that is not based on these principles.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak to this bill on mechanics tools. I do appreciate the Bloc member bringing this forward.

Bill C-205 is a carbon copy of the private member's bill that I put forth in the last parliament, Bill C-366. During that process, I received over 7,000 letters from mechanics across the country on that bill. I am sure the Bloc member has no doubt received thousands of letters from people across the country in response to his bill.

The only difference in the Bloc bill from the bill that I presented in the last parliament is the price for individual tools that are purchased by the mechanic. The amount has been increased from the \$200 that I had recommended. If the mechanic's tool is below \$200 the full cost can be deducted. If it is above \$200 it will be depreciated and a capital cost allowance will be deducted for income taxes purposes. That is the only change. It is an excellent bill and I sincerely thank the Bloc member for bringing it forward again.

I was very pleased that this time the bill has been made votable. When I presented the same bill to the committee, it unfortunately did not allow the bill to be voted on in the House. I believe that every private member's bill that comes before the House should be votable, particularly a practical bill like this.

The purpose of this bill is to allow mechanics to deduct the cost of their tools on the condition that the tools are a requirement of their employment.

● (1745)

The mechanic has to buy his own tools and then bring them to his place of employment. If tools are lost or damaged, he has to replace them from his own pocketbook.

At the present time mechanics have an incredibly large cost, often \$15,000 to \$30,000 in tools, which they have to pay for with after tax dollars, and yet it is a requirement of employment that the mechanics have those tools to use them on the job.

It is very important that this issue be dealt with. I would assume that this time it will have the full support of every party in the House.

The costs I am talking about are the costs of maintaining the tools, renting the tools, in cases where the mechanic chooses to rent, and insurance costs, because of course with the high value involved the loss of the tools would be devastating. It would be quite devastating to lose \$30,000 worth of tools.

The mechanic could also deduct the cost of the insurance. The mechanic would be allowed to claim capital cost allowance on tools over \$250 and, therefore, over time deduct the full cost of the tools for income tax purposes. That is the purpose of the bill.

When I introduced Bill C-366 I received over 7,000 letters from mechanics across the country. On this bill, in spite of the fact that it is not my bill, I have received hundreds and hundreds more letters. We have not even counted them yet, although I do appreciate the mechanics and the owners of the businesses for sending the letters to me. I know that copies of the letters have been sent to the finance minister. The finance minister has to understand how important it is that he deal with the situation.

During the debate on Bill C-366 members of all political parties supported the bill except the Liberals. The parliamentary secretary to the minister of finance at that time came up with a whole list of excuses for not supporting the bill. I would suggest that they were excuses.

I will go through what the parliamentary secretary said and I will respond to what I consider to be excuses in most cases. First, I want to say a little about what some MPs from all of the political parties said about this bill and what they are saying about the Bloc member's bill which is now before the House.

A Bloc MP said "I think this bill is good for the economy and for the creation of jobs. The Bloc Quebecois and myself support the measures proposed in this bill".

Private Members' Business

A member of the NDP from Saskatchewan said "I want to congratulate the member for Lakeland for bringing this legislation forward and tell him and members of the House that the New Democratic Party fully supports this concept and we will be supporting this bill".

A member of the Progressive Conservative Party from Manitoba said "I would like to pass my thanks on to the member for Lakeland who has once again brought forward a private member's bill to deal with what I consider to be an injustice and an inequality that has been around for too long". I think it is a fair comment that this injustice has been around for too long.

Reform MPs fully supported the bill. The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster and the member for Elk Island indicated that the bill was long overdue.

Then we come to the government side, the Liberals. The parliamentary secretary came up with numerous excuses, and I want to go through some of the key ones. He said "Mechanics are not the only occupation that incur substantial expenses as a requirement of employment". I agree with that. That statement is correct. Farmers and other businessmen, as well as artists, musicians and chainsaw operators incur substantial expenses as a requirement of employment.

Farmers, of course, are business people and they are handled differently, but artists, musicians, chainsaw operators and others are employees in many cases who are allowed to deduct the cost of the tools of their trade. I believe that is a bogus issue which the parliamentary secretary brought forward.

The parliamentary secretary also said "This private member's bill would also provide tax relief to all mechanics, irrespective of the size of their expenditures, instead of targeting relief to those incurring extraordinary expenses".

• (1750)

I would suggest that, indeed, that is an odd statement. Farmers and other business people, as well as the others I have mentioned, can claim their expenses no matter how large they are. That is not a criterion that is used to judge whether any of these other people can write something off for tax purposes. That was a very odd statement.

He also said "Provisions would need to be developed to ensure that tax relief was provided only for those items genuinely required as a condition of employment and not for those purchased for personal use". That is true. That is a fair enough statement, but throughout all our tax system, for anyone claiming, the same is true. In other words, the onus is on the person making the claim to ensure that he or she is only claiming expenses which are allowed

under the act. Taxpayers are trusted to do that. We have routine audits and we have special audits to check to ensure that people are being honest. Again, this was another bogus excuse.

The parliamentary secretary made several other, what I would consider to be, excuses and I do not believe that any one of them could not be dealt with by the government if it believed it was something that should be done.

The parliamentary secretary at the time, and I hear the same thing again from across the floor, said that somehow, and for different reasons, the deduction of the cost of purchasing, owning and maintaining a line of tools could not be done for several reasons. It is interesting that this government, which has raised taxes every year over the past seven years, since 1993—

Mr. Roy Cullen: It never raised them once.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, maybe not this year. That is a close call. But every year up until this year the government has raised taxes, and always it declares that the reason is tax fairness. Often we hear the Liberals say "We are increasing taxes to this group of people by \$1 billion because it makes it fair". Why is it that tax fairness cannot also lead to a lowering of taxes? In this case, that is exactly what would be done. We would lower taxes, allowing mechanics to deduct the cost of tools used for business in the name of tax fairness. Why is it that the government cannot understand the concept that tax fairness can also mean lowering taxes to a particular group of people?

I would encourage the government to understand that that is exactly what would happen. This is a fair measure. In the information I have received under access to information as to why the finance department will not go along with this, it indicated that it would cost the department somewhere around \$60 million a year. In the name of tax fairness, why can we not have this reduction of \$60 million a year? It is money that really should be left in the pockets of mechanics. This is long overdue.

The member across the floor may think it is funny, but with more than 7,000 letters from mechanics saying "We want tax fairness", the government should listen. I would encourage the government to support the bill, as it is a votable bill.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in support of Bill C-205.

I would say at the outset that I have put a very similar motion on the order paper which would allow mechanics who are working on their own to deduct their tools as a legitimate expense.

I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance across the way and I am sure he will be in agreement with the bill before the House because I see him nodding his head.

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• (1755)

Under the present income tax law there is a fair amount of discrimination. Mechanics, tradespeople, technicians, automotive technicians and carpenters who are in business for themselves can deduct their tools, but those same people who are working for someone else cannot deduct their tools.

There is a considerable expense to becoming a carpenter or a mechanic. Buying a whole set of tools is a very expensive proposition.

For almost any other business endeavour in the country one can deduct legitimate expenses. Whether people are consultants in a small business or in a larger business, they can deduct the expenses which are incurred in running the business. The mechanics and carpenters are saying that they should have the same right as anyone else. They are buying tool kits and tools in order to be involved in a business, in order to be an employee at a garage, a carpenter or whatever.

A lot of us do not realize how expensive it is for someone to get the basic tool kit. One often has to pay a minimum of \$5,000 to \$10,000. They tell me it can even be as high as \$50,000 or \$60,000 for a complete tool kit in some of the occupations which many people are going into today.

The Ottawa *Citizen* did a survey of the costs of getting into business. The reporter talked to Gene Myers, who is an Algonquin College student and an apprentice. He was asked how much it would cost to get the basic start-up kit to be a mechanic. He had spent \$17,000 and he said that was the bare minimum for tools an apprentice would require when starting full time work.

These prices are approximate, but I thought I should read some of them into the record to give members an idea of what some young people are required to pay in order to get into business.

For wrenches, the cost was \$2,020. I notice, Mr. Speaker, that even you are startled by that number. It is a shocking number and it is a very difficult expense for people getting into business. The wrenches are categorized in this way. Two standard size sets cost \$405 each, amounting to \$810. Two metric size sets are \$405 each, for a total cost of \$810.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: Who gave us the metric system?

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: The metric system came into being in this country because of pressure from some conservative-minded people who sat in the Trudeau cabinet a number of years ago. That is why we have the metric system response from the hon. member from the Canadian Alliance. At least I think it is the Canadian Alliance and not the conservative alliance. In any event, that is how the metric system arrived.

Two minimum specialized wrench sets cost \$200 each, totalling \$400. Torque wrenches are \$885. A 3/8 inch wrench costs \$295; a 1/4 inch wrench, \$295; and a 1/2 inch wrench, \$295. Sockets cost \$2,000 in total. He said there is a minimum of ten sets of different sized sockets at \$200 each. Socket extension sets cost \$450; 3/8 inch sets, \$150; 1/4 inch, \$150; 1/2 inch, \$150; wheel nut sockets, \$420; five sizes of sockets at \$60 each, another \$300; four sizes at \$30 each, \$120; and six ratchets at \$125 each, totalling \$750.

He went on and on with the list that he gave in terms of the start-up costs of getting a decent tool kit.

When an auto mechanic or a carpenter spends that kind of money to get into business we can make a fair argument for deducting the cost of these tools of trade from income tax. I think that is only fair treatment. It is only just treatment. I hope members of the government would agree with this perfectly reasonable proposal that is before the House today.

• (1800)

Many mechanics and carpenters have lobbied me over the years on this kind of proposal. About two years ago I circulated a petition among a number of the garages in and around the city of Regina. I got many hundreds of signatures on petitions calling upon the federal government to make such a move in terms of amending the Income Tax Act.

The time is long overdue for the House of Commons to listen to the people. They are saying that this is only a fair move and a just move that we should be making as the House of Commons. I am glad to see that we have some solidarity here among all political parties that this is the right thing to do.

I assume the Progressive Conservative Party will also be supporting this. We will be hearing from its distinguished House leader in a few minutes. I am not 100% sure he will be doing that but I think he will. His former hero, Brian Mulroney, did not do this when he was prime minister of the country, despite all kinds of lobbying that was done. I hope the Progressive Conservative Party has now seen the light and will support this private member's bill before the House today.

I commend the member for introducing the private member's bill. Let us get on with this. Let us hear from the Progressive Conservative Party. Let us make this a five party effort and change the law, which will make it a more fair and just system for a lot of people right across the country.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very important private member's bill.

I appreciate the introduction by the illustrious member from the New Democratic Party. He has been a long time member of the House and has been around for many, many years. He is a very

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useful tool in reminding us of things that have taken place in the past. Certainly the sins of the father are sometimes revisited on the son.

This is a very important piece of legislation because it brings about a very positive change in an industry that is very much in need of attention at this time. That is not unlike other industries and other Canadians generally who are suffering from the high cost of tax that is taken from their income. Mechanics are no exception.

This bill, which has garnered a great deal of support, in a very non-partisan way I hasten to add, has also gathered a great deal of support around the country. I commend the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans for the work he has done, and the member for Lakeland who brought forward a similar private member's bill. There is a sense that the government may in fact be listening but that remains to be seen.

This legislation is very much a common sense approach to a problem that has existed for a long time, namely that mechanics are faced with an incredible startup cost when it comes to beginning in their profession. As has been alluded to, indications are that the average startup cost is anywhere from \$15,000 to \$40,000 to break into an industry that, like other industries, is moving toward a more technological and highly advanced profession. The tools themselves, the power tools and the basic tools, are extremely costly and often the power tools are in need of a great deal of ongoing maintenance.

The bill is aimed at giving an industry in need tax relief that is brought about in a very straightforward way and, I would suggest, in a common sense fashion. This is uncommon in this place when it comes to legislation.

In many ways my initial reaction when we started talking about amending the Income Tax Act was to be a little concerned that once again we would be making a more convoluted attempt than was necessary. Short of the Revenue Canada Act or perhaps the new youth criminal justice act, the bill is aimed at streamlining as opposed to adding layers of legislation and layers of bureaucracy on top of one another, as is far too often the case.

The government members who have spoken to the bill would lead Canadians to believe that significant tax relief has already been brought about by this administration. We know that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact the most recent budget is rear end loaded; that is to say, much of the benefits of the budget will not be felt for a number of years, in fact years that go far beyond the government's current mandate.

• (1805)

This bill is aimed at assisting mechanics in a very real and tangible fashion. There is a great deal of need in this area. There is a great deal of need when it comes to the tools themselves being

considered very much a part of the profession, which they are. They are an integral part of any mechanic's existence and profession. The proportionate investment that is made by mechanics and the reliance on their tools highlights that very fact.

The cost as I alluded to is extremely high. Sometimes that cost, being as high as \$40,000, may be more than the annual income of a mechanic who is starting up in that profession.

There is a need for standardization across the board. For example, chainsaw operators and musicians are permitted to deduct the cost of their chainsaws and musical instruments. Why then should there not be a similar tax deductible mechanism in place for mechanics? There has to be some uniformity and fairness with respect to industries and eligibility for tax deductions. Not unlike other industries such as fishing and farming, there is an intrinsic connection between the individual and the tools and machinery that are required to provide the service in the profession.

The other important issue with respect to this bill is that there is a labour aspect, an element of employment, attached. Currently with such high initial costs, many young Canadians who have the possibility to get work after receiving training, be it at a community college or through a mentoring program, are faced with a monumental startup cost that they simply cannot afford. Therefore it continues this trend that we have seen in other professions which has become colloquially known as the brain drain.

Mechanics are no exception. Indications are that many mechanics are facing the very gut wrenching decision of whether to stay in their hometown, their community, their country or to go to the United States or other countries where they are given greater tax relief and perhaps a better life by virtue of being able to keep what they earn.

An element of this bill talks about maximizing job potential which we in the Progressive Conservative Party are very supportive of to say the least. Studies have shown that the mechanics industry has experienced a serious decline with respect to enrolment in technical institutions. I think this good faith initiative that has been brought forward addresses in some measure that exact problem.

The Canadian Automobile Dealers Association and other national organizations have embraced this legislation as a good idea. They have lobbied not only opposition members but presumably government members. They have reminded them that this is something that has been in the works, has been in the hopper, for some time. There is a great deal of support and demand that the government adopt such an initiative.

Time and time again the government has demonstrated that it is quite devoid of new ideas and this is quite sad. It trundles along in mediocrity. We are seeing more and more that the real initiatives are coming from the opposition benches. Therefore, we are faced with the difficulty of it becoming a partisan effort which is

unfortunate because this does not benefit Canadians. I see that Mr. Speaker is nodding in agreement with that suggestion. The government is not listening to Canadians and is not responding with the initiatives and the legislative change that is required.

With regard to tax deductibility for technicians, this idea was established in response to the industry itself and the growing concerns over the unfair treatment of automobile technicians. Working groups consisting of automobile industry associations from across the country have all banded together and spoken in support of this type of initiative.

The mechanics, like other Canadians, cannot be denied access to some form of tax relief. This is a very straightforward and common sense approach. Mechanics singularly are hardworking Canadians who want to take part in the new economy and be able to keep their hard earned working dollars. There is no reason whatsoever that they should not be afforded access to the same types of tax breaks that are prevalent in other industries.

• (1810)

Competition, increasing attention to detail, and the increasing bureaucracy that small businesses are faced with are other drags on the economy and on the mechanics industry itself. Insurance and the cost of maintenance when it comes to maintaining a garage and the tools of the trade are burdens for which mechanics, like others, are looking for some form of assistance. That could be brought about through the adoption of this type of legislation.

In November 1998 the Canadian automobile industry appeared before the finance committee in various capacities and organizations and made specific recommendations very much akin to this legislation. Since 1992 all of these groups representing mechanics and organizations across the country have been urging the government to move in this direction.

I have met personally with individuals like Brad Smith of Westville's Radco Enterprises and Dan McDonald of Scotia Diesel in Antigonish. Both of them were very open and frank in their support for this type of legislation which would allow them to keep their hard earned tax dollars. That we know will generate further growth through spinoffs in the economy.

Allowing mechanics to write off their expenses in relation to the cost and maintenance of their tools and their workshops is something that the Progressive Conservative Party very much embraces and supports.

We support the hon. member who has moved this bill through the Commons. We are hoping that the government members will try to break away from the tired and arrogant approach that we have become far too accustomed to, with no ideas coming forward, no innovation and no constructive moves. We on the opposition side are urging the government to support this legislation.

Private Members' Business

Again I congratulate all previous speakers who have brought forward their support. I encourage other members to do likewise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this situation that exists throughout Quebec is of great concern to me. I hear about it particularly in my riding, because I often come across mechanics in restaurants or garages and they tell me about this injustice done to them. They are not allowed any deductions from their taxable income for the tools they are required to buy to practice their trade.

Knowing that other tradesmen have access to such a deduction, we can see that the government encourages inequities and has tremendous difficulty taking action to contribute to the advancement of Quebec society.

In the report that was prepared following the December 1997 prebudget consultations in which I took part, it was recognized that the need was there. The public was asking that legislation be passed quickly to allow mechanics to deduct the cost of the tools they are required to buy.

Today is March 30, 2000, almost three years later, and yet nothing has been done. This goes to show once again that this government waits and then waits some more, and drags its feet on issues that penalize people. In this case, it is mechanics.

I am very pleased to support the bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans. I also thank all the members of the opposition who listened carefully to the demands of the Bloc Québécois and who support this bill, which will hopefully find some support among federal Liberals.

This is the second time that I speak to this important bill. When we made similar demands in June 1999, there was talk about a government surplus of several billion dollars. That was what the Minister of Finance was hinting at.

• (1815)

Now that the Minister of Finance has a budget surplus of tens of thousands of dollars, although it is still hard to find out the real figures, hard to be really informed about the Canadian economic reality, he ought to accede to what is being called for in Bill C-205.

This bill defends principles in which I believe strongly. I will tell hon. members what the objectives and principles are that must be obtained in this legislation.

First of all, mechanics must be given fair treatment as far as taxation is concerned, on an equal footing with farmers, and in harmony with that already afforded to chain saw operators, artists and musicians.

Adjournment Debate

Secondly, this bill is aimed at lessening the financial burden on mechanics imposed by the requirement to purchase their own tools, and very costly ones.

Just think of the young mechanic, fresh out of school, and often with a student loan, having to purchase thousands of dollars worth of tools in order to get a job. After working for a year, he is not even entitled to a tax deduction for the new tools he has acquired. As far as I am concerned, this is social injustice.

Now, moving on to another of the objectives I support. This bill offers a remedy for the serious shortage of workers in automobile-related fields. We know that it is getting harder and harder to recruit mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and the like.

In my region, in the RCM de l'Érable, the LDB is doing a lot of promotion to try to find 300 people who could immediately get work in business in Plessisville, Princeville and Lyster.

I also learned that the same situation prevails at the other end of my riding, namely in Laurier-Station and Saint-Apollinaire, where plants are also looking for people who are able to work.

If the government does not make the necessary efforts to prepare for the future, to help our young people, how can we ensure the viability of a region such as Lotbinière and that of all the regions of Quebec?

The problem described in Bill C-205 is one of a number of factors which, year after year, significantly affect our regions. Unfortunately, people are constantly leaving the regions. Think of all the efforts made by our ancestors, by the pioneers, all their collective achievements, all their hard work. Because of actions such as those of the federal government, the foundations that helped build the Quebec society are being eroded.

It is time to wake up and take charge. Each of Quebec's region has its own wealth, its own beauty, its own features. In each of these regions, there are motorists, people who use their cars or their trucks. There is pride in having local mechanics in each municipality.

I do not want to wax nostalgic, but 25 years ago, in rural villages, there were essential elements that promoted mutual support and supported the local economy. There was the general store, the local mechanic, a small restaurant, the caisse populaire, the elementary and secondary schools and the church.

• (1820)

Today we realize that most of the small garages in each of the towns have disappeared. Why? Because no measures or laws have been established to ensure some sort of continuity. What does this situation lead to? Gradually, people leave these villages to go and live in larger centres and must give up the heritage that is important to them.

It is high time that the federal government, through its rural and regional development policies, paid attention to this ever more desperate situation throughout Quebec. Today, it is the mechanics. Tomorrow it will be the electricians. Unfortunately, unless something is done, we will see that the major centres in each region and riding will be only ones to have survived.

I encourage all federal Liberals in Quebec and across Canada to join with my colleague, to be part of the support given us by the opposition parties—the Progressive Conservatives, the Canadian Alliance and the NDP—in recognizing that there is a desperate need.

It is urgent that the situation be resolved, in order to correct once and for all this injustice, which is befalling important people, the mechanics. We are proud of them and must keep them. We must support their efforts to work and continue to build with us the rural and regional communities of Quebec.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The time for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

JUSTICE

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this short speech comes as a result of a question I posed several weeks ago to the Minister of Justice. The question revolved around whether it was the intent of the 1997 child support guidelines to create a class of adult students who are supported, by court order, as children of the marriage.

In her response, the minister stated that such orders are not automatic. I am certain that the parliamentary secretary, who is here this evening to speak for her, will echo the idea that it is all about judicial discretion and that under the 1997 guidelines an order is not automatic when one goes to the court seeking support for an adult. Although the adult is called a child there is no right to this support.

If that is correct then I am inviting the parliamentary secretary, the Department of Justice or anybody watching this show to produce or to offer just one example of a case where a judge

exercised that discretion and said “No, you are applying for support for a child at university and I am not going to give it to you. You are applying for tuition expenses and I am not going to give it to you”. I am looking for one case.

I can tell the members that there are some very basic and fundamental questions surrounding these orders and this law which concern a broad cross-section of Canadians. First, when is a child no longer a child, or when does a child become an adult?

As we know, generally in this country the age of majority is 19, and in some provinces 18, but it is in that range. We know that a 19 year old can marry without a parent’s permission. We know that a 19 year old can enter into contracts and be bound by them. They can buy real estate and all sorts of things. They are adults and anything an adult can do they can do.

However, here we have, in a 1997 law passed in this place, the federal support guidelines which state that a child of divorce is entitled to support under circumstances which are widely applied to be post-secondary education.

Three years later what do we see? First, we see that an order is automatic. That is, if the custodial parent applies to the court and says that this child is in university, then the non-custodial parent must pay for those expenses. More importantly, we are seeing many recorded cases of so-called children who are 30 years of age whose non-custodial parent is in fact paying for their post-secondary education. We have Ph.D. students and MA students, some approaching middle age, who are still children as declared by a judge exercising his so-called discretion.

• (1825)

I have to ask how this can be. If we look at the law in this country we want it both ways. We know that under the Young Offenders Act a 14 year old can be declared to be an adult for the purposes of the law. We also know that for the purposes of the Divorce Act a 30 year old can be a child for the purposes of the law. How can this possibly be?

Second, I want to talk about fairness and equality because that is a big topic around this place. How can it be fair for a divorced parent to be compelled to pay but parents who are still married do not have to do anything? Even if the parents are millionaires, as long as their marriage is intact when the child is 19 they can say that they are not paying, and parents do that. However, a divorced parent does not have this choice. The court orders that parent to pay

Adjournment Debate

for the child up to age 30. We are waiting to hear whether the age will up any further.

I have one final point. Is the Divorce Act a law that is applied to create a social policy? That is exactly what is happening in this circumstance.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while there are a number of elements to the member’s question, I think it is useful to review what the government has done, which started his question in the first place.

In 1997 the government introduced child support guidelines to make the calculation of child support fair, predictable and consistent in the best interest of children. The Divorce Act does not automatically require parents to continue to support a child who has reached the age of majority but rather enables the courts to make an order for support if it is reasonable, given the circumstances of that family.

It needs to be said that this is not new policy. The courts have been ordering support for children over the age of majority well before the child support reforms of 1997.

The department is monitoring the federal child support guidelines closely and research to date indicates the guidelines are meeting their objectives.

The minister will be reporting to parliament on the guidelines by May 2002, and perhaps that is the time to have a more fulsome review of this to see whether in fact some of the issues that the member has raised are continuing to be an issue.

It is also important to note that most provinces and territories have legislation enabling the courts to make such orders where parents are separated. In fact some allow it where the families are intact.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.28 p.m.)

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