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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among all parties in the House and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

• (1005)

That, at the ordinary time of daily adjournment on Tuesday, October 17, 2000, today, no proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 shall be taken up and the House shall continue to sit for the purpose of considering a motion that this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Ethiopia and Eritrea; that during the debate on the said motion members may speak for no more than 20 minutes, with a 10 minute question and comment period, provided that two members may divide one speaking period; that during the debate on the said motion the Chair shall not receive any dilatory motions, quorum calls or requests for unanimous consent to propose any motions; and, that at 10 p.m. or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, there have been negotiations and we look forward to tonight's debate.

As part of what we discussed earlier, we had hoped to have more detail as to what exactly this peacekeeping mission may entail, how many troops may be involved, what kind of terms of reference there are and so on. Does the House leader have information that he can table or that he is prepared to give to all the opposition parties about that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I know that there have been discussions among the parliamentary leaders concerning the emergency debate this evening.

I would like to ask the government House leader if it would not be possible to consider that eventuality after the question I am about to ask of you relating to the necessity of an emergency debate on another matter.

I have not had the opportunity to discuss this with the government House leader, but we are aware that all these matters need to be addressed within the next few days.

I will not therefore be able to give my consent at this time. I would prefer it to be considered a little later, after we have been able to hold discussions.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: We will not proceed with the request for unanimous consent at this time.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning the systemic intimidation of an officer of the House of Commons. This is a very serious allegation, I admit, but in the past 24 hours our attention has been drawn to the government's use of its levers of power to intimidate the office of the access to information commissioner.

As you would know as an officer of this House, the decision on the definition of what constitutes contempt is reserved for the collective House of Commons, that is, the issue now before the Chair is whether there is sufficient evidence to give this matter to the House for examination and decision.

Yesterday the Speaker laid on the table the report of the access to information commissioner, who is similarly an officer of parliament, both of the House of Commons and of the other place. The commissioner has made very disturbing and troubling allegations. I refer to his report at pages 9 and 10. I quote:

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For its part, the Privy Council Office (PCO) decided to resist and challenge almost all of the Commissioner's investigative powers. To this end, officials of PCO have ignored orders for the production of records; failed to fully comply with such orders (in one case non-compliance persisted until after two Federal Court judges had ordered PCO to comply);

It goes on in the next paragraph to say:

In this latter regard, PCO lawyers advised a senior PCO official of Deputy Minister rank, to refuse to answer questions under oath put to him by the Commissioner, because there could be no punitive consequences. When the Information Commissioner cited the official for contempt and began the enforcement process, PCO also agreed to pay the legal costs associated with the constitutional challenge. . . .

This is blatant contempt for the commissioner.

It goes on in the final paragraph on page 9 to say:

...with no prior notice or consultation, to rescind a protocol with the Commissioner's office which was adopted and followed since 1984. The protocol governed the process by which the Information Commissioner could obtain a certificate from the Clerk of the Privy Council officially attesting that records claimed to be Cabinet confidences are, indeed, confidences. PCO claims now that it may exclude confidences from access without any obligation to certify through the Commissioner (as it must for a court) that such records are, indeed, confidences.

• (1010)

Finally, on page 10 of the information commissioner's annual report for 1999-2000, it says:

As for Justice Canada, the "home" department of the access law, it decided not to defend the Access to Information Act against the above-mentioned constitutional challenge brought against it by the senior official of PCO and funded by the Crown. Indeed, in proceedings before the Information Commissioner, an agent for the Attorney General took the unprecedented position of impugning the constitutionality of the very legislation which the Attorney General has the duty to defend.

There is a blatant conflict of interest at work based on the words and in this report.

As part of my submission I refer you page 11 of the report which says:

The government's palpable animosity towards the "right" of access (it would prefer to dole out information by grace and favour in well-digested mouthfuls) is no more apparent than in the disconnect between talk and action in the matter of reform of the Access to Information Act. Every study of the Act (from Parliament's own review in 1986, to the Justice department's internal reviews, to the Information Commissioner's reviews, to independent, academic reviews and careful reviews conducted by private members) has concluded that the law needs to be modernized, strengthened and expanded.

These are very heady and very heavy words. I submit that this report to parliament, written by an officer of parliament, raises sufficient questions and alarms to constitute a prima facie case that should be put before the House for examination and disposition.

The commissioner states that the privy council office, at public expense, has systematically challenged its powers and that the treasury board has systematically denied the commissioner resources to go about his duties. These are grave allegations and

grave findings which are deeply troubling and should be deeply troubling to every member of the House.

The House has a duty to give this report a priority over other business which the government seeks to place before the House in its rush to a premature election call. We cannot allow this damning report to be swept aside in a rush to the Prime Minister's vanity election.

It is the Prime Minister himself, the man responsible for the privy council office, who stands accused of impeding an officer of parliament in his duties. The Prime Minister is going to dismiss the House before we can take action using the normal processes of examination of this report.

I call upon the Chair to put the House of Commons first, to rule that the findings in this report raise sufficient questions that they merit action and that the debate in the House should take place immediately.

I am of course prepared to move the necessary motion to let the House proceed with this issue. I expect that other House leaders will have similar comments. Mr. Speaker, I urge you to take action on this matter.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two things to add to what the member said.

Personally, I have never read or seen a report from any officer of the House so condemnatory of the government as this one. The report talks about the denial of resources to the information commissioner; that working for the information commissioner is the death of one's career because of the way the government reacts; that the privy council office is actively involved in denying information; and that the justice minister is not only complicit in this, but her department is actually attacking the very legislation that gives the information commissioner the right to do his business.

I have never heard such strong language in the seven years that I have been in parliament. Never have I read language which basically says that the government is trying to stop an officer of the House from doing his job. It is doing it systematically, routinely, day after day and across the departments. That is something that should cause all Canadians great alarm.

• (1015)

We just have to read not only the report but Mr. Reid's comments that were published today in papers across the country in which he said that democracy itself was at risk when the government gets away with what it is doing right now. I could not agree more.

I would also like to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, something that happened yesterday. It does seem to fit the trend that we see from the government. At 11 o'clock in the morning the

information commissioner's report was tabled in the House. We in the opposition could not get copies of it until question period had begun, three hours later. The report was tabled in the House at 11 a.m. and we were denied access to it. That too should be part of the debate. How can we have things tabled in this place and then not have them available to the members of parliament?

I do not have the exact date and time but I remember, within the last couple of months of Speaker's rulings, where the Speaker actually said that when anything is tabled at the Table in the House of Commons it should be available immediately. He also chastized the government for not making sure it was available.

I am not sure how or why that happened. I just know that for three hours we checked the website, phoned the office of the commissioner and did everything we could to get copies and we were denied access to something that was tabled in the House. There is something wrong with that and it should also be part of the debate that I hope we enter into today. How on earth can the government say that it is defending democracy and our parliamentary traditions when the information officer of the House says that the government is complicit in hiding information that should be available, not only to the House but to Canadians at large? Everything around here is based on our access to some kind of information.

We should be debating this. It is an absolute condemnation of the government in the way it has handled this whole issue. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will rule that we can enter into a debate about the confidence this place has in the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our hon. colleague has raised a point of privilege I feel is of such importance that it requires us to intervene at this time, adding our voice to theirs and to that of the leader of the official opposition, in order to call for this matter to be addressed with the utmost urgency, as well as the serious accusations made in the information commissioner's report.

I believe it is appropriate to point out at this time—since we have gone to the heart of the matter—that I myself asked under Standing Order 52 that there be an emergency debate at the end of the day today on this matter, given the serious nature of the accusations and the fact that the report states in black and white, and I quote:

PCO refuses to accept the clear words of Parliament giving the Commissioner the powers of a Superior Court of Record in the conduct of his investigations.

Of all the accusations, the serious nature of this one is without precedent. Privy Council shunts aside and rejects the wishes of parliament to which the information commissioner is answerable. I would be prepared, in one way or another, to go along with the hon. member's request for an immediate debate on this issue, for a motion to be introduced and the issue debated. If that were to be

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done, it would pre-empt the emergency debate we had called for this evening, or the Chair should bear in mind in its ruling that if it does not allow an immediate debate, we should at least use the evening to debate the matter pursuant to Standing Order 52. Whatever is decided the final days of this government are a sorry spectacle.

• (1020)

As its mandate draws to a close, a matter of days now, our worst fears and doubts are being confirmed. Our complaints to the House about the answers being given by ministers about the unavailability of documents under the Access to Information Act are being borne out. This is a very serious situation.

For three and a half years, the Bloc Québécois has had a hard time because it has been systematically unable—this was how the privy council wanted things—to obtain any useful documents that would show the public what was actually going on behind the scenes in this government.

It is quite terrible that this is happening in a system such as ours. The control of information is something we thought was reserved for certain dictatorships, certain totalitarian countries. The first requirement of a dictatorship is to control information and release only what it wants.

It is a sad day for this parliament. It is a very sad conclusion to the government's stay in office.

It is vital that the question of privilege raised by the hon. member be debated immediately or that you at least allow an emergency debate on the matter in the coming hours. Otherwise, we will no longer know what deference to the will of parliament means.

The spotlight is now on the PMO and the privy council.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the NDP caucus, I would like to comment on a point of privilege brought forward by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, the House leader for the Conservative Party.

The point of privilege arises out of the tabling of the annual report of the information commissioner for 1999-2000. I would just like to remind the House, but more specifically the government, that Mr. Reid presents his report to the Speaker of the House. He says:

Dear Mr. Parent:

I have the honour to submit my annual report to Parliament.

This report covers the period from April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000.

The point I am trying to make here is that this report and the officer who has made this report is a creature of parliament and answers to parliament. What we see developing here in the report of the information commissioner is part of a larger disease that

Privilege

affects the Canadian body politic, and that is, the relationship between the government and parliament is not what it should be. What we have reported here, and which should be a concern for anyone, especially the Chair who is concerned with the integrity and the reputation of parliament, is evidence of what most of us see here every day, and that is that the government has contempt for the role of parliament and the democratic process.

In this case, it is contempt for an officer of parliament. In this case, we see evidence of the systematic attempts to frustrate the efforts of an officer of this parliament, the information commissioner, the person who reports to this parliament, to obtain the kind of information that he is mandated to obtain under the freedom of information act.

This report comes from someone with extensive experience in government and who was actually once a Liberal member of parliament. This would certainly, in fairness, give the lie to some of the things we sometimes think, that just because someone has partisan considerations he will never give the government a hard time. This guy is giving the government a hard time and properly so, but it points even more so to how bad the government practices must be in this particular instance.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that you should consider this point of privilege very favourably. For me it is just one more symptom of a larger disease, and that is the contempt that this government has for this House.

I am not pointing fingers at the government House leader. In many respects, as is too often the case unfortunately, the people above the government House leader, those people in the Prime Minister's Office, in the senior bureaucracy and in treasury board, treat us all with contempt.

• (1025)

It is not a question of government members treating opposition members with contempt. It is a question of the Prime Minister's office, that small circle around him, and the senior bureaucracy treating all of us with contempt, whether we are a government House leader or an opposition House leader. We have all fallen into the same basket as far as they are concerned: people whose will is to be thwarted, whose status is to be diminished and who, instead of being respected because they are elected, are held to be the very people that obstruct their will.

Time and time again we see the collective consensus of those in the senior bureaucracy and in the Prime Minister's office. The information commissioner has laid bare the reality of this as far as freedom of information is concerned. It behooves us all, including you, Mr. Speaker, to seize this opportunity to initiate a debate on what is a growing problem.

Although points of privilege cannot become election issues, this frankly is something that the Canadian people ought to take into

account. We have seen another contempt of parliament just today when people are appointed to cabinet who have never been elected. It is better to be an unelected friend of the Prime Minister than an elected member of parliament who the people vote for. Imagine that. Let us bring in some of the backroom boys.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona says he is trying to be relevant. I hope he will try a little harder.

We are dealing with a point of privilege raised by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough which has nothing to do with cabinet appointments. Perhaps he can stick to the point. I know he is doing his best.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: What I am trying to point out is a pattern of contempt. It is just a coincidence that on the very day we are talking about a report that shows this kind of contempt for parliament in terms of the government's actions with respect to the freedom of information commissioner and the work his department does, we have another example of this in the way in which the Prime Minister has appointed people to cabinet who are not at this time elected, some of whom have never been elected to the federal House of Commons.

I think it is fair ball to try to place this particular violation of parliamentary privilege, that is to say, those things the freedom of information commissioner points to, in the context of the larger contempt which the Prime Minister in particular has for the House and even for his own members.

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona that we are not yet having a debate on this subject.

The hon. member is rising on a question of privilege. I hope he is trying to assist the Chair in coming to a decision as to whether or not to recognize this as a question of privilege. If he has remarks along those lines, I would appreciate hearing them rather than what I think might be a very good speech on a motion, were there one permitted before the House.

Hon. Jim Peterson: The polls are relevant.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, a member across the way says the polls are relevant to this debate. That is all the government thinks about. Nothing else is relevant except the polls. I suppose if the polls said that the government should take out a bunch of people and shoot them, the government would say "Fine, the polls say that is okay. We will just do whatever". Instead it is members of the other side who aspire to be in cabinet who have been politically executed, while others have been brought in who are not even members of the House.

Privilege

I know you think this is not relevant, Mr. Speaker, but the point I am trying to make is that all of us should be concerned about the respect for this institution. Whenever a government acts in a way that is disrespectful of democracy and disrespectful of parliament it is something that the Chair should concern itself with. This point of privilege is an opportunity to give the members in the House a further opportunity to speak their minds, including those government backbenchers who may be embarrassed by the way they have been passed over and abused by their own Prime Minister

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course there is no question of privilege here this morning, as the Chair no doubt has already recognized or, I suspect, as he is about to.

There has been some discussion here as to whether or not the speaker should recognize an emergency debate under Standing Order 52.

• (1030)

I will acknowledge that it was raised. I certainly do not want to contribute to that process because that is the Speaker's decision and only the Speaker's decision. I recognize the Speaker will do that with the usual wisdom.

Whether one likes or dislikes a report tabled in the House does not constitute privilege. That is not the case. Whether someone receives the budget and he or she wants to do his or her function is not a matter of privilege.

The member from Central Nova said that certain government departments sought legal counsel when there was a difficulty or a challenge to the interpretation of law. Surely the learned member of the House should not be offended by the fact that people seek legal counsel in the interpretation of laws. It is certainly not a question of privilege. I do not see how anyone could even take that allegation seriously.

The House leader for the official opposition said that the access commissioner did not provide sufficient access to his own document. That may be interesting as a point but the government does not distribute the copies of the access to information commissioner's document. My own colleagues were trying to get copies of this yesterday and could not get it either.

I was reminded by members across the way that this is an independent officer of the House. Surely the independent officer of the House is not going to be dictated to by the government as to how many copies to bring along. That is something to be discussed between the Speaker and the independent officer in question, whether it is the auditor general, who will table documents later today, or whether it is the privacy commissioner or whether it is some other independent officer.

When independent officers who report to parliament do not provide sufficient copies of their documents, the Chair will discuss that with that independent office. It is not something that the government is in any way responsible for or otherwise. The mere allegation of that is bordering on the preposterous.

I know someone raised and was quite nervous about the fact that the Prime Minister made excellent cabinet appointments this morning. That nervousness was duly noted. I will not comment on it further other than restating that I do not believe a question of privilege has been raised today with the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know how much longer the Chair needs to hear members on this point. I must say the Chair has heard enough to take the matter under advisement at this time. I will allow brief comments from the three members who rose.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points that may be of assistance to the Speaker. One is the point made in the report which quoted Justice Gérard La Forest in 1997, a former Supreme Court of Canada justice. I refer the House to the facing page of the report which says:

The overarching purpose of access to information legislation... is to facilitate democracy. It does so in two related ways. It helps to ensure first, that citizens have the information required to participate meaningfully in the democratic process, and, secondly, that politicians and bureaucrats remain accountable to the citizenry.

I suggest that as members of parliament, as representatives of the citizenry of the country, we are deeply concerned about anything that puts a stranglehold on the information required to participate meaningfully in the democratic process and to do our job to hold the government accountable to the people of Canada.

This report not only clearly but scathingly points out that the government is impeding that very important process. I refer to one quote on page 10, second column, first paragraph of the report which says "In sum, then, there is a full counter-attack in progress against the Office of the Information Commissioner".

• (1035)

We need to take this very seriously. It is not just a matter of partisanship; it is a matter of fundamental democratic practice in our country. I urge the Chair to take this matter very seriously. It is a matter of privilege, not only for every single member of the House but for every single citizen of this country. I would ask the Chair to accede to the request of my colleague from Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough to bring this matter forward on an urgent basis so that it can be dealt with in a meaningful way, not swept under the carpet by the events that are taking place elsewhere in the democratic arena.

Routine Proceedings

I would plead with you, Mr. Speaker, to give this matter the priority that we as members of the House feel it should have.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind you that there was a question of privilege moved by myself last June that is now before the House which relates directly to this matter. I suggested that there was interference with my privileges as an MP because of certain documents that were presented to cabinet by the justice department.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you are expected to rule on this question of privilege very soon. You might consider taking under advisement the current question of privilege until after we hear your ruling on my question of privilege. My question of privilege is very specific and alleged direct interference. If you find a prima facie case for my question of privilege, I think there will be ample opportunity for the House to debate the information commissioner's report in that context.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair appreciates the comments of all hon. members who made submissions on the point that is before the House this morning on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

With respect to the distribution of the documents, it is the Chair's understanding that there was a miscommunication between the privacy commissioner's office and the Chair in respect of the time of the tabling of the documents. It is agreed that the documents were tabled at 11 o'clock and the documents were not released to members until later. That was clearly the result of this miscommunication between the two offices and should in no way reflect on the validity or otherwise of the question of privilege that has been raised by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

The Chair will take this matter under advisement and get back to the House with a ruling in respect of the hon. member's question as soon as possible.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions.

* * *

[English]

CLEAN INTERNET ACT

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-507, an act to prevent the use of the Internet to distribute material that advocates, promotes or incites racial hatred, violence against women or child pornography.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill which, as indicated, is a bill to prevent the use of the Internet to distribute material that advocates, promotes or incites racial hatred, violence against women or child pornography.

If this legislation is eventually adopted, it will be a giant step forward in dealing with a social ill that is fast pervading our country and one that all of us would like to see dealt with in a way that will make this society a much better place for us to live in.

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

* * *

● (1040)

WHISTLE BLOWER HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-508, an act respecting the protection of employees in the public service who make allegations in good faith respecting wrongdoing in the public service.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to protect the members of the public service of Canada who disclose in good faith reasonably well-founded allegations of wrongdoing in the public service to a supervisor or to a public body. These could be reports of waste, fraud, corruption, abuse of authority, violation of law or threats to public health or safety.

While promoting the dignity and human rights, I believe that public officers have genuine public trust as evidenced in the annual report of the Information Commissioner of Canada. The public interest is served when employees are free to make such reports without fear of retaliation and discrimination.

Therefore, I am very pleased to introduce, after a lot of hard work and consultation with many whistle-blowers, my private member's bill entitled, an act respecting the protection of em-

ployees in the public service who make allegations in good faith respecting wrongdoing in the public service.

When a public service employee blows the whistle that person should be protected and not punished. In the U.S. whistle-blowers are rewarded.

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

* * *

COMPETITION ACT

Mr. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-509, an act to amend the Competition Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the timing of the recent decision by the competition tribunal toward Superior Propane, a monopoly of a product, is cold comfort to farmers and consumers alike. I am therefore pleased to introduce a bill to amend the Competition Act with respect to limiting efficiencies defences in merger cases before the competition tribunal. Using efficiency to obtain merger approval is unacceptable if the proposed merger would create a monopoly in the marketplace for the parties involved and would provide no benefit for consumers.

The bill clarifies the competition tribunal's powers to make or not to make an order in the case of a merger when gains in efficiency are expected or when the merger would create or strengthen a dominant market position.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present two petitions, both on the critical issue of health care.

The first petition calls upon the government to implement legislation for clear labelling of all genetically engineered seed and foods derived from, processed with, containing or consisting of genetically engineered organisms before they are released into any and all commercial markets.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition pertains to the ongoing concerns of Canadians for a universal public health care system. The petitioners call upon the government to immediately act to ensure health care funding up to 25% immediately and to implement a national home care program and a national program for prescription drugs.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two separate petitions. In the first, the petitioners are calling for an amendment to the Canada Post Corporation Act so that rural mail carriers may be entitled to collective bargaining. I am pleased to table this first petition.

[English]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present four petitions today pursuant to Standing Order 36.

• (1045)

In the first petition from Kamloops the petitioners point out their concern about Alberta's bill 11, which they feel opens the door to for profit hospitals and threatens health care across the country.

They are asking parliament to take whatever steps are necessary to stop this American style move to health care and to consider introducing national programs for home care and prescription drugs.

HIGHWAYS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another petition. The petitioners are concerned about the state of the highway system across Canada. They urge the Government of Canada to consider putting some of the revenues raised by the excise tax on fuel into highway construction in all parts of Canada.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in which the petitioners are concerned about our criminal code. They call upon the Government of Canada to amend the criminal code to prevent persons convicted of serious crimes from being released from custody pending the hearing of their appeals except in exceptional circumstances.

SIKHS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition is from members of the Sikh temple in Kamloops. They point out the importance of April 13 in their religion. They also point out their contribution to Canadian society.

More important, they call upon the House to recognize the importance of the five *Ks*. These are the kirpan, a sword representing indomitable spirit; kesa, unshorn hair representing simple life, saintliness and devotion to God; kara, a steel bangle worn as a sign of eternity to God; kangah, a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body; and kacha, short breeches representing hygienic living.

S. O. 52

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICING

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to present a second petition signed by a number of people in my riding.

These petitioners are calling on the government to do everything possible to lower the price of gasoline, especially with winter just around the corner. The increase in the price of gasoline will make it difficult for many people in my riding and across the country to make ends meet over the winter, given the very high price of heating oil, among other things.

* * *

[*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 all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has received notice of a request for an emergency debate by the hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for recognizing my privilege, my right to speak to this request and to give my reasons for making it.

I would like to say that you should examine this request in the light of the question of privilege raised a bit earlier. Allowing the question of privilege would automatically dispose of the emergency debate, because there would be a debate today, which would meet our objectives. If you were to rule the question of privilege out of order, obviously the matter of an emergency debate would remain an extremely pressing one.

On page 1 of the information commissioner's annual report, the hon. Mr. Justice Gérard La Forest, former judge of the supreme court, says—the words are heavy with meaning—and I quote:

The overarching purpose of access to information legislation... is to facilitate democracy. It does so in two related ways. It helps to ensure first, that citizens have the

information required to participate meaningfully in the democratic process, and secondly, that politicians and bureaucrats remain accountable to the citizenry.

Page 2 of this report contains an extract from the Access to Information Act, subsection 2(1):

2. (1) The purpose of this Act is to extend the present laws of Canada to provide a right of access to information in records under the control of a government institution in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public, that necessary exemptions to the right of access should be limited and specific and that decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government.

• (1050)

The reason I have requested an emergency debate is that, in the report submitted to parliament, because the information commissioner reports to parliament, it says, and I quote very briefly:

PCO claims now that it may exclude confidences from access without any obligation to certify to the Commissioner (as it must—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. This is not an opportunity to make a speech on the matter raised by the hon. member for Roberval with respect to the debate this evening. It is merely a very brief presentation on the urgent nature of the debate.

I would ask the hon. member to restrict his remarks to that point alone, nothing else.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Just one sentence, which will satisfy both you and myself. It reads as follows:

The Privy Council Office refuses to accept the clear words of Parliament giving the Commissioner the powers of a Superior Court of Record in the conduct of his investigations.

The Privy Council Office is the department of the Prime Minister. It is questioning the authority of parliament and its decision to confer upon the commissioner responsible for access to information the powers to investigate, audit and distribute documents.

This strikes me as so serious, given the words of Justice La Forest, that it is an attack on the very essence of democracy by the department of the Prime Minister. It is not a minor matter, but rather one which merits an emergency debate this very day.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair has carefully considered the comments by the hon. member for Roberval, as well as his letter submitted earlier this morning on the matter.

As the hon. member has indicated, the Chair has already received a question of privilege from the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough and has taken the matter under advisement.

If the Chair decides it is a true question of privilege, as the hon. member for Roberval has indicated, there will be an immediate debate in the House on the motion by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. It is possible to continue that debate during regular sitting hours.

In my opinion, it is perhaps not necessary to consider the matter of an emergency debate this evening, because the Chair has already taken the matter under advisement. In my opinion, the request is not in order at this time.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, from what I understand, the ruling on the point of privilege has not yet been brought down.

Does your response mean that you are maintaining my request pending a ruling later on? Because a favourable ruling disposes of my request, while an unfavourable one leaves it active and fully justified.

I would like to know where we stand exactly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members must wait for the Chair's ruling on another point of privilege. I must add, however, that it is standard practice to renew a request for an emergency debate daily.

Thus, if the Speaker's ruling is not brought down this afternoon, tomorrow the hon. member can request an emergency debate on this issue for tomorrow evening.

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[English]

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE WESTERN CANADA TELEPHONE COMPANY

Hon. Jim Peterson (for the Minister of Industry) moved that Bill S-26, an act to repeal an act to incorporate the Western Canada Telephone Company, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

• (1055)

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill S-26 is to remove from the laws of Canada obsolete provisions that restrain Telus Communications from operating throughout Canada.

Bill S-26 is a standard housekeeping bill in many ways. It would repeal an act to incorporate the Western Canada Telephone Company, known as the BC Tel act. It thus would remove restrictions that hinder BC Tel from competing across the country. These are restrictions only BC Tel faces.

This constraint was put into place in the bad old days of provincial monopolies. Today it is contrary to the competitive climate in which the telecommunications industry works in Cana-

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da. The Competition Act, the Telecommunications Act and the Canada Business Corporations Act will still apply to Telus.

We support the bill because it is consistent with Canadian Alliance policy that government should foster a healthy economic environment for the benefit of consumers by pursuing free and open trade at home and abroad, including eliminating interprovincial trade barriers.

The telecommunications industry is Canada's fastest growing industry. According to the Canadian business performance report revenues grew 50% in this industry between 1998 and 1999. This is tremendous growth. It is one of the strongest assets in Canada.

Canadian society is being transformed by the increasing use of technology. In their homes, businesses and schools Canadians are embracing technology and the changes it brings. Computer use in Canada jumped to a 36% national average in 1998 from 29.4% in the previous year. Governments in Canada at all levels are changing the way they do business by incorporating this new technology into their practices. Telecommunications companies provide the important ramp on to the information highway.

According to the Canadian Bankers Association, between November 1999 and January 2000 in Canada approximately 12.7 million adults, or 56%, used the Internet. That shows an increase of 13% since 1997. We can see this is a growing sector. The 43% who are not currently on the Internet anticipate getting online within a couple of years. We definitely need the infrastructure the telecommunications industry provides.

However it is not all good news today. Too many bright Canadian entrepreneurs have been forced to go to the United States to find capital for their ideas. Too many Canadian companies have been forced south or overseas by high taxes. Canada's personal income burden is the highest in the G-7. It is 21% greater than that of the United States. High taxes combined with a stagnant standard of living and an abysmal Canadian currency of a 65 cent dollar have been leading many individual Canadians to leave our country, in increasing numbers. It is quite disturbing.

This summer Statistics Canada reported that over 62,000 Canadians left the country this year, enough people to populate a medium size Canadian city. That is an increase from the 58,000 who left last year. This is accelerating, if anything. We know the U.S. high tech companies continue to look for people around the world. That will continue unless we get our house in order in Canada.

While those people were packing their bags the Liberals were denying that the brain drain existed. As recently as June the Prime Minister publicly rejected the notion that Canada was losing its best and brightest. He insisted that the brain drain was only a myth being perpetuated by his critics.

This year 65,000 Canadians do not agree with that. The brain drain problem must be addressed. The Canadian Alliance fair tax plan would address the main reasons behind the exodus. The

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Canadian Alliance would increase income for all Canadian taxpayers no matter how much they make. We would remove 1.4 million Canadians with the lowest incomes from the tax rolls entirely. We would encourage investment and savings for retirement. These measures would encourage Canada's best and brightest to stay and work here at home.

It takes quite a bit before a Canadian wants to leave this country. Our friends and families are all here. It is a major disruption. For the people who have immigrated to Canada over the years we know it has been a major traumatic experience. These people did not do it willingly. They were being driven out of their countries.

In addition to relieving the onerous tax burden, Canada needs a strategy to compete in the global economy. The Canadian Alliance would reduce business taxes and build a positive climate for doing business while ensuring Canada has a skilled workforce and a modern infrastructure. Part of that infrastructure is telecommunications.

• (1100)

Investors need confidence that government is getting the economic fundamentals right, and I would suggest that is not happening now.

To encourage more high tech investment in Canada's economy, the Canadian Alliance would lower payroll taxes so that employees would take home more money and businesses could hire more employees.

We would cut the capital gains tax on investing, which would take away obstacles that restrict investment and which would encourage the economy to prosper. We only need to look at the situation in Ireland as an example.

We would cut taxes on the high tech industry. The current system penalizes the new economy. The Canadian Alliance proposes to tax all types of companies equally.

In this day and age Canadians must be able to access government information and services online. We would appoint a senior adviser on technology to oversee a project to ensure that Canadian citizens could access the Government of Canada online.

We would increase support for Canada's research granting councils and co-ordinate scientific activities in all government departments to ensure that science, not politics, prevails. Canadians should not be left behind in the rush to do business online. Canadian regulations need to be modernized to reflect the reality of a new technology.

Bill S-26 is a straightforward piece of legislation which would allow Telus to compete on a level playing field with other Canadian telecommunication companies.

In an increasing global market deregulation of this kind is long overdue. In fact we have quite a bit better legislation and trade agreements in terms of international trade agreements than we have here at home because of our interprovincial trade barriers which restrict Canadians from doing business across provincial borders. That needs to be addressed. It is long overdue. I would suggest the government has not made much progress in that area.

It is time to give Telus the legislative freedom to do business in Canada. Therefore the Canadian Alliance is supportive of the bill and will be supporting it at all stages to allow it to go through the House today.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My colleague from the opposition just mentioned the reason for my point of order. I think you would find unanimous consent in the House to proceed with all stages of the bill today, including consideration in committee of the whole.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed with the bill as indicated by the deputy government whip?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, we have a Minister of Industry and allow me to offer my congratulations this morning.

I was very pleased that the Alliance Party member for Peace River expressed himself on the bill. We all heard him speak in support of the bill. It is really a housekeeping bill as he clearly stated. On our side we fully appreciate the fact that there is good co-operation on the bill. He referred, for example, to the BC Tel act, which was enacted in 1916. We certainly have to modernize things, and that is what we are trying to do.

He touched upon some of the most important issues. I will not go into the nitty-gritty, but through Bill S-26 we are trying not only to modernize but to create a level playing field so that telecommunications companies have an opportunity to compete, to remain strong and to grow. Not only will they offer excellent service but at the same time will create opportunities for Canadians locally and abroad.

I thank everyone for co-operating in moving the bill forward. It is also important to take this opportunity to talk about some issues with which we are faced today.

The member for Peace River touched upon some very important points. He talked about technology and how we had moved forward. I stand here proudly as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry to talk about our connecting Canadians program and our computers for schools program which put our country above every other nation. We are probably the most connected nation in the world, offering high speed Internet and low cost. As Canadians we feel very proud of it.

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• (1105)

The member raised one very important issue. He talked about how we had better policy to deal with our international partners than we do within the provinces. He is right.

The federal government cannot simply stand and say it wants to do something. Provincial jurisdiction has to be respected. We have to work with our provincial partners. I know the member agrees; we have talked about it personally. I am sure he feels that by working together we will slowly, hopefully, overcome those barriers as quickly as possible for the good of each Canadian.

I will touch upon some of his points. He talked about companies and people moving. In a global economy, in the global village we live in, there is a lot of mobility. There is a great shortage of high tech people in Canada because it is one of the fastest growing industries.

Not too long ago I read an article in the local papers in which applications had been put out for lab technicians. About 80% of the individuals who applied were Canadians wanting to come back to Canada for several reasons: the fact that we have invested in research and development and that we have made some very positive steps in the last budget in how we treat, for example, our stock options in terms of capital gains, which the member for Peace River so eloquently touched upon.

We know what has clearly been addressed in the budget in terms of how we address options to motivate people to invest in our country. That has been happening in a very healthy way. Steps have been undertaken.

All statisticians and pundits out there, not us, have been saying that we are going to lead. We have been leading the G-7 in economic growth and in job creation. We were the first to balance our books and we were the first ones to show a surplus.

Just the other day I read in an article a comment made by Mr. Klein, the premier of Alberta. He is now basking in the surplus he has. He is now reinvesting it back into his province, and I am glad for that. He said Alberta did not want to go back to 1993 or 1994 when it had to make tough decisions. Now he is able to reinvest in his province and he is able to give out some bonuses, as did the premier of Ontario, for example. That is their prerogative.

It is important at this stage to talk about the tough decisions that we as a government had to make in 1993. We had a growing deficit after nine years of the Conservatives not being able to meet one of their budget targets. We had a growing debt that was out of control. Thanks to the Canadian people we carried out our commitment and balanced the books. We are lowering the debt consistently, and now we are in the same position as Mr. Klein, thank God, to reinvest in

our country. Part of that reinvestment is looking at the high tech sector—

Mr. Charlie Penson: They do not want reinvestment; they want taxes down.

Mr. John Cannis: I am glad the member for Peace River is talking about taxes. If we do not have the money, we cannot support the system, lower the debt and lower the deficit at the same time. That is voodoo economics. That is skidoo mathematics.

The government took a very responsible position, headed by the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Industry and the new Minister of Industry. We made those tough decisions in a compassionate way. Yes, we created a lean government but it was not a mean government. We went to the people with commitments and promises we have kept. We are very proud.

The member touched upon payroll contributions. In 1993 they were pegged at \$3.30 per \$100. My colleague sits on the industry committee with me. He is a great participant with whom I have enjoyed spending time on the committee. They prefer to refer to payroll contributions as taxes, but as a former employer I call them contributions, as did the former leader of the Reform Party.

• (1110)

It is on record year after year that payroll contributions have been going down. Members opposite fail to accept this and ask why we have revenue. Let us talk about revenue. In 1993 we had 11.4% or 11.6% unemployment. We were having to put money out to support these people. Today we have over two million people working who are not taking out of the system but who are paying into it.

They talk about revenue and economic growth. I stand here proudly as I look at the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and the minister responsible for northern development who has invested in the north and created jobs. These people are working hard to put people to work.

The hon. member talks about tax equality. When I go to the doctor and I have an ache in my arm, he will start from that point and work his way. We did everything within our means to deliver compassion to the nation. I stand proud that the high tech industry the member talked about is growing by leaps and bounds.

There has been the creation of 2,000 21st century research chairs across country. The United States has MITs. Can we imagine having 2,000 MITs across our country? That is what it is all about. The government and the Prime Minister chose not to build monuments for the 21st century. They chose to invest in the future

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of the country, our youth, by creating the Canadian millennium scholarship endowment fund which is preparing our youth of today for the economy of tomorrow. That is one of the best investments we have made.

Let me close by saying that we have followed a very balanced approach. This is reflective of what we are doing by modernizing legislation permitting Canadian companies to compete locally and internationally. The member for Peace River referred to provincial barriers. I am hopeful in the future and with their co-operation we can move toward working with the provinces to bring down interprovincial barriers so that we can have mobility.

With our health care system we have sent a very strong statement to Canadians across the country that the Liberal federal government is adamant about protecting health care. It will enforce the Canada Health Act. It has put its money where its mouth is and we intend to continue in that direction.

In closing let me thank all the parties that co-operated to fast track Bill S-26 for the good of the country, for the good of Canadian people and for the good of Canadian companies.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the rather enthusiastic comments of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry this morning. Normally he is a very quiet individual, a thoughtful, low key and humble kind of man. Today he is not.

I wondered what would cause my friend to have a different approach today. Then I remembered that he is a hard working and determined guy who is dedicated to the Department of Industry. When he heard the Minister of Industry was leaving, I suspect he probably thought he would get an appointment, a better job.

What does the Prime Minister do? He reaches out into a provincial legislature, picks a guy who promised to serve out his term in Newfoundland and places him as Minister of Industry. Talk about Machiavellian politics. This has to be a case study in manipulation and so on.

I assume the enthusiasm of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry is a masking an extreme disappointment that he has been overlooked and our friend from Newfoundland has been brought back into cabinet in this eleventh hour cynical move. However that is the way the world is and there is not much we can do about it.

• (1115)

In his comments, my friend talked about the government's restoration of health care funding. What he failed to mention is that when all of the restoration takes place, it will only lift the federal

contribution to the level it was at in 1994. I want to tell my friend this is not 1994. It is not 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 or 1999. It is the year 2000. In other words, to feel great about this whole thing and to pat himself on the back with both hands, to say that we have increased funding to the 1994 levels when we know populations have increased, when we know inflation has increased, is not really that great a contribution.

I will just say to my hon. friend, we are still looking for a little bit more, but the point is still well taken.

He also mentioned the investment the government has done. I will be the first to say, yes, in a balanced approach, there have been very useful investments in the high tech sector. We are a relatively well connected country, perhaps even, as he says, the most connected country in the world, but let me also remind my friend of other investments made. They were not investments in social housing because the government says that we do not have any money for social housing, but we do have money for luxury hotels and resorts and we do have money for golf courses all over central Canada.

To make the record clear, when my friend says we are investing in the economy, yes, he is investing in golf courses, hotels and resorts, but the government has not invested a single cent in social housing.

An hon. member: That is not true.

Mr. Nelson Riis: That is absolutely true. Since the government took office in 1993 not a single cent has gone into social housing in this country. The government has abandoned that program.

Those members can talk later and explain where I am wrong.

The point is, we have people on Parliament Hill today from the women's march who are reminding us of this. Every single MP is being lobbied today. These people are saying "Please put some money into social housing". The reality is that the government has not.

Let us just make it clear. There is government money for golf courses, hotels and luxury resorts but no money for housing that is much needed in all parts of the country. I could go on to identify other sectors as well.

What he did not mention either was the incredible growth of food banks. Not only have the national chartered banks done very well, the food bank business is also booming, and that we should be much ashamed of.

My hon. friend also did not mention the money that has not been invested in children. While we woke up this morning to come to a parliament that is about to end, 1.4 million children woke up this morning living in poverty. The reason they woke up living in poverty is not that only they are living in poverty but their parents

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are living in poverty. Is this not some form of societal child abuse? For a country as wealthy as Canada to permit, year after year, hundreds of thousands of children to live in poverty is a form of societal child abuse. Quite frankly, we should be ashamed of this record.

Does the government announce any major initiatives in regard to child poverty? No, but if someone needs money for a golf course in Atlantic Canada there is money, apparently, and if someone needs money for a luxury resort, there is money. However there is not enough financial support to deal with child poverty.

I could go on in regard to a number of issues but we are not actually supposed to be talking about them.

My friend also mentioned balancing the books. He forgot to mention that one of the ways in which the government balanced the books was to take money out of the EI that employers and employees contributed in anticipation that they were going to get some return on their insurance investment. The government dipped into their fund to take out the money and dipped into the pension fund of the federal public service as well.

It is important that we remind ourselves, in a more balanced way, of why the books of the country have been balanced. It is because money put into the employment insurance fund has now been siphoned off.

I have two quick points. Today we are talking about telephone services. I think we would all agree that communication is crucial in a knowledge based economy, crucial today in an ever shrinking globalized world and absolutely fundamental in terms of economic development in the future.

• (1120)

As we talk about this legislation, there are parts of Canada that do not have any telephone service. I know some members will be surprised to hear this, but there are parts of Canada that have no telephone service at all. As a matter of fact there are some parts of my own riding that do not, to be specific, the East Barrière Lake area and the Red Lake area. There are others. A lot of people who live there have been trying to get the telephone companies to provide service but to date they have not been able to do so.

I want to make that point clear as we are getting ourselves excited about how connected we are. There are still a lot of people who do not have even fundamental telephone services.

As we talk about balancing off this sort of equal playing field, which is what this legislation is all about, and talk about providing a level playing field for all players, let us also remind ourselves that as we speak we have the softwood lumber agreement that the Government of Canada agreed to which prohibits Canadian lumber exporters from exporting lumber into the United States. This is up

for renewal on March 1. I do hope the government, if it actually espouses the fundamental belief in free trade, abandons this forum of managed trade which, quite frankly, militates against western lumber producers.

I appeal to my Liberal friends across the way. When companies are making the case that we should have free trade in lumber, when the members of the IWA say they want to have free trade in lumber, I appeal to the government to actually agree to have free trade, particularly as this is free trade with the United States. I thought we actually had a free trade agreement with the United States but when it comes to softwood lumber we do not have a free trade agreement. I find it rather perverse and almost amazing that we would allow this to occur but we have. Hopefully we can undo this damage in the next number of weeks.

To get back to Bill S-26, others before me have indicated that this is actually a pretty straightforward piece of legislation. It is a bit unusual when one thinks about it. The British Columbia telephone company special act was enacted back in 1916 by this parliament. The purpose of this special act was to federally incorporate the British Columbia Telephone Company and place it under federal jurisdiction. At the time this special act was created, the Canadian telecommunications industry consisted of monopoly service providers, including fledgling provincial crown owned corporations just beginning to be established in the prairie provinces.

Today this special act is inconsistent with the open and competitive Canadian telecommunications industry where all other Canadian owned telecom companies are free to compete in every Canadian jurisdiction. This places Telus at a competitive disadvantage for a number of reasons.

Rather than go into those reasons, I think it is obvious that when one company has to seek permission from the CRTC every time it wants to make a major corporate decision whereas other companies it is competing with do not and can simply do it within their own corporate structure, we are asking Telus to compete in the marketplace with its hands tied behind its back, so to speak.

In summary, we in the New Democratic Party support the updating of the legislation. We also support, as we indicated earlier, the rapid movement of the legislation through all stages so we can complete it today. It has already gone through the stages at the Senate, which has done due diligence on this legislation. It is appropriate that we move expeditiously as well to enable the legislation to be proclaimed prior to the dissolution of this parliament.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to state briefly the position of the Bloc Québécois on Bill S-26, whose aim is to treat Telus the same as the other companies. This

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company is governed by the Act to incorporate the Western Canada Telephone Company, which dates from 1916.

The objective of this very short bill is to not subject it to a specific law, but to treat it like the other companies and have it governed by the Canada Business Corporations Act, which will enable it to continue its activities throughout Canada on the same footing as the other companies.

It is not a matter of not governing this company any longer, but of affording it equal treatment. Accordingly, we will not debate this at length, since everyone is in agreement to pass this bill as quickly as possible.

• (1125)

Since this bill does not involve any contentious issues, we will co-operate in passing it quickly at second reading, at report stage and at third reading today. We will support Bill S-26.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

**CANADA HEALTH CARE, EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES
FUNDING ACT**

The House resumed from October 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, an act respecting the provision of increased funding for health care services, medical equipment, health information and communications technologies, early childhood development and other social services and to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. Over the course of my parliamentary career of three and a half years, which hopefully will be extended in the next election, I have had a great interest in this area, both as the deputy critic for health for the Alliance Party and as the vice-chairman of the health committee for the House of Commons.

I am usually quite delighted to be able to rise and bring the concerns of my constituents of the riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan before the House of Commons, but unfortunately I rise today being forced into bringing forward their concerns because I do not think

we really need to have this debate in the way that has been lined up for us.

• (1130)

Canadians know and cherish the health system in Canada. For many years we have had a made in Canada solution which ensures that all Canadians have access to quality health care. Generations of Canadians have grown up expecting that their loved ones, their families and they themselves would have adequate health care available to meet their needs.

Thanks to the Liberal government Canadians no longer can be assured of that. The stark, cold reality is that over the last few years the health care system of yesterday has been steadily destroyed by the Liberals of today and will not meet the health care requirements of tomorrow.

I would like to describe the problems that have resulted from the Liberal government's uncaring approach to health care. For the record, I and the other members of the Canadian Alliance will be supporting the bill. However, let me be perfectly clear on our measure of support for it. We are supporting it because finally the Liberals are rectifying past Liberal mistakes that have needlessly hurt many Canadians in the process, need never have been implemented, and would not have taken place under a Canadian Alliance government.

In 1993, when the Liberals came to power, the federal portion of the Canada health and social transfer was \$18.8 billion. Within four short years the heartless Liberals slashed away more than \$6.3 billion annually. Today the federal Liberals are still \$3.3 billion lower than in 1993.

Prior to this bill the Liberals had stripped away \$24.7 billion from the health care system in Canada. Their earlier budget plans called for the removal of another \$9.9 billion over the next three budget years. Were it not for the pressure of the official opposition, the provinces and indeed Canadians themselves, the Liberal government would have gouged an incredible \$34.6 billion out of Canada's health care system over a projected 11 years. That was what it was intent on doing.

That \$34.6 billion represents more than \$1,100 less in health care for every man, woman and child in Canada today. Can we imagine what another \$1,100 of health care spent on every person in each riding would do to alleviate the pain, suffering and discomfort many feel?

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan there are approximately 100,000 people. That translates, if my math is correct, into 110 million missing health care dollars. That \$110 million could have been used to hire more nurses and maintain and reopen operating rooms. It could have been used to ensure that more people were not subject to longer than necessary waiting lists and to give the opportunity to upgrade or purchase new medical technology equipment.

Not a region in the country has not been negatively affected by the callous financial approach the Liberal government has inflicted

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upon Canadians from coast to coast. A case in point is the Cowichan District Hospital in Duncan, in my riding, where a dialysis unit sat idle. What was the primary reason it sat idle? Simply put, there was not enough money in the system to hire trained personnel to operate the equipment.

I ask my hon. colleagues to imagine the concern and the pain in the hearts of parents whose children require a dialysis machine to stay alive and who know that because of funding the equipment in the hospital has never been used. This is not an academic subject for me. I know that feeling. I have a daughter who could have been one of those who required dialysis. She has only one kidney. Even though the dialysis unit was only 15 minutes from our home, the stark reality was that if her one remaining kidney had shut down we were over an hour away from the nearest dialysis unit. For her to use the pediatric dialysis unit we would have had to take her to Vancouver.

A dialysis unit costs approximately \$630,000 to purchase. The annual operating cost for 36 patients totals approximately \$1 million. Let us imagine if a portion of the \$110 million the Liberals have ripped out of the system in my riding alone could have been used for dialysis in the Cowichan hospital. Then let us imagine the sense of relief a parent or patient would feel when the unit was finally opened and put into operation. Unfortunately this unit is already approaching capacity. It is expected that in less than one year new dialysis patients will once again be required to make the one hour trip to Victoria for the dialysis treatment they require.

• (1135)

In 1991 in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, Mr. Pat Carson donated \$861,000 toward the purchase of a CT scanner. That is what the health system in the country has come to. There is a critical need for new technology and modern equipment. The government does not have the money to pay for it. Individuals who know of this crying need are coming forward to pay for this equipment.

Mr. Carson's wife had cancer. Unfortunately she died of it. While there are no guarantees, it was thought that earlier treatment for her could have been initiated through a faster diagnosis by a CT scan.

Hon. members are wondering how well the scanner is now working. Has it saved lives? I am sad to say that the scanner is still not in operation. The money has now accumulated to over \$1.3 million. Only now, after the promise of more federal money and nine years after this very generous public donation was made, is the CT scanner coming online. How many lives would have been changed or even saved if the CT scanner had been in place years ago? Simply put, a lack of funds claims lives in our health care system every day. The Liberal government must accept much of the blame.

If these were the only stories, the story of health care in Canada today would not be such a tale of woe. Unfortunately this is only one of thousands of stories from across the country. Through the remainder of the day we will hear from others about surgery

waiting lists, cancelled surgeries, long waiting periods to see specialists, pain, suffering, and even death.

In my home province of British Columbia we have had patients lying on gurneys in the hallways and in linen closets, if we can believe that. Cancelled surgeries at the hospitals in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan are a daily occurrence. We can and we must do better than this. We have done so in the past.

The track record of the Liberal government speaks loud and clear. In the last few months the health committee has had meetings and at each opportunity I raised the issue of the committee studying the overall system of health care in Canada. What happened when I raised that issue at committee? The Liberal majority simply said no. During the discussion at the agenda planning subcommittee one Liberal member actually had the audacity to state that health care was too big a topic for the committee to study.

Let us imagine that: Canadian health care is too big for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health to study. If the Standing Committee on Health cannot study the health situation in Canada, may I ask who should?

A recent report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information stated:

The number of health professionals from 1988-1997 did not keep pace with Canada's population growth, resulting in fewer health professionals per capita in 1997.

Over that 10 year time period "the number of professionals per 10,000 population declined by 1.7%, from 185 to 182". Based on these numbers, we are short 9,000 health professionals.

I would further ask hon. members to consider our aging population. We are all getting older. We cannot reverse that trend, unfortunately. According to Statistics Canada demographics, in 2001 about 13% of our population will be 65 years of age or over. By the year 2026, just a few years down the road, this same age group will rise to 21% of our overall population. In real numbers this is a rise from 3,945,700 to 7,759,700, almost a complete doubling of this age group.

I remind hon. members that with few exceptions this includes each and every one of us here. It includes our peers, our personal friends, our neighbours and many family members. Without an end to the serious damage inflicted on our health care system by the Liberal government I am afraid the health care system may not be available to those of us who may require it the most in the future.

• (1140)

Although I know some hon. members will scoff at this premise, let us consider a few facts within the various fields of professional health care. Currently the Canadian Medical Association has noted with concern that the number of doctors leaving Canada is roughly equivalent to the graduating classes of six medical schools per

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year. That amounts to almost 40% of our medical school graduates. To my mind that is simply unacceptable.

It now takes half the output of all Canadian medical schools to replace the physicians who leave the country annually. One reason is the cost of medical education. The president of the CMA asserts that the debt of a graduating medical student could rise as high as \$140,000. Other reasons as given by the former director of research at the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges of Canada include health care cuts and plunging morale.

Here are some other facts. In 1996, 731 doctors left the country. In 1997, 659 left. That totals 1,390 doctors in just over two years. Doctors moving south of the border represent just a quarter of all medical personnel leaving the country every year. Most of those leaving are nurses. We are told, and I believe it to be true, that we face a chronic shortage of nurses.

A 1997 study of 489 orthopedic surgeons graduating between 1985 and 1994 showed that fully 25% have moved to the United States and 70% of the rest were considering it. The most common reasons were restrictions on operating time, unavailability of beds and other frustrations with practice restrictions.

The CMA has also stated that there is a severe shortage of high tech physicians capable of reading the results the latest medical technology gives us. There currently is a shortfall of 150 full time radiologists in Canada, with an expected shortfall of 500 over the next four years.

Let us not forget that it takes a great deal of time to train the doctors and nurses we need in Canada. Regular training for a general practitioner takes at least seven years. Specialist training takes 13 or 14 years. We are short of trained staff now, not in seven or thirteen years. A crisis looms on the horizon, and still the government remains intent on destroying rather than renewing our stressed health care system.

The government claims it is treating the health care system with compassion. We hear that word from our hon. colleagues across the way quite often. They say they are a compassionate lot, with compassion oozing out of their pores. Last month in Montreal the Prime Minister stated that he had "invested in health care". The Minister of Health laid claim to this being a "compassionate government, leading the way for those among us that require health care". The 1997 Liberal red book stated that they "would not abandon the health care field and that predictable and financial certainty was essential for our health care planning".

Absolutely nothing could be further from the truth if we take a look at what the government has done. I have been calling for a serious review of the Canadian health care system for over three years now. The government has done nothing like that. It has cut the transfer payments. It has chastised the provinces for attempting to find real solutions to real health care problems. It has made federal-provincial relationships completely untenable, and still it

attempts to make the claim that it is upholding health care in Canada. On the eve of an election in the country finally it does something about it. Surely Canadian people can see through that.

I believe the federal Liberal government will be forever remembered in history as the destroyer of our present health care system. The facts are indisputable. It has permitted the rise of two tier health care on its watch, across the country.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and all their minions can bluster and rant all they want, but the truth is crystal clear: the Liberal government has failed all Canadians when it comes to health care. It has permitted, even encouraged, the failure of the health care system that Canadians have come to enjoy and count on. Canadians all across the land know it. They will not forget the Liberal government's actions when the next election comes.

Canadians are not as gullible as the Prime Minister would like us to believe. I believe Canadians know where the blame rests for the unacceptable status of our health care system. It rests firmly at the feet of both the Prime Minister and Minister of Health.

• (1145)

Canadians are looking for someone to champion health care. Canadians are looking for a political entity that will put things right in this country, beginning with health care itself. Canadians are realizing that the Liberal health care talk has no substance, has no meaning and has no depth.

The Liberal government has attempted to make the claim that they are the only party willing to support the five tenets of the Canada Health Act.

In 1997 the red book stated that the Liberal "commitment is to the five fundamental principles of our medicare system and on our commitment to the continuing role in financing and other aspects of the federal government in health care". That is a very noble statement, but have they lived up to it? When it comes right down to it, have they attacked this problem at the provincial level where the delivery of services actually takes place? How far from the reality of today, when the government is truly the architect of the demise of the Canada Health Act.

All across this country there are examples of abuses of the Canada Health Act. If someone hurts a knee on the job and the Workmen's Compensation Board is paying for it, there is no problem. That person gets to go to a private clinic and jump ahead of everyone else waiting for knee surgery. It may be legal but it is not right, and the government should fix that kind of queue jumping.

Does anyone need an MRI? There is a three week lineup. If someone pays \$800 cash at a private clinic they will avoid the lineup. If they do not like the wait time involved they can take their credit card and head south of the border. There are a lot of Canadian

doctors and nurses there already. Maybe it will seem like a Canadian reunion.

Has the Liberal government attempted to resolve these issues? I do not think so. Certainly not while I have been around this place. Rather than working with the provinces and attempting to ensure that all Canadians have quality health care, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health prefer to antagonize and cause dissension rather than build unity. Canadians see past the Liberal smoke and mirror show and they are really tired of it all.

Canadians are turning to the Canadian Alliance to right the wrongs that this Liberal government has forced upon all Canadians. Corrective actions cannot be implemented immediately but they can begin immediately.

My colleagues and I recognize, of course, that money alone is not the whole solution to this problem. However, we cannot deny that many of the problems were caused by the government's significant reduction in funding, funding that this Liberal government has simply slashed out of health care among other things. Many of the solutions will require funding, yet further efficiencies can be found in the system.

Yes, we need more trained professionals. Yes, we face challenges that we have not previously encountered. Certainly we have an aging population. Yes, the delivery of health care services remains a provincial responsibility. We know all these things to be true. However, what positive role has the federal government played in this? To date, none. It has been irresponsible in its lack of solutions to the health care crisis that now faces Canada. Many of the problems are systemic and there has been no plan from the government to attack the systemic problems in our health care system.

Canadians look to government for leadership. They have not found it here in this place with this Liberal government as far as health care is concerned.

We do need changes in the health care system. We need a system that shows we are truly getting results. We need a system where governments work together. We need a system that provides funding on a regular basis consistently over the years working co-operatively with the provinces. That is what a Canadian Alliance government offers to Canadians when it comes into office. What we will do for the health care system is what the Liberals have failed to do. They have acted irresponsibly. Putting this kind of money back in at this point will simply be a band-aid solution to a growing problem.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand as the member for Halifax West and speak on behalf of my constituents to Bill C-45. I should indicate at the outset that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys.

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Bill C-45 is an act respecting the provision of increased funding for health care services, medical equipment, health information and communications technologies, early childhood development and other social services, and to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act.

• (1150)

The bill came about as a result of the September 11 health deal that was reached between the federal government and the provinces. The bill is in two parts. The first part provides authority to make expenditures into a special \$1 billion medical equipment trust, as well as a \$500 million fund for information technology.

The second part of the bill authorizes an increase in transfer payments through the Canadian health and social transfer for social programs which are defined in the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act as programs in respect of health, post-secondary education, social assistance and social services, and early childhood education.

While the September 11 health deal is a step forward, and we admit that it is a small step forward, it really does not go far enough. When I say that it does not go far enough, I am not just giving my opinion on this. I have knocked on well over 1,000 doors within the past few months talking to the constituents of Halifax West. Many of the people to whom I have spoken have indicated to me that health care is still the number one issue for them. They feel that the present agreement of restoring the kind of funding that has been put back in does not go far enough to deal with the kinds of concerns and problems they have. They do not see any immediate relief to the many problems that they are facing: waiting for needed surgery, long line-ups, trying to obtain needed medications and so forth. They do not see any immediate relief to those problems in the deal that was worked out between the federal government and the provinces.

As an example of this I will tell the story about what happened at one of the doors that I knocked on. It was on a beautiful day just last week. The sun was shining and there was beautiful colour in the leaves in the maritime provinces. It was a nice day to go around getting to know the people within the riding of Halifax West. Up until the point when I knocked on that door, I was feeling pretty good.

After I had knocked on the door, a young man answered. I asked him if he had any special issues he wanted to discuss that related to the federal government or its programs. He said "Yes. Step inside for a minute". I entered and right off the bat he started to tell me about his concerns with the health care system. He introduced me to his wife who was lying there. This young man was probably no more 30 years of age and his wife was probably around the same age. When he introduced his wife I saw this lady lying on a couch

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and the look of her belied her age. She looked much older than I knew she was. This was because the woman was dying of cancer at such a young age.

To hear this young man tell his story about his involvement with the health care system, about the trials and tribulations that he has gone through and about his concerns for his wife, just about brought tears to my eyes.

The interesting thing about this young man's story was that he was telling me his story not so much because he thought it would help his wife, as he knew her days were limited, but as in the hope that it might help other people who find themselves in a situation where they need health care.

These are the kinds of things that we are seeing right across the country, the kinds of problems that we see coming because of the short-sightedness of the government in dealing with our health care system.

I can tell another story, about an elderly woman. She is the widow of a veteran who served our country proudly. On one occasion my wife and I visited this lady. We had a wonderful time having a cup of tea and chatting with her. Not too long ago I decided to call her up to see how she was doing. She told me "I am not doing too badly. I just came back from the hospital. I had been in the hospital for a while but now I need to have permanent nursing care on a daily basis. I need someone in my home with me on a daily basis". Up to that point this lady had lived by herself in her home, a beautiful home in the Bedford area along the shore. She said "I do not know what I am going to do because I cannot afford this kind of care. I wonder if there is any way I can get any help".

Since she was the spouse of a veteran I thought I could refer her to the veterans independence program under which she may qualify for some assistance. I gave her the name and the phone number and asked her to call. I asked her to let me know how she made out. Some time later I had not heard from her so I gave her a call just to see how things had worked out. She said "Well, the news is not so good. Unfortunately, my income is just beyond the threshold at which they cut people off for such assistance." That is not a very high threshold. She then told me that she did not know what she was going to do. She said that she needed to pay for the service but that she would probably end up losing her home because she could not really afford the service.

• (1155)

When we look at Bill C-45 we see that it does not really deal with the kinds of concerns that Canadians have in the health care system. It does very little to address an overall plan for health care, and specifically, there are no initiatives pertaining to national home

care which is what this lady would benefit from, and pharmacare, which so many of our seniors are in need of.

When we talk about home care, I must say that even though the current government has gutted the health system and has not really put back the amount of money that is required, the amount of money that is being put back is less than it was in 1994, and this is the year 2000.

With that kind of gutting of the system, I must take my hat off to the people who are working in the system day in and day out with commitment and dedication and working against adverse circumstances to try to provide health care for their fellow human beings.

When I think about home care workers, I am honoured to indicate that Nova Scotia has dedicated this week as Home Support Workers' Week. Many people are recognizing and expressing their appreciation to the home care workers who help thousands of Nova Scotians get the quality of care service that they need in the comfort of their home and close to their family and friends. Home support workers are an essential part of the fabric of the health care in Canada.

As we look to reshape health care in Canada and hopefully begin to undo the damage wrought by years of health care cuts administered by Liberal and Conservative governments, we need to ensure that home care is properly funded, that the workers are properly supported and paid properly, and that they work in decent conditions.

The financial support for those needing home care—and I think of the lady I mentioned—must be made available. Home care workers offer experienced care, support, compassion and dignity to people within our communities. They are an integral part of the health care system, taking a lot of the responsibility and the weight off much needed hospital beds in today's system.

Those are some of the areas that Bill C-45 does not address. Those are some of the things that we must give attention to if we are going to make this health care system one of which we can continue to be proud.

While the bill is necessary, I guess, in the final analysis, and while the NDP does support the bill as a step in the right direction, it is really a small step forward in light of the giant steps backward taken by the Liberal government. Let me also make it perfectly clear that we feel the Liberal government has missed a golden opportunity to present a vision for the future of medicare and to advance a plan that would preserve and strengthen universal public health care.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's very eloquent presentation and I must say that it is probably one of the most thoughtful presentations I have heard in the House for some

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time. I commend him on his thoughtfulness and the thoroughness of his research.

I will give a speech later in the day so I have some notes here. There must be a mistake in my notes because I remember that a few years ago there used to be a 50:50 balance. The federal government would put in 50% of the funding for health care and the province would put in 50% of the money. My notes say that the federal government now has reneged so much that it only allocates 13% of the total, which means the provinces have to pick up 80 some per cent and the federal government only picks up 13%.

Would my friend at least tell me my notes are wrong? If in fact the feds are only giving 13% of health care funding, that would be absolutely scandalous.

• (1200)

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, despite the protestations I hear from the other side that my hon. colleague's notes are wrong, my research indicates accordance with his notes that the federal government is currently down to a low of around 13% in terms of the health care. It wants to talk about tax points and other things to try to accommodate that but we know full well that it falls far short of what is required to provide the kind of health care, home care and preventive measures which are so necessary today.

It is one thing to try to put a band-aid on a cut when it is bleeding and festering. It is another thing to try to get at the root cause and to prevent the illness in the first place. This is what adequate funding will do. We are calling upon the government to provide the kind of funding it used to, which was at least 50% of the cost of health care, and make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of our citizens.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I direct my comments to my Liberal friends sitting across the way. I assume they have been out door knocking like my friend from Halifax who indicated that he had been knocking on doors for the past number of weeks. I know I have and there is one thing that I found out at almost every door. Those who wanted to talk inevitably talked about health care and the abysmal state of our system. There were some people who did not want to talk or they were not at home or they could not talk.

I would say it is almost in a crisis situation. As a matter of fact, I suspect there is not a single member of parliament today who does not know someone personally in his or her family who has not been confronted with an inadequate health care system in terms of treatment. I know I certainly have. My parents are elderly and are sort of struggling all the time. They do not complain but they have had to wait weeks for tests and weeks to get into the hospital for a minor operation and so on. That is what one hears everywhere.

It is absolutely scandalous that the government has somehow gotten away with not taking responsibility for the problem. It has blamed it on provincial governments, not to say that they do not deserve some criticism. However, the reality is that it was this government that made those massive cuts to our health care system, which caused this problem from coast to coast to coast. That is fact number one.

Fact number two, as my friend from Halifax just verified, is that the federal government was supposed to throw in 50% of the funding for health care but is now contributing only 13%. That in itself is scandalous. Let us face it, when it throws in only 13% we can forget about national standards from coast to coast.

Forget about the same quality and standard of health care in British Columbia as one would find in Prince Edward Island or in Nova Scotia. That is not the case. We now have virtually 13 different health care systems. There are no serious national standards because the government puts such a minor amount of the money into health care that it cannot enforce national standards.

My friends across the way must be shaking in their boots as people are finding out what is happening in Alberta. There are 50 private health care clinics in the province of Alberta. Bill 11 opens the door now for an American style, two tier, for profit health care system. If we ask any real health care providers or any serious students of health care what they think, they will say that we are opening the door to a two tier for profit American style health care system, which is not what Canadians want. I do not think I have ever encountered a single Canadian who says he or she wants to be like the Americans when it comes to our health care system.

Perhaps, as my hon. friend reminds me, there are some parties in the House that feel comfortable with an American style health care system, but Canadians do not. People ought not to make profits on sickness, injury and suffering. That is what a private health care system does.

My friend who spoke just said that Bill C-45 was a small, baby step in the right direction. However, I would not say it is a baby step. This is more like a nudge forward. We have so much more to do. The government for the last two elections has promised Canadians a home care system. Do we have a one today? No, we have not. For the last two elections the Liberals promised a pharmacare program for Canada. Do we have a one? No, we do not.

• (1205)

The government goes to the electorate and says that if it elects the Liberals it will give the people a child care system but they do not do it. The next time they say that if the people elect them they will give them a home care system, but they do not do it. Or they say that if they elect them they will give them a pharmacare system, but they do not do it.

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Canadians will eventually figure out that this is a group of folks they might want to be cautious of when they say that they will do this or that for them while really meaning they will do it to them. We will not have a child care system, a home care system, a pharmacare system or an elder care system. I hate to say it but unfortunately that is the reality. I wish I could say something different. I wish I could say that the government has provided health care and home care and so on, but I cannot.

Have members ever seen people trying to clap themselves on their backs using both hands and both feet? That would be quite a sight. That is what we have seen. We have seen people clapping themselves on the back and saying "Look how wonderful we are. We have restored funding". That is not the case. The government has not restored proper funding for health care. It has restored funding to 1994 levels. The Liberals should wake up. This is not 1994. This is the year 2000. They have increased the funding to 1994 levels, which is a nice step, but what about 1995 levels? Populations were increasing and inflation was increasing. What about 1996? What about 1997? What about 1998? What about 1999? What about the year 2000?

Are we supposed to get excited that the government has dipped into the EI fund and into the federal pension fund to come up with moneys so it can increase federal health care spending to 1994 levels? Are we supposed to be cheering? Yet that is what we are expected to do, cheer. We are not cheering, nor will we cheer. We will say not only is it not enough money, but we have to look at the components of health care.

I think members would agree that we have to have a decent home care system in our country. We are an aging population. How many householders do we know of who do not have to be concerned about caring for an aging member of their family? Home care is a reality. To have a health care system in the 21st century without a home care component is just not possible.

We know the price of drugs. We know that the price of pharmaceuticals has been skyrocketing, particularly after the Mulroney government brought in protection for the drug companies, unfortunately supported by this government. We cannot help that. That is what we have. We need a pharmacare program because we know that seniors by the tens of thousands cannot afford the necessary prescription drugs which they require because we do not have a pharmacare program. We cannot have a modern 21st century health care program without having a pharmacare component in there.

We talk about elder care and child care. I know this is not necessarily part of this discussion. However, when we look at modern countries around the world, do they not have a national child care program? Of course they have. Do they not have a national home care program? Of course they have. If these countries can afford it, why on earth can we not afford it? We have these huge surpluses.

I know we have money to spend to build luxury holiday resorts. We have money to spend on building huge fantastic golf courses. As a matter of fact, I golfed on one this summer. I did not realize it was subsidized by the federal government and by the taxpayers of Canada. We have money for golf courses and luxury resorts but we do not have money for home care.

We heard a lot about the values of our society. The Prime Minister said that this would be an election about values. I hope it is. I think Canadians from coast to coast to coast will also hope that it is. What does it tell us about the values of a government that says it has money for luxury resorts, for golf courses and for fancy statues and fountains in the Prime Minister's riding but cannot afford health care in terms of home care, pharmacare, elder care and child care? It cannot afford these. It cannot even afford social housing.

I want to say that the Prime Minister lives in social housing. The Governor General of Canada lives in social housing. The Leader of the Opposition lives in social housing.

• (1210)

If we can afford social housing for the Leader of the Opposition and for the Prime Minister of Canada, we should have some social housing for people who actually cannot afford decent housing. It seems reasonable to me.

We have to start thinking about what kind of a country we want. Mr. Trudeau called this a just society and our goals should be a just society. The New Democratic Party supports this. We like the idea of a just society so that if we are sick or injured, it does not matter where we happen to be in Canada, we will have access to the top quality care. That is not the case today.

I appeal to my Liberal colleagues to be generous. We have a huge surplus of perhaps \$20 billion before us. Invest some of that money in home care, in pharmacare, in elder care and in preventive care so that we can build the health care system of the 21st century that Canadians want, one that we can afford if we have the will to do it.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in today's debate on Bill C-45.

I am not sure how to begin. We are obviously not going to deny the health care system more money because it needs it. There is no question that this is a cynical move on the part of the government on the eve of an election. That is really what drove the government to the bargaining table with the provinces, so it came up with a deathbed reprieve and put money into health care, money which it took out of the system over the last seven years after it came into office in 1993.

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We heard on many occasions this morning about the dollars that the government has taken out. If we look at this, it has taken \$24 billion out of the system. It projected taking out another \$9 billion but was forced to back down on that. If the Liberals had their way, they would have taken at least \$35 billion out of the system.

The money they are putting back into the system will bring us back to 1994 levels once the full value of the package kicks in. However, we are going to be waiting a number of years before we get there. Actually, by the year 2004, we will be back to the levels of spending of 10 years ago. It does not make sense but that has been the government's cynical approach to governing over the last number of years.

Now, on the eve of an election the Liberals are suddenly wanting to rush this bill through the House. They are attempting to marginalize this place because the agreement was struck between the Prime Minister and the provinces. The House of Commons and parliament were not consulted on the best way to approach this. Now we are stuck again with a deathbed reprieve. That is what they are asking for.

This may be somewhat cynical, but it will be 18 months before the payments actually kick in. It is not going to immediately repair the damage that they have inflicted on the system in the last seven years. The first amount of money comes in 18 months. It will not affect the lineups at the emergency wards during flu season. In fact, that might be one of the reasons the government members want to go to the polls early. They do not want to go through another winter of lineups at the emergency ward.

It is not going to stop the trips or the busing of Canadian citizens to the United States to receive cancer treatments. In my home province of New Brunswick we are taking cancer patients down to Bangor, Maine, for treatment because our system has been denied funding for the last seven years. We cannot afford to treat our own patients, so at a higher price per patient we are now shipping them to the United States. Does that make sense? Of course it does not, because basically they do not have a plan. They do not have a vision. They are devoid of ideas. "No ideas, no votes" should be the slogan in the next election.

• (1215)

The premier of New Brunswick put it best. Our share as a small province is about the same as that of Nova Scotia, I might add. It would be in the order of \$16 million once the money kicks in. That would keep the system in New Brunswick running for all of 12 days once it gets its full share of the money. There are 365 days in a year so there is a big shortfall.

The health minister in New Brunswick expressed it another way. The moneys that would come to the province of New Brunswick, if it wanted to use them on a day to day basis, would keep the system running 12 days. That is another way of putting it. The health

minister, Mr. Furlong, said that money would pay off existing health corporation debt, debt that has been racked up over the years simply because of the money shortage and because of the lack of commitment by the federal government to fund health care. That responsibility rests at the doorstep of the Prime Minister.

In the last election, with the same kind of deathbed reprieve, he asked for forgiveness for taking a wrecking ball to health care. On the eve of the election he pumped a few billion dollars back into it to resurrect his political fortunes. Fortunately for the Prime Minister it worked. Unfortunately for the Canadian people it worked, because now we are victims of the same cynical process.

We only have to go back to the election of 1993 and the election of 1997. Let us remember red book one and red book two. I suppose we could call them fairy tale one and fairy tale two. I could quote from either one of the documents to make my point. In both those documents the present government made a commitment to health care. In two successive elections it reneged on that promise, not to mention its promise on the GST. We will forget about that one because that is another argument.

The revenues from the GST are making the government look pretty good today in terms of balancing the books and eliminating the deficit. Automatically we could extract \$30 billion from the equation today as we stand in this place because of the revenues coming in from that hated tax, the tax the government was to axe when it got into office. It is seven years and waiting and we still have it.

If we take a look at the OECD report in terms of world economy and how Canada is faring, it credits the GST and the free trade agreement as the engines of the Canadian economy, the structural changes that we made along with deregulation and privatization to get the Canadian economy rolling. What do the Liberals do? They pick on the most vulnerable in society: the sick, the poor and the elderly. I could add the unemployed. They use the same technique of heavy handedness on the most vulnerable of all workers, our seasonal workers.

It was only a fight that we waged in this little corner of the House of Commons that forced them to back down. They took a position they could not sustain, especially on the eve of an election.

If this were six months after an election they would roll in for another three years or so. The plan of the Liberals is that they do not go to the people every four or five years. They go in three and a half years. They do not wait for the constitutional period a government is allowed. They go because of political expediency. They go because they are high in the polls. They are not going because their agenda has been filled or their red book promises have been fulfilled. They forget about red book one and red book two. They go on the trash heap of all trash heaps in terms of political promises.

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• (1220)

This is like a crazy glue, Scotch tape approach to government. We can see them pasting together a platform that might work with the aid of crazy glue and Scotch tape. I hate to use the words Scotch tape in reference to the Liberals. I guess it is derogatory used in that sense. Their approach to government is basically ad hoc. They make it up as they go along, with no plan for the future.

There is no plan in the health bill. The plan is to get re-elected to impose the same kinds of draconian cuts. There are no guarantees in the bill that they will not do it six months after an election. How did they get away with it? They forced the provinces into a room and said either take the money or there is no money. This was the deal or no deal.

The Prime Minister basically asked how they would go back home and deny their people that money. That is old fashioned blackmail. That is what the government is used to. It got away with it for seven years. This will be the third election in seven years, with no other reason than political expediency for calling an election. The government's commitments to the Canadian people have yet to be filled.

They went back to trash heap and resurrected red book two from 1997. Where are the commitments to health care in terms of delivery of a home care program and a pharmaceutical program? They are lost somewhere out there in great Liberal propaganda land, nowhere to be seen. The government is hoping that Canadians will forget about it, but we will not forget about it. We will remind them exactly what the government has done or in this case not done on the health care file.

There is nothing there to be proud of. The premiers wrapped their arms around this in Ottawa at 24 Sussex. It is pretty hard to deny the Prime Minister on his turf. He would probably kick them out on the street if they did. The premiers went home and sobered up. I am saying that in a sincere sense. After having a chance to go through the document, every one of them said the document came up short of the mark. The Canadian Medical Association said it was \$17 billion short of the mark. The government will continue on the same track if it is given the mandate. That should be a sobering thought for Canadians.

There is an old expression that there is nothing like a lynching in the morning to sober the mind. I am saying that is what the government will get because it is looking at a huge ocean of support, a mile wide but unfortunately for it only about an inch deep. It will evaporate on the first day of the campaign. It will be a downhill trail for the government.

A few years ago David Peterson in Ontario suddenly called an election for no reason other than the fact that he was popular in the polls. The same thing will happen this time.

This is how the preamble should read to Bill C-45, because we are talking about fairy tales one and two. In other words, red book one is fairy tales edition one and red book two is fairy tales edition two. We are anxiously awaiting fairy tales three or a rerun of one or two. The preamble to red book three, if there is one, should go something like this: Once upon a time, long ago in a land far away, the benevolent king bestowed upon his, et cetera.

It is a fairy tale in the making. It is not real. I guess the Liberal philosophy is, if it worked once we will do it again, if it worked twice we will do it again, but three times and the jig is up. The Liberals have no credibility on that file.

• (1225)

Let us talk about balancing the books. I see, the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions here. He loves to get up, button his suit and boast about their financial record, conveniently forgetting that he stood on this side of the House and raged against the GST.

In a moment of weakness not too many months ago that same minister admitted we could not eliminate the GST and that some of their financial success was due to revenues generated by that instrument. I see the minister clapping. I appreciate that. It has taken him seven years to publicly acknowledge that in the House of Commons. I welcome questions from the minister as well.

Nurses have taken an awful pounding from the government, as have doctors. The government forgets about the commitment of Canadians to preserving health care: the nurses and doctors, the people cleaning hospitals, the instrument technicians and the people who work in cafeterias. Every one of them, from the top to the bottom, has been a victim of the government.

It will happen again. In addition to the five principles of the health care act, universality, portability, accessibility, et cetera, we are suggesting that we need the sixth principle of secure, dependable, dependable funding so that governments have a chance to plan.

A government cannot give everything to everybody all the time, but most Canadians deserve a road map, a plan of where the government is going, which would allow hospital corporations and provinces to budget and lay out plans that would be workable in a five to ten year period. We know what spending costs are doing in the health care field. Statistically we can forecast what the cost will be down the road in a number of years.

I am reading from a document of June 2000 that talks about the cost drivers. It predicts that annual provincial health care costs will rise to at least \$85 billion in 10 years from the \$54 billion of today. That is just on the health care side provincially. It also says that the long range outlook is even more stark. Provincial health care costs

could rise by 247% in the next quarter century to \$186 billion from today's \$54 billion. Those are real numbers.

The government must acknowledge the fact that we are getting a deal on health care. We have a system that includes everyone. Every one of us is entitled to the publicly funded health care system.

In the United States the system is driven by litigation and private corporations, insurance companies being one of them, not to mention medical corporations or HMOs. Some 40% of all Americans are left out of their health care system because it is not publicly funded. A majority of the other 60% is getting services below a standard that would be acceptable, simply because it is driven by the private sector.

We do not want to see that type of system in Canada. The fact is that the Americans, as a percentage of GDP, pay more for a system that is completely broken than we pay in Canada. In GDP terms in the U.S. it is just slightly under 15%. In Canada we are slightly under 10%, more in the order of 9%.

• (1230)

It is a deal but it does not come without a cost. We acknowledge that, but we must have a commitment from the Government of Canada stating that, yes, it will have sustained funding and it will make sure the system works, and no, it will not subject people to the next round of budget cuts as has been done in the past.

There is nothing in this package, Bill C-45, that gives us any sense of relief or satisfaction that the Government of Canada has learned its lesson and that stable funding will be there. At the whim of the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance acting on behalf of the Prime Minister and cabinet, the government could actually come in six weeks after the election and take a scalpel to health care again.

The principle we are standing by is the sixth one, sustained dependable funding, and adding it to the health care package or the five principles of health care so that there is a road map, a business plan. No one can run a business without a plan except the Government of Canada.

As I said originally in this debate, there are no ideas. The government is devoid of all ideas. There is no plan for the future. I think the Liberals' campaign slogan in this election should be "No ideas, no votes". I would accept that.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's comments on this piece of legislation. He was talking about fairy tales earlier, and I was thinking about why we

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had budget cuts in the first place. It seems to me it was a government that the member's party was part of that brought us to a \$40 billion annual deficit. That deficit, I very well remember, endangered not just the simple health of every Canadian in this country but the financial integrity of this country. It was this Liberal government that took up the cause to eradicate that problem.

An hon. member: Thirty-two billion dollars of that debt belonged to Pierre Trudeau.

Mr. Alex Shepherd: Yes, there were some changes made, some unfortunate changes, and health care was one of them. Now we are happy to say that our financial house is back in order, that we in fact have surpluses and that we are able to share them with the provinces in this manner.

We must keep focused about just who administers the health care system. Canada has the fourth highest per capita spending on health care in the world. The member would say that we should spend more. That is not the answer because people are saying at the same time that we rate 18th in service delivery. That tells us a whole story, not of the federal government but of the provinces and territories that are responsible for administering the health care system.

That is why this legislation includes an accountability framework. It requires provinces to meet certain accountability targets, like how much money we are going to be spending in new technologies and buying MRIs, like how long the waiting lists are going to be and how we are making progress to improve health care for average Canadians. That is what this legislation is all about. The fairy tales the member was talking about were in his speech.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, not that I have to, but I would be willing to table the fairy tales, edition one and edition two, if the member would like to have them just as a reminder of what those members have said.

The member was not in the House in the eighties. Not once between 1988 and 1993 did the Liberals, including the Secretary of State responsible for International Financial Institutions, who is sitting in the House right now, or the finance minister, for that matter, ever stand up in the House and vote for anything that would reduce either the size or the cost of government, never.

When the Liberals left office in 1984 they bragged that they left the cupboard bare. They said that they had left the country in such financial destitution that the Conservative government could never recover and would never get re-elected. Surprise, we did. Basically they are reaping the rewards for a lot of tough things we did, things we had to do and were forced to do.

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• (1235)

However, when they resort to hitting the most vulnerable in our society, the sick, the poor and the elderly, simply to balance their books, there is something wrong. There is something wrong when they have a \$40 billion surplus in the EI fund which they want to use to pay down debt to balance the books. When the mini-budget comes out we can rest assured that they are going to lay down a lot of cash on the national debt right on the backs of the poor, the working poor, the sick and the elderly. The transfer of funds into health care, education and welfare has been decimated by the government and by no one else.

That is the sad legacy on which the Liberals are going to have to run the election. It is a record that I would not be particularly proud of. I do not think they are going to be able to stagger around too many parts of Canada promoting it.

Their latest hero to come on the scene is Captain Canada, all the way from Newfoundland. Perhaps we should call him Captain Kangaroo because he stood up in this kangaroo court called parliament and voted for these draconian cuts to health care that almost decimated his own province. He went back home and almost admitted the same, saying "I can go back home and fight as premier for this province and restore health funding". He is the very man who stood up in the House and took it away. That is the phony of all phonys.

He is coming back now to save Canada. He is saving Canada only because the Prime Minister wants to keep Paul Martin off his back. It is a political game that even the Liberal caucus understands. Putting a man like that into cabinet—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): As the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest is well aware, we do not refer to each other except through our office. I understand there are other members wishing to get a question in edgewise.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to see that the member from New Brunswick can read. He was giving us the Canadian Alliance platform just a minute ago.

What is the platform of the party he represents? None of us have seen anything in writing to this point.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is accusing me of not reading, but obviously she was not listening. One of the cornerstones of our platform will be the sixth principle of the Canada Health Act: secure funding so that provinces, even Alberta, even B.C., will know where they are down the road, so that they can plan.

Running a government or a country is no different from running one's own family or business. Mr. Speaker, you have been in business. You have a number of businesses on the go now, I think. You are an entrepreneur. You take risks. You do not get out of bed in the morning without some kind of plan as to where you are going or how you are going to do it. People must have a plan no matter how successful their business, no matter if the cash is flowing in by the barrel or the truckload. Mr. Speaker, you must have a plan for how you are going to reinvest or for where you are going. You just do not simply hand out money and think that it is going to work.

That is what the government is doing in this case. A deathbed reprieve is what it is looking for. "Here is the cash, do not get in my way, there is an election coming" is exactly what the Prime Minister is saying. He is saying "Just get lost, here is the money, do not make a peep. We can change it all tomorrow, but we are getting ready for an election and we do not want to talk about it. Take the money and run". That is exactly what the government is doing.

I have a feeling that it is not going to work. Canadians are a bit too smart for that. As I said earlier, the Canadian people were duped once by red book one, twice by red book two, and the cut, paste and crazy glue approach to red book three is not going to work.

• (1240)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we need to debate in the House the record of the Mulroney Conservatives and the role they played in diminishing transfer payments to the point where in fact cash for health care would have completely dried up as we speak.

What we do need to address are the comments by the Liberal member in this debate that defend a deal which in fact does nothing more than put back the cash transfers the government took out in 1995. It does not even ensure that those moneys flow immediately. It makes provision for some money to flow a year from now. It does not even increase the base from which to build for the future.

The real issue here is how anyone can justify a government maintaining federal funding at a low rate of 13% despite being in this surplus position.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is usually kind except when she gets onto this. How can I express this in a generous way? The point is, I take exception to some of what she said, but in terms of the government and their track record on this issue I could not agree more with her.

In all seriousness, the Canadian people are becoming just a little bit cynical about a government running by the seat of its pants. It will come down to ideas and a commitment to doing the job the way it has to be done in civilized society.

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Mr. Gerald Keddy: New ideas.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Yes, with some new ideas, ideas that will to challenge us, where the government meets the challenges head on.

These people have never spent any political capital on ideas, have they?

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Greg Thompson: None. The government is basically running by the seat of its pants on seeds sown and work done by previous administrations, including, to give him credit, some of the work done by Mr. Trudeau. It is just running on the past, devoid of ideas, because when we go out and do something new and challenging, it means that we are going to lose some popularity, that we are going to spend some of our political capital. These people could never be accused of spending political capital. These people are always the cynical sort, where it is "make it up, write the cheque".

To conclude, this is a cheque book approach to governing. These people are taking out the cheque book to plug every hole in the dike.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I really am at a loss as to where to start. There have been many interesting comments and a sharing of ideas, and even a borrowing of ideas from one party to the other.

Where we have to start is to talk about the reality. We have parties who claim that the health care system is the best in the world, that Canada's publicly funded health care system is next to none. I think we need a reality check. We have this perception in Canada that the Canada Health Act and medicare is a universal plan. That is just not so.

To me universality means that every Canadian is treated in the same manner with regard to health care. This is just not so. There are individuals in the province of British Columbia who have no health care. They are in arrears with their health care premiums and have people from collection agencies after them to collect the health care premiums before they receive medical services.

A lot of people in the rest of Canada are not aware that there are two provinces where the citizens actually have to pay out of their pockets on a monthly basis in order to receive health care services. If they do not pay those premiums they do not receive the services. If they do not have health care insurance because they do not pay for it, they have to pay cash to see a medical doctor. In Ontario and in Saskatchewan that is not the case, but in B.C. and in Alberta if people have not paid their health care premiums they are not covered under medicare.

Some will say that does not happen, but I will tell them about this young lad whose name is Tim Jeffries. When he showed up at a local hospital with a shattered ankle he was put into the operating room for corrective surgery. Then, when they found out his health care premiums were in arrears, they removed him from the hospital room. They did not do the surgery until his mother had paid the health care premiums owed. That is not universality.

• (1245)

It is not universality when individuals in B.C. can be taken off operating tables because they have not paid premiums but individuals in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Atlantic Canada and Quebec can get the service without paying a cent out of their pockets. People in B.C. have credit agencies after them. People in Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada do not.

Another thing we talk about is a health care medical services plan that it is portable: no matter what province one is in, one can go to another province and receive medical services. Portability, a key part of our medical system, does not exist either.

An individual from my constituency who needs dialysis was planning a trip to Ottawa to visit his son. There was no room in the public system for Mr. Rushworth to receive dialysis. He would have to go to a private clinic. Because of the difference between the cost of the dialysis and what the province of B.C. would pay, it would have cost him \$1,400 out of his own pocket to be able to visit his son in Ontario. Portability does not exist.

Canadians have misconceptions about our health care system. I do not have to tell anybody about accessibility. I had a conversation with my florist while ordering some flowers. He was over in Britain when it was discovered he had a life threatening aneurysm. He waited seven months for the surgery to repair it. This was a life threatening condition.

Is it accessibility to have to wait 12 months, 18 months, two years or whatever it takes to have hip or knee replacement surgery? Accessibility does not exist.

We talk about the system south of the border and just how awful it is. I have contacts in the United States who run a public hospital system there. I know them very well. When I told them about the young man who was pulled off the operating table they were horrified. They said, perhaps for lawsuit reasons, they would never have taken anybody off an operating table.

We have a situation where the health care system Canadians think is there for them is not. Why is it not there for them? The numbers tell the story. In 1993-94 the federal government transferred to the provinces through Canada health and social and education transfers a total of \$18.8 billion over a period of seven years. It actually was budgeted for a decrease to \$11.5 billion, but a

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few years ago the Liberal government realized the crisis it had created and reversed that. The bottom end figure is \$12.5 billion.

That \$6.3 billion was taken directly out of cash transfers to the provinces to provide health care services to the people of Canada. With these numbers there is no question that the federal government, through the cuts to transfers to the provinces to provide health care services, is solely responsible for the crisis in our health care system.

I would like to address some of the comments being made by both the Liberal government and the New Democratic Party that Canadian Alliance wants to support a two tier health care system. It is just not true. We have always supported public health care for Canadians that delivers what it promises to deliver in a system that works. However, we are not naive enough to think that we now have a one tier health care system. Anybody who has had to make use of Canada's health care system knows it is a multi-tier system. Let us not even talk two tier.

• (1250)

I want to address something of interest. The New Democratic Party in my province of British Columbia has kept up the fallacy that we have a one tier system. It is also hypocritical to the point where, in conjunction with the federal government, the province of B.C. helps fund a private clinic in China. It is a private clinic for only those who can afford to go there. It is funded by the federal government and the province of B.C.

Another hypocrisy involves an individual by the name of Robert James Mason. It was not his fault. He needed surgery immediately. It was not a situation in which he could afford to wait. In our health care system everyone has to wait. Lo and behold if we did not have a union supporting his desire to have the government of British Columbia send him down to the United States, that hated country south of the border, to get the health care he needed. He could get it immediately there. He could get good health care.

The New Democratic Party, which is always ragging on the American system or anybody who says that their health care system is actually delivering good health care in a timely fashion, supported one of its union members going to the United States for service. There is a bit of irony in that and a bit of hypocrisy.

It does not stop there. We cannot use the private clinics in Vancouver or in our country if we pay with public dollars. However, the New Democratic Party in B.C. can. The cabinet uses it in B.C. The Workers' Compensation Board and the union use it in B.C. Why can some people make use of these private clinics and get quick treatment when they need it when others have to wait for 15 months or 18 months to get the services?

We have a multi-tier system. For people in the New Democratic Party and the Liberals to pretend that it is not so will not help solve the problem.

A number of things are necessary. First, we have to change our attitudes. The federal government has to stop blaming everybody else and assume responsibility. When the Liberal government in 1967-68 brought in health care it made a promise to the provinces that it would fund it at 50%. It made that promise to get the provinces to come into the Canada Health Act. What is the current percentage of funding? It will be 13%. After promising 50% funding it delivered something much less.

Why should Canadians believe the government that lives and breathes stories about the health system that are not true? Why should Canadians believe the government that made promises it cannot and will not deliver? Why should Canadians believe in the end run it will deliver on the promises it is making today through this legislation? Why should Canadians believe the government will not, when it suits its purposes, once more cut funding in transfers to the provinces?

• (1255)

The government seems to think this is a time for photo op politics. With a federal election looming it gives the money to the provinces and is the saviour of health care. The real story is that the government took the money out of health care. It created the crisis. It is responsible. All it is doing is putting back in some of the money it took out in the first place. What would stop the government, should it unfortunately be re-elected, from doing that again?

Priorities are funny things. The government claims the delivery of health care services to Canadians is a priority. Let me talk about the government's priorities. Many of us have seen the television ads about how wonderful the federal government is for putting back into the system some of the money it took out. That advertising cost \$8 million. Believe me, \$8 million could do an awful lot to put the necessary technological equipment into our health care system. That money could do an awful lot to create more training and educational positions in our universities and to help replace the doctors and nurses leaving our country.

The government spent \$8 million to tell Canadians how wonderful it is. If that is not photo op politics, if that is not buying votes for an election, I do not know what is. It certainly is a case of misplaced priorities.

What is needed? Money is needed, but more than that we need new ideas. We need to encourage provinces to come up with new and innovative ways to deliver good health care that will be there for the people. Our concern should not be whether health care is here today or tomorrow but whether it will be here 10 and 20 years from now for our children and grandchildren.

What needs to be included in the Canada Health Act, and what should have been there in the first place, is a legislative commitment that the federal government will not renege on its funding

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commitment. The Canada Health Act needs the addition of long term funding from the federal government to the provinces. That way the provinces can plan and design a system that will work in the future.

We need ideas and plans from the federal government. The Minister of Finance has loosened up his pocketbook and provided an additional sum of money but it is not what is needed. The Canadian Medical Association has said an additional \$10.5 billion is needed. This is only a drop in the bucket of what will be needed.

The point is that we need more than money. The finance minister has given us some more money for our health care system, but what new plans and ideas has the Minister of Health given us? None. What good is putting money into a system as broken as ours without some idea of how we are to allocate the funds or make sure the deficiencies in the system are corrected?

Other speakers have mentioned our shortage of doctors and nurses and our obsolete equipment. We need the new technologies out there that can be used for diagnostic purposes. Those kinds of investments can probably save dollars in the future. That is what we need. We need some assurance that the money that goes into the system will be appropriated in the right places to actually make a difference. We need to encourage the doctors and nurses who have left our country to return to Canada and provide the health care services we so desperately need here.

How do we do that? We do it by making their work environment much better and by providing them with not only the technology and equipment but also with a lower tax rate to make them competitive and put more money in their pockets.

• (1300)

We have to look at other areas in our country, at rural areas and aboriginal communities where the health care services they have today are not acceptable. We need to look at them in order to address how we are going to provide better health care in rural areas and in aboriginal communities.

The problems are enormous. What Canadians are looking for is leadership. They are looking for leadership from people who have new ideas, who are willing to be part of a partnership. Whether this Liberal government likes it or not, the constitutional act, the BNA Act, has given the delivery of health care to the provinces. It is a provincial responsibility.

Yes, it makes bad photo ops prior to a federal election if the federal government does not get the credit for it. I am sorry, people, but the provinces are the ones with the responsibility. The federal government's responsibility is to work with the provinces, not to threaten them, not to coerce them, not to blackmail them, but to work with them to find the solutions, to find areas in which we can better our health care system.

What we have had is a federal government that is so concerned with getting the credit that it blames the provinces for everything that has happened. It blames the provinces for the crisis in the health care system. It wants photo op politics. It will spend \$8 million to get photo op politics, to get the accolades that go with saving our health care system.

It is time that we put away jurisdictions. It is time that we delivered good health care to our citizens. It is time for our federal government to acknowledge and to respond to its place in delivering the health care system, and that is to make a financial commitment that it sticks with and does not change. If that means legislating, so be it. It means that we legislate a commitment of the federal government.

If it means that the federal government does not get the credit, so be it. The main concern should not be buying votes at election time. The main concern should be that every Canadian is able to get the medical services when needed, at the time—

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it is inappropriate in the House to allege that the government is buying votes. It is unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Your point is well made. I was paying attention to that. The allegation was made in the obtuse. It was not directed at any one individual or at any one ministry. It was an obtuse suggestion and as such I did not consider it unparliamentary.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the government would be so sensitive to that fact and yet see nothing wrong in spending \$8 million on advertising to the Canadian people who is responsible for saving medicare. If that is not vote buying, then I would be interested to know what is.

The reality is that the federal government has made a commitment to the Canadian people and the big question is from its past delivery, its past governance: can Canadians trust it to deliver? I would say no, Canadians cannot.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the dissertation of the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley and a number of things escaped me. She talked about the loss of money in the envelope for health care spending. It is quite common that people forget about tax points.

I know I will not be able to sell the country on tax points, but I would like to draw members' attention to the concept that the provinces and the federal government came to an agreement on years ago. Rather than transfer cash payments to the provinces, the federal government would transfer a combination of cash and taxing room. In other words, the provinces would be allowed to tax

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more and the federal government would tax less in the area of income taxes.

During this same period revenues have increased. In fact the propensity for provinces to gain more revenue to support the health care system is also part of this arithmetical formula. It serves the opposition to simply ignore that fact of reality as if Confederation and other things in this country had never happened, but that is reality.

• (1305)

This member likes to use examples. She constantly alludes to what a great system the Americans have and gave a number of examples about people in her own communities and so forth who are without health care.

I would just like to give an example. I can remember being on a dock in Florida. Beside me were an American doctor from Illinois and a fellow who had a heart attack while fishing. In cardiac arrest, lying on the dock, is this man of about 63 or 64 holding onto this doctor's hand and saying "Do not send me to a hospital. I cannot afford it. I will lose my house". That is the kind of health care system that the Alliance would like us to have here in Canada.

The Alliance constantly talks about the provinces' responsibility for health care. Yes, under our constitution the provinces are responsible for the administration of health care, but the Alliance then turns around and says that it is inefficient and that it is the federal government's responsibility. The Alliance cannot have it both ways. If the provinces are responsible for the administration of health care, the provinces are responsible for the inefficient use of that money.

Finally, it is interesting that the hon. member talks about the province of Alberta and the fact that people have to pay premiums there. If they do not pay them they cannot get access. Her own leader was the treasurer of the province of Alberta. That is the kind of health care system the Alliance wants to bring to Canadians.

Ms. Val Meredith: I do not ever recall saying that I thought we should have an American health care system. I do not believe that and neither does the Canadian Alliance.

What we are concerned about is that when we send Canadians to the U.S. to have their treatment because we cannot provide it here, it costs, in the case of this one individual, \$60,000 to the health care system of B.C. or Canada to pay for this service in the States. That \$60,000 U.S. is not helping to support our Canadian health care system. It is helping the public health care system in the United States. That is what I object to. We are using our Canadian health care dollars every time we send one of our patients south of the border.

It is happening all the time. I have newspaper clippings here. The third patient in a week went to Seattle. This was a trauma patient

who was turned away from three hospitals in the lower mainland and got shipped to Seattle to get trauma care after a motorcycle accident in which the guy's spleen was split wide open. These sorts of things should be treated immediately. He was sent to Seattle.

Guess what? Our Canadian dollars are supporting that medical system in Seattle. They are not in Canada supporting our health care system and that is the responsibility of this government because it took the money out of the provinces' hands and the provinces cannot deliver the care citizens require. It is the responsibility of the government. The government took \$6 billion-and-something out of the health care system, no one else. That is its responsibility. It ought to assume that responsibility instead of trying to pass it on to the provinces.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in my own community in Calgary West, some of the constituents I have door-knocked have talked about some of the practical, real, front line implications of these cuts the government has made to health care over the last while. I have seniors in my community who have of course contributed to the growth and the building of this country. They are the foundation upon which we stand and yet they are in lineups for hip replacement surgery. For these people, frankly, every single day they have left is precious. Health complications like these only make it that much more difficult.

I wonder if the hon. member might be able to comment, for example, on how the government cuts have resulted in people having to line up for hip replacement surgery.

I would also like the hon. member to comment, for example, on the case of my grandmother who received eye surgery. She went to a clinic called the Gimbel Eye Centre, in Calgary. The reason she went there, of course, was that the public system was not able to handle her for months. Instead of operating on both eyes at once, they would have done one eye at a time with regard to her developing cataracts. If that were the case, my grandmother would have been deprived of her sight for months. As well, the public procedures in terms of the facilities in Calgary were actually less effective than those of the centre.

• (1310)

I know the government was trying to do its best to make sure that my grandmother could not get access to those things. The government would force a woman in her eighties to go to the United States to get that type of surgery. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

The member talked about \$8 million in ads. I wonder whether the \$8 million the government has put into ads to try to pull the wool over the eyes of Canadians would be better spent on doctors and nurses.

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What about the 50:50 commitment there used to be with regard to health care in Alberta? Alberta was paying 91% of the health care bill in our province. I wonder what it is like in the member's native province of British Columbia.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to clarify something for the listening audience. When I talk about a \$6 billion cut I am talking about each year. Collectively over the five years it was budgeted for, we are talking in the neighbourhood of \$30 billion. That is the enormity of the actual loss in funding that the provinces have had to operate under.

I would like to talk about private clinics versus publicly administered health care services. I do not imagine that there is a province in Canada that does not have some type of private clinic. Some clinics are for eyes, some for general practice, some for laboratory work, some are abortion clinics and so on. There are a lot of private clinics out there.

Here is the concern Canadians should have. Because of the failure of our public system to handle the demand for hip surgeries, cataract operations and whatnot, Canadians who can afford it are taking to the United States the dollars that could be supporting a Canadian health care system of private clinics, public services or whatever. That money is supporting American public health care.

I have good friends in Mount Vernon, south of the border, who run a public hospital, from birth to death. They have a public system for people who cannot afford insurance. People who come into their emergency room are looked after whether they can afford it or not. My friends are overjoyed with the Canadians using their services, because Canadians are subsidizing that public service they give to their own American people.

How does that make any sense? In Canada our people are waiting 15 or 18 months for hip surgery but if someone can afford to use an American clinic, he or she can have surgery next week.

That is the concern Canadians should have. Our dollars are supporting the American health care system, not the Canadian health care system. We have to stop that. We have to make our system work by a commitment, followed up on by the federal government, to put funding in place which the provinces can count on to be there, and that funding cannot be taken away unilaterally when it serves the purpose of the federal government.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-45 is to implement certain of the Government of Canada's commitments in respect of health care and certain early childhood development commitments arising from the meeting of the first ministers held in Ottawa on September 11, 2000.

The bill provides funding for the acquisition and installation of medical equipment and funding for health information and com-

munication technologies. The amendments to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act provide for increased funding over five years to the provinces and territories through the Canada health and social transfer for health, post-secondary education, social assistance and social services, including early childhood development.

Canadians have to ask themselves why the Liberals have to be so reluctantly dragged into reality. In view of the bill before us, the angle I am going to take for the moment is to put in perspective children's and human rights legislation, entitlements versus privileges and health care spending.

• (1315)

While the UN declaration of human rights recognizes that all beings are born free and have equal dignity, it gives minimal recognition to the unique nature of childhood. Most of its articles refer to everyone, but article 25(2) states:

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

There is no other reference to childhood and age is notably absent from article 2 in the list of human characteristics for which discrimination is precluded.

The 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms also makes no reference to children per se, either their specific freedoms or any limitation of them, except to recognize age as among the human conditions for which discrimination is specifically precluded.

Neither of these declarations mentions any responsibilities that adults should or must have toward children when asserting or using their rights. Article 3 of the charter states that every citizen of Canada has the right to vote and to be a qualified member of a legislative assembly. Since children cannot be members of a legislative assembly it seems possible they were overlooked in the legislation. Their special vulnerabilities were certainly not acknowledged.

The 1991 Canadian ratification of the 1989 UN convention on the rights of the child was thus of key importance for Canadian children. The convention challenges the signatories to seek to attain benchmark behaviours toward the needs, rights and freedoms of children. As a co-signatory the Canadian government is obliged to report on its progress toward full implementation of the convention.

In 1999 the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children reported on compliance to convention articles in six selected areas. These areas are education, fundamental freedoms, treatment of

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abused and neglected children, refugee children, children with disabilities, and Canada's response to its international obligations with regard to children.

A number of articles were assessed for this compliance: article 4, which is international co-operation; articles 13, 14 and 15, which prescribe fundamental freedoms; article 19, which requires protection from maltreatment, abuse and neglect; article 23, which outlines the rights of children with disabilities; articles 28 and 29, which are directed to ensuring access to education; and article 22, which requires countries to offer protection and humanitarian assistance to refugee children.

Examination of these articles has shown seven areas where children's rights are being systematically violated in Canada. Action is required in 26 situations before compliance can be said to be achieved. This lack of compliance is clear. One example is the lack of both adequate national data on the extent of disability in childhood and resources for children with disabilities and their families.

In Canada the rights of children under the UN convention are not fully recognized in many other ways. Article 3 requires that the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration. When much of the information is examined in the light of the best interests standard, it is clear that in many instances it has not been attained. The lack of environmental standards specifically directed to the protection of the fetus and growing child is an obvious example. Likewise, data on school age children and youth reflect the difficulties they encounter with regard to violence and sexuality.

Article 17, while recognizing the social and cultural value of the mass media, also directs states to develop appropriate guidelines for the protection of children from information and materials injurious to their well-being. A day spent watching television or surfing the Internet confirms that such injurious material is readily available to developing children, reflecting the extent to which adult rights and freedoms continue to be exercised without regard to the possible impact on the child.

Article 18, while recognizing the responsibilities of parents for the upbringing and development of the child, also asks states to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible. Clearly we have performed indifferently in this regard. The Liberal record is very poor.

Article 24 recognizes the right of children to enjoy the highest attainable standards of health. Article 24(e) seeks to ensure that all segments of society, especially parents and children, are educated and supported in such basic aspects as health, hygiene, sanitation, prevention of accidents, nutrition and breast feeding. While the rates of injury have fallen over the years, the relatively high rates

that persist among young children reflect the continuing attitude that the young child must adapt to the adult world, oftentimes a developmentally impossible task.

• (1320)

While the advantages of breast-feeding are today more widely known, rates of breast-feeding rapidly diminish in the weeks following birth through the lack of ongoing support for this natural process. Similarly the record of Canadian hospitals in adopting the World Health Organization 10 step breast-feeding support program can only be described as abysmal.

Article 26 recognizes the right of every child to benefit from social security. Article 27 calls on states to recognize the right of every child to a standard of living that is adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. It also states that while parents have primary responsibility to secure these standards, states will assist where necessary through material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

With food banks that serve thousands of individuals, with extensive dependency on clothing exchanges and donation programs for those in need, with school nutrition programs essentially dependent on non-government agencies, and with the number of homeless children and families increasing in large cities, it is clear that Canadian governments have much work to do before compliance with these articles is achieved.

Under article 31 children are entitled to rest and leisure and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic and recreational leisure activities. Chapter 7 demonstrates that such activities are viewed not as universal entitlements in Canada but as privileges dependent upon adequacy of family income.

Sexual abuse of children and adolescents is all too common, especially for those who have disabilities or who live on the street. Article 34 charges states to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and includes in this protection from inducements or coercion. Measures must be taken to protect them from prostitution, unlawful sexual practices and exploitative use in pornographic performances and materials.

The apparent acceptance of high rates of prostitution as a means of survival among the youth living on the street, the horrendous revelations regarding official suppression of evidence of sexual abuse of children in both residential schools and recreational and sports activities, and the 1999 decision on the possession of child pornography in British Columbia are all examples of our delinquency as a society toward children and of the consideration of adult freedoms over children's rights. It is a record of the Liberal government's failure.

Many of the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child challenge the age-old attitude to children that regards them solely as parental property. This is a particular tension in North American society, reflecting attitudes that must be questioned in today's rapidly changing family demographics.

A comparison of the facts of the health of Canada's children with the provision for child health and well-being in the UN convention is a sobering but worthwhile exercise. It becomes clear that the rights and freedoms of children are generally dependent upon the goodwill of adults. When this fails, children often lack ready mechanisms to redress situations of concern. The old style Liberal government has failed the country.

While Canada has ratified the UN convention, it unfortunately is not part of domestic law, has yet to be used in Canadian courts and is not legally respected. These circumstances leave many children in society still lacking in many basic human rights. We have a government that has failed children and should be denounced.

The Canadian Alliance supports the increased funding of health care for Canadians, especially children, but it does not believe just putting more money into the issue will solve all the problems in our health care system, again, especially the situation for children.

While the funding is welcomed by our party we also oppose the Liberal government's opposition to attempts by the provinces to find new, different and more creative ways to deliver services within the Canada Health Act. Our party has greater respect for provincial jurisdiction of health care under the constitution and would work with the provinces to find more effective and efficient ways to deliver health care services.

The current Liberal government cannot continue to denounce the provinces for trying to establish less top heavy, bureaucratically inefficient, Soviet style health care delivery systems. It is a position of the Canadian Alliance that more money does not necessarily solve all the problems that arise from inefficient delivery models. Restricting how the provinces may use the money does nothing to help heal our health care system.

My community wants better governance than we have had. I will continue to be their voice for higher standards, a more comprehensive consideration for families and children, and an accountable, optimistic vision for the 21st century.

• (1325)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is suggesting that the government has done nothing

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for children and families. Although I was not prepared to speak on this, I wrote down a couple of items that perhaps the House would like to be refreshed on.

First, there is the increase in the Canada child tax benefit to the advantage of all families with children. Another \$2.5 billion included in there means an aggregate of \$9 billion annually goes to families with children.

On January 1, 2001, there will be an increase in maternity and parental leave benefits. Parents can choose to provide direct parental care to their children up to a full year. Families with children will benefit from the \$1 billion for that program.

The child care expense deduction was increased in 1998 from \$5,000 for a preschool child and \$3,000 for a school age child up to \$7,000 for a preschool child and \$4,000 for a school age child.

There is also the deindexation of the Income Tax Act and the increase in the basic personal amount available to all Canadians. This puts more money into the pockets of Canadians so that they can choose to provide the kind of care their children need.

These are just some of the examples of the work the Government of Canada has done on behalf of all Canadians to invest in children, who are our future. I would ask the member to simply clarify his remarks with regard to the investment we have made in children.

Mr. Paul Forseth: Mr. Speaker, I tried to very quickly go through details to try to provide a different perspective on the general conversation around health care. I tried to say that concerning our international commitments, when we compare what we are doing with the commitments we have made under the UN convention of the child, Canada comes up very short.

What the member has talked about goes a bit in the right direction but is still very short of what could have been delivered in the current fiscal envelope. Under our solution 17 package the child care expense deduction is still there and the child tax benefit is still there, but where is the standard deduction for children that is not means tested, that as a society recognizes the value of children, and that provides freedom and opportunity for parents to decide how they will look after their own children?

I think I have painted quite a stark picture of how Canada boasts internationally and makes proud commitments but within these domestic borders falls very short.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby spoke about early childhood development. That is one of the aspects of the bill. I suggest that there is no greater need for early

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childhood development than in the area of health care, where we see huge lines of very young children waiting for surgery. That is a travesty in terms of early childhood development.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the \$8 million pre-election ad campaign the government is running these days. In my riding they could not get funding for an MRI diagnostic equipment machine. It costs about \$1 million. The \$8 million the government is wasting on its ad campaign would have bought eight MRI machines. To buy the machine they had to raise the money locally, within the constituency, because there was a shortage of funding as a result of the \$30 billion the government cut from the health care system through its drastic cuts in transfers to the provinces over the past five years.

Would the member see that as being of detriment to the early childhood development he is talking about today?

Mr. Paul Forseth: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made the point. I do not need to repeat it. However I can add to what he has said.

Typically when governments are heading into elections government departments spend taxpayer money on soft advertising or image building for government services. People understand that as being quasi-political advertising.

• (1330)

I will give another example of that. We have these soft, warm, fuzzy commercials that talk about how we are glad that the family law system and child maintenance are there because children are first. Then there is the web page number and so on.

I look at the expense of producing those commercials and at how many thousands of dollars it costs every time those commercials are run, yet the government has done nothing to implement the joint Senate-House of Commons committee report on child custody and access and has done nothing to reform family law.

Instead of fancy commercials to make us feel warm and fuzzy about the federal government, that money should have been put into providing real services to children, to establish unified family courts across the country and all kinds of relief that could be directly provided to children and families.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on the last point the member brought forward about the joint Senate-House of Commons committee on our children, the child custody issue and the recommendations that were given to the federal government by a joint all party committee of both the Senate and the House of Commons, I know the member

spent a lot of time travelling the country and taking part in those committee hearings.

I had someone in my office again last week asking about the 45 recommendations. He was a divorced dad who was trying to get access to his children, trying to look after his children and trying to pay his child support.

I wonder if the the member could briefly describe what he thinks should have been done. Could he also give us some of the key recommendations of the child custody report that he spent so much time working on, and tell us what has happened to children at risk because of this government's lack of action on that front?

Mr. Paul Forseth: Mr. Speaker, many other countries have gone through the same agony of trying to update their divorce and separation laws. Certainly Canada is far behind developments in the western world on that issue.

The road map is there, but the response of the federal government is that it is just one more study in the ongoing debate. The federal government has absolutely no political commitment to take action on the review of family law.

No matter where we go, from province to province, there is an agenda out there in the public, that is, the family law system is broken and in a mess and it needs leadership from the federal government, not an excuse saying that it is a complicated problem of shared federal-provincial jurisdiction and we must discuss it further.

I want leadership from the justice minister and the government with regard to taking some action and bringing the provinces along. We can restore the balance and fairness in family law.

Where appropriate, we can make family law much more child focused. We can develop shared parenting plans instead of seeing children as property. We can work with the shared jurisdiction of the provinces to enhance conflict resolution, non-court processes and unified family courts across the country.

We can implement specifically the recommendations of the report "For the Sake of the Children", including the specific principle of shared parenting and mutual parental responsibility.

We have to improve the process whereby grandparents have to go through an extra barrier if they feel they have to get legally involved with the situation.

We also have to get the courts to enforce their own orders.

We have to deal with the issue of false allegations in the whole family law context.

There is a tremendous agenda but unfortunately the Liberal government has a track record of no commitment to getting anything done in the family law area.

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Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on the bill before the House today, the bill that is putting more money back into health care. I want to state the obvious, which is that even with the additional money, we will still not be back to the levels we would have been at if the government had not touched the bill in the first place back in 1995 in the budget of the Minister of Finance.

When the history of this period is written, we will find that there has been no government that has taken as much money out of social programs, particularly health care, as the conservative government across the way. I say conservative because it is more conservative than the Conservative government was when it comes to restricting programs for people.

Now of course we have an election campaign that is about to be announced. The Prime Minister will drop the writ this weekend for November 27. One wonders what that campaign is all about.

• (1335)

I think this campaign is more about the Prime Minister's fear of the Minister of Finance than his fear of the opposition parties. He is afraid of the Minister of Finance and afraid of a rebellion on the backbenches of the Liberal Party.

Here is a government whose cabinet has recommended no election this fall. Here is a government whose caucus recommends no election this fall. Here is a government whose pollster has recommended no election this fall. Here is a government that knows the Canadian people do not want to waste \$100 million to \$200 million on an election campaign this fall. Here is a government that is only three years and a few months into its mandate.

Here is a government that does not want a campaign, but there is a Prime Minister who wants a campaign because he is afraid of the Minister of Finance and a rebellion in the backbenches of the Liberal Party. That is what politics has been reduced to.

I wanted to say those words in the debate today because the Prime Minister has been trying to fast track absolutely everything so that he can drop the writ come Sunday of this particular week.

Some of my friends in the Liberal Party—and there is one behind the curtain now—are quite embarrassed by the Prime Minister in terms of how he is trying to engineer an election for his own purposes because of his fear of the Minister of Finance.

The Prime Minister of course is bringing in the premier of Newfoundland to be a minister in the government. The premier of Newfoundland is not a member of parliament and, God help us, not even a member of the other place, the Senate.

The Prime Minister is setting a really dangerous precedent. He did this with the minister for trade and the minister for intergovern-

mental affairs a few years ago. He put them in the cabinet and called a byelection to get them elected. They were not even members of parliament but were given cabinet positions. The same thing has happened with the premier of Newfoundland. He has been put in cabinet and is not a member of parliament.

The last time I remember that happening before this Prime Minister was back in the days when, I believe, the leader of the today's Conservative Party brought in a fellow named René de Cotret and put him in the cabinet. He later ran in Ottawa Centre. I think it also happened when former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau appointed Pierre Juneau way back in the 1970s or early 1980s.

Here we have a Prime Minister in the modern age taking someone who is not elected. He has done it three times. He is setting a very dangerous precedent by putting three people in cabinet with no election, without going to the people. I do not think that should be done. If someone wants to serve in the cabinet, he or she should be elected to the Parliament of Canada. The Prime Minister has not done that.

We should have a very healthy debate about all these issues. They are all very important. I believe we should have set election dates. We should have elections every four years unless the government falls on a confidence vote. We should have a set parliamentary timetable with a set time for a throne speech, a budget and a beginning and an end to a session so that the Prime Minister cannot manipulate the timetable for his own partisan political differences.

Some of the people most frustrated with this are the Liberal backbenchers themselves. When they walk out of the House they tell me how frustrated they are with a Prime Minister who runs a one man show with the support of one or two ministers and a few bureaucrats in his office, including one of my friends who I see across the House here today.

The system has to change. We need a government and a parliament that listens to the people of Canada. If we had that we would not have had the big cutbacks in health care in 1995 to begin with.

There are Liberals hanging their heads in shame. Their government has cut absolutely billions of dollars out of health care. They were a bunch of nervous nellys who were afraid of a Leader of the Opposition at that time who was advocating massive cutbacks in health care and in social programs. The Liberals cut back more than any other government in the history of Canada. They should be very embarrassed by their government's position.

Someone across the way said that it would be a dinosaur who would advocate more money for health care. I do not know where some of those Liberals have been but they should talk to the

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ordinary people in this country. Canadians want an investment into programs for people. They want the social deficit eliminated. They want the opportunity to have health care regardless of their incomes. Those are the things Canadians want but the government is cutting back on them.

• (1340)

Health care came into this country through a courageous fight many years ago waged by people in Saskatchewan. It began back in the 1940s with hospitalization and in the 1960s with health care. It was people like Tommy Douglas who brought health care into the country.

If we look at the Canadian population we will find that there is no program as popular in Canada as health care, yet we have Liberals across the way laughing about it, saying that it is an old-fashioned thing, that it is out of touch, a thing of the dinosaurs. I wish they would get up in the House and say that publicly rather than just heckling.

Last week I was talking with a number of people in the inner city of Regina who were very concerned about losing health care. They were very concerned about the government's massive cutbacks in all social programs. They were concerned about the government putting all the money on paying down the national debt while forgetting to invest in people and paying off the social deficit.

Where are the great progressive Liberals, those great left wing Liberals who used to stand in the House and advocate programs for people, advocate the redistribution of income and wealth in the country, advocate a vision of a country that is based on sharing, co-operation and greater equality? Now they seem to be Alliance people in a hurry. There is not much difference between the two parties in terms of their tax programs, paying down the national debt and forgetting about the fact that we need money and programs for the people.

There will be a choice in the election that is coming up. There will be a couple of different visions in the election. There are two parties, the Alliance and the Liberals, that share a very similar vision as to how they want to organize the economy. There is an argument as to whether or not they should put more money into the debt and deficit or put more money into helping wealthy people pay down their taxes.

The Alliance Party has a 17% flat tax that it is advocating in its second term, a flat tax that would be a big cutback for millionaires in the country. How much different is the Minister of Finance? A lot of his tax breaks have put a lot more money into the pockets of wealthy people in Canada as well.

I want to point out to the Canadian people that the Liberal Party across the way will leave a legacy of being the most conservative government in our post-war history: more conservative than the government of John Diefenbaker, more conservative than the

government of Brian Mulroney and certainly more conservative than the governments of Pierre Trudeau and Lester Pearson.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if Canadians watching the debate today would be shocked to know that we are debating a bill that would put \$23.5 billion back into the Canada health and social transfer to the provinces for health care and early childhood development.

If this bill passed, money in the medical equipment fund, a \$1 billion fund, could flow tomorrow. We have members standing in the House denying Canadians the right to that medical equipment.

Let me give an example. In regard to the province of Saskatchewan, \$33 million could be available tomorrow if its member would support this bill and get it through the House.

There is a member opposite from British Columbia, where \$132 million could flow in the next few days for medical equipment such as MRIs and CAT scanners.

I have lost touch with the cost of an MRI or a CAT scanner, but if we are looking at \$1 million or \$2 million, Saskatchewan could have 30 of them in the next few days, and we sit here and debate this.

The bill would enact \$23.5 billion in addition to \$14 billion in the last two budgets that would be transferred to the provinces through the CHST for health care, post-secondary education and social programs.

How can the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle deny the residents and citizens of Saskatchewan access to this \$33 million medical equipment fund?

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, did I hear the parliamentary secretary correctly? Did he say that in the next few days we will have 30 more MRIs in the province of Saskatchewan? Is it a commitment on behalf of the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance that in the next few days there will be 30 more MRIs? If that is the commitment, would he please get up and tell us that is a commitment by the Government of Canada. If it is not a commitment, then why does he say it?

• (1345)

He is complaining that I spoke for about eight or nine minutes in the House of Commons. The government could have put money into the health care system in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000. However, the government cut back its funding of the health care system by billions and billions of dollars making people suffer and making sure that hospitals closed from coast to coast in this country. Now he complains that we speak for 10 or 20 minutes in the House of Commons. Where is his common sense?

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Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite interesting to listen to the parliamentary secretary when he said that if this bill does not pass today at all stages hell will freeze over and the end is upon us.

The parliamentary secretary knows full well that in discussions with the government House leader, we were told absolutely, point blank, that this bill must be passed by March 31 and I certainly hope it will be. It would be under a Canadian Alliance government. We were told that the funding is not in jeopardy and that the provinces will not be disallowed the right to buy MRIs or other equipment.

The government knows full well that the deal is going ahead. All the parties in the House of Commons are going to support it. We will support it. We want to make sure it goes ahead. The provinces can carry on in full confidence that the \$1 billion in the technology fund which he talked about will be theirs. The agreement spells that out. Everyone in the House knows that is a fact.

This is the way the Liberals do business. They say either we agree with them and agree with them on their terms or we will be punished.

I would like the hon. member from Saskatchewan to describe for us what he thinks about being held to ransom by the Liberals. They are saying that we are not even allowed to talk about this issue because if we do it we are somehow anti-health care. What does he think of the Liberal tactics here this afternoon?

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, those are typical Liberal tactics. That is why I speak so much about reforming the parliamentary electoral system so people can have input, so there is proper debate and proper participation in how we spend the money that belongs to the taxpayers of the country.

When we debate an issue of importance like health care for a few minutes, they get upset because we are going to stall things. That is the same party, by the way, that has promised a home care system and pharmacare in this country. Where is pharmacare? Where is home care? We should be raising those questions in the debate today.

I remember my grandfather telling me years ago that the Liberal Party promised medicare in 1919 and fought for it. It did not come in until the 1960s. It only came in after it was started in Saskatchewan under the leadership of the CCF and Tommy Douglas. Can we believe the Liberal Party? That is its track record.

We need serious parliamentary reform in this country so we can hold ministers accountable, so we can have proper debates and so the people of the country can have their voices heard. If we do not do that we will find ourselves sleepwalking right into a crisis in democracy. We are seeing that today with the snap election call coming on Sunday by the Prime Minister. We are seeing it in the

way he brought Brian Tobin, the premier of Newfoundland, into cabinet without a seat in the House of Commons. That is really shameful and cynical political behaviour on the behalf of the Prime Minister of Canada.

We know it is a fact that the Liberal Party does not want this election campaign. The cabinet has been advising against it. The caucus has advised against it. The Liberals' own pollsters advised against it and yet the Prime Minister is trigger happy and wants to call an election campaign. Is that democracy? Is that the kind of system where we have checks and balances, where ordinary people's voices can be heard, where people are empowered and where we have a democratic system? Should one man be able to call an election whenever he wants regardless of what is happening in the country and regardless of what bills are before the House of Commons? My answer to that is no.

We have a country where the Prime Minister appoints the head of the army, the head of the police, the head of the supreme court, all the justices, all the senators, all the cabinet ministers and makes every major appointment in government without any proper checks and balances by the House of Commons. This is something that should be changed. We need a political system that is democratic and that empowers people.

Finally, we need a change in the electoral system to bring in a measure for proportionate representation where everybody's vote counts and votes are not wasted. That is the kind of agenda we need in this country.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from the NDP to refer to some of the remarks that were just made by the Liberal member a few moments ago. Let us be honest. The only reason we are debating this health care accord is not because of the federal government, it is because of the leadership that the provinces provided. They pretty much dragged the federal government kicking and screaming to the table to negotiate this particular accord.

● (1350)

Does the hon. member agree with the Progressive Conservative sentiment that this bill should be reclassified as the post-dated cheque bill, given the fact that none of the dollars that were initially cut by the federal government for health care will be restored immediately? It will be done partially next April, but the dollars that were cut will not hit the 1994 levels for over three years. Would the hon. member support that this was a provincially led initiative that the government had to accept because it was a take it or leave it deal?

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I think it absolutely is. Most of the money will start flowing well after the bill has passed through the House. The money will go out next year and the year after and the year after that but not in the immediate future.

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Once again, and I think the parliamentary secretary knows this, it was the leadership that came from the provinces, particularly from premiers like Premier Doer of Manitoba, the chair of the premiers this year, and Premier Romanow of Saskatchewan, who started to put this on the agenda a number of years ago. This forced the federal government to act. The federal government was a very hesitant player in terms of putting more money back into health care.

This is the most important issue in the country. The money is there. It is about time we reinvested more money into health care.

I would like to enquire via questions and comments, where is the promise on pharmacare? Where is the delivery and promise on home care? I see Liberals hanging their heads and not getting up to respond to that.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter into this debate on what I think Canadians think is a very important bill. It is a bill that the Canadian Alliance is pleased to support. We do not think it is perfect but we are supportive of it in the sense that it restores some of the gutting of the Canada health funding, which took place under this Liberal government, and restores, at least in part over the next few years, what the government took away.

It reminds me of a famous political story in British Columbia. B.C. had a premier who people said would put rocks in shoes for the entire time he was in office. However, just before the election he would pull out two or three rocks expecting that everyone would say thanks for the relief and that his party would be re-elected. That premier is long gone so we will not talk about him. This reminds me of what the Liberals are up to today.

When it comes to health care, it is interesting and instructive to go right to the platform that the Canadian Alliance Party will be campaigning on in the weeks ahead. It is pretty straightforward and in a capsulated form on the right hand side of a document that can be found at www.CanadianAlliance.ca.

First, our plan for the health care system is to maintain Canada's medicare vision and the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

Second is to replace federal-provincial confrontation with a more co-operative approach. We should not have to drag the federal government to these meetings. It should be co-operative. Let us try to work together on health care.

Third is to maintain funding commitments to health care with a built in funding escalator to allow for increases in population, changes in demographics and so on. That will be built into our plan.

Improved funding will increase access to quality care for the family. That is a given and everyone knows that. We will also guarantee in law long term funding to the provinces so we can

rebuild our health care system with confidence. That is the big thing.

Our plan also says that right now the Canada Health Act does not impose any obligation on Ottawa to maintain funding levels. The health accord that we are talking about today does not obligate the federal government in the long term to give strategic long term funding in health care. It is a short term agreement and is good as far as it goes. However, it does not commit the federal government in legislation that the provinces can count on the funding for the future. Our plan goes on to say that the Canadian Alliance thinks it is wrong that the health act does not include that right now. We will amend the Canada Health Act to ensure that the federal government cannot unilaterally cut health care funding again. We propose to entrench five year funding agreements, negotiated with the provinces, in the Canada Health Act.

• (1355)

The reason this is important is that the federal government, and we saw some of it here this afternoon already, will go into this next campaign and it will say all kinds of things, particularly about our party, I believe. They brought in Mr. Tobin from Atlantic Canada. They needed a rat pack organizer and brought in the king of the rat pack to do it. He will be the king of the drive-by smear. Whatever is said about the Canadian Alliance, his job will be to paint an evil picture of it.

It reminds me a little bit of something our leader said in a speech the other day when we launched our platform campaign in Kitchener. Close to 2,000 people came out to hear this. He talked a little bit about the health care funding. I remember it well and it is something to remember for this coming campaign. He had some advice for the Liberals, which was to try telling the truth all the time.

It is so innovative for the Liberals that they might actually find it is something worthwhile. Instead of saying, for instance, that the Canadian Alliance will do away with the Canada Health Act, maybe the Liberals would like to pick up the document, turn to page 15 and say that we will maintain Canada's medicare vision in the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

When the Liberals speak the truth, it might even feel good to them. Instead of smearing other people, instead of spreading lies, spreading innuendo, spreading nonsense that they know is not true, what if they actually got up and spoke the truth?

There is an old saying that the truth shall set us free. What it means is that it is a very freeing thing to tell the truth, even about someone we may oppose politically. Instead of attacking someone individually, instead of going childish off into the distance, painting on campaign signs and literature and thinking it is funny, why do they not try just telling the truth that the Alliance will maintain the Canada Health Act, will enshrine five year funding agreements with the provinces, will give Canadians back what the Liberal government took away and will do it in spades?

The Deputy Speaker: I know the House will look forward to the continuation of the hon. member's remarks later today. I should advise him and the House that there are 15 minutes remaining for him to complete his speech.

* * *

[Translation]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to lay upon the table the supplementary report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, volume II, for October 2000.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MISS INDIA-CANADA PAGEANT

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past summer the 10th annual Miss India-Canada pageant was held in Toronto. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to congratulate the winner, a resident of Ottawa Centre, Miss Ritu Jalhan.

The Miss India-Canada pageant provides young Canadian women of Indian origin a platform to display their grace, talent, community contribution and knowledge.

Miss Jalhan, a 20 year old student who is currently studying anthropology at York University, was encouraged to enter the pageant by her friend.

I am sure my colleagues will join me in offering congratulations to Miss Jalhan.

* * *

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it appears that the momentum for an election has gathered a life of its own and that a fall election is now inevitable.

I may not be here after the election to take part in the debates in the House but I do want to go on the record as saying that it has been a meaningful experience.

When I ran for election in 1997, I believed that some of the most important things I could do would be to fight for equality among all Canadians and work toward an egalitarian society, one that did not categorize its people on the basis of race. I also believed that it was

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necessary to restore respect for all human life from conception to natural death.

• (1400)

I leave without having accomplished either goal, but when I was campaigning I made only one promise, which was to be faithful and to make a good effort. I believe that I have honoured that commitment by contributing to the debate.

Aside from those two larger issues, I have enjoyed serving the people of Prince Albert. I thank them for entrusting their federal affairs to me over the past three and half years. I look forward to what the future holds for me. I wish you well, Mr. Speaker, and all of my colleagues as well.

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[Translation]

PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 12, the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation announced the award winners for the year 2000. This is the ninth year these awards have been given in recognition of an illustrious career in the arts.

Each of the recipients has left his or her own individual mark and continues to inspire generations of Canadians. This year's winners of the Governor General's awards for the performing arts are: Janette Bertrand, Fernand Nault, Teresa Stratas, Stompin' Tom Connors, Christopher Newton and Donald Sutherland.

[English]

Two other prestigious awards were also announced last Thursday. The Ramon John Hnatyshyn award for volunteerism in the performing arts was awarded to Mr. Walter Carsen.

[Translation]

The National Arts Centre award went to the Cirque du Soleil.

I would hope the House will take this opportunity to thank all of the winners for their remarkable contribution to the growth of the arts in Canada.

* * *

THE FRANCOPHONIE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the secretary general of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie, His Excellency Boutros Boutros-Ghali, is visiting Quebec from October 16 to 18.

He will give a speech on the new political, economic and cultural dimensions of the Francophonie. Later in the week, he will address the theme of the Francophonie and democracy.

By placing emphasis on this important visit, Canada and Quebec are strengthening their ties with other parts of the world that share

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the same ideas on the protection and growth of the French culture. In addition, we are continuing in our determination to share the wealth that comes of living in French with the people of the Francophonie.

We therefore extend a welcome to His Excellency Boutros Boutros-Gali in the knowledge that Quebec will continue to take the lead in its role as home of the Francophonie in North America.

* * *

DESJARDINS WEEK

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the fact that October 15 through October 21, 2000, is Desjardins week. It was launched officially yesterday.

This event constitutes one of the high points in the Desjardins movement's centenary celebrations. Among other things, the names of the recipients of the 25th edition of annual Desjardins awards will be announced, and the Fondation Desjardins bursaries awarded. It is the foundation's 30th birthday.

Through numerous activities both within the movement and in the communities, the event organizers are underscoring its economic contribution to the various regions of Quebec.

Thanks to its ability to unite the talents of Quebecers in all fields, the Desjardins movement has been able to innovate throughout its history.

Happy Desjardins week.

* * *

[*English*]

DARRELL AND ANTHEA ARCHER

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, where is the Liberal government's heart? It is certainly not with entrepreneurial men and women on the family farm.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, the Archers, Darrell and Anthea, recently wanted to add to the agricultural diversity of Canada. They determined there was a growing market for water buffalo milk and cheese in Europe and that the trend was shifting to North America. They wanted to be a part of it. It made sense agriculturally and economically.

One year ago they bought and began the importation of their herd from Denmark. Agriculture Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency gave approval at every step. The herd was in quarantine in Denmark and now is in Canada.

Now after an outbreak of BSE in one cow in Denmark, the Archers face the loss of everything. They have invested everything into this enterprise and the CFIA has demanded the herd be destroyed.

I understand the need to protect our beef and dairy markets, both domestically and internationally. However through no fault of their own, the Archers face the loss of everything. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has failed to offer this family any compensation. This is not acceptable.

The Archers and the people of Canada need a change. It is time for a government with a change. The Canadian Alliance will be—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Vaughan—King—Aurora.

* * *

• (1405)

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has undergone an economic renaissance known internationally as the Canadian miracle. Over two million jobs have been created since 1993, the vast majority by a determined, focused, visionary group of individuals who embody the very best of human qualities.

They pursue their goals with passion and commitment. They persist through obstacles even when they appear insurmountable. In a world of constant change, they stay ahead of the curve. They are innovators, risk takers and job creators. They strive for excellence. They take pride in their products and services. They contribute to their communities and, yes, they are nation builders.

I am referring to small business entrepreneurs, the engines of Canada's economy.

A strong voice for Canadian small businesses is the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This well known national organization today has reached an important milestone in its history. The CFIB has reached a membership of 100,000.

On a personal note, I want to express my gratitude and congratulations to the CFIB on this important and very meaningful event.

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[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the report tabled yesterday, the information commissioner made an unequivocal attack on this government's culture of

secrecy, which deprives the people of Canada and of Quebec of their right to access to information.

According to the commissioner, the highest government levels are involved. The Prime Minister's Office, in an unprecedented act, has refused to allow the commissioner access to its files. The Privy Council Office is involved in a court challenge of the constitutionality of the commissioner's right to carry out investigations. Both Treasury Board and the PCO are creating procedures to delay the publication of embarrassing internal audit reports.

This should not come as any surprise. A government that looks out for its friends, who then repay the favour through the party's election coffers, has no choice but to conceal information from the public. Secrecy is one of the things that characterizes nepotism. In a country that claims democratic practices, this is totally unacceptable.

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[English]

THAMES RIVER

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legacy continues. In 1984 Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau initiated the Canadian heritage river secretariat to recognize the great natural and human heritage of Canada's rivers.

On August 14, 2000, the Thames River in southwestern Ontario was officially designated as one of Canada's 28 Canadian heritage rivers.

Over its 11,000 year history, the Thames River has played a key historic role. Natives, hunters, explorers, fur traders, settlers, soldiers and former slaves have all travelled this natural highway.

Today, the river and its watershed are home to great diversity of plants, birds, fish and animals, some of which are endangered and found nowhere else in Canada.

Last month, at the annual Heritage Day Festival, I was pleased to join with provincial and first nation representatives to unveil a plaque recognizing the heritage river.

Congratulations to the many volunteers who made this dream a reality.

* * *

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Canadian Alliance, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Canadian Federation of Inde-

pendent Business on having recently passed their 100,000 membership mark.

A number of the members of its national management committee are in Ottawa today to celebrate this important event. I was honoured to meet with them earlier today.

Small businesses produce most of the new jobs created in Canada. They provide most of the new inventions and innovations and, yes, they pay a ton of tax to the federal government.

Until the CFIB came along, the interests of small businesses were largely ignored when important policy decisions were made in government. All that started to change after the CFIB came into existence. Twenty-nine years later and 100,000 members strong, the CFIB has grown in size and influence to now become the big voice for Canada's small businesses.

On behalf of the Canadian Alliance, congratulations to the CFIB on reaching this important milestone in its history and may it and its members continue to grow and flourish.

* * *

A WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to give my support to the A Week Without Violence programs being promoted by the community YWCA of Grey-Wellington in Mount Forest, Ontario.

In past years, the community "Y" of Grey-Wellington raised awareness of violence by holding competitions for T-shirt designs in local schools, having the clergy dedicate prayers against violence, sending letters to the newspapers, handing out anti-violence literature and holding discussions.

In designating October 15 to 21 as A Week without Violence, the YWCA asks us to be aware of our own attitudes and negative behaviours as we pledge to spend seven days without committing, condoning or contributing to violence.

I would like to thank the YWCA for the work it does and for designating October 15 to 21 A Week without Violence.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I was a new member of parliament, I was given the critic area of small business. One of my first duties was to meet with John Bulloch, the founder of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. He was an enthusiastic and

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outspoken advocate of the small and medium business sector and I learned much from his wise counsel.

Now 20 years later, the CFIB and I are still going strong and still speaking out on behalf of small and medium sized Canadian businesses.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business currently has over 100,000 members across the country, the largest individual membership business organization in Canada. One of its strengths has been the direct input from its members in the form of surveys which are sent to all members of parliament to assist us in our decision making.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done an outstanding job advocating for small and medium sized Canadian enterprises. Today is CFIB's first official day on the Hill. The government would do well to listen to them.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-POVERTY DAY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, October 17 has been set aside as international anti-poverty day.

I share in the cry of Centraide-Québec, which, in its open letter to people who are not concerned about poverty and to everyone else, said "Over the past several years now, we have come to believe that poverty and social inequality involve costs and consequences that result in our society's shooting itself in the foot because of its failure to sufficiently or properly invest in the fight against poverty and inequality".

On the eve of the economic statement, I encourage the Prime Minister to show a modicum of compassion by re-evaluating his priorities and by recognizing his government's seven years of social deficit. This would be a fine opportunity to act on the demands by the women who are continuing their walk for a fairer and more humane world.

This is an appointment with equity the Liberal government is not allowed to miss.

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[English]

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, a group of approximately 250 women and men of Ahuntsic walked in solidarity to fight poverty and violence against women.

[Translation]

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the success of our march, especially Mireille Belisle, the founder of the Fondation

Mélanie Cabey, a not for profit organization to support the disappeared; SNAC, a food and community action service; the Ahuntsic CLSC, which manages Réseau justice et foi; the Centre des femmes italiennes de Montréal, which organized the event; the municipal housing office; Courrier Ahuntsic; Amitié n'a pas d'âge; Stations Nos. 27 and 28; La Resource; various elected representatives and a number of private citizens.

[English]

We on this side of the House have worked closely and co-operatively for the last seven years with all local groups to ensure that all women in Canada and elsewhere receive justice and equality, and that there is zero tolerance for violence against children and women.

Congratulations on a successful march to all those who participated in Ahuntsic and all across Canada.

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[Translation]

ATLANTIC TOURISM INDUSTRY

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC): Mr. Speaker, on October 16, ACOA announced a new \$19.5 million marketing measure for the tourism industry in the Atlantic provinces.

While the federal government continues to promote tourism in New Brunswick, certain rural communities are suffering as the result of poor environmental decisions made in their regions.

Kent county, in my riding of Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, was the victim of the construction of a huge pig barn in Sainte-Marie.

The Liberal government in office at the time failed to consult the public and refused to do an environmental impact study.

The people of Kent county, who work so hard to promote tourism, are now discouraged by the smell and the negative impact of this facility.

I wonder how this Liberal government can expect the people of Kent county to attract tourists to their region when they are up to their neck in manure.

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[English]

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with a population of nearly six billion on our planet, we should be aware that two-thirds, or approximately four billion, live in relative poverty, while 1.3 billion live on one American dollar a day. Seventy per cent of those living in poverty are women. These conditions are in part what has prompted the organization of the World March of Women.

Oral Questions

Canada also faces poverty issues. Children who live in low income families made up 13% of all children under the age of 18 in 1997. Of that number, 40% were living with a single female parent.

• (1415)

Homelessness, often equated with the extreme side of poverty in Canada, is affecting young women at an earlier age. Women and men from countries all over the world have signed a petition that will be presented to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, along with a list of demands to help eliminate poverty and, in particular, the feminization of poverty.

Let us add our voices to those calling for an end to poverty for women in Canada.

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BRAIN TUMOUR AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, October has been set aside as brain tumour awareness month. This is an opportunity to talk about the tragedies and the triumphs of those who have suffered from brain tumours.

As a medical practitioner, my life was touched by a brain tumour but nowhere more than five and a half years ago when one of our colleagues in the House was struck down by this disease. Thankfully she was diagnosed early and treated quickly and today her health is excellent. She retired from politics just before the last election. I had an opportunity to talk with her and she is advocating brain tumour awareness.

I give my congratulations to the medical workers in this field, to the scientists, to the people who treat brain tumours, and to Beryl Gaffney, retired MP, for her work on this cause.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the report of the auditor general today and the report of the information commissioner, which was blocked from question period yesterday, cataloguing the Prime Minister's disrespect of public funds and the democratic process, were interesting.

The commissioner's report in bold type has the words "Mayday—Mayday", the international call for help. The report in question says that the action of the Prime Minister's Office is "undermining the democratic process".

The Prime Minister needs to stand right now and do one of two things. He should tell us the information commissioner is not telling the truth or apologize to Canadians for undermining democracy. Which one is it?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a law on freedom of information and we are obliged by the law. Yes, there are requests. We have to analyze every request to see if it is within or outside the law. Of course some information has to remain privy to the offices of the Prime Minister and the ministers for the proper administration of government.

When we have a disagreement there is a mechanism in the law that exists. The commissioners can go to court and ask for a ruling. When they go we oblige, but at the same time we have to protect the responsibilities of ministers to have the right to communicate among themselves for the betterment of the government. We have the right to have some—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister missed the point. It says he is undermining democracy.

It is no wonder that we have such a hard time getting information from the HRD commissioner on wasting \$3 billion a year when the information commissioner says that the future careers of the commissioner's staff have been threatened, and that if members of the public service come to believe that it is career suicide to do a good job for the information commissioner, the effectiveness of the office is in grave danger.

If the Prime Minister is refusing to apologize to the public for undermining democracy, will he at least apologize to the information commissioner's staff for any threat to their livelihood?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if any threat has been made by anybody, I hope these people will make specific accusations about it. It is completely unacceptable if their jobs were threatened.

I will see that proper action is taken, if somebody did it, but we want to have the facts, not a statement.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): They did, Mr. Speaker, very specifically, and the Prime Minister thinks he can win an election on those values.

The information commissioner makes other rulings, directly to the Prime Minister's Office, that no other minister, in 17 years, has refused to co-operate with the information commissioner's investigations, and that the Prime Minister's Office may be sending a message to other ministers to cease co-operating with investigations.

Oral Questions

No other minister in 17 years has had such a poor performance as the Prime Minister, undermining democracy, threatening public servants and encouraging cabinet ministers not to co-operate with investigations. If the information commissioner is not telling the—

The Deputy Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a well-known process. We in my office, as in any other office, are following the precedents that have been established since the law was passed by parliament.

• (1420)

Now they want to move even further. They want to have, for example, my schedule. Perhaps I should give it. Perhaps I should not give it. However, I think there is some communication within an administration that belongs to the ministers and the Prime Minister. If the commissioner feels that he has the right to have it, he can apply, we will go to court, and the court will decide.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the information commissioner says that the Prime Minister set the worst record of any minister in 17 years. Looking at this, it is no secret the Prime Minister does not want to show off a recent poll which says Canadians think he is the most arrogant and untrustworthy of all political leaders.

He can restore some small faith to Canadians if he would admit that the \$25 billion he ripped out of the health care system went to cover the \$21 billion that he wasted in HRD. Will he admit that?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is all over the map. We decided to give good government to Canadian people. I have been a member of parliament since 1963 and I have always done my job in the proper way.

I always come to the House of Commons. I always reply to questions asked of me. I am always talking to the press. I have been the same and I am still the same. However, when the Leader of the Opposition makes accusations he should make accusations that are precise and not make big statements like that. That is why his credibility is going down every day.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister wants precise, it is here in the information commissioner's report: the worst record in 17 years.

If he will not admit that the information commissioner was telling the truth, if he will not take responsibility for wasting \$3 billion a year which could have gone to health care, will he at least support the Canadian Alliance position on health care to add a sixth principle to the Canada Health Act that will guarantee funding at

the federal level so that no federal government ever again could rip \$25 billion out of the health care system?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have Bill C-45 before the House today that will guarantee money for the provinces for five years and the opposition is blocking the process to pass the bill.

If the Leader of the Opposition has any authority over his party, he will get up on his feet and say that the bill will be passed this afternoon.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two important reports have been released in the last 24 hours: the report of the information commissioner and the report of the auditor general. These two reports show us just how democratic this government really is.

How can the Prime Minister ask the public to trust him when the information commissioner is making very serious accusations about the attempts by the Prime Minister's own department, the PCO, to control information in order to avoid accountability?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have disclosed more records over the past two years than ever before, thousands and thousands of records.

But the law provides that some records, such as those for internal use within each minister's office, may remain privileged, and this has been respected by all information commissioners over the years. I think that ministers are entitled to speak with their staff without having to release the content of such communications to the public.

If the commissioner feels that the government has acted contrary to the law, he has a recourse, but we are doing exactly what has been done since the law was first passed.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government has been forced to disclose records. It holds the all-time record for RCMP investigations. More investigations have gone on in the riding of this Prime Minister than in the ridings of any of his predecessors.

How does he explain that the PCO, his own department, is challenging almost all the commissioner's powers, that it is ignoring information requests and that senior PCO officials are refusing to answer questions, probably under his orders, even under oath?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member must know that the reason there are investigations is because we have asked for them.

Oral Questions

In the case involving the riding of Saint-Maurice now before the courts, it was my office that called the police to inform them that there seemed to be some abuses.

The fact of the matter is that we have tabled thousands and thousands of documents and our present information policy is the one that has been around since 1979.

I repeat that there are records and communications that must remain privy to the government.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the PM has a short memory.

In the Placeteco affair, his government attempted to conceal all of the facts and it was the Bloc Québécois which demanded an investigation.

The PM can give all the fine speeches he wants. Let him stand up and tell the public what his explanation is for the statement by the information commissioner, referring to him and his cabinet, that this was the first time in close to 17 years a minister has refused to co-operate in an investigation by the information commissioner. He is the one the commissioner is referring to.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I shall repeat again what I have already said.

Under the law, there are certain documents which are privileged information for the administration of a government, a minister's office or the Prime Minister's Office. There are others that are privileged information for MPs. There are certain things that belong to MPs, that relate to the operation of their offices. They do not want everyone seeing what goes on within their offices. The same goes for everyone.

I am entitled to speak with my staff and my ministers and to keep information just for myself. This is normal, and there have never been as many documents made public as there were in 1999 and 2000.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, Bloc Québécois): Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad turn of events.

Is it not sad to see that the key Liberal value used by this government as its mandate comes to an end is the control of information and thus of democracy? Is this not sad?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is focussing on just one part of the report. The commissioner also says that he congratulates certain organizations for their excellent co-operation.

The problem of concern to me is that they want to have access to everything that goes on in my office.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: In your riding.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: No, no. I believe I am entitled to communicate with the people who work with me without having to make public all the documents and all the conversations.

This is how a government is run. MPs do the same. They would be the first ones to complain if we went to see what goes on their offices every day.

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general gives the government a failing grade in meeting its obligation for aboriginal health. Higher infant mortality, lower life expectancy and chronic disease are rampant. Suicide rates are astronomical.

Why has the government ignored 65% of the auditor general's recommendations from three years ago for meeting its health obligations to aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years the health status among the aboriginal population has improved, with reduced infant mortality and longer life expectancy, which is not to say there is not a great deal more to do.

We are grateful for the recommendations the auditor general has made in his most recent report. We take encouragement from the fact that the auditor general has pointed out that we have made progress since his recommendations in 1997. There remains more work to do and we are committed to doing it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the health minister is so grateful for the auditor general's recommendations, why has he ignored 65% of them?

In 1994 Canadians were horrified to learn of the desperate conditions at Davis Inlet, particularly substance abuse and suicide among youth. The government promised urgent assistance, relocation and improved living conditions.

Six years later the suffering continues. The government's failure to address the underlying problems leaves the residents of that community at grave risk. Is the government prepared to sacrifice another generation of aboriginal youth?

• (1430)

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the member that we have been working very closely with community members of Davis Inlet.

We are in the process now of moving a whole community, which takes a significant amount of time, effort and planning. We are on track to move a community out of a very desperate situation into a brand new place to live with brand new housing, sewer and water, all the different amenities people in Canada take for granted.

Oral Questions

I hope that will be what the member is expecting, because that is what the aboriginal people in Labrador and the Innu are expecting.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, the report of the auditor general revealed today a growing pattern of deals made in secret by the government, whether they have to do with specs that are changed or offices in Sydney or whether they have to do with approvals for HRDC grants that are given directly by the minister in the riding of the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

May I ask the Prime Minister one specific question about a deal made in private? Why was the \$100 million expenditure on Downsview kept from parliament?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for Canada Lands, the creation of that corporation was according to the rules on creating crown corporations.

That corporation will report to parliament through an annual report of Canada Lands. That report will be available to the House committees. Therefore all parliamentarians can question the officials on the operation of that corporation. Everything is in the open.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says everything is fine. He followed the rules he wrote. The rules he wrote said he could hide a \$100 million expenditure from the House of Commons but he would let parliament look at it after the money was gone. That is perverse and that is wrong.

Will the Prime Minister of Canada undertake now first to change those rules his minister hides behind and, second, to stop this pattern of secret deals that betray the public interest of Canada?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Lands was built under an act of the Parliament of Canada. This corporation is obliged to report to the House of Commons in an annual report, as the minister said.

This is all according to the law passed by parliament. If the hon. member does not want to have a crown corporation of this type, he should say so.

We think that Canada Lands is a good operation at arm's length from the government, so there will be a minimum of intervention in its operation.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government is trying desperately to look good on all kinds of fronts.

The HRD minister has assured Canadians time and time again that there were very few grant overpayments at HRD. The auditor general disagrees with that. Only 76% of the more than 17,000 active files, that is, less than one-half of 1%, were subjected to

departmental review. That one-half of 1% generated 11 police probes.

Why did the minister avoid the other 16,900-odd files? Were there not enough RCMP officers to go around for the investigation?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by reading from the news release of the auditor general wherein he wrote:

Longstanding and widespread problems finally being addressed—Sustained effort is required.

As I have said on a number of occasions, the administration of grants and contributions in my department was unacceptable. That is why we implemented a corrective action plan for which today the auditor general has given unqualified support. He asked us to sustain our effort, and I will commit to the House that indeed we will.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is finally being addressed. They have been in government seven years. I can understand they would get the itch to do it right. The auditor general also said:

We note, however, that HRDC's review of 76 sampled files was not sufficient to determine whether all 17,000 active files fully met program requirements.

That is a heck of a shortfall. How can the minister defend ignoring 99.5% of all those files?

• (1435)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear that the hon. member opposite has never, in all these months, taken the time to look at our corrective action plan.

The first thing that we said we would do was review our active files, because of course that gives us the opportunity to correct them now. In that action plan we also commit to reviewing our dormant files and we are engaged in a process with PricewaterhouseCoopers to do just that.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general informed us this morning of two serious problems in CIDA's awarding of a contract to Transélec, in Louiseville. This company now belongs to the Prime Minister's good friend, Claude Gauthier, who also owns Placeteco, which received funding worth \$1.2 million and is under investigation. This is the first problem.

How can the Minister for International Cooperation justify the choice of Transélec in the prequalification stage, when it did not meet the basic criterion of 51% Canadian ownership.

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the pre-qualification stage the officials sent

Oral Questions

to the, minister a list of seven companies, one of which was Transélec. This was under the old system before a competitive system was established, which we changed after the previous government.

This company won the competitive bid with 30% under. It has finished the program without any problem whatsoever.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is unconvincing, but there is a second problem. The auditor general tells us that Transélec did not even get a qualifying grade on CIDA's evaluation grid. How does the minister explain the Prime Minister's friend getting the contract?

[*English*]

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the member is not listening. The memo that went to the minister concerning the pre-qualified companies included seven companies. Transélec was one of those seven. Three companies were selected to go to bidding.

This was under the old system when these things went to the minister. That is no longer the system. We have changed that system, because we now have a transparent and open system in CIDA.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, according to today's auditor general's report, Transélec, the company run by the Prime Minister's friend and campaign contributor, did not qualify for the \$6.3 million CIDA contract awarded to it in 1997.

Not only did it not meet the minimum score to apply, it was not even Canadian owned during the pre-qualification phase. Yet that did not stop the Prime Minister bending every rule in the book to benefit his friends.

Why does the Prime Minister not just admit that the auditor general has caught him red handed using public funds to favour his Liberal friends?

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegation is totally irresponsible. First, CIDA's practice is to hire professional auditing accounting firms to ensure compliance with professional decision standards.

In this case CIDA accepted the formal declaration by the proponent that the Canadian ownership requirement was met, with the declaration confirmed by a recognized reputable Canadian accounting firm. The allegations are totally erroneous.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, personally I think it is terrible that the Prime Minister's

career has to end this way. For over a year the Prime Minister has attended his cronyism as business as usual.

According to the auditor general the PM has broken every rule in the book in handing out this \$6.3 million contract to his friend. How does the Prime Minister defend this obvious abuse of taxpayer money simply to reward his friends?

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that the member tries to accuse the Prime Minister directly is absolutely despicable.

This company was 30% below the bid. It finished this job and we saved \$2.5 million as a result.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are still reeling from the report tabled by the information commissioner, which states that PCO is challenging his power to require witnesses to appear and to answer his questions.

• (1440)

This behaviour by PCO constitutes an attack on the very foundations of parliamentary democracy. It is yet more proof of this government's arrogance.

What explanation can the Prime Minister give the House for such a flagrant lack of respect for parliament's decisions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have here a portion of the report that talks about PCO, which comes under my responsibility. I am quoting from page 15:

[*English*]

—the Privy Council Office deserve a special mention and genuine praise for their accomplishments. . . (The Privy Council Office) devoted the energy and resources necessary to clear up a significant backlog of late cases and establish procedures and practices to prevent the delay problems of the past from returning.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is free to read quotations that show him in a good light, but there are also quotations that cast a shadow over PCO, and there is no getting around that.

We are really reaching the bottom of the barrel when, because of government paranoia, senior officials are driven to break the law rather than provide the information required by the commissioner.

How can the government justify such contempt, not just for the commissioner himself, who was appointed by parliament, I need hardly point out, but also for the law?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has just made a very serious accusation when he says that officials are breaking the law.

An hon. member: That is what it says in the report.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: If he has proof, it is his responsibility to give names and circumstances, rather than make groundless accusations.

That is all they know how to do: make accusations and then hide.

An hon. member: It is in the report.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

* * *

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today the auditor general confirmed the HRDC minister has been grossly exaggerating, even fabricating, the jobs supposedly created from her free-spending ways. I quote:

Project officers did not properly monitor the number of jobs created.

I quote again:

HRDC counted all the jobs created by a project, regardless of the extent of its contributions toward the project's total cost.

Why does the minister insult Canadians with pretend numbers when she knows she cannot back them up with facts?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed the auditor general agreed that jobs had been created. There is a question over how many and he is right that we did not document appropriately the data that would support the numbers employed.

Having said that, the auditor general recognizes that last spring we implemented a program to review all our programs to ensure that we have appropriate outcomes identified and the measures to confirm those outcomes. That work will be done and implemented by next spring.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that if we are spending \$3 billion a year something would be created. The problem is that the minister justifies her reckless spending by saying jobs are being created, and yet the auditor general says she has no basis on which to make those allegations.

The records are not being kept. There are jobs being claimed for which other people are paying. The minister is not coming clean with Canadians. Why is she exaggerating job figures when she knows very well that she cannot back them up with the facts available?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite we believe that there is a role for government to play in ensuring that Canadians have the opportunity to work.

As I have said, we are engaged as we speak in a complete review of all of our programs to ensure that we know the appropriate outcomes and that we have the appropriate tools to measure those outcomes.

The auditor general has given us his complete confidence in the application of the program and we will ensure that the job is done.

* * *

[Translation]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House, the President of Treasury Board stated that it has always been government policy to support the role of the information commissioner.

How can the Prime Minister justify such a statement when the information commissioner says in his report that the Minister of Justice chose not to defend the Access to Information Act when its constitutionality was challenged in the courts by Privy Council?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to that specific situation, everyone in the House should know that case involved a private litigant who decided to contest the constitutionality of a section of the Access to Information Act.

I would point out to the hon. member that the information commissioner ultimately concluded that the absence of the attorney general at that stage of the proceedings was perhaps the better approach.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a letter from Ontario environment minister Mr. Newman to Minister Anderson, Ontario has still not—

The Deputy Speaker: I assume the hon. member is referring to the hon. Minister of the Environment, and I know she will want to do that.

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, in a letter from the Ontario environment minister to the federal Minister of the Environment, Ontario still has not officially supported the Canadian commitment for an emission cap in the transboundary region.

Oral Questions

Would the minister tell the House what he intends to do with the Ontario coal burning power plants to make sure they achieve that cap since it is now part of the Canadian commitment to the United States?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the draft agreement calls for a 50% reduction of nitrous oxide emissions from Canadian coal powered plants in Ontario, and a 70% reduction of nitrous oxide emissions from American plants during the smog season, May through September.

I have some doubt, and at this point I cannot say exactly what Ontario will do, as there is some ambiguity in its positions, but I can assure the hon. member that we expect the Ontario government to co-operate with the coal powered plants it owns. If it does not, federal legislation will be used to make sure we meet those targets.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the week after David Dingwall was appointed a minister of the crown, he said "I want the government to rent space in the building at 338 Charlotte Street".

Other competitors were denied the opportunity to bid because the contract was drawn so narrowly. We paid \$200,000 a year more in rent than what was an adequate rent. It turned out after all that we did not even need the space so we let it to someone else.

Why is it that every time the auditor general reports, we get these smelly contracts which seem to produce public money for private gangs?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first concerning the bidding process, my department had an internal audit and the matter was dealt with. As a matter of fact, in the internal audit concerning that space, the auditor general cited that ACOA had potential partners but that those partners did not come through, and that was the problem. Now the government of Nova Scotia is renting most of the space.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I like these internal audits. They lead to places.

Let me give another example. The Canada Communication Group was privatized in 1997. It is now owned by St. Joseph Corporation. The auditor general told us in 1997 that it was given a privileged advance arrangement, in other words a sweetheart deal, because it could go five years in business with no competitive bidding.

What is the connection between privileged advance arrangements and the fact that in the last two years CCG and St. Joseph donated \$30,000 to the Liberal Party?

The Deputy Speaker: I think that question is out of order as it does not appear to relate directly to the competence of the government.

The first part of the question concerning the contract with the crown corporation may be in order and the hon. Minister of Public Works may choose to answer that part of it.

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, St. Joseph printing, like any other printing company, had to bid for the contract. It was an open process and therefore the company had no sweet deal. As a matter of fact it complained that we were too hard on it.

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the minister back to the deal cut in October of 1995 among ACOA, Public Works and the Liberal government of Nova Scotia, all of whom leased the space in Sydney at 30% more than the market rate from a golfing buddy of the Prime Minister.

• (1450)

The key provincial Cape Breton cabinet minister at the time is today the minister of ACOA. Why would the government enter into such a dubious deal? Is this the kind of questionable conduct we can expect from the new minister?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, during that time my department had an internal audit on that matter and all the questions were dealt with. As a matter of fact the auditor general in his report quoted the internal audit.

The question of the transparency was dealt with and everything was done according to treasury board policy.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Cape Breton, Liberal values mean contracts offered to golf buddies of the Prime Minister: a friend under RCMP investigation who got ministerial help arranging a sole source contract from ACOA that saw hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on renting empty offices. These are the values laid out in the auditor general's report today.

Will the new unelected minister for ACOA be responding to these documented abuses before Canadians are forced to go to the polls?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can continue on and repeat the same thing. Everything was in order. Everything was done according to the rules. The department had at that time an internal audit and confirmed that everything was done according to

Oral Questions

the rules in terms of space. The partners for that space did not come through and ACOA was able to rent the extra space to the Government of Nova Scotia.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Internal e-mails to NRCan show that the heritage minister intervened on behalf of a company to permit them to manufacture less energy efficient refrigerators for 18 months beyond the current regulation in the guise of protecting jobs.

Yet Camco's own internal documents, which I have here, show that it will be sourcing those same refrigerators from the United States 18 months from now anyway. This is a very precarious precedent for industries and companies who invest in environmental technology due to governmental regulations.

The minister is not concerned about jobs in Alberta for which she makes regulations. Why are jobs in Hamilton more important than jobs in Alberta?

Mr. Benoît Serré (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government must strike a balance between our environmental goals and job creation and economic development. We believe it is very important to save 300 jobs for Canadians.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general has identified many inconsistent and unfair practices in dealing with Canada's airports. Toronto gets a \$185 million rent reduction right out of the blue, while documents from the ministry of transport show that Moncton airport will be in a deficit position for 20 years.

Why does the minister have a special deal for the airport in his own area and nothing for anybody else? Why the double standard? Why the special treatment?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the hon. member that the devolution of Canada's airports was one of the most successful programs initiated by the government.

It is a program that has improved quality, has put management into the hands of local entrepreneurs, has responded to the needs of local communities and has given the kind of investment that the public sector would have had to pay for but is now being paid for by users.

The regime that has been put into effect is an accountable one and one that has had uniform application across the country. It has been tough in negotiating some of these deals because airports have

not liked the fact that we have to be consistent. This has been consistent.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Veterans Affairs, who is also the minister responsible for western economic diversification and for francophonie.

The Commissioner of Official Languages has just released her 1999-2000 annual report. In connection with economic development, the commissioner acknowledges the efforts of Western Economic Diversification in helping to bolster linguistic duality and the vitality of francophone communities outside Quebec.

Would the secretary of state share with us how his department obtained such results?

• (1455)

Hon. Ronald J. Duhamel (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, allow me to thank the commissioner for her report.

We followed a very simple formula. We went out into the francophone communities and listened to the people. We asked them what their priorities were. We were able to provide them with some funding, modest amounts, yet important.

The women and men in those communities went ahead and implemented their plans, with highly successful outcomes.

We shall continue with the same approach.

* * *

[English]

GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the information commissioner has been bullied by the government but fortunately he has not bowed out. The auditor general is being swept aside as if his reports were not important, but they are. We hear from HRDC about the thousands of grant applications that have been handled incompetently, with money being used questionably. We see from the auditor general on the CIDA grants that a \$6.3 million contract was approved contrary to the rules.

Is there nothing that this Prime Minister will not do to help his friends?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at this moment that when a person is in public administration all sorts of problems can occur.

Because the Leader of the Opposition was a senior minister from Alberta, I would like to refer to what the report of the auditor

general of Alberta said specifically about human resources. It showed that human resources programs were always a challenge for any government.

I am sure the government of Alberta appreciates the report issued last week by the auditor general on the human resources and employment departments.

In looking at the departments' skills development program, the auditor found evidence of significant overpayments. He also found that the controls within the departments were not adequate to ensure proper record keeping—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm.

* * *

[Translation]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have seen it in question after question. The government has decided to attack the public's right to information.

The commissioner even told us in his report that the career advancement of his employees was threatened in no uncertain terms.

Will the Minister of Justice tell us whether she intends to launch an investigation in response to these serious accusations by the information commissioner?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegations made by the information commissioner are very serious. I would presume that if he has evidence to back up those allegations he will be making that available to me. I would ask that he make that available to me, to the President of the Treasury Board and to others so that we can follow up on the information he has.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the unelected minister for Nova Scotia announced funds for the homeless in the Halifax-Dartmouth area. This is the same announcement, of the same money, the government made over eight months ago.

It is starting to get cold out and in Canada homeless people die on the streets every winter. In Halifax-Dartmouth we need youth and women's shelters. We need quality affordable housing now.

Why has the government held up funds for over eight months? Was it so that the unelected senator could re-announce the money on the eve of an election? Why are the Liberals playing pre-election politics with the lives of the homeless?

Oral Questions

Hon. Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to tell the hon. member that our member will be voted in soon and he will be in the House very soon.

Having said that, I want to inform the hon. member that the group in Halifax and the community groups have been meeting. Their community plan is completed. I signed off last week, which means that funding will be given to communities in Nova Scotia immediately.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, the decision on the future of Manitoba's land forces was supposed to be made months ago. The military has tabled a business case which has now been confirmed by a third party business case from KPMG as being the right decision.

Why will the Minister of National Defence not accept the recommendations of his own military and make this decision now, before the election is called?

• (1500)

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is also another consultant's report that has come up with some different views on the matter. It is a credible consultant. I and the department are examining that report to reconcile the different points of view.

As soon as we do that we will make a decision that will be in the interests of the land forces and the regiment to help ensure that their operational effectiveness is best met and that we bear in mind the quality of life of our soldiers and their families.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Ivan Grose (Oshawa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows I do not often rise on a government question of this sort, but this one has a personal interest. As well, it passes my validity test.

Some people are saying that prison conditions are too soft. I would suggest to them that they might try it for a day or so. What assurance can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General give that prisoners are not living a life of luxury?

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have visited prisons across Canada and I can tell the House first-hand that this government is committed to incarcerating offenders and doing justice in Canada. More to the point, unlike the opposition members who do not want

Government Orders

to work with the government in this very important area, we not only rehabilitate but punish offenders in the most effective way.

Instead of caterwauling away, they should be congratulating Correctional Service Canada.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Deputy Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Lord Russell Johnston, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been further consultations among all parties in the House pursuant to an issue I raised earlier this morning.

• (1505)

I believe you would now find unanimous consent for the passage of the following motion without debate. It is the same motion that I read into the record today. I move:

That, at the ordinary time of daily adjournment on Tuesday, October 17, 2000, no proceedings pursuant to Standing Order 38 shall be taken up and that the House shall continue to sit for the purpose of considering of a motion "That this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Ethiopia and Eritrea";

That, during the debate on the said motion, Members may speak for no more than twenty minutes, with a ten minute question and comment period, provided that two members may divide one speaking period;

That, during the debate on the said motion, the Chair shall not receive any dilatory motions, quorum calls or requests for unanimous consent to propose any motions; and

That, at 10.00 p.m. or when no Member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Does the House give its unanimous consent for the government House leader to present the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation for the following motion which I would like to share with the House as well. I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following:

That, on Wednesday, October 18, 2000, the House shall not proceed to private members' business nor shall it adjourn until the Minister of Finance and a spokesman for each of the opposition parties has spoken in debate on a motion: That this House support the economic policies of the government provided that the ordinary time of daily adjournment may be adjusted by the Chair if required for the purposes of this order and to permit a full hour of private members' business that day; and: That, on Thursday, October 19, 2000, the House shall sit at 9.00 a.m. and shall consider private members' business from 9.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m., provided that any division requested thereon shall be deferred until immediately after the division to be held on a motion to concur in a notice of Ways and Means, to be proposed as the first government order considered after 3.00 p.m. that day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Does the House give its consent for the government House leader to present the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

DEFENCE PRODUCTION ACT

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.) moved that Bill S-25, an act to amend the Defence Production Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking members of all parties for their co-operation with respect to this very important bill.

It is very important for two reasons. First, it will facilitate a solution with the United States with respect to ITAR, but more importantly still, it will ensure the implementation in Canada of an effective control system that will support our interests and those of the Americans in matters of security.

The environment is changing. New threats to security, such as intranational conflicts, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and international terrorism, have appeared.

• (1510)

[English]

These new challenges are causing western countries, including Canada, to look at their defence needs in new ways. In the U.S. the changed perception of this threat, especially in congress, has led to an increased focus on domestic security issues. As a global response to this increased risk of diversion, the U.S. tightened up its export control over sensitive goods and technology.

Government Orders

Canada was sideswiped by these broad concerns of new perceived security threats when the U.S. department of state amended the Canadian exemption provisions under ITAR. Many of the preferential elements that had previously been available to Canadian firms were removed and the definition of who could take advantage of Canadian exemptions was also narrowed considerably.

This had major repercussions for Canada's industrial sector, in particular, defence, aerospace and satellite industries. The result of this action did, however, provide Canada and the U.S. with a convenient and timely opportunity to pursue extensive discussions on export controls of sensitive goods.

[*Translation*]

Among other things, the amendments have eliminated the earlier preferential status of Canadian companies and imposed new permit requirements for a vast range of goods and technologies. The amendments have also tightened up the definition of who can enjoy a Canadian exemption.

For our industry, the amendments add administrative formalities, costs and significant delays that mean lost business opportunities.

[*English*]

This is why we need this bill. Canada must establish appropriate safeguards to assure both ourselves and our U.S. defence partners that certain controlled goods and technology, as set out in Canada's exports control list, are available to only authorized individuals and companies. We need such assurances not only to protect certain controlled goods and associated technology of the North American defence, aerospace and satellite infrastructure, but also to encourage trade and improve Canada's national economic stability.

Putting these safeguards in place will be an important step toward reinstating the ITAR exemption for Canadian firms, allowing again for licence free cross-border transfer of most U.S. origin controlled goods and technology.

A big part of this new system of safeguards is the proposed controlled goods registration program. This Canadian made registration system will be housed within my department and will ensure effective control of access to and the transfer within Canada of controlled goods and technology.

Very briefly, the registration system will work as follows. Companies or individuals that wish to be registered or companies that wish to have a temporary worker or visitor exempt from registration must apply directly to the minister. Registration will authorize the registered company's directors, officers and employees to access controlled goods provided they are screened by the company. If the application is approved it will be up to the company to ensure ongoing compliance with the new regulations and to establish a compliance system that can be inspected.

Companies will also be required to submit reports to the Department of Public Works and Government Services and to submit to periodic inspection by my department. As minister, I will have the power to deny, suspend, amend or revoke registration and exemptions on the basis of a security assessment. I will also have the authority to request necessary information from applicants for registration or exemption.

The bottom line is that when the bill becomes law, the transfer of controlled goods in Canada may occur only between registered persons and certain individuals or classes of individuals who may be exempt from registration. U.S. visitors who are already registered with the U.S. government are an example of the type of individual that could be exempted.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

As I have just mentioned, the bill will create a new part 3 in the Defence Production Act, providing for appropriate sanctions, including imprisonment, for people and companies contravening the act.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I thank all colleagues for helping to give this important bill speedy passage. It will protect the security of our North American defence system and in the meantime will allow the defence sector to continue to do business with its defence partners in the U.S.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to enter debate on the particular bill. I am very happy with the hon. member opposite who just outlined some of the provisions of the bill. I will go into the bill in a little more detail and perhaps suggest exactly its purpose and why it is needed in Canada today.

At the outset I assure the minister that we are here to support the bill. Although we have some questions about it, essentially we will support it.

Bill S-25 amends the Defence Production Act, as already indicated, to establish a new regulatory system which will regulate access by Canadian defence industries to certain controls, military goods or goods with military application. The bill reflects a new Canada-U.S. agreement on co-ordinated legislative measures to strengthen our control over trade in defence related goods and technologies.

The proposed regulatory regime will be administered by the minister of public works from whom we have just heard. It will ensure effective controls to have access to and the transfer within Canada of controlled goods and technologies. Under the proposed system, persons would have to be registered by the minister or be exempt from registration under the regulations to have access to such goods.

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I am sure some people listening to the debate will ask why we need the bill. On April 12, 1999, the United States state department amended the international traffic and arms regulations and removed many of the preferential elements in the Canadian exemptions contained in part 126.5 of ITAR. The amendments reduce the scope of the Canadian exemptions by imposing licensing requirements on a broad range of goods and technologies that had been licence free before April.

In addition, the U.S. narrowed the definition of a Canadian citizen and ruled that Canadians with dual citizenship could no longer take advantage of the Canadian exemptions. These amendments and the stricter interpretation of a Canadian citizen have significantly and adversely affected access to U.S. goods and technology, thereby affecting the competitiveness of the Canadian defence, aerospace and satellite sectors.

It has impacted these sectors very significantly in that this is a major part of the Canadian economy. There is a lot of trade between Canada and the United States in these sectors. It is essential that this part be secured because national security is at issue to a large degree.

The United States had reason to take action on April 12 of last year, despite the claim of the Minister of Foreign Affairs that decreasing the export of Canadian military related goods and materials controlled unrestricted defence related technology, which was being sent by private companies in Canada to places where it should not have been sent.

This was not some kind of willy-nilly action by the United States. It had a basis in fact. The hon. senator observed certain things in the action by the United States. For example, he had heard the suggestion that components of our frigate program found their way to the People's Liberation Army of China.

Additionally there was no provision under Canadian law to prevent controlled unrestricted technology, including data and other information, from being transferred between civilian companies and others within Canada. That was the instigator, the lever that caused the Americans to question whether they could trust Canadians to maintain secrecy and to assure national security both in Canada and the United States.

• (1520)

This state of affairs and insecurity in our defence production sector caused grave concerns. Our partner, the United States, said that it wanted to protect its security. If we would not do it, the Americans would protect theirs. The U.S. has threatened to relieve Canada and did so.

There was a reason why the Americans did this. The hon. minister mentioned just a moment ago that it gave us the opportunity to do something. The interesting comment I would like to make is that the Liberal government, over and over again, needs to be prodded to do something meaningful.

A government that is concerned about governing the country and its security would take and have the necessary precautions to ensure the security of the nation and ensure that the secrets of our technology and such intimate information would not be made available to anybody.

There was a good reason for the Americans to do this. I am very happy the government has now taken a step. I am also sad to say that it took an outside country to draw attention to a weakness that existed in our country.

On October 8, 1999, a Canada-U.S. agreement in principle was announced, recognizing a shared commitment of both governments to protect against illegal transfers or retransfers of controlled goods and technology from North America and to maintain a strong, integrated North American defence and industrial base. The U.S. provided assurance that it was prepared to reinstate many Canadian exemptions and enhance others in tandem with Canada's harmonizing controls in the USML items within Canada and introducing appropriate legal sanctions for infractions.

Is it not interesting that our government did not have the initiative or the courage to do the things it is now threatened with because it missed the point? As part of the agreement Canada has put forward new legislation, which is before us today. It will put forward new regulatory provisions that will strengthen Canadian defence export controls as a result of these changes. The Canadian export council list will control the same defence goods and technologies as identified in the U.S. munitions list.

The United States concurred with Canadian legislative and regulatory changes. It intends to revise its defence trade control regulations to reinstate most of the pre-April 1999 Canadian exemptions, allowing for licence free transfer for most U.S. origin unclassified defence goods and technology.

The United States confirmed its intent to expand the exemption to allow for licensed access to such U.S. origin exports by Canadian citizens, including Canadian dual nationals and Canadian permanent residents. The United States also intends to expand the prior exemptions to permit the export without licence of certain additional defence goods and technical data.

If this goes ahead we can be reasonably assured that we will now have the same kind of reciprocal relationship that we had before. Perhaps it will be even a little smoother than it was. That is good.

It is interesting that the bill originated in the Senate. Why did it not come from the government? It should have come from the Prime Minister's party because it should have been done at that level.

Why then is the legislation required? The bill is required to reinstate special exemption for Canadian firms under the U.S. ITAR so that permits for the export of defence goods and services are not required. Without special exemption Canadian companies

are hampered from competing. An estimated \$1 billion of the \$5 billion business done by high technology, aerospace and other defence industry companies located in Canada have been potentially affected by the U.S. regulatory changes.

The bill will ensure a continued access to U.S. defence market and related technology. The Canadian defence industry stated that the Canadian exemption would be largely reinstated if there was evidence that three major issues were being addressed: first, the tightening up of our own export controls; second, the harmonization of the Canadian export control list with the American counterpart, which the joint agreement on October 8 states will be the case; and, third, the implementation of a registration system. All three elements would come into play with the passage of the legislation.

• (1525)

We are on good ground at this point in time to ensure there will be a smooth transition. The defence industry will be well served with this legislation.

According to the government the legislation is further required so that Canada establishes appropriate safeguards. It is not just good enough to make the statements, but safeguards are required to assure both ourselves and our U.S. defence partners that the controlled goods and technologies as set out in the Canada export control list are available only to authorized individuals and companies.

We need such assurance not only to protect certain controlled goods and associate technology of North American defence aerospace and satellite infrastructure but also to encourage trade and improve Canada's national economic stability. Since about 85% of our export market is with the Americans to the south, it is a very good idea to have good relations with them. That is precisely what is being set out.

We have the provisions of the bill pretty clearly in mind, but some other questions need to be addressed. Will the new regulations be costly to Canadian industries? The minister has already alluded to the fact that it will cost them something. The estimate is between \$2.5 million to \$3 million annually, but the cost to industry would be quite minor because a large percentage of the companies that have control of goods are already in the government's classified industrial security program. Thus government has already screened a number of their employees.

Under this program, however, industry would have to appoint a designated official to ensure that controlled goods are properly controlled within companies. That would be the main cost to industry. We do not know exactly what the additional cost will be.

Does the Access to Information Act apply to the provisions of the bill and to the Defence Production Act as a whole? The answer

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is yes. However, so too do the protections for commercially confidential information, as well as the possibility of applying coverage for national security purposes. That is important to recognize, but it places a tremendous onus on the minister and his personnel to be sure the national security is preserved.

We have to admit that although this part of the legislation is necessary and essential and although we will support it, the integrity, honesty, stability and accountability of the government and its officials will be very significant and important in terms of making the legislation provide for the security we want in Canada.

Will the regulations in question be printed in *The Canada Gazette* and therefore open to parliamentary review and comment? This is an interesting question because, as we heard this morning, much of this is done in secret behind closed doors. Because cabinet has the authority to make regulations under this act, it can make amendments to these regulations without making them transparent.

According to the Department of Justice the regulations to be made under the new part 2 of the act would have to be published in the ordinary way. It would require pre-publication in part I of *The Canada Gazette* to allow for comment and consultation and to take views of affected parties into consideration for revision of the proposed regulations. That would then be followed by publication of the ultimate regulations in part II of *The Canada Gazette*. The Department of Justice says that they will be available. Then the defence industry and the public will know that these are the regulations that have to be met.

Members in the committee proceedings in the Senate requested that the minister undertake to deposit the regulations with the committee once a year. The minister is on record as saying that he had no problem with the request. The minister spoke to the bill just before I rose to speak. We suspect he will do exactly that. If we become the government, we would undertake to do the very same.

Regulations respecting ongoing compliance would allow the department to conduct inspections and gather information on those registered. Would this give the government unreasonable access to information which could be used in a manner that would violate privacy? It is very easy to assume that could be the case. What is the assurance that the information gathered when these inspectors are in the highly secure industries will not be used by the government for other purposes?

• (1530)

Registration will authorize the registered company's directors, officers and employees to access controlled goods provided they are screened by the company. If an application is approved, it will be their responsibility to ensure ongoing compliance with the new regulations and to establish their compliance so it can be inspected.

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Companies will also be required to submit reports to the Department of Public Works and Government Services and to submit to periodic inspections by the department.

Specifically, then, the department officials responded this way. The intent, and I draw the attention of the House to the word intent, of using administrative inspection is to enable the inspector to look at the security systems in place and suggest alternatives that will be helpful, which is the normal practice of inspectors and other regimes throughout the government. The intention is not to have the inspectors do anything in connection with a criminal search.

If the inspector found something in the course of an ordinary administration inspection that he believed was appropriate for a criminal investigation, the inspector would have to present himself in the ordinary way to obtain a search warrant. Thus, he would have to withdraw from the premises and then, on reasonable and probable grounds, assert evidence sufficient to obtain a search warrant under the criminal code. That is absolutely critical and essential.

The difficulty will be that there is a judgment factor involved here and the person doing the inspection will have to make that kind of decision. The incumbent will have to be very careful and aware of what the security requirements are, what the regulations are and what criminal offences could be perpetrated by certain individuals or by certain companies.

In summary, the main provision in Bill S-25 is clause 5, which would add a series of new provisions to the Defence Production Act in the form of new parts 2 and 3 of the act.

The new part 2 of the act proposed in clause 5 of the bill would provide for the control of access to certain defence related goods. Essentially, part 2 would restrict access to such goods to those persons who were registered by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services or who were exempt from such registration.

Pursuant to the new section 35, the controlled goods subject to the proposed regime would be set out in a new schedule to the act which would be added to clause 7 of the bill.

By virtue of new section 36, the new regime would not apply to most public sector employees in Canada, when acting in good faith, in the course of their employment duties or to any member of a class of persons to be prescribed in the regulations.

New section 37 would make it an offence for a non-registered and non-exempt person to knowingly examine or possess controlled goods or to transfer controlled goods to another person. This section would also make it an offence for any registered or exempt person to knowingly transfer a controlled good to or permit the examination of such a good by a non-registered and non-exempt

person. The section would clarify that transfer would mean to dispose or disclose the contents of a controlled good in any manner.

Section 37 would also clarify that a person's registration extends to authorized corporate officers and directors as well as authorized employees of the registered person.

New section 38 of the act would provide for a scheme of registration of persons by the minister for access to controlled goods. The minister would furnish registered persons with a certificate. Registration and renewal of registration would be subject to conditions to be prescribed in regulations made under the act in addition to those that the minister considered appropriate.

Moreover, the minister would be able to request any information from applicants for registration which the minister deemed necessary. The minister would be able to deny any application for registration or suspend, amend or revoke a registration on the basis of a security assessment to be prescribed in the regulations. We can see the significance of the minister's role in this operation.

New sections 39 and 39.1 would provide for a system of ministerial exemptions for individuals or classes of individuals.

Under new section 40, registered persons would be required to provide the minister with information, as prescribed by the regulations.

New section 41 would provide for the designation of inspectors to ensure compliance with the proposed rules.

● (1535)

New section 42 would give such inspectors the power to enter and to inspect any place; to require the attendance of and question any person; to require any person to produce for inspection a document; to detain or remove any controlled goods until satisfied that it was in compliance with the requirements of the act and to regulations; and to require any individual in charge of a place that is the subject of an inspection to take any measures that the inspector considers appropriate. While exercising the authority under this new part, inspectors could be accompanied by another person.

New section 43 would provide the governor in council with authority to make regulations for carrying out the purposes of the provisions of this new act including: prescribing classes of persons to whom the new restricted access regime to be established by the proposed new part 2 of the act would not apply; prescribing procedures for authorizing employees, corporate directors and officers of registered persons to have access to controlled goods; prescribing various matters pertaining to registrations and exemptions under this proposed new part. This would include: eligibility conditions applications procedures; the factors to be considered by the minister in deciding on registrations or exemptions; the

minister's power to renew, suspend, amend or revoke registrations or exemptions and make regulations of conditions of registration or their renewal; conditions of exemptions and their renewal; security assessments; and amending the schedule of controlled goods on the joint recommendation of the minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

This last point is significant. We now have a countervailing balance of one department with another department. It cannot be done unilaterally by one minister alone. That is a wise thing to do.

The proposed new part 3 of the act would create a new offence to cover various acts of obstruction in relation to the inspection and reporting scheme proposed in the act.

New section 44 would make it an offence to: provide false or misleading information; destroy any record or document required to be kept under the act or the regulations; make a false record or document which the act or regulations required to be kept; interfere with anything detained or removed by an inspector; or fail to comply with any reasonable request of an inspector or otherwise obstruct an inspector in the performance of his or her functions.

It is a comprehensive act. There are very significant powers given to the cabinet and to the minister in particular.

Pursuant to new section 45(2), violation of new section 44 and any other provision of the act would be punishable on summary conviction by a fine of up to \$25,000 or imprisonment for up to 12 months or both.

Pursuant to new section 45(1), the punishment for violating new section 37, that is, the access to controlled goods by a non-registered and non-exempt person, would be on summary conviction a fine of up to \$100,000 or imprisonment for up to two years or both, and on an indictment, a fine of up to \$2 million or imprisonment for up to two years or both.

There is now a punishment or a fine that is given to people who violate the provisions of the act. That is a significant impact that gives the minister some power to do things and make it meaningful.

There are two other sections that I would like to look at but I will skip that for now.

I will conclude by saying that while we support the bill and the provisions of the bill, we also recognize that there are some serious questions with regard to the bill.

I appeal to the minister and to all members in the House that something as significant as this, which deals with the national security of a nation, cannot be treated seriously enough. The threat can come from people giving information, technology and access to controlled goods. This could fall into the wrong hands and be used against our nation which would make us less secure.

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I commend the government for doing this. At the same time, the record of this government does not give me the kind of assurance that the minister will be open and accountable for all the things that are in this act. I have some doubt about this because of the results of the last report of the auditor general. I begin to wonder sometimes just exactly how open and how forthcoming this government will be about information like this. I wish it well and I certainly want to give it a try.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-25 amends the Defence Production Act. It indicates in its summary that the Minister of Public Works and Government Services is responsible for administering the new regime, which requires a person to be registered or exempted from registration by the minister to have legal access to these goods.

One's first reaction to the bill is that it might as well have been written in Latin. We need a translation for just about every sentence, because it is not exactly clear.

Sections 26 to 29 are repealed and replaced. These referred to anyone committing an offence and making a false declaration, which carried a \$500 fine. The old act ended at section 34. This one goes to 46, where it indicates rather flatly a list of controlled goods, that is, prohibited firearms and ammunition with a calibre greater than 12.7 mm.

It is moreover stipulated in subclause 37(1) that "No person shall knowingly examine or possess a controlled good or transfer a controlled good to another person". Subclause 37(2) further states, and I quote:

No person registered or exempt from registration shall knowingly transfer a controlled good to or permit the examination of a controlled good by a person who is not registered or exempt from registration.

I shall try to translate these provisions from Latin into plain English.

Then, in subclause 38(3), it is stated that "The minister may deny an application for registration or suspend, amend or revoke a registration on the basis of a security assessment—". The minister may also designate inspectors. In other words, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services has considerable power as far as the import and export of military materiel is concerned. He also has absolute power over the designation and selection of inspectors.

As we know, absolute power without the imposition of regulations or criteria sometimes creates inequalities and opens up the possibility for patronage and for finding jobs for the party faithful.

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That is the weak point of the bill. Is it necessary, in order to accomplish our objectives, to give so much discretionary power to the minister?

Clause 43, under Regulations, states that the governor in council may authorize officers, directors and employees to examine, possess or transfer controlled goods. It seems to be mainly the penalties that are changing. Subclause 45(1) states, and I quote:

Every person who contravenes section 37 is guilty of

(a) an offence punishable on summary conviction and liable to a fine not exceeding \$100,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both; or

(b) an indictable offence and liable to a fine not exceeding \$2,000,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years, or to both.

In short, this is a warning to those thinking of diverting goods from their ultimate destination.

My comments will be very brief. As I already said at the very beginning of my speech, Bill S-25 cannot be praised for its great clarity.

• (1545)

We would have liked the powers of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services to be more clearly defined in relation to those of the Minister of National Defence.

We would also have liked the minister's powers to be a bit more limited, less discretionary and less conducive to unfairness.

Nonetheless, the tightening of controls on the middlemen in the import and export of these arms would seem to us to be appropriate. The penalties for offences become serious, where before they were merely symbolic. I think that this will also be a valid measure that we will approve.

This is important, because importing sophisticated weapons requires that middlemen be above any tampering. In future, however, bills having to do with national defence ought to be much clearer.

Despite these reservations, we are prepared to support in good faith the procedure for rapid passage of this bill, given the particular political circumstances in which we find ourselves.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to address Bill S-25, an act to amend the Defence Production Act. At the outset I would reiterate a point made earlier by a colleague that we have some concern about this bill originating from the other place rather than coming through the House, with its duly elected representatives,

and then moving on to the other place, which is normally the process. That aside, the NDP will be supporting the bill.

I want to give a bit of background information on the bill for the sake of the people watching and listening to this debate. The bill is an attempt to establish a new regime for regulating access to certain controlled military goods or goods with a military application. Persons involved in this kind of work would have to be registered by the minister or be exempt from registration under the regulations in order to have access to such goods.

Bill S-25 seeks to address a situation that emerged when the United States revoked Canada's special exemption from U.S. arms control regulations. The bill reflects a new Canada-U.S. agreement on co-ordinated legislative measures to strengthen control over trade in defence related goods and technologies.

Historically speaking Canada had been exempt from many of the provisions of the U.S. international trade in arms regulations, known as ITAR. Permits for the export of defence goods and services from the U.S. to Canada traditionally have not been required except for a small category of particularly sensitive goods and technologies, including those pertaining to nuclear weapons, strategic delivery systems, nuclear propulsion systems and submarines.

Most defence technology and unclassified technical data from the U.S. could be exchanged freely between the U.S. and Canadian governments and private sectors. As a result, Canadian and U.S. defence industries have operated more or less as a single market since World War II. Many U.S. companies established subsidiaries in Canada. Companies on both sides of the border frequently bid on contracts in the other country.

On April 12, 1999, the U.S. state department made unilateral changes to ITAR that significantly narrowed Canada's exemption from the licensing of U.S. origin defence goods and services. Until that time Canada was the only country granted an exemption under all but 5 of the 19 categories of goods and services covered by ITAR. The changes required Canadian companies to obtain export licences for 11 of 19 categories, effectively ending the special treatment for the Canadian defence industry.

According to the U.S. government the new measures were necessary because of U.S. companies misusing the Canada exemptions and concerns regarding the effectiveness of Canadian export controls. The Canadian government denied that Washington's concerns were justified.

• (1550)

Beyond the procedural impediments, additions to ITAR caused restricted access to technological data based on citizenship. This is a very important one. Let us take note of what was happening here.

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Only personnel holding Canadian or U.S. citizenship to the exclusion of other nationalities could have access to the information or technology in question. The U.S. does not recognize dual citizenship. However, many Canadian high technology firms employ foreign born specialists because of the skill shortages in these areas.

Moreover, our Canadian human rights laws, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would preclude government restrictions on the hiring of such persons purely on the basis of nationality or country of origin. We certainly would have concerns about that restriction being placed on any relationship between the United States and Canada with respect to defence production and the goods and services involved.

On October 8, 1999, a Canada-U.S. agreement in principle was announced. It recognized a shared commitment by both governments to protect against illegal retransfers of controlled goods and technology from North America and to maintain a strong, integrated North American defence industrial base.

The U.S. provided assurance that it was prepared to reinstate many of the Canadian exemptions and enhance others if Canada harmonized its export control list with the U.S. munitions list and if Canada strengthened controls on these items within Canada and introduced appropriate legal sanctions.

In March 2000 cabinet agreed to the establishment of a strengthened transfer and access control system for certain controlled goods and technologies. It directed the Department of Justice to begin drafting the legislative and regulatory framework conditional on a successful conclusion to bilateral negotiations. On June 16, 2000, the two governments resolved any outstanding issues.

Under the new agreement the U.S. agreed to reinstate most of the pre-April 1999 Canadian exemptions on the transfer of most U.S. origin unclassified defence goods to Canadians, including to Canadians of dual nationality and permanent residents with third country nationality.

For its part Canada agreed to establish a new regime that would require persons having access to controlled goods to be registered with Public Works and Government Services or to qualify for an exemption from registration as set out in the regulations. The new access control provisions include significant penalties for breaches.

This is what Bill S-25 is all about. It is a system of regulation and legislation that sets forth conditions to better control the export and re-export of defence goods and technology, particularly those of U.S. origin.

Under this legislation, by virtue of proposed section 36, the new regime would not apply to most Canadian public sector employees when acting in good faith in the course of their employment duties or to any member of a class of persons to be prescribed in the regulations. Proposed section 37 would make it an offence for a

non-registered and non-exempt person to knowingly examine or possess controlled goods or to transfer controlled goods to another person.

I understand that representatives from the affected industries in Canada, in particular the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, have spoken out in favour of quick passage of Bill S-25 and the implementation of a new agreement between the U.S. and Canada to ensure continued Canadian access to the U.S. defence market and related technology.

While I have indicated that we will be supporting the legislation, I want to make it clear that we are supporting the legislation because we recognize that certain aspects of defence production have spinoff effects beyond simple defence applications, such as various satellite communications, rockets, aircraft engines and navigational, gyroscopic, chemical and biological applications. Quite often in the research and development around these items there is a spinoff benefit that goes beyond a military application.

• (1555)

I want to add another dimension to this debate. While we support the legislation, I have grave concerns that when we look at the whole issue of defence production and the production of goods geared toward defence we sometimes are talking about nuclear weapons and other systems of mass destruction.

We know there is a lot of money in the defence industry. Earlier an hon. member on the other side of the House talked about the importance of defence production to business and the economy in Canada and thus the importance of good relations. I sometimes become very concerned that we might allow our concern about business and economy to overshadow the need to work hard toward a peaceful society that does not engage in guns and arms and the production of those types of goods.

It disturbs me to read in the paper or to see on television a boy of 12 years old being shielded by his father's arms to avoid bullets and in the end being shot dead because of the conflict between two nations. There is so much of this happening worldwide. There is so much conflict, destruction and death. A lot of it is tied into and enabled by the arms involved. That boy did not die because someone was handling a toy. It was a deadly weapon. It was probably from some arms trade or part of defence production in some way or another.

So much of this is happening around the world. We have to concentrate on building a society that looks at all the money spent on defence production, that big industry found worldwide, and on asking ourselves what kinds of things that money could do if we applied it to help the homeless who sleep outside, without any shelter overhead. How much good would that money do if we applied it to child poverty, which is a curse in our society but has existed for so long and continues to exist? How much good would

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that money do if we applied it to training and other programs to help the unemployed? How much good would it do if we applied it to our aboriginal communities, which quite often have a lower social and economic status than the rest of our communities?

There is a lot of money involved in the arms trade and the defence industry. I am in no way taking away from the fact that every country must have an adequately resourced military to protect its borders and engage in domestic activities to assist its citizens. I am saying, however, that sometimes we allow the economic interests associated with some of these industries to overshadow and overpower the need to get to the human and social concerns within our society.

I make that point strongly because I think it quite often gets lost in the midst of debate. We want things to go smoothly so that we can have greater trade, greater economic stability, and more money flowing in. However, what is happening with all the money flowing in? Where is it going?

I read a piece in the paper a couple of days ago, probably the plane when I was coming here, about the fact that the term millionaire no longer means what it meant 30 or 40 years ago. If one was a millionaire then one was a member of an exclusive club. Now more and more people, numbering in the thousands, can claim to be millionaires, a lot of them at a very young age. The article also mentioned that there are 300 billionaires in the world.

We should look at where that concentration of wealth is going. Much wealth and prosperity exists today but remains concentrated in the hands of a few. A lot of that wealth comes from such things as defence production industries and various other industries where the money flows through big corporate interests from one country to the other.

Arms are getting into the hands of children and women. I talked to the Eritrean ambassador last night. She told me something I was unaware of. A large number of the Eritrean soldiers fighting in the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia were women. I asked specifically if there were any child soldiers involved and was told no, they protect their children. However, women are fighting on the front-lines, laying down their lives in a conflict between nations. What are they using? They are using guns and arms off which someone has made money.

• (1600)

I raise it here in the House because we are elected people. We are elected to represent our constituents. We are elected with a responsibility to try to build a better society, to try to do something to elevate ourselves beyond the realm of the killing and fighting we see day by day.

A good part of that will come about if we start to look honestly at some of the things involved which we take for granted as being a natural part of our economy. We can have a thriving economy but we can have an economy that is based on things other than weapons of destruction.

I make that point even though we are supporting the legislation to enable a smoother relationship between Canada and the U.S. It is better to have some controls around this kind of technology rather than no controls at all. I really would implore us to work for the day when the ultimate goal will be that we put less emphasis on the production of arms and weapons of destruction and things that kill people and more emphasis on the kinds of things that breathe life into our society and give our society a sense of purpose, meaning, and a true sense of destiny.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. We are not allergic to a bill from the other place. I would like to pay tribute to the work done by our party's team in the other place, which worked very hard on this important bill.

Many things have been said about it. I would like to provide a brief historical overview.

Discussions were held prior to World War II, but later, in the mid 1940s, the U.S. and Canada decided to have a free trade zone for arms in general.

It was not really an economic free trade zone. It was more the whole American and North American continental defence strategy. It was a far cry from the free trade agreement signed by the Conservative government and developed, I have to admit, by the Liberal government. I have to admit that.

That said, the United States wanted to combine continental forces. Canada, in the north, was politically stable. In terms of the continental defence strategy, with Russia being so close, the Americans could ask certain favours of Canada, and would do some in return.

The arms industry was allowed to freely cross the border because it was exempted more readily than was the case for other countries, and this arrangement benefited Canada's economy. Canadian know-how, which was developing at that point—they talk about the Avro Arrow, which the Diefenbaker government unfortunately dropped—could have benefited the Americans as well.

Therefore, Canada's technological efforts would have benefited the States before others, because there was a trading market. It was advantageous. It did change. Canada and the U.S. are special trading partners in a number of areas, but that started before.

But in 1999 the States said "Whoops. We are starting to have some problems, including security problems". I would remind hon. members that it is not just with weapons, but also with immigration. Last year, a bill had to be passed for Canada to keep illegal immigrants wanting to enter the U.S. through Canada. Because the Americans do not want them, the legal responsibility is ours.

So we did them a favour, in return for which we got Canadian visitors over the U.S. border quickly. That was part of the negotiations.

In connection with Bill S-25, I wish to point out the contribution of the Canadian ambassador to the United States, the good lobbying by Canadian industry, and the excellent historical co-operation between the two countries, which have made it possible to design a bill and to convince the U.S. authorities that we would do what had to be done as far as security was concerned.

I believe that the Americans are going to be pleased with this, as will our industry, because Canada has developed enormously since World War II as far as technology is concerned.

• (1605)

Once again, I congratulate those in the other place on their good work. I also want to congratulate the minister responsible and the government for co-operating with the other parties in order to protect thousands of jobs in Canada.

The Progressive Conservative Party supports Bill S-25. We are pleased to facilitate its rapid passage.

[English]

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question. It was coincidental perhaps that as my colleague was speaking I was reading an excerpt from the press that says "Canada gets duty free zones" and talks about Liberal MPs supporting it.

In the case of my own province of Newfoundland, we are the most easterly point in the country, the nearest point of entry into Europe from the western side. We see what is happening in Ireland because of their geographic location, even though it is not necessarily duty free. Does the member think that the creation of free trade zones would benefit specifically a place so strategically geographically located as the province of Newfoundland?

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, my answer is yes. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are used to working in their corner of the country, to coming up with solutions and original ideas.

As my colleague from Newfoundland says, I am sure that we can do so with government support. Will the arrival of a new minister from Newfoundland help? I suspect so, but that said, the people of Newfoundland must reap the benefit of these programs, just like the people of all the other provinces of Canada.

This is why a regional spirit, the spirit of helping the provinces, must be maintained at all cost, contrary to what the Canadian Alliance members say. We must keep the tools to ensure that in all of Canada's regions, from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Vancouver, by way of Quebec and Ontario, wealth may be spread around with

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the tools that belong to the elected representatives of the provinces and the people of the country.

Newfoundland is a province of the future, I firmly believe. Things will go a lot better when there are a few members sporting the colour of the ocean.

[English]

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I hope to be very brief with my comments, but I would like to make a connection here between an issue that I have consistently been bringing to the House, that is, the issue of Canada's national security.

This particular bill comes about as a very direct result of the lack of attention that the government and its predecessor have paid to the issue of national security in Canada. It is a concern to the people of the United States, to the people responsible for the defence industry of the United States.

We have to remember this. Whether we like it or not, the fact of the matter is that in Canada we have the ability to have expenditures of many types on many things where we basically do not have to put out the money for the defence we are getting from the country to the south of us.

These people of course have their own vested interest. We act as a buffer. We recognize to a certain extent that we are the meat in the sandwich between them and other people who would be adversaries to them. They do have their own vested interest, but the fact of the matter is that we as Canadians have the ability to have a defence budget significantly smaller than we would need if we did not have the level of co-operation we have with the people in the United States.

• (1610)

Secondly, they have a very legitimate concern and interest in the transfer of technology, information and intelligence. Even within the confines of the lower 48 states, the United States has seen many of its facilities ending up being compromised by people who have come into its own territory. As it tried to bring that into focus and regain control of that, the United States naturally took a look at the sources of these malevolent forces coming toward it. Many of those sources were coming through a very porous 49th parallel.

We must pay far more attention to the entire issue of national security. Interestingly, this issue of intelligence gathering and management has everything in the world to do with the difficulties that this nation and indeed many nations around the world are having with respect to organized crime and the fact that in many instances terrorism is bought and paid for by the proceeds of organized crime. Organized criminals and terrorists have the ability to go across boundaries literally at the speed of light, at the flick of a computer switch.

Speaker's Ruling

This particular agreement, which came about, I believe, in good faith between our nation and the nation of the United States, is a good example of how when we come across a problem we can work together and work our way around the problem.

The necessity of this legislation is due to our charter of rights and freedoms. The necessity of this legislation is due to the way in which our country is configured and the way in which we welcome immigrants to our country to be part of this great nation of Canada. As we give those immigrants opportunities within our society and as they in turn help to construct our society, to build our society and to add to our intellectual wealth and the quality and fabric of our society, these people are building our society. At the same time, because of the concerns that the defence industry was having in the United States, it felt that this was a step away from its ability to be able to control people who would have access to its very highly valued, highly confidential secret information.

Our caucus had the opportunity, through the good auspices of our defence critic, to have two or three meetings with the defence industry while this was coming to resolution. I thank the member, but I also thank the defence industry for taking the time and interest to inform us and our caucus as to what was going on.

As the industry came to us, it was made very evident that there must be a connection. There must be a management of information among the solicitor general, who would be responsible for CSIS and the RCMP, immigration, foreign affairs, industry and foreign trade. All of these and more of our departments must do a far better job of sharing and managing information and intelligence as it is being gathered.

I am very pleased that between the two nations we have arrived at this bill, at this accommodation. As I say, it shows goodwill between the two nations, which bodes well for the future. However, I say to the government, we must pay attention to the fact that we had to do this bill in the first place. The reason we had to do this bill is that the government unfortunately is not paying anywhere near the attention that it should be to the issue of information gathering and management in Canada for the sake of our national security.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the comments by my hon. colleague who said so much about the management and control of information.

• (1615)

The minister of public works shall have the right, authority and responsibility to identify people and give certificates to them so that they have access to information on the goods and technology involved in the defence industry. These people must then ensure that the provisions of the act are met, and there will be an inspection process as well.

Could the hon. member comment on the significance of the minister's authority respecting the control of information?

Mr. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, this is part of what I have been speaking about. At the moment I would say that we have a tremendous number of chimneys of information, a vertical flow of information from the information or intelligence gathering, up through to the top, where the top is concerned about the management of the vertical flow of information.

The difficulty is that the government is undertaking, on behalf of the people of Canada through this law, a process that requires more than a vertical chimney of information. We do not have any effective way of creating it at this point, but we must create a horizontal pipeline of information. In other words, there could very well be information that the minister of public works should have in his possession that is resident in a department adjacent to the public works ministry.

That information, which could very well turn the tide as to whether he would certify an individual for access, could be sitting in the department literally right next door to the minister and the public works ministry could be unaware of that information. That is what we are talking about.

We are in favour of this act because it achieves the mutual objectives between our two countries, but my colleague, the critic for public works, and I are trying to drive home to the minister that because we can have intelligence in an adjacent ministry of which the public works ministry is unaware, he could indeed end up certifying people who perhaps should not be certified.

Within this government or the successor government, whether it is the Liberals, the Alliance or whoever forms the next government, the ability within government to access and manage intelligence sharing on a horizontal basis between departments must be created so that when the public works ministry, as in this case, makes a determination that a person is worthy of a certificate it will be making that determination on more than a simple rubber stamping. It will be making it based on the very best information and intelligence available.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair is ready to give a decision on the question of privilege raised earlier today by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough alleging interference with an officer of parliament, namely the information commissioner.

Speaker's Ruling

As the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough noted, yesterday Mr. Speaker tabled the 1999-2000 annual report of the information commissioner. In his report the information commissioner complained about the actions of the federal government, and in particular the Privy Council Office and the Treasury Board Secretariat, contending that these departments had challenged his powers and denied him resources to carry out his duties.

The member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough argued that this interference constituted a contempt of the House and he called upon the Chair to rule it a prima facie case of privilege with the concomitant results.

[*Translation*]

I would first like to say that the Chair attaches considerable importance to the concerns expressed by the member. I also wish to thank the Leader of the Opposition in the House, the member for Fraser Valley, the Leader of the Bloc Québécois in the House, the member for Roberval, the Leader of the Government in the House, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, the member for Calgary—Nose Hill, and the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot for their comments on this matter.

• (1620)

[*English*]

House of Commons *Procedure and Practice* makes it very clear at page 67:

—the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which... tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members or its Officers.

The Chair must judge whether the complaints raised in the most unequivocal terms by the commissioner in his annual report constitute such an obstruction.

There can be little doubt that the information commissioner presents a colourful and impassioned case for the principle of access to information. He recalls that his very first annual report to parliament set as his objective a policy of zero tolerance for government recalcitrance in complying with freedom of information legislation.

In this second report the commissioner notes that he has refused to retreat from this zero tolerance policy and he rails at the resistance his office has continued to encounter in carrying out its work.

Despite his unforgiving assessment of the situation and his blunt annoyance, the commissioner concludes:

There is some heartening evidence that his game plan is working.

The Chair can well understand members' reaction to the cri du coeur of the information commissioner, especially in the opening section of the report entitled "Access—A Right Under Siege" and

the title "Mayday—Mayday", but the very fact that the report is couched in such bold language and takes such a strong position is in my view evidence that the commissioner has not been impeded in carrying out his work.

He may be frustrated by the attitudes he has encountered in the senior echelons of government. He may even be outraged that the government does not take his mandate as seriously as he evidently does, but the fact that he voices those frustrations in no uncertain terms does not, in the view of the Chair, provide evidence of a prima facie case of contempt, especially when he is able to present his report unimpeded and obviously in his own words.

[*Translation*]

Members also know that the enabling statute, the Access to Information Act, gives the commissioner various recourses when he is dissatisfied with a result.

In addition, the annual report is permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. When examining the report, this committee will be able to consider the concerns expressed by members with respect to these issues.

[*English*]

The committee can hear the information commissioner and his officials. It can call before it some of those mentioned in the report as less than fully co-operative and if as a result of this study the committee concludes from the evidence that the report does not merely document the frustrations of the commissioner but points to a climate of systematic obstruction, then the committee can report its findings to the House and ask the House to take appropriate action.

Rumours abound of a possible dissolution. However, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has this permanent reference and a new committee in a new parliament may proceed, as the current one may do, and study this issue at its leisure.

Accordingly in this particular case I find that there are various recourses immediately available to the information commissioner and to all hon. members. I therefore cannot find that a prima facie case of contempt has occurred.

• (1625)

I would like once again to thank the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough for drawing the commissioner's views and his own concerns to the attention of the House. Like him, I look forward to the work of the justice committee on these important questions.

[*Translation*]

I also wish to tell the House that, with respect to the request by the hon. member for Roberval for an emergency debate this evening, the Chair has decided that such a request is not in order at this time. It does not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders.

*Business of the House**[English]*

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will take time to review your ruling in some detail when I see it in print.

The other point of order that I raised during that period was about the tabling of the report and when it was available to all parliamentarians. I believe you said it was a problem of miscommunication between the commissioner and the Speaker.

I wonder if you could explain that because I am not sure what miscommunication means. It was tabled in the House. It should be available to members. I do not know whom I should point the finger at. I am not pointing it at the government. I am wondering what went wrong there because that information, once tabled here, should be available immediately, as I understand it.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not want to tie the Chair down to an answer on this because I think we are looking into what exactly transpired, but the best information I can provide the hon. member with at this time is that the report was sent to the Speaker with the request that it be tabled at a particular time. The additional copies were sent to the distribution office with an embargo until another time later than the time requested for tabling.

It appears the document got tabled at a time when the distribution office was not expecting to distribute the document, so when members contacted the office and asked for copies they were denied.

I have asked that this matter be investigated. I do not understand why there would have been two times but I understand there were. I can report that far to the hon. member at this stage. I believe I am correct in what I have stated, without being more precise.

I know the hon. member would be happy to raise this matter with me in private. I would be more than happy to do whatever we can to see that this situation does not continue in the future.

It is an unsatisfactory way to proceed, in my view, and I sympathize with the position the hon. member was placed in, but I stress it was a matter of communication between the office of the Speaker, the table officers of the House and the information commissioner's office, and I believe two messages came from the latter.

* * *

*[Translation]***DEFENCE PRODUCTION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-25, an act to amend the Defence Production Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

[English]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you would seek it, I think you would find consent, pursuant to discussions among the parties, to proceed to further consideration of the bill at all stages, including committee of the whole.

The Deputy Speaker: Notwithstanding the reference to the committee on foreign affairs, is it agreed we consider the matter now in committee of the whole and proceed with third reading?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

● (1630)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. After further consultation on the motion proposed earlier today, I would like to propose it again as amended pursuant to the conversations between House leaders. I am only moving half of the motion that was proposed earlier. I move:

That, on Thursday, October 19, 2000, the House shall sit at 9 a.m. and shall consider private members' business from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., provided that any division requested thereon shall be deferred until immediately after a division to be held on a motion to concur in a notice of ways and means, to be proposed as the first government order considered after 3 p.m. that day.

● (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the government House leader have unanimous consent to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**CANADA HEALTH CARE, EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES
FUNDING ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, an act respecting the provision of increased funding for health care services, medical equipment, health information and communications technologies, early childhood development and other social services and to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to resume my speech on this important bill, a bill, as has been noted several times today, that is fully supported by the Canadian Alliance, although we do think improvements could have been made in this health accord.

The health accord does re-establish some of the money that was cut by the Liberal government over the last several years from the health care system. What it does not do is enshrine the health accord in the Canada Health Act itself so that stable, long term, five year funding is available for the provinces in order to plan their work and work their plan. That is a weakness of the bill.

It is interesting that we have now passed two bills today in their entirety. When there is not a lot of controversy about a bill and it is in the best interests of the country we want to be co-operative. We have already had a fair bit of discussion about this bill and we were given time to contact the people affected. All those things are possible. We passed two bills today that I hope will get royal assent before the week is out. It is nice to see that happen.

We think that business should continue to go ahead. However, this health accord, which should also go ahead, will be interrupted almost certainly by an election call on Sunday. We see an awful lot of crocodile tears on the Liberal side. We hear them saying "We have to approve this bill in all stages this afternoon or else basically it will not go anywhere", or, "Desperate measures are required", or, "We have to interrupt the rules of parliament. We cannot follow the rules of parliament".

If there is desperation in the health care system, it has been caused by the government. Any desperation on the funding side has been caused by the cuts from the federal Liberal government. In its efforts to restore that, efforts that we approve of, it says we have to suspend the rules of parliament and pass all stages today or else the walls will come tumbling down.

This bill will get passed. It will go through a proper examination in committee where we can talk about it. Would it not be nice to talk to the Canadian Medical Association for a minute about this? Would it not be nice to make sure that the way the money is going to be distributed is in the best interests of everyone in all provinces? Of course it would.

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The government is going to spend a good part of the campaign suggesting that unless it can suspend the rules of the House and pass it all today in all stages the end is near. Nobody is going to buy that argument. Everyone sees what is happening here. An election is coming and the government would like to have all the legislation disposed of in a couple of minutes here in the House as if the House does not matter.

Let me just talk about what the government is going to leave on the table. It will leave the health accord unfinished. We have said that we are prepared to come back next week and the week after and get at it. We want to do this properly and get it passed by Christmas but the government is going to call an election and suspend that.

What about some of the other things the government has left? What about the Financial Institutions Act? The banks have been looking for Bill C-38. The banks, the credit unions, the provinces, the consumers and other financial institutions want to modernize the Financial Institutions Act. We are ready to go with it. Let us debate it and get it passed.

That is not going to happen. It will get lost. The banks will be told "You are going to deal in an increasingly globalized financial world but you have to stick with the rules from the last century and that is just too bad". That is too bad for the banks, the credit unions and the consumers, but it certainly is not because the opposition is not willing to get on with business. We want to get on with it.

• (1640)

What about the changes to the Young Offenders Act? That bill was brought in as Bill C-68 in the first session of parliament. After prorogation, it was renamed Bill C-3. It has been kicking around this place for years and it will die because the government cannot get its legislative act together.

Does anyone know how many bills have actually received royal assent during this fall session? I have the list here: one bill. The government feels that it might get another one passed so it might end up with two bills for the whole fall session. This health accord is certainly not one of them. The government could have brought it back the first day and we could have had a good debate on it. We could have gone right to work on it, but no, the government has been fiddling around with this, that and the other thing, with no idea of where it wants the country to go and no idea where it wants the legislative package to go.

It is as if the government wants to get all the legislation out on the table and pretend it has all been passed so that when it calls the election on Sunday it can say that it has addressed the Young Offenders Act and that the financial institutions have been looked after. Tomorrow it will give a mini-budget that will finally give the

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tax relief it has always promised. The government has not done it for seven years, but it will be talked about.

I have some more bills here. The international boundary waters legislation deals with the movement of bulk water sales. We support that bill. Let us bring it in and pass it next week. We will not because government members just want to talk about it. They pretend to work at the business of Canada. They pretend to care about these issues. They pretend to care about the health accord. However, when it comes right down to it, what do they do? They are all talk and no action. A title from the information commissioner's lament about the government is that it is all talk and no action.

We are going into an election without an act to amend the criminal code, dealing with cruelty to animals, disarming peace officers and so on. That bill is not going to come before the House.

How about the bill respecting marine liability, something that affects our shipping industry? We support that bill. Let us get it today, tomorrow or the next day. Let us have it in the House for debate. We are not going to get to pass that legislation.

How about changes to the immigration system? The Liberals have been talking about it but it is not going to come. They talk and talk but no legislative bill ever makes it through the House of Commons.

What about the shipping and navigation bill? How about something as basic as the criminal code changes dealing with harassment, home invasion and the miscarriage of justice? We are ready. Let us bring that bill into the House today, tomorrow or the next day, sometime soon. Let us deal with home invasions because it is a big problem on the west coast. We want that law toughened up. We were to support that bill but we will not have the chance because it will be left on the table.

How many bills have been passed this fall? How many have received royal assent? One bill.

The government has brought in a lot of bills. How about changes to the employment insurance system? That was a priority of the government. It brought in changes to the employment insurance system but it was not serious about that. It should properly be renamed "my hope to improve my chances in a certain region of Canada act". The government has no intention of passing that legislation.

Why did the government bring in Mr. Tobin to be the minister? Why did it go to the other place and pick a senator, an unelected official, to sit in here as the minister from Nova Scotia? This is not about the issues or the legislation. It is all about the election.

How about the Eldorado nuclear limited reorganization act? It is housekeeping bill but we could pass that quickly. We could get on

to business. Next week would be perfect. We could do it in a few days and it would be all over.

We could deal with the tax courts or with Bill C-43, which deals with income tax. Those are important. Let us deal with them.

How about an act to establish a foundation to fund sustainable development technology? We could have a debate in the House on that legislation but, no, the government will not do that.

How about the Manitoba claims settlement legislation? We could finish that up. The citizenship of Canada act legislation is something that the Liberals could talk about for a while. They will talk about it. They have tabled all this legislation.

• (1645)

If one could get elected on tabling, this government would win in a landslide. It has tabled everything but does not want to pass any of it. It is not about passing legislation. It is not about a vision for the future. It is about putting little tidbits out there hoping that enough interest groups will think the government is serious about the talk so that when the election comes the government can say that it is really serious about the sales tax and excise tax amendments. One might then say "Really? The government must have brought it to the House early and championed it hard". The government would say "No, we just just tabled it". It can claim 100% in tabling. If tabling were a university course these guys would get grade A in tabling.

They are not passing this list of legislation. They are only interested in the election. That is why, when the government shuffled the cabinet the other day—oh, was that just this morning? I thought I saw it being foreshadowed for several days in advance. When the government finally shuffled the cabinet, when the famous deck chairs were shuffled, what did it do? I actually watched it on TV. The government had four people sworn into cabinet. Two of them have not even been elected.

Is Mr. Tobin the best idea for industry minister that Canada ever had? It is not about that. Who cares about that? That is what the Liberals say. It is not about picking the best elected member of parliament to take that position. It is not even about expanding the gene pool, because that gene pool has been well worked over. It is a genetically modified Liberal gene pool. The Liberals all come out like cookie cutters. They do what they are told and they get a job like that.

It is interesting that the one outspoken member of cabinet, the guy we could at least count on to have a bit of backbone on occasion, is gone. The former veterans affairs minister is no longer with us, as they say in the funeral business. He has gone, not to the other place but to somewhere by the windows down there never to be heard from again. Why? Because an unelected person just took

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his place. In the vernacular, he is now sucking slough water while someone else is slurping at the trough. That is just what has happened. It is all about the election.

The bill on implementing the health accord that we are debating today does three-quarters of what the government should have done. Of course it should not ever have cut the funding to the extent it did to begin with, but at least the bill restores it. It is like kissing your sister: it's a kiss but it ain't everything it's cracked up to be. It is a little bit, so we will support it.

Instead of playing around with parliament like this, here is what would be a pleasure. I look forward to this, because in the byelection of our leader for the Canadian Alliance I was at a public meeting and one of the big cheers he got—and he has had many and he will get many more—occurred when he stood up and said that if he was elected prime minister it would be a pleasure, a week after the election at the press conference, to stand up and say “The next federal election will be held on October 30 of 2004”, whatever Monday that might be, four years from now. Then we would not have to go through this charade of tabling endless amounts of legislation for political showmanship and brinkmanship, which the government is practising today, the brinkmanship of “do as I say or else” something terrible will happen.

Would it not be nicer for the government to say “We have a legislative package to go through but another six months to do it in, so you can plan your life around that because these are the bills that are important to our vision for Canada. We hope you agree. If you do not, let us have a reasonable debate about it, let us pass the good stuff, amend the bad stuff and defeat the poor stuff, but you can count on it?”

There would be four years to get through the business of the House. The next party conventions could be planned around it. The Canadian people could make their election plans around it. Political activists who want to take time off work, and there are a few like that, would find it good too. The House would not be stuck in the position in which we find ourselves today, with a whole package of stuff, of legislative initiatives, some good, some bad and some correcting past wrongs like the bill we are talking about today.

• (1650)

At least then we will have it done in a structured way with a game plan and a House of Commons plan laid out for all Canadians. They will not have to come here three working days before the election call and say “If you do not give us everything we want, then it is the end of health care as we know it”. That is what they are going to say in the days to come.

That is a lousy way to run the country.

What a better way it would be to have a legislative package that the government is serious about, that spells out the vision for the country and that we have adequate time to deal with in the House of Commons. It would be like this: take it, win some, lose some, have some free votes on some things, and at the end of the day on a certain day four years from now the government would go to the electorate and say “Judge the record, this is the package that was completed”.

A half baked, half finished legislative calendar, like I have a list of here, is not the way to be serious about dealing with Canada's business. This is a lousy half measure, introduced in a poor, ad hoc way that is not indicative of good government.

That will change and it will change when the Canadian Alliance forms the government.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, during the hon. member's comments he referred to the incoming new minister from Newfoundland and the outgoing minister from Newfoundland. I wonder if he would tell us what he thinks of a government who sends to the far corners of this House a minister who always looked after the people of Newfoundland and brings in somebody who has always looked after himself. What does it say about a government that would do something like that?

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it says quite a bit and most of what it says is not too complimentary.

I do want to say, however, that the former minister of veterans affairs is not exactly as pure as the driven snow either. A week or so ago he was promising \$10 million to move some jobs from one part of the country into his riding. This is the very sort of thing that we have been on about all day during question period, that is, it is the wrong way to run a country.

I will say this about the former veterans affairs minister, I think he is right. When necessary, and it happened throughout his career from time to time, he stood up to the government and said the way things should be.

On the health accord, as an example, it would be far better to have people on all sides of the House speak their minds in a way that moves the agenda forward rather than doing what they are doing over there today, which is political brinkmanship. They are going to say, and I heard it today from the Prime Minister during question period, “If you do not pass this thing in all stages today, then you are against health care”.

If the government would do everything we asked them to do today, we would have tax relief, parliamentary reform, a justice system that worked and equality for aboriginals. On and on it would go. If the Prime Minister would do everything we asked for

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today, I guess we would be further down the road, but we would have a Canadian Alliance government if that happened.

I do not expect that he is going to do that. What the Prime Minister is doing today is trying to paint a picture for the upcoming campaign. He is going to hang his head in sorrow at one of these press conferences and say "Woe is me. I could not get it through the House of Commons because I asked everyone else to suspend the rules of the House of Commons to get something through and they said that we should play by the rules".

All we are asking for is that the government play by the rules. Let us get this thing done, but we can finish it next week. There is no panic about it. Everybody knows it will go ahead. We are all going to support it. I hope that today it will at least get through second reading. There is no reason we cannot finish this bill and finish it easily next week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Before we get to the next questioner, for a moment I did not realize what bill we were on. This is Bill C-45, the health bill, so it would not be a bad idea to once in a while touch on the content of the bill, particularly in questions and comments.

• (1655)

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, for the member for Fraser Valley, within the context of health care spending, while other countries are using their taxation policy as a lever for economic growth, our current government is content with the status quo. The status quo gives Canada the dubious distinction of having the highest personal income tax rate in the seven most industrialized countries and the second highest corporate taxes in the OECD.

Even the Liberal government's spending priorities do not rank any better. In fact, its own pollster, Pollara, revealed that in a recent survey of 5,300 Canadians, 73% of those polled thought the government was spending on the wrong priorities. We certainly have to look at the fact that without the EI surplus there would be a deficit of \$6.8 billion in both 1999-2000 and 2000-01. It is about misplaced priorities: wise health care funding versus the current Liberal administration.

The health care bill is before us today. We must realize that any budget surplus comes not from the government but at the expense of overtaxed Canadians. What should we be doing here instead of rushing this kind of spending bill through the House at the last minute, at the dying end of parliament?

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, it is all about priorities. When we talk about balancing the budget, it is balancing the budget at what level of taxation? That is a good debate to have. We could have it here in the House. Maybe it will start tomorrow when the

minister makes his statement. He is going to say that revenues are higher than expected so Liberals are going to find ways to spend it. It is the old story. The government takes our money. We send our money to Ottawa, the government deducts 50% for handling and then spends it on pork-barrel projects we never asked for. That is the government's idea of management.

What we have said is that government has a legitimate role but it should be majoring in the majors, such as health care funding, research and development, higher education and certainly encouraging common education throughout the provinces as well.

It was interesting to note the comments of the member when he talked about the EI surplus. On the EI surplus there was just a little thing the government passed the other day, the tricky dicky move of the week. The government passed a little order on the government side that said the EI surplus belongs to the government, that EI surplus the EI commissioner says should be given back to the workers and the employers who contributed to the EI plan in benefits and in reduced rates of levies against employers, that combination. Instead the government says that it has just changed the rules and that it now owns the surplus.

It is just gone. The surplus just went into never-never land. To be used where? We will find out about some of it from the finance minister tomorrow. Tomorrow the finance minister will tell us that he has extra money. Some of it will be from the EI surplus. It is interesting how the government says that all this extra money from the high level of taxation has given it a surplus. The government says it will give us back a little of it in tax relief but then it has a whole bunch of government programs.

Let us not forget the health accord, because the government is going to mention the health accord in every other breath for the rest of time, I would say, as if it is new money. The government has that health accord but is forgetting to mention that the taxation level of personal income tax in Canada is the highest in the G-7. Have a nice day. I wonder why 65,000 Canadians left Canada last year primarily for the United States and a fairer tax regime.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague read out a number of bills that the government has introduced but has done nothing about.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague if he is aware of the various advertising programs that the government has gone through in the last three months, namely, a little booklet that went out to all seniors telling them about all the wonderful things the Liberal government has done. I wonder whether or not some of the tabled bills that have not been passed and have not gone through the system have been alluded to in that little booklet. I wonder also about the cost of that little booklet. I am also wondering about the

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cost of the \$8 million ad campaign telling Canadians how wonderful the government is for solving the health care problems that it created. Are these costs also incurred through this multi-list of tabled bills that the government has put forth?

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if we will ever know the costs in this parliament because of course those costs will no doubt be picked up by the auditor general in the next parliament. I expect that in the next parliament the auditor general is going to say that he has reviewed the spending bulge that took place during the pre-election period and that the advertising budget of the federal government suddenly had a giant need to communicate to Canadians in the month and a half preceding the federal election. It was practically a cosmic force that forced the Liberals to spend \$8 million to advertise the Canada health accord that has not yet passed the House of Commons. However, that never stops the government. It spent \$8 million to tell Canadians what we all read in the newspaper. It is all couched in terms that the government loves us and the government is here to help us. It is one of those things that no one really believes.

● (1700)

It was the same thing with the booklet that perhaps 30 million people got in the mail telling them about the 1-800 number they could phone if they had a problem with the government, because the government loved them.

I would expect that in the next parliament the auditor general will talk not just about the March madness, which is the spending that occurs every March when the government departments all have to feather their nests, but he will also talk about the little spending splurge of millions of dollars that the advertising department of the federal Government of Canada spent telling Canadians what they already knew from newspaper reports. That will be a shame. That money should have been spent on health care, education and research.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-45, the bill dealing with health care funding.

The bill would ratify and implement the deal between the provinces and the federal government. We respect the fact that the provinces did reach an agreement with the federal government to increase funding and we support that. The Canadian Alliance supports increasing funding for health care, but we do not pretend that will solve the problem with health care. We do not believe that is the case.

Just because we support the bill does not mean that we will just let it pass all in one day. The Prime Minister in question period today said that if the bill did not pass by Friday, because the opposition wanted to talk about it or maybe some government MPs

wanted to talk about it, then we were against health care. That is not the case.

Opposition members and government members want to speak on the bill because we have things we want to say on health care. We want to make the point that more money will not completely solve the problem. We want to make the point that the amount of money the government has agreed to put back into health care through the legislation and through its agreement with the provinces will not restore health funding by the amount it has cut over the last few years. It is absolutely absurd for the Prime Minister to say that if we do not agree with the bill and if we do not pass it immediately then we are against health care.

I remind the Prime Minister of a few facts about the legislation. One fact is that a bill of this magnitude has received less than six hours of debate in the House. Yet the Prime Minister said that if we did not pass it today we were against health care. The Prime Minister really does not understand the democratic process. He does not understand that the House is a place for debate. This House is a place where we should bring out different views on issues, especially on important issues like health care.

Debate on the bill was first called for on October 5. This was less than three and a half years into the government's mandate. The government has been in place for seven years. Yet the Prime Minister said if we did not let this pass we were against health care. We will tell that to Canadians. That is not right.

The Prime Minister is asking for the members of the House to break the rules of the House. That is what he called for in question period today. That is not right. We should have time to talk about the bill. We should not just pass it on through. We should give Canadians a chance to know what this piece of legislation is about.

● (1705)

The legislation is about ratifying the provincial-federal agreement on health care. It is about returning only part of the funding that the government reduced over its seven year mandate. It is not as wonderful a thing as the government makes it out to be. There is no increase in funding. This only returns part of the funding that the government cut over the past few years.

Does that mean we will hold up this legislation? Absolutely not. In fact, as far as I am concerned we can allow this to pass second reading in the next few minutes and get on to the rest of the process.

There is no reason that we cannot pass this bill over the next few weeks. We do not want to hold it up. We respect the fact that the provinces have reached an agreement with the federal government. The legislation would ratify the agreement so that the money could be paid out, but we are looking for proper debate on the issue.

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It is ironic that the Prime Minister said that if we did not agree to pass this legislation immediately we were somehow against health care. If we look at the government's legislative calendar for the next three weeks, Bill C-45 is not even on the legislative calendar. That is the level of priority the Prime Minister gives to this piece of legislation. If the Prime Minister feels that the bill is important, as I think it is, and wants the bill to be dealt with in a quick fashion, then he should talk to the House leader and get him to put it on the legislative calendar as a top priority item. He has not done that.

Again, we are here to talk about ratifying this deal. Does the Canadian Alliance support passing Bill C-45? Yes, we do. We believe that restoring some of the funding which the Liberals cut from the provinces to fund health care is the right thing to do. We say they should restore all of the funding that they cut from the provinces over the past seven years of their mandate. We say this deal is not good enough. We say it is only a start.

When we form the government it will only be a start. We will not only focus on funding, we will focus on actual solutions to the problems in health care. We respect the jurisdiction of the provinces in health care. Under the Canadian constitution the provinces have jurisdiction over health care. We also respect the Canada Health Act.

Today in question period, the Leader of the Opposition said "Let us add a sixth pillar to the Canada Health Act". That pillar would be guaranteed funding for the provinces. The provinces could then rely on getting a certain level of funding committed to and guaranteed by the federal government so that the federal government could not decide some time in the future to cut back, slash and burn health care funding. That is what the Liberals have done over the past seven years. We want a sixth pillar to health care which says we will guarantee funding over the long run.

How many Canadians know that when medicare was first agreed to back in the 1960s, the level of funding of the federal government was more than 50%? The provinces signed onto the deal because the federal government was committed to this level of funding. Have successive Liberal and Conservative governments respected that commitment? No, they have not. Now the federal government only funds somewhere around 13% of the cost of health care. It has absolutely reneged on the deal that a Liberal government committed to back in the sixties.

• (1710)

The Liberals reneged on the deal that the Liberal government committed to in the sixties. They reneged on the commitment to the Canadian people and to the premiers of the provinces back when the provinces agreed to publicly fund health care. That is just not right. That is why the Leader of the Opposition today stood in the House and said "Let us put that sixth pillar of health care in place", and that would be—

Mr. Nelson Riis: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt my friend's comments on health care but I think he made a serious error in saying that only 13% was covered by the federal government. Surely his notes must be incorrect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That was a sneaky point of order.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I respect the comment of the hon. member from the New Democratic Party. He is absolutely right. In fact the level is not 13%. It is only 11% right now. It will be 13% if this bill passes and if that funding is actually put in place. I am sure that is what the member was referring to. I was using rough figures and I know the reality is even worse than the picture I had painted.

It was really not a point of order and I appreciate your decision on that, Mr. Speaker. I will try to get back to my presentation now.

The Canadian Alliance really does respect provincial jurisdiction. We think that when the provinces come up with an idea within the Canada Health Act that will improve health care they should be listened to. I think every province probably has an idea that it can implement in its own province that will improve our health care system. I do not think the federal government has all the good ideas when it comes to health care.

I hear a lot of heckling from across the floor. It truly is the arrogance showing through, with the Prime Minister, in his arrogance, saying "This is our bill and you should just pass it". We saw that in question period. Now we see the members across the floor showing their arrogance and not even allowing us to make our points on the issue. What they are saying in effect is that they have all the answers, that they are right, that they may have slashed health care funding over the last seven years but what they want to do now is to restore part of that, and that they are heroes for doing so.

Mr. Joe Jordan: What the member has dribbled over the airwaves is nonsense. It is arrogance. He has no respect for the Canadian people if he believes that they are going to believe what he put out.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: The hon. member across the floor really ought to listen a little. He could learn something. It is really quite difficult for me to make my presentation with that kind of interference from across the floor.

This arrogance flows way beyond this piece of legislation. Let us talk a little about the Prime Minister's record—

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point order. Would you ask the member for Lakeland whether it is his intention to not allow the bill to proceed and to not allow the bill to be

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presented by this Friday to the other chamber so that we can reflect the will of the premiers and the Prime Minister as they have indicated in the agreement of September?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): That also is not a point of order but it was an interesting way to get a point of view injected into the debate.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, it is that kind of arrogance that we have seen from the government for some time now.

He stands and says "If you are not going to pass this by Friday then you are just not doing the right thing". Why Friday? I think we ought to talk about this. We ought to have the debate on it. We could probably get this through the House in the next two or three weeks. I do not see a problem. Certainly that is not my intent.

With this kind of rhetoric coming from across the House and this kind of interference, I do want to point out the Prime Minister's record in the House. It goes beyond the bill and beyond the member saying that if we do not pass it quickly we are against health care.

Let us look at what the Prime Minister has done. What did he do on Bill C-68, the gun bill? We had somewhere over a dozen Liberal MPs whose constituents told them to vote against the gun bill. They were going to do that and some did at the earlier reading. However, when it came to third reading what did the Prime Minister say? I will never forget what he said. He was in Atlantic Canada somewhere.

• (1715)

What did the Prime Minister say? He said "If you dare vote against our bill, even if your constituents want you to, we will punish you. I will not sign your nomination papers the next time if you want to run in the next election".

Does that sound like a democratic Prime Minister? No, that is not democracy. It is that kind of arrogance we have seen over the past five years. It is just not right. We will not sit here and take this kind of arrogance, these anti-democratic feelings and expressions of the Prime Minister, and just let them go.

On the GST, the member for York South—Weston said "You ought to respect the promise you made in the 1993 election to eliminate the GST". That is what the Liberals promised. The Prime Minister himself said on several occasions that he would get rid of the GST. Probably that helped him win that election.

When it came time to do something about it, the member for York South—Weston in talking about it asked what happened. He was kicked out of the party. He is sitting as an independent now. That is the way the democratic process works in the House.

In question and comment period another member mentioned the advertisements that are on television right now. They are funded by

taxpayers, not by members of the Liberal Party. They are trying to say how wonderful their record on health care is when in fact it is dismal. It is disgusting that they would use taxpayer money to fund partisan ads saying what a great job they are doing.

The brochures they sent out to seniors were disgusting. That is not the democratic process working properly. That is not an acceptable expenditure of taxpayer money. We will not stand by and allow these kinds of things to happen without raising them.

In terms of Bill C-45, my colleagues and I are certainly willing to let it go through quite quickly at second reading. We will get on to committee stage and third reading stage. Let us see what we can do to have proper debate on it and make sure that it is implemented properly. That is all we ask.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to raise a couple of issues about Bill C-45 with my colleague from the Alliance Party. Let me preface my comments by saying that I had expected by now we would be at work during committee of the whole trying to improve the piece of legislation.

So anxious was I that I almost amended the wrong piece of legislation. It had been our understanding that we would be using this afternoon to consider the bill clause by clause to improve it as much as possible within the limitations imposed upon us.

I share the concerns of my colleagues with respect to the haste with which the matter has been put before us and the lack of opportunity to have a comprehensive debate. Certainly it is a very disappointing situation when we have had so little opportunity to debate health care in the House to date.

We all understand that the legislation which implements the September 11 deal at the first ministers level is a small step in the right direction. Certainly there has been an indication to all of us that the first ministers across the country would like to see this step taken so that we can get on with the further work required to improve our health care system. Being uncertain about the timeline available to us, it is important for us to put that on record.

Members of the Alliance have clearly expressed their concerns about the bill. They have a platform document that does not go much beyond what the Liberals have presented, which is a base of \$18.7 billion for health care. Certainly it is hardly commensurate to the task at hand and needs to be addressed.

• (1720)

Therefore, would members of the Alliance consider supporting our efforts to try to amend the bill so that at least the base level of funding moves beyond the \$15.5 billion outlined in Bill C-45?

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Would they work with us to ensure that the increase in transfer payments allocated through the bill is at least added to the base so that by the year 2005, when the agreement is over, the base would have been raised to \$21 billion? This would provide us an increase in baseline funding and ensure greater responsibility on the part of the federal government for the overall burden of health care costs.

That is the amendment I was hoping to propose today. I am not sure if I will have an opportunity in the near future to discuss this in committee of the whole, but I would like to know, given the previous Alliance policy statements and presentation of the issues during this debate, if it would agree to support us in advancing this improvement to the bill.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, just to answer the hon. member very directly, we would certainly support that. The Canadian Alliance and the Reform Party before it called for increased funding to health care in every election platform we have ever run under.

Although it is important, we do not think that spending will solve the problem of health care. We have to find some new and innovative ways to improve the system, to allow the provinces to do that and not stand in their way at every opportunity. It is unfortunate the member is one of the people who has stood in the way of new ideas for improving health care along with the government. That really does not lead to making things better.

In terms of her question on whether we would support their amendment, we do support it. It is something for which we have been calling. Let us go beyond that.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting here listening to this debate. Members on the opposite side talk about the need to debate the bill, but I have not heard any substantive issues debated or any problems, proposals or constructive suggestions for the bill. It has been rhetoric.

The member for Winnipeg North Centre talked about her amendment which does not call for any additional cash compared with what is in the bill in front of us. The member for Lakeland agrees to support that. It provides no additional cash from what is in the bill as it stands.

Apart from being on television, on CPAC and whatever, what are their motivations? While Canadians are waiting for a billion dollars in a medical equipment fund that could buy needed medical equipment if the bill were passed, members opposite discuss abstract innuendo and rhetoric. I have not heard one significant critique of the bill, not one decent suggestion, not one substantive issue raised about it.

I come back to the member for Lakeland. If he is so concerned about the bill, I ask him to give us one constructive suggestion.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, talk about crocodile tears. If the member had done his homework he would know that this amendment would increase funding beyond what is in the current legislation.

The member wonders why he has not heard points of useful debate. It is because he has been too busy talking to listen. He is still talking rather than listening. If he would listen to what we are saying he would hear some points which are worth bringing out, which do add to the debate, and which will help inform Canadians about what is going on here and about what we are considering.

When the government came to office in 1993, federal funding to the provinces for health care was \$17.5 billion a year. It gutted that so that in 1994 it cut funding to \$14.5 billion a year with the plan it implemented. That is what his government did. Where has he been for the last seven years?

• (1725)

If and when the legislation passes it will return the funding level to \$15.5 billion a year. That is all it does. It does not even increase it to the level of funding when the government took office.

He has the nerve to say that what we are proposing will not increase spending from what they are proposing. That is not true. That is not accurate. I would ask the member to do his homework in the future.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have just a brief comment. When the member talks about not listening, one of the main reasons we are moving so aggressively on the bill is that the vast majority of Canadians told us to forget our political alliances and get this thing done, get it fixed. The member is also forgetting that tax points were transferred to the provinces.

Let me close with saying why we want to move the bill forward. We are concerned about their position. The member from Calgary, the finance critic, stated unequivocally that he supported private health care. Their current leader, while a member of the provincial government, advocated private health care. As long as we are in government that will not happen.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit: Mr. Speaker, where has the member been throughout this debate? Why have there been no Liberals speaking in this debate, or very few, until just now when something they do not like to hear tweaks them? The Canadian public is being told facts that they do not like to hear.

The absolute fact is that since 1993 the government has cut \$36 billion in health funding. The fact is that this deal returns only \$23 billion of that amount. Why are these members not standing up in the House and talking about that?

The member talks about tax points. Why has he not been standing in the House explaining what these tax points are? I would certainly welcome him doing that.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—POVERTY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The House resumed from October 16 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It being 5.30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment relating to the business of supply. Call in the members.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 1426*)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Alcock
Assad
Asselin
Axworthy
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes
Bélair
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)
Bevilacqua
Blaikie
Bonin
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cannis
Cardin
Casey
Cauchon
Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Coderre
Coppes
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
de Savoye
Desjarlais
DeVillers

Alarie
Anderson
Assadourian
Augustine
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Bertrand
Bigras
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Brien
Bryden
Byrne
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Charbonneau
Clouthier
Comuzzi
Cotler
Cullen
Davies
Debien
Desrochers
Dhaliwal

Supply

Dion
Doyle
Drouin
Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)
Duhamel
Earle
Finlay
Fontana
Gagliano
Galloway
Girard-Bujold
Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)
Goodale
Gray (Windsor West)
Gruending
Guay
Harb
Harvard
Hearn
Hubbard
Iftody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lavigne
Lee
Lill
Lincoln
Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Mancini
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mercier
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Mitchell
Murray
Nault
Nystrom
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patry
Perron
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Plamondon
Price
Proud
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Robinson
Rock
Sauvageau
Sgro
Solomon
St. Denis
St-Jacques
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Telegdi
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Turp
Valeri
Vautour
Volpe
Wayne
Wilfert

Dockrill
Dromisky
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Duceppe
Dumas
Eggleton
Folco
Fry
Gagnon
Gauthier
Godfrey
Godin (Châteauguay)
Graham
Grose
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hardy
Harvey
Herron
Ianno
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keys
Knutson
Lalonde
Laurin
Lebel
Leung
Limoges
Longfield
MacAulay
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
Marleau
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
Ménard
Mifflin
Minna
Muise
Myers
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Picard (Drummond)
Pillitteri
Pratt
Proctor
Proulx
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Rocheleau
Saada
Scott (Fredericton)
Shepherd
Speller
St-Hilaire
St-Julien
Stewart (Brant)
Szabo
Thibeault
Torsney
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Vanclief
Venne
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Whelan
Wood —215

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Bailey
Benoit	Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Casson
Chatters	Elley
Epp	Forseth
Goldring	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Hanger
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Konrad
Lowther	Lunn
Manning	Mark
Mayfield	McNally
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Penson	Reynolds
Ritz	Schmidt
Solberg	Stinson
Strahl	Williams —38

PAIRED—MEMBERS

*Nil/aucun

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment carried.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the main motion, as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the main 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 yeas have it.

An hon. member: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1805)

[*English*]

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

The House resumed from May 18 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of my colleague's Motion No. 155 which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should work towards incorporating a measure of proportional representation in the federal electoral system, making use of a framework which includes: (a) a report on proportional representation prepared by an all-party committee after extensive public hearings; (b) a referendum to be held on this issue where the question shall be whether electors favour replacing the present system with a system proposed by the committee as concurred in by the House; and (c) the referendum may be held either before or at the same time as the next general election.

I would like to congratulate my colleague, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, for bringing this issue forward. The member has been a champion both of reforming democracy and of bringing a measure of democracy before the House ever since he first became a member I believe more than 20 years ago. I want to say that it is this kind of outstanding work by one member of parliament that is a measure of what a person can do in the House and what can be accomplished.

I think it sometimes has been rather a lonely battle to take on this issue. I congratulate the member for having the strength and motivation to keep plugging away at the issue of making sure our democratic system is more representative and fair. It is an issue that perhaps Canadians do not fully understand, but when I talk to my constituents in East Vancouver and to other electors, I really understand that people feel alienated and very far removed from the political system. We only have to look at federal election results and voter turnout to see what happens in terms of people's alienation.

It used to be that when a federal election was called, 80% of those eligible to vote would actually go out and vote. That number has dropped. I believe in the last federal election it was down to about 67% or 69%. In my own constituency of Vancouver East it went even slightly below the national average.

Here we are today, in the House, poised to deal with the issue of proportional representation and days away from an expected federal election call on whatever issue the Prime Minister has dreamed up he wants to campaign on, when the very issue of democracy and fair representation has not been taken up by the government. I welcome the opportunity, days before what we expect to be an election call, to actually debate this issue. Hats off

to the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for having the strength to bring forward and never give up on the issue.

It is important to explain to Canadian voters what proportional representation is all about. Basically it is making sure representation in the House of Commons is proportional to the number of votes a party actually wins. That is the basic premise and that is the principle on which we are advancing this motion.

• (1810)

What it really means is that if a political party wins, say, 38% of the vote, which in actual fact is what the governing party did win, it would get only about 38% of the seats in the House of Commons. That is not what our experience is today. When we see what our system really does produce it is really quite astounding. I think it reinforces people's cynicism about the political system.

I would like hon. members to look at the numbers. In the last federal election the Reform Party got 19% of the vote and so did the Conservative Party. However, because of our system of basically first past the post, the Conservative Party got 19 seats and became the fifth party. The Reform Party, still based on the same kind of support within the Canadian electorate, got 60 seats and became the official opposition.

In terms of the other two political parties, the Bloc Quebecois and the NDP each got approximately 11% of the vote in the last federal election. What was produced in the House was astoundingly different. The Bloc Quebecois got 44 seats in the House and the NDP got 21 seats.

I think Canadians understand but they may not have thought it through in terms of the actual formula used. It begs the question, is this what democracy is about? Is this what representation means? To the hon. member who said yes, that is what it is about, I say he is dead wrong.

If we look at every other developed country in the western world there is some proportional representation. Judy Rebick, a well-known commentator on CBC, wrote in her column in May 2000, when this motion was first introduced, that Canada is probably the least democratic country in the developed world when it comes to elections. Democracy is defined in the dictionary as majority rule, and yet in all of Canadian history only two federal governments have actually won a majority of votes. I agree with her view. We are way overdue for a political debate on this issue. Astoundingly it has not been debated for over 75 years.

When I came to the House as a newly elected member of parliament I had strong ideals, which I still have, about working for my constituents and making a difference in this place. I am sure all 301 members of parliament feel that way. However, when we look

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at the system under which we operate and see how it is systemically designed to reinforce establishment party rule, I really think we have to challenge that status quo. We have to say to ourselves and to Canadians that if we believe in democracy and true representation of what people are actually voting, we must have the courage to stand and change that system and move to a system of proportional representation where people can ensure that every vote counts.

That is precisely what the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has designed this motion to do, to ensure that the voices of Canadians, no matter where they are in the country, are actually reflected in the House of Commons representation.

The motion actually talks about establishing an all party committee. I suggest that this is a very important element. My entire last community householder addressed the idea in "It's About Democracy". I talked about voting, the importance of the right to vote, and how in many places people have died for the right to vote. I actually included a whole section on proportional representation to get people's feedback. I have been amazed by the interest and the feedback from people who say they want to know more about it and how they can make sure it happens.

• (1815)

We are days away from an election based on the old established rules. As a consequence most people will be silent. Their votes will not be counted in a truly representational way.

As members of the House we have the opportunity to say we are willing to look at this issue, to make our parliament democratic and to make our voting system democratic. The 75 years of silence on this issue, other than the work our hon. member has done, is far too long to wait for true democracy.

I call on all members of the House to support the motion. At least let us have a good debate on it to see what kind of support there is from the public, because I think it is there.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I make the observation at the beginning that the reason why this has not been debated in the last 75 years is that the debate concluded 75 years ago with the conclusion that proportional representation is not anywhere near as democratic or efficient for democratic societies as what we do have in Canada, which is the first past the post constituency system.

I observe that the three most powerful democracies in the world, the three most efficient democracies in the world, the three democracies of which at least two of them have the greatest land masses in the world, have the simple plurality system that we inherited from the British parliamentary system.

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If we compare proportional representation around the world, the majority of countries that have that type of system, which basically involves a party leader being able to name people to seats based on the percentage of votes his parties received, we will find by and large that the countries whose democracies work most inefficiently and with the greatest amount of difficulty are those that have proportional representation.

There is a reason for this. There is a very clear reason. Proportional representation is great in theory but terrible in practice. The reason is that in the end it so slices up the result of an election that very rarely do we have anything but a minority government and too often we have a situation where not only do we have a minority government but the balance of power is controlled by a very few.

I point out that Israel, which is currently in the news right now, is a classic case of proportional representation. What happens is that a legislative assembly or a parliament is fractured among many parties. What constantly happens is that no single party can get enough of the seats by proportional representation, percentage of the vote, to form a government. In the end, very small parties, often parties with very extremist agendas, form the balance of power.

I think one of the barriers to peace in the Middle East, to some extent, has been the fact that successive Israeli governments have had a great deal of difficulty advancing agendas for peace when they have had very small splinter parties, which they are dependent upon to remain in power, that are very reluctant to advance the peace process, as the current government of Mr. Barak. I find he made a superb effort, but we do realize that he had to come to some very difficult alliances to even bring the peace process as far as it has gone now.

Let us leave Israel. We can go around the world and find countries such as Italy and many others in which proportional representation has led to successive governments that are extraordinarily weak and have constant elections. It is bad enough to have an election in less than four years around this place, but some of these countries with proportional representation have elections about every year, if not every six months.

• (1820)

To illustrate my point I do come prepared. I do have an example that should strike great interest. It is the results of the 1997 election when the Liberals did form the government. It was a very narrow majority. In fact the Liberal government only received 38.5% of the popular vote but obtained 51.5% out of 301 seats in the House. So a government was formed.

The mover of the motion would find that unacceptable. Let us just consider what would have happened had we had proportional representation instead of the by constituency voting mechanism that we have inherited from the British parliamentary system. Here

is what would have happened. I have a note here somewhere that I made. Had it been proportional representation in this parliament based on the 1997 election, two alliances would have formed based on the percentage of seats they would have obtained.

Let us suppose that one of those alliances would have been the Liberals and the NDP. The Liberals obtained 38.5% of the popular vote. The NDP received 11%, for a grand total of 49.5% entitlement for the number of seats. In other words, had the seats reflected the popular vote, then the Liberal and NDP coalition would have been entitled to only 49.5% of those seats.

Similarly we had the natural alliance formed around the Canadian Alliance, the Bloc Quebecois and the Conservatives. The figures are 18.8%, 19.4% and 10.7%, for a grand total of 48.9%. Of the five major parties in the House, neither natural alliance would have been able to form a government.

Where would the balance of the seats come from? There were three independents. In fact if the seats had been awarded according to the percentage of popular vote, enormous power would have been given to the two independent MPs who were sitting in this House. They would have had it in their power to determine whether it would be a government based on NDP-Liberal values or a government based on the more conservative or the more decentralizing philosophy that characterizes the Bloc, the Reform Party and the Conservative Party.

That is unacceptable. A country cannot be run when that kind of power is given to so few. What we have in our system is not fair, in the most literal sense, but it works.

When there is talk about democracy we do not simply talk about what is fair or what seems good on paper. We have to talk about what is good for the country and what is good for Canadians. What is necessary in any democracy is that we have a reasonable succession of governments that are able actually to carry out a mandate, if not for five years or four years, at least for three and a half years. In a system where there are two MPs holding 299 MPs to ransom, governments will rise and fall every six months, as indeed they do around the world with countries with this kind of problem.

There is another major problem with proportional representation which strikes near and dear to my heart. One of the problems is that in our current system the reason why there is a skew in the percentage votes is that if I win in my riding and another person wins in another riding I may win by 30%, 40% or 50%. It depends. Nevertheless I win in my riding and I come to the House representing the people in my constituency. It makes it very difficult for the Prime Minister or any party leader. If I come to the House I am not only here because of my party leader, I am also here because of the support I have received regionally in my constituency from my own electors.

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• (1825)

In the proportional representation system there are no constituencies, not usually. In the majority of them there are no constituencies. What happens is that once the party leader, as in the case in Israel and so many other countries, gets the percentage of the vote, he determines who takes his place in parliament. The difficulty is that means the party leader can hold his politicians together with an iron fist, whereas the reality here is that the Prime Minister has to be on a certain amount of good behaviour around here because he cannot easily fire backbench MPs like me.

The reality is that he can dismiss people from cabinet but he cannot dismiss people from their House of Commons seats. If he does, he may do it at his peril because—and the hon. member for York South—Weston is a good case in point—the leader may dismiss but the voters may return that person as an independent.

The thing that I find most appalling about the very thought of proportional representation is that in that kind of parliament I would not survive 10 minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, when I was at university, we had a debate on proportional representation in Canada and we had trouble finding people capable of justifying it within the system in which we live.

The Canadian parliamentary system, with all of its history, cannot be improved merely by introducing a new way of voting. What absolutely needs to be changed is the entire way the municipalities, the provinces and the federal government operate, and that cannot be done solely at the federal level.

I remember the New Democratic Party's talk of pure proportional representation. Among my professors here in Ottawa, and they were fairly leftward leaning, there was not a one who talked about pure proportionality. Technically, it is impossible to apply. Many impressive works have been written on this; I have looked up my old reading list. There are some very good books on proportional representation and a pure proportional system can never be implemented.

I also recall that some decades ago a number of provincial governments, a number of provincial parties, including our friends in the New Democratic Party and the Parti Québécois, proposed proportional representation. I will not address the Parti Québécois, but rather the NDP. Some provinces are governed by the NDP. There are medium and large municipalities that are governed by parties that are more or less left wing. I have not seen any example of proportional representation. That simply does not exist.

The other major problem with this private member's bill is that the Senate is completely overlooked. They do not want to talk about the Senate. It is like our friends from the Canadian Alliance who do not want to talk about the sovereignists in the House. They vote against motions because these motions are presented by sovereignists. There is respect for democracy, but that is another issue. The Senate is important. A few years ago, some discussions took place and some proposals were made about proportional representation for the provinces in the Senate. The Senate has a historical role that is not, of course, truly fulfilled. It must represent the territories, the larger territories such as the provinces, and the regions.

Instead of appointing friends as senators, we could use a system based on proportional representation to choose them. For example, the Canadian Alliance Party, the Bloc Québécois and all the other parties could be represented in the Senate. Without really changing the role of the Senate, each province would submit a list of names.

That is one solution but, here again, we are talking about lists and when we talk about lists it is as though we were undemocratic. What the NDP member told us earlier is that proportional is equivalent to democratic. It is not true because it is up to one person, the party leader, to decide whose name will be on the list. For example, in a riding, assuming we were to keep the same structure, if I lost the election it would mean that a clear majority, in a perfect system of proportional representation, had rejected me, their representative. That is not democracy.

• (1830)

During the 1990s, when the number of seats in the House was increased to represent Canada's demographic growth, there was talk of having a percentage, 250 members, for example, elected in the present system, and the remainder, some 50 members, elected proportionally.

Here again, with such a high risk of a minority government, and the set rules in the House of Commons on political party recognition—a minimum of 12 members of a party must be elected for the party to be officially recognized—the rule of a proportional vote could not be used. For example, if six members of the Green Party were elected, they would not have official status in the House. This is another problem of democracy.

The question of proportional representation must really be examined as a whole. First, there must be the assurance that the representative elected in a given region carries some weight, carries some of the political will of his community.

Instead of proportional representation, could we talk of a second ballot? Instead of proportional representation here in the House,

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each riding could hold a second ballot. That means that every member would have to have 50% of the votes plus one.

There would still be the risk of government inefficiency, because the strength of Canada and the provincial governments lies in the fact that when government is elected and given a mandate for a certain period, and more often than not in the case of a majority government, the government has a majority to give it the time to introduce bills, to take major decisions and to reach difficult decisions.

Could a second ballot or proportional representation not be used in the case of the committees? Perhaps. It is done. In that case, there is no list, but rather an ongoing system of appointments.

Clearly improvement is necessary. I say this often. It is like the Canadian constitution. The constitution is not just a couple of pieces of paper we stick in a drawer or display in a museum. The Canadian constitution has a daily and real impact on the life of every citizen, except that we do not have to modernize it because people do not want to talk about the constitution. There is no wish for a weekend constitutional conference.

If the country evolves, if people move with the times, perhaps this piece of paper should be updated as well. Naturally, this includes the role of MPs. It includes the way in which these men and women are elected. This automatically brings us to the Senate.

People want to abolish the Senate. Why? Because they say it is ineffective. Someone was telling me that two houses were better than one. In that case, the Senate must be given a role. Perhaps it could perform the role assigned it by the constitution, which also provides certain protections.

In the constitution, Quebec is given special status through its number of representatives in the Senate. This is important. What would proportional representation mean for the people of Quebec? What effect would it have on the francophones of the country? This has to be considered. We are still a minority and will have to keep fighting to preserve our language. That is where the Senate comes in.

As for the House, I must admit that we lost out a bit. In the constitution, Quebec has 75 seats, except that there is no section providing for an increase in that number, as Quebec did not then have the right of veto that it has in the Senate. With every passing decade, Quebec is losing political clout because it is losing ground demographically. Before anything is done about the little constitutional protection Quebec still has, there will need to be a constitutional conference in a lovely building surrounded by water and guarded by the RCMP.

These are therefore major constitutional changes and we need to think of present and future minorities. We must think about the role of the ridings, the role of the provinces and the role of the Senate.

What this motion is asking us to do is to discuss things. That would be fun, but the motion does not go far enough. There is no mention of the Senate.

• (1835)

It is conceivable that everyone could be elected by proportional representation and that there would still be an appointed Senate. Senators would be appointed by a government that would not be able to stay in power for more than six months.

Our system is not built that way. It is, first of all, a two-party system. There is a party in power and there is the opposition. This has been the third time in Canadian history that the opposition has been comprised of three or four parties. It certainly will not be the last. In our system, like that of Great Britain, the United States, like many major countries, if one really wants to talk about better representation, proportional representation cannot be applied to Canada at present. It is impossible.

So I say yes to virtue, but also to realism. I invite hon. members to look at what goes on internally. First of all, how can improvements be made in the other place? We could put in place certain improvements to the Senate without changing the constitution, because people want nothing to do with that. Unfortunately, it is a question of once burned, twice shy, particularly in Quebec.

Let us put in place measures that will improve the Senate, let us ensure provincial and territorial representation, and then later on improvements can be made to what goes on here.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is challenging the House and the government to make use of proportional representation. What I would invite him to do is to first meet with the provincial NDP governments. He might have more luck convincing his NDP brother than his Liberal distant cousin.

[English]

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to participate in this important debate on an aspect of our electoral system.

My remarks will begin with some observations on Canada's electoral system and tradition, then comment on the experiences of other countries and point out some considerations we should bear in mind on this very important issue.

Canada's electoral system is a model for democracies around the world. It is a well functioning system with a long history that Canadians support. Indeed, other countries have sought out our expertise in designing their electoral systems.

As we all know, Canadians elect members of parliament through a first past the post single member constituency system derived from the British electoral system. The first past the post system

encourages pre-election consensus building within parties so they might present broad platforms to appeal to the majority of voters. This also means that each of the 301 federal ridings is represented by the one candidate who receives the most votes in an election. That means that individual Canadians at the local level can elect an MP and have someone from their area who they can identify and contact on issues of importance to them.

Canadians have a tested election system that has provided us with strength in terms of stability and consensus building as well as local representation for individual Canadians.

There has also been debate on the reform of the existing system. There has been little broad based public debate on possible changes to our electoral system. Most of it has centred on the possibility of a directly elected Senate.

In 1979 the Pépin-Robarts task force on Canadian unity proposed that 60 supplementary seats be added to the House of Commons and that these seats be allocated to parties in proportion to their share of the popular vote. In the early 1980s the Quebec government considered and in the end rejected a regionally based proportional representation system.

More recently, the MacDonald commission in 1985 and the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee in 1992 recommended that members of the Senate, but not those of the House of Commons, be elected by proportional representation.

A system based on proportional representation in Canada would likely result in more minority governments, would make post-election coalition building a major step in forming a government, could give marginal parties disproportionate influence on national policies, and could exacerbate regional tensions by making it more difficult to build national consensus among all Canadians.

• (1840)

Such fundamental change in the electoral system would require broad public debate and public support and possibly a constitutional amendment, which I will comment on in a few moments.

I will now consider other countries' experiences. A number of foreign countries have incorporated proportional representation into their electoral systems. Several points are important to note.

First, there is a wide range of possibilities for proceeding with proportional representation. Second, other countries' experiences vary. For some, proportional representation has been costly and divisive, and in some cases, abandoned. Some of the advantages of proportional representation cited by its advocates include higher voter turnout, more voter choice and more diverse representation, with more women and minorities in the legislature and in government.

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However, a closer examination of the facts shows that these advantages are in fact not as clear-cut in actual practice. Indeed, proportional representation can be a complicated and costly system.

Now we have to take a look at constitutional considerations. Canada's constitutional provisions must be considered when assessing possible changes toward greater proportional representation. First, the constitution, sections 37 and 55, requires that provinces be proportionately represented in the House of Commons. Second, the Canadian tradition of one member representing one geographically defined constituency would probably be hard to change.

Any major public debate on changes to the electoral system which considers a greater degree of proportional representation could be expected to open up many other issues including: the question of representation of aboriginal peoples; distribution of seats, by province, by region, and urban versus rural; Senate reform; and roles, responsibilities and accountability of MPs elected from a party list. These issues suggest that a constitutional change might be required to proceed with proportional representation.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know, for me particularly, that I am very concerned about the distribution of seats by region, urban versus rural. We should be well aware of the fact that it is important that our rural areas in Canada are well represented in the House of Commons, as they are today.

Particularly in a province like Ontario it is very important that we continue to have diversified representation, that we continue to recognize the different issues in northern Ontario and in southwestern Ontario, the different issues that we have in urban centres versus rural centres, and the different issues in Burlington, as the member has just pointed out.

Every area has different issues and every area needs to have someone there who can respond to those issues, represent those issues, bring them to a national consensus and bring them to an area where we can work together to resolve these issues and define what they are.

There would be tremendous public debate on that very issue. I do not know how we would resolve it to the satisfaction of a minority of people who need representation. We cannot allow them to not be represented.

We also have to look at the importance of provincial representation and provinces, the distribution of seats and why and how the constitution was written, why certain guarantees were made, and we have to encourage development in those areas where they may not have large populations, such as the Atlantic provinces. We need to encourage and ensure that those provinces grow economically and grow in population. It is important that we look at that.

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When we look at other countries' experiences, it just does not hold up. One of the advocates says that it includes higher voter turnout, more voter choice and more diverse representation of women and minorities, but the facts say that is not happening. There are not those clear cut examples. They are not there in reality. In fact, it is a more expensive system. We have to look at what is working well in Canada, at why it is working well and at why would we want to change from what we have.

There is an opportunity after every national census to make representations on the boundaries of each riding and to discuss what should be included and what should not. Sometimes members of parliament themselves will go forward to make suggestions that would make their area larger or that would give their boundaries a higher population because they recognize that there are communities or centres of communities that need to be connected and need to be together. They need to be represented in a way that reflects the way in which they live and work together. We cannot just put a line down the middle of a community and expect them not to be insulted by that.

• (1845)

It is important that we continue to talk about and debate the system but it is important that we continue to have representation. I thank the hon. member for raising this issue. I know it was raised during the procedure and house affairs committee's consideration of election issues. I believe it would be premature of the House to pronounce itself on an issue as complex and far reaching as proportional representation or to have a national referendum on it at this point in time. I am therefore calling upon all hon. members to oppose this motion.

I would thank you for your wonderful job as Speaker in the House of Commons over these past few years. I have very much enjoyed having you in the chair and having the opportunity to work with you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Thank you for those very kind words.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to stand in the House of Commons to speak on the issue of democracy.

I congratulate the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for bringing forward this initiative. Frankly I am surprised. He has been reading our book. Is that not incredible? If one looks at the 75 principles on which our party was founded and the principles that now give us direction on how to represent our constituents in this wonderful House of Commons, one will read, in item 74 of those 75 guiding principles, the following:

To improve the representative nature of our electoral system, we will consider electoral reforms, including proportional representation, the single transferable

ballot, electronic voting, and fixed election dates, and will submit such options to voters in a nationwide referendum.

The hon. member is really a closet Canadian Alliance member.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: My motion came before your book.

Mr. Ken Epp: The hon. member claims that his motion came before our book. I rather doubt that. This happened quite a while ago. This is very similar to policies to which I have aspired ever since I was first elected.

What is democracy? That really is the question here. To me democracy is that system whereby we reflect, in the rules of our country, the will of the majority of the people as much as possible. There are times when that is not possible. Sometimes the majority of people simply do not like something when in fact it is a necessity. However, in a true democracy, if we come up to those kinds of situations I believe we need to be able to persuade the Canadian people, based on sound argument, that the measure is supportable. I have observed in my short lifetime that in those countries where a majority of the governed do not support the decisions made by their government the society usually deteriorates. We see sometimes total chaos in those countries.

What do we have in Canada? Do we have democracy? As I said, I am proud to stand in the House of Commons as representative for the people of Elk Island. In my party, the one I very proudly belong to, I have a mandate to represent the people of my constituency, whereas the other parties by policy have to vote the way they are told by their party leadership. In our party the rule is that when a clear consensus can be found among the people of the riding it is the duty of the member of parliament to represent the wishes of those people.

Contrast that with other parties where individuals who act contrary to party wishes get kicked out. They need to be represented in a way that reflects the way in which they live and work together. We cannot just put a line down the middle of a community and expect them not to be insulted by that.

• (1850)

Another thing that comes to mind with respect to a democratic system is that we are so far from it. It is incredible the amount of power we have vested in one person, the Prime Minister of the country. Right at the grassroots level the Prime Minister, as the leader of the governing party, can actually choose candidates in different constituencies at election time.

It is not required that the candidate be the person chosen by the people in the constituency. We have a number of situations where people aspiring to run to become members of parliament have been rebuffed by the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party. They have been told they cannot run even when they have won the majority of

votes at their meeting. Instead, the party in power states what people it wants. In some cases an election is not even held. The candidate is simply appointed.

We experienced this in Canada just last week when the Prime Minister effectively chose the member of parliament for one of the ridings in Newfoundland. It basically gave the people there no choice at all. He has been appointed to the cabinet of Canada without even having won an electoral seat in this country. To me that is not democracy.

The Prime Minister who chooses the candidates in the ridings is also the one who controls the members of parliament and tells them how to vote during each vote held in this place, that is, with the exception of the odd private member's bill, where members express themselves individually.

The Prime Minister controls the Senate. He appoints the members of the Senate, especially when there is a change of party in power, after a short length of time. We have experienced this since 1993 when the Conservatives held the majority in the Senate and when it served a very useful function, frankly. From time to time the Senate maintained a bill was not good for Canada and sent it back with amendments. However, after a while senators retired or passed away. They were replaced with Liberal appointees or liberally appointed. They now do the bidding of the Prime Minister in the other House.

There is no democracy in that. The Prime Minister appoints the candidates, appoints the Senate, and controls how they vote in both Houses. One could say that is really more of a dictatorship than a democracy. We must add to that the ability of the Prime Minister to appoint judges and commissioners to all the different commissions in the government. It goes on and on. We do not really have representative democracy.

With respect to proportional representation, the specific motion before us today, there are different kinds of proportional representation. The model I like the best is the one in which each constituency has a first past the post candidate. To me it seems fair that the person who got more votes than anyone else, not the one who came second or third, should represent the people of that riding.

However, there is a better way to do even that. In votes we should seriously consider having people express themselves in a preferential ballot and have the votes counted by computer. The person who has the fewest votes on the first level of choice would drop off the ballot. Every ballot with that person as a first choice would then go to the second choice. The process would continue until the person had a majority of the people in the riding. In that way we would not have a situation where there is a minority member. Eventually he or she would have the majority of the votes based on the first, second, third or fourth choice.

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The second model I like a great deal is the one in which we have the first past the post system, as now, but also members at large for perhaps each province. I do not think we would want to do this right across the country. It would cause a bit of a problem. However, in each province there could be a set-up in which each province has so many members of parliament elected from the constituencies plus so many at large. That number could be used in the proportional system to top up representation for each province. It would serve very well to balance out the powers.

• (1855)

Then the ultimate, and this was the argument from the Liberal side, was that we would have a minority government. A number of people have told me our best governments have been minority. In minority governments legislators have to actually engage in a fair amount of give and take, negotiating and accepting amendments to improve bills. We thus get better legislation. I think we would be much better served if governments had to do that negotiation on the bills and motions they brought forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address Motion M-155, which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should work towards incorporating a measure of proportional representation in the federal electoral system, making use of a framework which includes: (a) a report on proportional representation prepared by an all-party committee after extensive public hearings; (b) a referendum to be held on this issue where the question shall be whether electors favour replacing the present system with a system proposed by the committee as concurred in by the House; and (c) the referendum may be held either before or at the same time as the next general election.

I listened carefully to the eloquent speech by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on his Motion M-155, and while I find his arguments very interesting, I do not agree with his proposal. There are, in my opinion, very good reasons to keep our existing electoral system. That system is based on ridings, with each riding electing a member of parliament.

This means that a member of parliament has a great responsibility toward his constituents, who can vote against him the next time around. Similarly, voters can get rid of the government in office if they no longer trust it. The verdict is decisive in the case of a majority.

Moreover, as the only representative for his riding, a member of parliament is responsible for representing his constituents regarding any issue that comes before parliament.

Under the current system, a member of parliament must take into account a whole range of opinions. He does not speak only on behalf of his party. As the sole representative of his riding, he must

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try to correct all sorts of wrongs and he must take into consideration the interests and opinions of all his voters.

Thus, the role of a member of parliament is to fulfil the basic function of any political system, which is reconciling a large number of views.

We also saw that in some countries using an electoral system based on proportional representation, it can sometimes take weeks after an election before the government is formed. Also, once the government has been formed, often under a coalition integrating small specialized parties—not to say extremists—it is not in a position to maintain the confidence of the legislature.

Electoral systems based on proportional representation often require the establishment of a coalition between parties of diverging political views. A plurality system tends to lead to the formation of broad based parties bringing together members from different regions and linguistic and ethnocultural groups.

Proportional representation is likely to lead to a coalition government formed following in camera political negotiations and not as the result of balloting.

Some countries have realized that proportional representation exacerbates regional differences and rifts within societies and that the search for a national consensus on vital issues is accordingly complicated.

Finally, in our electoral system, voting is a simple act. The voter simply indicates the name of his preferred candidate. This permits the reduction of the number of spoiled ballots.

The vote count is quick and simple. Generally, only a few hours after the polls close, Canadians know which party will form the government and which will form the opposition.

• (1900)

Of course, even the best systems are open to criticism. However, we must not forget that Canada's political system is one of the most stable and democratic in the world. It serves as a model for many countries.

Our electoral system has stood the test of time, while remaining flexible in the face of change. Clearly this is a delicate and complex matter, which must be handled wisely, especially since there is nothing to indicate real public support for such a change.

Holding a national referendum on this issue is not warranted. This is why it would not be a good idea to carry this private member's motion through, and I would advise the members of all parties to oppose it.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your excellent work. I am most grateful to you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Thank you very much.

[English]

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on the matter before us. When we work internationally as Canadians on issues particularly related to getting better representation in houses of parliament around the world, it has been interesting to compare systems of government and whether proportional representation can improve the lot of women, for instance, in certain countries where the lists are very clear that it is male-female throughout the system.

We also have in Canada a fine tradition of very clear responsibility for certain ridings. It was interesting that the member for Elk Island suggested that was our first and only call when it has always been my understanding that a Canadian member of parliament is not responsible only to his or her constituents but to all Canadians. People in the riding of Elk Island have just as much right to call me. I hope everyone does not start to call me. My staff is very busy.

There is the aspect that when I make decisions or think about voting in parliament I also think about the impact of my decisions and the decisions of the government on people in Elk Island, men, women and children from all walks of life. That is a very important aspect of our system.

While the debate is quite interesting and we should certainly take the time to review whether our system of government is working for Canadians and how to improve it, if people take an objective look and try to avoid some of the silliness that we have heard in at least one speech tonight, they will say that Canadian members of parliament represent Canadians well, that there is a check and a balance in place, and that there are good reasons for our system to continue to exist.

If members look around, in 1993 this was the most multicultural parliament in a long time. We had far greater representation from the different founding nations and people who made up our country, new citizens, people who came to Canada for the first time. I am a child of immigrants. It is interesting that the Reform Party, which supports the motion, has the worst representation of women in parliament with just 3 of 50 or whatever seats it has.

It is worth it for us to examine different systems of government to see what works best in different countries, but our Canadian system works very well. Another challenge in looking at proportional representation is that there is no single system internationally. Perhaps there are other ways in which we can improve our institutions.

Certainly there has been a lot more support for motions. Just today most members of the House voted for a Bloc motion, although the Reform Party voted against it. There has been much

more liberty, especially on this side of the House, to encourage members to live up to their expectations and the expectations that Canadians have of them.

• (1905)

Our system, as I said, has worked well. We have clear accountability. We have a system where each of us, including the member for Essex, myself and, I am sure, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, has a very active constituency system.

We help our constituents on a day to day basis in our offices. We have wonderful staff members across the country who take the ideas from our constituents and give us the information so we can do our jobs better. We are able to provide value added service to them in being an advocate with various government departments and making sure that we change legislation that does not seem to be working effectively.

We have a good system in Canada. We have had a lot of improvements over the last number of years. I can assure the House that we in our caucus have great debates behind closed doors and come up with a united team having great representation across the country and a fine leader who allows us that debate.

[*Translation*]

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PEACEKEEPING

The House proceeded to the consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Pursuant to the order made earlier this day the House will now proceed to consideration of the motion that this House take note of possible Canadian peacekeeping in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the Minister of National Defence. I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to address the House for the first time in a role which I have now held for approximately eight hours. I feel it is an important opportunity as well to address the issue of peacekeeping.

The government fully supports the practice of parliamentary consultation on significant Canadian military deployment outside

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our country. In this context we are raising the question of Canadian participation in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, known as UNMEE.

Before I discuss the merits of Canadian participation in this mission I would like to offer a bit of background information. On June 18 of this year, following two years of periodic and bloody warfare, the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea signed the cessation of hostilities agreement under the sponsorship of the Organization of African Unity.

[*Translation*]

These two years of fighting came at a heavy cost. It is difficult to give an exact figure, but it is estimated that at least 120,000 people were killed. The hostilities forced some 1.4 million people to leave their homes during a drought. Canada cannot ignore the sad fate of these people.

[*English*]

The OAU called on the United Nations to play a vital role in ensuring that both sides respect their security commitments. The agreement further asks that a United Nations peacekeeping mission monitor a temporary security zone between the opposing armed forces.

The request from Ethiopia and Eritrea to the United Nations comes at an important time for peacekeeping. The recently released findings of the Brahimi panel point to major issues that need to be addressed by the international community to ensure that peacekeeping practices are effective and Canada will continue to be in the forefront of such reform.

What we do in support of UNMEE is an important demonstration that we are prepared to support, in real terms, innovative change. It is equally important that we demonstrate our support for Africa, underscoring that African states can expect our help in achieving a measure of security for our people.

Canada believes that the United Nations should be central to the maintenance of international peace and security. This belief has prompted us to support, again and again, UN peacekeeping operations. Canadians understand that for the United Nations to play a central role in fostering global peace the UN member states must step up to the plate and swing the bat.

Canadians also understand and demand that when our forces go abroad in the service of peace they do so under the aegis of a coherent game plan.

• (1910)

UN missions must have achievable objectives. They must have a mandate sufficiently broad to achieve those objectives, and they must have the human and financial resources necessary to operate effectively.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

That is why, in this debate on whether or not to send troops into Ethiopia and Eritrea, we must ask ourselves how this mission will help Africa and how it will strengthen UN peacekeeping, as well as take into account specific features of the mission's mandate.

Since June, the UN security council, of which Canada is an active member, has recognized the need to deploy a peacekeeping force in the region in order to prevent the resumption of hostilities. It therefore adopted, on July 31, Resolution 1312 creating the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

This resolution authorizes the deployment of 100 military observers with the mandate to ensure on site initial liaison between the parties, establish the mechanism for verifying the ceasefire and help with overall planning for the peacekeeping mission.

[English]

On the basis of the assessment mission, the UN secretary-general recommended the establishment of a peacekeeping force of 4,200 personnel; roughly 4,000 troops to establish and maintain the security zone, plus an observer force of about 220 personnel and associated support resources. The security council adopted a resolution authorizing this phase on September 15.

It is worth noting that since the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement there have been no reports of significant military skirmishes. In short, there is a peace to keep and both sides appear genuinely to want the agreement to work.

Moreover, UNMEE has a clear and achievable mandate. Its role is well defined and appropriate, and it will have the resources to do its job right. However, there is another aspect of the UNMEE mission that affords an important opportunity to bolster the capacity of the UN to advance and effect peacekeeping in line with the Brahimi recommendations.

Canada, in conjunction with several like-minded countries, has worked to create a new rapid deployment mechanism, the standby high readiness brigade or SHIRBRIG. The United Nations request for Canada to provide troops to UNMEE came within the context of deploying a SHIRBRIG battalion.

SHIRBRIG is a multinational brigade to be held at a high state of readiness and activated as required for chapter 6 operations with the United Nations. Reflecting our long held desire to build a capacity within the UN to deploy peacekeepers where they are needed in a timely fashion, Canada has participated in SHIRBRIG from its inception.

UNMEE provides the first test case for SHIRBRIG. The proposal before us is to send one Canadian company of about 400 troops within a Dutch battalion that would go to Ethiopia and Eritrea as

part of a SHIRBRIG deployment. This battalion would be joined by two battalions from other troop contributing countries.

As I noted earlier, as envisaged, an expanded Canadian role in UNMEE would be as part of a Dutch led SHIRBRIG battalion. The Netherlands has signalled that it would consider providing one SHIRBRIG battalion on the condition that a reliable and experienced peacekeeping partner would also participate in a significant way. The Netherlands therefore approached Canada and asked us to join it in a SHIRBRIG deployment.

I am pleased to say that the Dutch government has approved this proposal and the matter is currently before parliament in the Netherlands. Obviously Canada believes that the successful deployment of a Dutch led SHIRBRIG battalion would provide both concrete proof of the viability of the SHIRBRIG concept and momentum in the further deployment of a UN rapid reaction capacity called for by the Brahimi panel.

I would like to point out that Canada has already played a role in the initial stages of UNMEE. Canada contributed one Canadian forces lieutenant-colonel as UNMEE's chief operations officer and a further five officers as military observers, but now the UN has asked us to consider a greater involvement. The government proposes that the Canadian armed forces provide a mechanized infantry company group, a necessary national command and engineer and logistics support, estimated at 400 personnel.

• (1915)

This may also involve a requirement for an initial engineering surge of up to 200 personnel to help establish infrastructure. The Canadian contingent would operate as part of a Dutch led battalion under the UN field headquarters. The headquarters would have as its core the SHIRBRIG headquarters staff to which Canada has committed seven officers.

Exact Canadian troop numbers would be determined following further discussions with Dutch authorities and a strategic reconnaissance mission to the area. Variables include the nature and scope of Dutch logistical support, the precise location of Canadian deployment, the quartering arrangements Canadian personnel would use and the extent to which costs would be offset by UN funding.

Therefore, endorsement of this proposal before us will allow Canada to accomplish several things. First, it will allow us to contribute in a meaningful way to regional peace in East Africa. Second, it is an opportunity to demonstrate that the UN can achieve its peacekeeping objectives when a mission is given an appropriate mandate and sufficient resources. Third, it will underscore the ability of the international community to support organizations such as the OAU in developing African solutions to African problems.

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We will be in good company doing a necessary job for a fixed period of time, and then coming home. Canadians should embrace this opportunity to show we are serious about helping African countries in need and supporting the UN's role.

I would like to leave the House with this thought from Benjamin Franklin, who said "There was never a good war or a bad peace". Let us act as agents of peace in the Horn of Africa.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join our new Minister of Foreign Affairs in discussing with the House this evening the possible Canadian peacekeeping activities on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The minister has spoken about the diplomatic efforts in the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity with respect to bringing peace to this region. I would like to further discuss the matter in terms of supporting our interests as well as our values as long standing participants in peacekeeping efforts with the United Nations and around the world.

[*Translation*]

Peacekeeping speaks in a concrete and active manner to the values most dear to Canadians: peace, democracy, human rights and compassion.

[*English*]

Canadians have been and remain prepared to join other nations to better the world, whether in Africa, Asia, Central America, the Balkans or the Middle East. We want to participate in helping to bring peace and stability in the world. This is in our interest as Canadians to continue to help the United Nations to carry out these missions.

Five years ago Canada completed a study on how to improve the United Nations rapid reaction capability. A key recommendation is materializing in the form of SHIRBRIG, the standby high readiness brigade. The concept behind SHIRBRIG is to provide the UN with a readily deployable brigade to support UN operations. Its job is to react quickly to get a UN presence established and then to make room for a UN follow-on force.

The United Nations mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, UNMEE for short, would mark the first deployment of SHIRBRIG. The core of the UN mission's headquarters planned for UNMEE would consist of military headquarters staff from SHIRBRIG. Canada has committed up to seven officers to the planning element of this staff.

The UN force commander is expected to be the Dutch brigadier-general currently in command of SHIRBRIG. We now have an opportunity to advance our goal of enhancing the UN's rapid reaction capability.

• (1920)

Let me now turn to the mandate of this mission. The UN security council resolution 1320 of September 15 authorizes the peacekeeping mission to monitor the cessation of hostilities in a temporary security zone along the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

UNMEE would consist of up to 4,200 troops, including up to 220 military observers. The resolution also authorizes the deployment for a period of six months.

The Canadian forces can make a meaningful contribution to this mission. Our contribution would consist of a mechanized infantry company, including a company headquarters and three infantry platoons equipped with armoured personal carriers. It would also have engineer and logistics support and other combat services support units. It may also include a reconnaissance platoon equipped with our Coyote vehicles. All of the equipment we will be sending on this mission will be the best state of the art equipment that can be provided.

The total number of personnel will be about 400 and they will be there for a period of no more than six months. The United Nations is well aware of our commitment with respect to the six month timeframe.

The Canadian forces would be deployed within a Dutch battalion and under the operational command of a Dutch battalion commander. Canada has worked closely with the government of the Netherlands on this proposed mission. I have met with my counterpart on two occasions with respect to this, and the Dutch parliament, as the foreign affairs minister has indicated, is currently considering this matter. Our approval is tied to their approval since the battalion is a joint effort.

I have discussed with the chief of defence staff, General Baril, the risks involved in this mission and the impact on the Canadian forces. While the military risk is assessed as low, the health and environmental risks, including the threat posed by land mines and unexploded munitions, are of greater concern. To better assess these risks we are sending a strategic reconnaissance mission to the area. Before the government deploys Canadian troops on this proposed mission, the chief of defence staff must be satisfied that logistics, medical and security arrangements are acceptable.

I know that members of the House are concerned about the impact of the high operational tempo of the last few years on the quality of life of the Canadian forces.

[*Translation*]

As Minister of National Defence, I have made improving the quality of life of the men and women in the Canadian forces one of my main priorities.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I can assure members that we have taken this into consideration in our planning. With the reduction in our personnel overseas, from over 4,000 a year ago to some 2,500 today, the pressure is certainly much less.

Having carefully weighed these and other factors, and pending the final military advice of General Baril, I believe that Canada should make available the mechanized infantry company group of about 400 personnel as I have outlined.

We have a real opportunity and the capability to make a difference in Africa. We have an opportunity to enhance the UN's reputation as a force for peace and we have an opportunity to build on our peacekeeping legacy. In short, we have the chance to do justice to our words, our values and our policies. That is why I ask the House to support the proposal to deploy the Canadian forces to a UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I want to reflect on the comments of the chief of defence staff. I think he spoke with some bluntness this week, saying that the Canadian forces will have to cut personnel further and cannibalize its own operations to purchase new equipment. That is just to keep things afloat. Looking at the auditor general's report that came out today, it is very clear that there will be substantial reductions again in military capability.

• (1925)

The government has a history of deploying troops and stretching them to the limit every time a conflict comes up. One has to ask whether it is the defence minister or the foreign affairs minister who actually gives direction to the military on whatever he decides should happen. This is not to say that there are not conflict areas in that world that do need attention, but I am concerned about our troops.

I am concerned about the number of deployments they have had. I have not heard much as far as assurances from the minister that those concerns will be addressed other than making this commitment. We are in the middle of a take note debate but the decision to send them has already been made, which does concern me.

What does the minister plan on doing? Does he plan on stretching the troops even further, to the point where something else will give? The chief of the defence staff has made clear note that there are problems with the budget as it sits and now the minister is committing our men and women even further.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton: Madam Speaker, the hon. member has once again misread the comments made by the chief of the defence staff, or even the auditor general for that matter.

The auditor general has noted in his report that we have made substantial progress in providing the kinds of equipment and

resources needed by the Canadian forces. The chief of defence staff also said, in the same articles that the hon. member seems to be reading, that we are more combat capable today than ever before and that we are ready for these kinds of missions.

The hon. member should also listen to the remarks I made a few moments ago in terms of the operational tempo of the Canadian forces. We had over 4,000, a very high operational tempo a year ago. It is down to 2,500 today, to a great extent because of our rationalization of our forces in the Balkans.

It is at a much more manageable level because the government is concerned about the quality of life of our troops and wants to make sure that in fact there is a period of time between these rotations, so that they are not being stretched and over stressed, as we are all concerned that they not be.

While the Alliance Party only talks about matters, we have taken action. We have put more money into the defence budget this year to help make sure we do have the equipment. That is why when they go to Eritrea and Ethiopia they will have the best equipment that anybody could have, modern, up-to-date equipment. It is because of the actions of the government while the Alliance Party only talks.

Mr. Art Hanger: Madam Speaker, the concluding point in the auditor general's report—and I believe this is incumbent upon government to inform the House of exactly the state of our military—is this:

In summary, there is a need to provide Parliament with a more complete picture of the capabilities of the Canadian Forces.

To listen to the rhetoric coming from the minister one would think otherwise, but the truth of the matter is that the auditor general, as are many Canadians now, is very concerned about the state of our military and the deployment of our troops overseas.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton: Madam Speaker, we have new Coyotes, new armoured personnel carriers and new combat clothing for an environment such as Eritrea and Ethiopia. We have provided so many new things to our troops that it is a very clear demonstration of our commitment to make sure that when we send our troops there they will be properly equipped. Parliament is being consulted on this occasion and will be consulted on many occasions with respect to meeting those particular needs.

• (1930)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Calgary Northeast.

I would like to welcome the new foreign affairs minister to his position. I have no advice to give him other than to read deeply for several weeks before he wanders into that portfolio. As somebody who is fairly new to this, I have discovered how complicated it is.

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I will not suggest that I am going to edify the House greatly with what I have to say tonight, but I do want to issue a few cautionary notes about what the government is proposing to embark upon.

Canada is proud, and rightly so, of its record in peacekeeping. As a Canadian citizen I am very proud of what Canadian soldiers have done in their role as peacekeepers over the last 44 years since former prime minister Pearson invented the idea of peacekeeping. Soon I will be able to present a peacekeeping medal to one of the people who works in my office in my riding. I am quite proud of that fact and he is very proud of the role he has been able to play as a peacekeeper in the past.

It is something that Canadians generally support. We like the idea that Canada has played a very productive role around the world as peacekeepers in the past.

That said, Canadians are rightly concerned about some of the things that have happened in the past and which give us pause when we consider moving into some of these new trouble spots such as the mission that the government seems ready to embark upon, the mission where we would essentially patrol the buffer zone between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which is 25 kilometres wide.

This is a situation where there has been, as the foreign affairs minister pointed out, tremendous bloodshed over the last few years. There have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of 100,000 or 120,000 people killed and 85,000 to 100,000 displaced. In some cases people are in jeopardy of not having enough to eat this fall. It is a pretty desperate situation.

We also know that in the past when we have gone into the continent of Africa we have had huge trouble in some cases. I think of Zaire, where peacekeepers sat on the tarmac for a month trying to figure out what exactly they were doing there because seemingly on a whim the Prime Minister decided that peacekeepers should be sent there. I think of course of Somalia. Who could forget Somalia and the disaster that was? It spawned an inquiry that ultimately never did get to the root of the problems, an inquiry that the government cut short.

Most tragic of all, of course, was Rwanda. That was a terrible situation. Roméo Dallaire sat helplessly and watched the genocide that took place there while he tried to alert the rest of the world to what was going on. Ultimately the UN failed him, frankly, in that situation.

The reason I raise some of these cases is not to suggest that Canada should not go on peacekeeping missions into Africa but that we should go with our eyes completely open. We have challenges that I am not certain the government has considered yet. I do not think it has addressed some of the questions that have been raised.

My friend who just spoke and questioned the defence minister has pointed out that Canada has been involved in a lot of peace-

keeping over the last many years, at a time when the government has cut deeply into our ability to provide equipment for our personnel, at a time when the government has cut the number of personnel dramatically. There were about 10,000 people out of uniform in the last seven years and about \$10 billion to \$11 billion removed cumulatively from the defence budget over the last seven years. That is a lot of money and a lot of personnel to remove and still maintain the same levels of peacekeeping that we have been maintaining. It was not very long ago that we consolidated our troops in the Balkans because we were overextended. It was hurting morale in the military.

It seems like we cannot say no to missions. We are just now starting to get back on our feet. We are just now giving our military personnel a chance to collect themselves and get used to having a bit of time to spend with their families in many cases. Right away again, though, the government is committing us to another mission. It commits us without answering some fundamental questions.

• (1935)

We point out that Ethiopia-Eritrea in the Horn of Africa is a tremendous distance from Canada. How do we support these people when they are that far away? Let us remember that we do not have the airlift or sealift capacity we should have. We do not have a lot of capacity in our military because we have let our military run down so much. How do we reinforce those people? How do we support them? How do we withdraw them if there is trouble?

We know that there can be trouble in Africa. That is one thing we have learned over the last many years. Even when we do not expect it, all of a sudden there can be trouble. When we talk about trouble in Africa we are not talking about skirmishes but about the sorts of things that have happened in Somalia and Rwanda and the sorts of things that happen today in Congo. We are talking about terrible messes, terrible situations, so we need to be assured that we have the ability to reinforce those troops, to supply them and to get them out if there is the type of trouble we are talking about. We have heard no reassurance from the government that we have that capacity.

Next, as I have already mentioned, we are in a situation where we are already extended about as far as we can go. What happens if we are asked to intervene in places like the Congo? Are we to send more people over? How will we deal with that sort of situation? It is not clear to us what the government's intentions are. Obviously this is something that is on the government's radar screen, but we need to have that kind of information before we can say yes. The government has said clearly that we would not be involved in the Congo, that we would therefore commit these troops only to Ethiopia-Eritrea. That is an important thing, which we need to know. We have not heard that yet from either one of the ministers.

My final point is that while I appreciate the chance to speak tonight to this issue, I resent the suggestion that somehow we are

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influencing the government's policy on this issue and somehow influencing their decision on whether Canada will go. It is all but assured that Canada will go.

The minister mentioned a moment ago that the Dutch parliament will consider this. Maybe in that system members actually do consider it. That would be a great thing, but I have a niggling suspicion, which is borne out by past experience, that this debate really will not influence the decision very much. That is regrettable. A lot of people who are here have some valuable points to raise. We would see this place full if people thought they could influence the government's decision making. Unfortunately they do not, and that is reflected in how many people will speak to the issue tonight.

I will conclude my remarks with that. I urge the government to consider some of the questions I have raised. It is for those reasons that the Canadian Alliance is very reluctant to suggest that Canadian peacekeepers should go to Ethiopia-Eritrea to be involved in this mission. We need more information. We do not have it. It is for those reasons that we would oppose that action at this time.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is not just the discussion of Canadian peacekeeping deployment to Ethiopia but other conflicts in the world that have given rise to a take note debate in the House.

It is always interesting that the feedback from the government side to the opposition and to the Canadian people does not appear to lend itself to a true debate on this issue or any others when it comes to deployment. The decision has been made, pure and simple, so in a sense all we are really doing is offering a viewpoint that will not go much further than the statements made here in the House and which certainly will not influence any decision on that side.

● (1940)

I am concerned that the Liberal government continues to commit our troops to overseas duty despite almost daily warning signs that the Canadian military is on the verge of collapse when we talk about combat capability. The chief of defence staff was uncommonly blunt this week, declaring that the Canadian forces will have to cut personnel again and cannibalize their own equipment to purchase new equipment.

I want to go back to the auditor general's report, because I think the Canadian people should be well aware of what in fact will happen and what is presently happening.

We can talk about the navy issue. It is going to lose part of its operating budget and will cut back on two Kingston class maritime coastal defence vessels. It will retire minesweepers.

The air force has already removed eight of its 14 Challenger jets. In addition, two Dash 8 aircraft were declared surplus. It has called for a 10% reduction in infrastructure from its component parts.

The business plan of the individual services for the 2000 planning year indicates that additional reductions are planned. The air force faces the largest cuts. The CF-18 fleet will be reduced from 122 to 80. Overall, the air force will shrink from 460 aircraft to 257.

The situation in the army has not been addressed yet. The army has not yet determined how it will restructure itself, but it could also face significant reductions in its order of battle.

That is the complete picture. Of course there is no indication of downsizing, but that is on its way also.

Why? It all comes down to the issue of funding. The government really refuses to address that point of keeping our forces combat capable. If that is the purpose of having the military, the government has reneged on its duty.

The limited cash infusion contained in the last budget was just enough to pay off some of the backlog of bills. The vicious cycle of defence planning and spending continues in the country, yet the government continues to ship more troops overseas. Quite a number just came back from East Timor not too many months ago.

I would like to ask the government how much planning, both of a tactical and a strategic nature, has been invested in this mission. We have committed ourselves to UN missions before without considering the long term requirements or expectations, like the list my colleague from Medicine Hat clearly pointed out, with some situations like Zaire.

I believe the government just does not get the picture when it comes to what our military is all about. In fact, it has insulted our military from time to time, even to the point of referring to our peacekeepers as boy scouts. I think that is an insult. Really, they are far from being boy scouts.

The point remains that the government continues to support peacekeeping missions because we have always supported peacekeeping missions. No consideration is given to the fact that there are half as many people in uniform in 2000 as there were in 1970. We are deploying beyond our means.

The government has worked hard to promote and project an image of peacekeeping and our peacekeepers that is blatantly false and that needlessly places our military personnel in harm's way if they do not have adequate equipment.

● (1945)

Peacekeeping no longer follows the Cyprus model where Canadians stood in observation posts with binoculars and surveyed the

uneasy but verifiable peace. For the past decade the UN has sent peacekeepers into countries where there is no peace to keep or where the one that does exist is exceedingly vulnerable.

We have been sending our soldiers into war zones and blithely asking them to keep the peace, and it has not happened. The government's insistence that these operations are peacekeeping as usual has created a sense of false comfort as Canadians think their military personnel are enjoying six months in some foreign land with little or no danger. Moreover the government has failed to equip the troops it does send.

That brings us to the point of clothing the soldier. It is far from complete and well behind its deadline, leaving them without even the basic kit requirements. They have been forced to beg supplies and material from our allies in the field.

The larger equipment requirements have also proven a constant source of failure and embarrassment for the government. Our lack of sealift and airlift capability has meant that we cannot move our personnel or our equipment on scene without relying on contracted out services. All we have to do is reflect back to the *GTS Katie* to realize how unreliable some of those services can be, with disastrous implications to this country.

Canada is consistently late in regard to deployment because we lack the necessary deployment resources. Our military personnel are forced to work with equipment that is often not interoperable with our allies. Kosovo was an example. We just barely fit into the communications band with our allies and they were required to adjust to meet our lower standard.

We have no extraction capability, and this is becoming more and more important. If our troops were involved in some conflict and needed to be removed, there would be no opportunity to do that because we just do not have that capability. There are no resupply options. There is no reinforcement plan.

We have been fortunate thus far that our international friends have been so willing to lend us a hand under these circumstances, but surely a country such as Canada should not have to rely on military charity for its military forces to function. There must be a limit somewhere.

It is time to answer UN deployment calls within the context of national interests. The member for Medicine Hat clearly pointed out what should be our national interest. Is it every conflict which comes along that we are asked to participate in and we do it in an ad hoc fashion? Or, is it something that we define as our basic interest and that is where our priorities lie? That has never come from that side of the House, and it is high time it does.

We cannot respond to every crisis, especially given the government's complete lack of resolve to provide consistent funding to the Canadian forces.

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Members of our forces have been deployed in some of the most difficult of situations and have never complained. It is the responsibility and moral duty of the government of the day to look after those needs, and I would have to say it has failed to do so.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it indispensable to take part in this debate. I must say that I have just heard some surprising words.

My new colleague from Medicine Hat, the foreign affairs critic, seemed more concerned with adding to the argument of his colleague, the defence critic, than giving the foreign affairs point of view.

• (1950)

Yes, it is true much needs to be done here, but much is indeed being done, and we know that at this time there is one fundamental issue for peace: that the UN regain its credibility. This is something that affects all countries that have the means to participate, and Canada is among them.

The people on the other side of the floor with all their surpluses are not going to say whether the means need re-examining. I know that they do not. What is the government asking? Compliance with the UN request to provide 400 military personnel, under chapter VI, to this mission, that is, to send in some Blue Berets, infantry and armoured equipment in a context in which there would not be any peace if the UN had not guaranteed to occupy the disputed border area between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The peace agreement was signed on June 18. We were no longer sitting by that time.

It would have been a good idea if the question had been submitted to us before the UN accepted. Perhaps the UN committed itself without knowing the direction this mission would actually take.

I am pretty well convinced, however, that Canada would have agreed to participate in this mission after it weighed the situation. It is more than participation, since the UN is asking Canada to take on the responsibility of managing the mission, along with the Netherlands.

I would have liked to tell my colleagues who are concerned about these issues—and we are also concerned about the plight of Canadian troops—that since the ceasefire, since June 18, we have found, based on our research, that the ceasefire has been respected by both sides. In a way, this is a peacekeeping mission that meets requirements that had not been met in a long time.

It is a peacekeeping mission that is not at all like the one in Sierra Leone, not at all like the one we need to have in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where fighting is taking place

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everywhere, and also not like the peacekeeping mission in East Timor. It is a situation where the ceasefire will be respected. Even the end of the rainy season did not result in renewed violence. There has been tension, but no violence.

When we assessed the situation, when we looked at the troops available, when we took into consideration soldiers who had returned from a mission and had already had a respite—because that is important—we realized that we were able to take part in this mission.

I want to go back to the UN's credibility, to this notion that is based on what happens in the area of foreign affairs. We must remember the failure of UN troops in Sierra Leone, the dismal failure of peacekeepers in Sierra Leone. We must remember what happened in East Timor, where a referendum held under the aegis of the UN left the population at the mercy of mistreatment, fire, destruction and abuse from adversaries who had not accepted the clear verdict of that referendum. The population is still waiting for the reconstruction process.

Who followed what happened in Rwanda? Of course, we do not even talk about it. However, in these new missions, the UN must demonstrate that it can be effective.

• (1955)

Who is the UN, if not all the countries that make it up? It is the member countries, ultimately. We cannot point a finger at Kofi Annan. Of course there are problems of administration in the UN. We can single out examples of overspending, yes, but the collective responsibility of the member countries with respect to peace lies ultimately with each individual nation.

I would like to speak briefly about Africa in connection with what is going on in the world. Africa is the poorest continent, the one which is now the stage for terrible conflicts in countries that are poor and growing poorer.

There is the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where eight African nations are battling each other. It is being called Africa's first world war. Africa is in a terrible state and the UN has frankly done little to help.

Perhaps help is not possible, but that was not the impression given by General Dallaire at the time. On the contrary, the poor man is now personally tormented by what he experienced of the UN's failure to act. He says that what has become a terrible human tragedy, this genocide, could have been avoided.

With respect to the request being made, once again, I repeat that it does not come under chapter VII, which provides for armed troops who can defend themselves, but chapter VI concerning peacekeepers. This is in a situation where there is already a ceasefire. Canada's commitment is not an unlimited one. As I understand it, it is limited.

Not only is it limited because the defence minister has said he made that clear to the UN, but it appears to be limited by the situation itself. What this peacekeeping force will allow is a negotiated peace.

Permit me to recount some of the troubled history of this region. Eritrea is a new country. It became a country as the result of a referendum on self-determination overseen by the UN in the spring of 1993. At that time, it became an independent country. We knew at the time that there was a border problem. Let us say that cartography is not the best equipped department in a country that lacks everything, one of the poorest countries on the planet.

The borders were not a big problem for several years. The region is sparsely populated and has no natural resources. In any case, relations between the two countries, Eritrea, which I have just mentioned, and Ethiopia, which it separated from, were more or less satisfactory. Trade disagreements arose, but it was in 1996 that there were new disagreements.

In 1998, the Ethiopian parliament declared war. We all saw the terrible images because these countries found themselves at war in this situation. Because of this war, and not because Eritrea is not self-sufficient in food, the land could not be cultivated as it ought. This war just ended in June.

We are being asked to allow peace to be negotiated and agreed to.

The Bloc Québécois, members will have understood from what I have said, supports this mission. We support it because our general council adopted a resolution this spring calling for the UN to agree to act as a buffer between the two borders.

• (2000)

I neglected to mention the importance of understanding that there is a zone 25 kilometres wide and more than 1,000 kilometres long that both parties want to see protected by the UN peacekeeping mission.

Why? Because the border between the two countries, the one being preserved by the UN, which was the original line at the time Eritrea was separated from Ethiopia, is not well known. It is being discussed.

While this border is being marked out, the mission in which we are going to take part, I hope, will make it possible to preserve the peace.

Since the general assembly of the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of such a resolution, we are pleased to see Canada participating in a mission that will put it into place.

Second, we understand that there is a lot of mine removal to be done. This land, which is poor and in many areas dry, and lacking in natural resources as well, has been mined. There is much work to be done to remove the mines.

When I accompanied the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the time to Kosovo, I saw with my own eyes how soldiers were helping out, helping groups, companies or community undertakings that were going to do the de-mining.

It is therefore our understanding that there is a considerable humanitarian aspect to the UN mission. For those who may be watching, I should point out that the UN mission is going to be called UNMEE, which stands for United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Third, it seems extremely important to us that the UN and Canada, which was invited to participate and which has the means to do so, take part in that mission, precisely because this new country, Eritrea, has become a country following a referendum held under the aegis of the UN.

Therefore, it is not possible for the UN not to help that region, that new country called Eritrea, which separated from Ethiopia, define its borders. It is important not only for that country but also for the future. It is the UN's duty to intervene.

Fourth, it is interesting to know that the ceasefire agreement provides for the implementation of a peaceful dispute settlement process, including arbitration if necessary, to define borders. This means that the conflict will be limited in terms of its duration.

I should add something that is more comforting. The two sides agree on one thing: under international law, Eritrea's border will have to be the same as it was when it achieved independence, and this excludes any partition, whether through a referendum or armed intervention.

Naturally, as a history teacher and a committed individual when it comes to the right of peoples, I am pleased to see that both sides agree on that, under the UN's authority. That country comes all the more under the responsibility of the UN, and of Canada, which was invited to take part in that mission.

Fifth, I repeat that, unlike most conflicts where peacekeepers are present, this conflict has every chance to be limited in terms of its duration. As soon as the peace accord is reached, the UNMEE will no longer have any reason to exist.

• (2005)

It is much simpler—and it has seldom been possible in recent missions in which Canada took part—to say that the mission is limited in duration. The Canadian army is now in a position to participate in the mission. There are 2,500 Canadian Blue Berets in the world. With the exception of the 192 on the Golan Heights, Canada is not very involved in the most difficult missions right now. There are ten Blue Berets in Jerusalem, five in Iraq, five in

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Sierra Leone, two in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and three in Timor.

The largest contingent is in Bosnia where, despite everything, there is relative peace, particularly since the recent election in Serbia. UNMEE is therefore coming at the right time.

For all these reasons, and I hope the member for Medicine Hat will come around, I say on behalf of the Bloc Québécois that we hope that Canada will take part in this mission. I would, however, emphasize that prior consultation would have been preferable.

Given the circumstances, however, I think that the government should perhaps have recalled us during the summer in order to consult parliament, but I understand that there were circumstances in which Canada was being pressured and that it was urgent to reply to the two countries concerned.

We have been told of the terrible situation they faced, of the more than 100,000 dead, of those who were displaced, and of all those of whose suffering we were not reminded but who faced starvation and other woes.

Whenever Canada comes to us with a responsible decision which bolsters the credibility of the UN and is consistent with the health and safety of troops from Quebec and from Canada, we will be there.

In conclusion, during my first term of office, before my riding boundaries were changed, the Longue Pointe military base was in my riding and I met with a number of officers who were very proud of Canadian skills and very unhappy about all the disappointments that had befallen the army.

I understand that our troops are proud when they can demonstrate their skills. The Canadian army needs this pride given what it has gone through as an organization. I am not talking about responsibilities to be distributed, but troop morale.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased and welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the NDP to the issue of Canada's role in the peacekeeping mission to Eritrean-Ethiopian border. Like other members of the House, I am very proud of Canada's record in the world of peacekeeping and what our men and women have accomplished and will continue to accomplish in this field.

Just this past week I had the honour of attending a reunion of the veterans of the Princess Louise Fusiliers regiment. It was very encouraging to attend their special ceremonies. I had the honour of presenting Mr. George Cameron, one of the veterans in my riding of Halifax West, with a special service award, a peace bar for

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service he performed in Korea, and to see the pride and joy on his face with which he accepted that medal, even though it had come many years late. There were some problems in getting the medal to him, but we were finally able to do so and he was very pleased with it.

• (2010)

I was also pleased to see at the ceremony the current regiment of the Princess Louise Fusiliers on parade. I was quite impressed with the composition of that reserve unit. Minority group people and young women were represented in that unit. Young women were marching proudly. It shows we have made some advances over the years and that we are gradually improving the situation with respect to our military.

It was particularly encouraging when the regiment called up the veterans and they stood side by side on parade. The younger and older generations were side by side, proudly displaying their feelings of having provided service to our country in a very meaningful way.

Turning to the particular mission, I underscore that on this occasion I am quite pleased to see that this is a UN sponsored mission. It is somewhat different from the conflict in Kosovo which was primarily NATO driven and dominated by U.S. intervention. I made the point forcibly during the debate on that issue, but on this issue I am pleased to see that this is a UN sponsored mission, which is where I think these kinds of international conflicts should be dealt with.

First and foremost, I believe that all Canadians involved in this effort must be properly equipped, clothed, supported, trained, led and organized. I pray that the government has learned from the extreme hardships encountered by peacekeepers in Croatia and is ensuring that our peacekeepers on this mission are provided with every opportunity to fulfil their mission safely and securely.

Canada owes a debt of gratitude from the outset to every Canadian involved in this effort. I think about their families and their communities. I recall this past June taking a trip to Edmonton, Alberta, to speak to a group about health care issues. When I finished my talk I asked if there were any questions.

I was asked a question, not by one of the members of the audience, but by a young lady far in the back who was working the bar in that establishment. She asked me when I would bring her husband back home. There was a note of desperation in her voice as she told her story of how due to the operational tempo of the armed services her husband was away from home time after time. She hardly saw him. She was left behind with two small children to support. She was holding down two jobs trying to support her children and was going through a terrible time. When I talked with after the meeting she broke down and cried. I hugged her for a

moment and we talked a bit more. Then she told me that if things did not get better she would have to leave her husband. She did not want to but she could not take it any more.

That is what the high operational tempo is doing to families. This was back in June. I am glad to hear the minister in his remarks acknowledged the problem with the operational tempo. He is apparently concerned about it and is doing something to address the issue. It is important to families to know when their men and women are away on service that proper supports are available to them.

Also during the summer I visited a family resource centre. I was impressed with the amount of work and the kind of work the organization was doing to support military families. It was there in their time of need to help them through the many problems they faced while their spouses were on active duty.

Also with respect to this mission, I am glad to see that we are becoming more involved on the African continent. I have raised that point as well. I was pleased to hear my colleague from the Bloc Québécois point out her concern that perhaps in the past our involvement in the African nations has not been as desirable as we would like or has not accomplished as much as we would like.

• (2015)

It is good to see that this particular mission is going to an area that has been torn by strife and where the need is there.

Just last evening I was speaking with the ambassador from Eritrea. We talked a bit about the difficulties in that country and the devastation that the war has caused. I was quite surprised to learn that a large number of the people who fight in the Eritrean army are women. There are a large number of women soldiers fighting in that battle. I asked in particular whether or not there were child soldiers involved. She said that there were not, that they protect their children, but that women are out on the front lines fighting and dying for their country.

This conflict has had an enormous cost for both Eritrea and Ethiopia in terms of lives lost. We are told that in a two year period up to June 2000 almost 100,000 lives have been lost. Just picture that. That number would wipe out a good portion of the core city of Halifax and is larger than the population of many towns and cities across Canada. So many lives have been lost in the war.

It has been very difficult for both countries with respect to food, security and property. I asked the ambassador from Eritrea what her views were with respect to this upcoming peacekeeping mission and I could see the joy on her face and her appreciation of the fact that we were going to send peacekeepers to help them in their time of need. She said that we would be very much welcome in the role of peacekeeping in that area.

In the past year, successive poor crops in Eritrea combined with recent Ethiopian attacks in agricultural regions have brought more than one million Eritreans to the brink of starvation. That is a lot of people. Sometimes we think about the poverty and the starvation right here in our own country, but look at a large number like one million people. Quite often it is seen on TV. We can see the bodies that are being racked with hunger, the bones coming through the flesh. It is hard to imagine that when many of us can sit down at a table and sometimes eat more than we should eat. We have to go on diets sometimes because we are overweight, yet one million people are on the brink of starvation.

I sincerely hope that this peacekeeping effort can play a role in creating conditions whereby the famine in Eritrea can be addressed. On that issue, Canada should be front and foremost in providing food aid to Eritrea over and above the \$500,000 recently provided for displaced persons. We need to do more.

On September 15, 2000 the UN security council passed resolution 1320 authorizing a full mission of 4,200 troops, including 220 observers, with a six month mandate. The United Nations mission will monitor the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement in a temporary security zone along the border. A combined Canadian-Dutch battalion will take responsibility for the central portion of this region.

Canada is looking at sending a mechanized infantry, including a company headquarters, three infantry platoons, a reconnaissance platoon, supporting engineers and logistics and combat service personnel, amounting to about 400 troops in all, and possibly another 200 engineering and logistics personnel as needed.

The report on Canada's peacekeeping efforts in Croatia produced a troubling picture. In that situation our peacekeepers lacked lumber and sandbags to adequately protect themselves from the regular shelling and gunfire. They lacked proper medical support and sufficient advance surgical team support. The UN refused for weeks to examine complaints from our peacekeepers that the drinking water was contaminated.

I was pleased to hear the minister indicate in his remarks tonight that in this particular mission our troops will be well resourced and well supplied.

Our peacekeepers, their families and communities deserve to know that the government has addressed all these issues and is doing everything possible to ensure that our peacekeepers are provided with all the support possible.

Our thoughts and prayers will be with our peacekeepers and their families over the weeks and months to come. I pray for their safety and for their safe and healthy return. On behalf of all Canadians

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and many beyond our borders, I am both proud and humble in offering sincere thanks to our peacekeepers for their efforts.

• (2020)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Madam Speaker, it is with a mixed sense of both pride and concern that I rise to speak tonight on the issue of sending Canadian armed forces peacekeepers to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

I would like to advise you, Madam Speaker, that I intend to share my time tonight with my colleague for Richmond—Arthabaska.

In the history of the United Nations' peacekeeping efforts, few countries share the type of legacy earned by the people of Canada. Our Canadian peacekeepers are the most requested in the world, known for their fairness, their dedication and their great skill and ability. Our peacekeepers have challenged those who would challenge freedom and liberty, whether in Europe, Asia, Africa or the Middle East.

At no time in our nation's history has our service to global community or our sense of duty and responsibility ever been questioned. Whenever human rights and democracy were threatened, Canada has stood in their defence. Whenever tyranny and genocide have ruled, Canada has sought them out and ended their reign.

Given the importance of this debate tonight, let me be perfectly clear. I will not dispute the merit of sending Canadian armed forces peacekeepers to Ethiopia or Eritrea, but I will oppose with my very last breath sending our armed forces to any point on this globe if they are either unprepared or ill-equipped. As my colleague from Nova Scotia has stated, many of our men and women in uniform have been sent before as peacekeepers and they have been ill-equipped and unprepared.

I was at a family resource centre on one of the bases in Nova Scotia. I want the Minister of National Defence to know that I was really impressed with that family resource centre, but they had to have a place for little children so they could feed them, because our men and women were taking them to the food banks. They had to have counselling there because the fathers were away for months at a time. The government did not give one penny to that resource centre. The people on the base had to go out into the community and raise the money in order to put that family resource unit together. It was unbelievable. When they told me about this I was really in shock to think that we had allowed this to happen in Canada.

I have often stood in the House and said that when we order our men and women in uniform into harm's way, we must not increase the risk by supplying them with resources and equipment that are insufficient for the tasks we have assigned them to do.

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I am confident that hon. members are aware of the uncertain state of our armed forces. In the last seven years Canada's defence budget has declined steadily as the operational tempo of our armed forces has risen. When I speak of our military's operational tempo, I speak of the ratio of time spent in deployed missions by our men and women in uniform.

This is at the very heart of what we debate here tonight. In the 1993-94 fiscal year, the Department of National Defence had a budget of \$12 billion. Perhaps this was not ideal but it was respectable. Tragically, by the 1998-99 fiscal year the department was cut to a shameful \$9.4 billion. In this past decade the defence department's budget has been cut substantially, by 23%. In this same time our military has been called upon to battle both the worst of mother nature's arsenal and the worst of the world's tyrannies.

Sadly, the cuts to the military's budget have been unavoidably followed by cuts to the numbers in their ranks. The number of CAF personnel has been reduced by about 20% in the same period as the budget cuts. The reduction in the number of civilian employees at the Department of National Defence has been a staggering 40%.

• (2025)

That said, fewer people with fewer resources are being assigned a greater number of missions and more work. The House knows as well or better than I that when we use terms such as missions and work we mean risk and danger.

Just this past weekend the chief of the defence staff, General Maurice Baril, confirmed in the Ottawa *Citizen* that there was likely to be an additional reduction of 2,000 to 3,000 men and women in a process that he called readjustment. General Baril alluded to a grave prediction that up to 10% of all the bases in Canada will either be shut down or sold off.

The best training in the world for young people is in the cadets reserve and then right into the military. They learn respect for their fellow Canadian, their fellow man, and they learn respect for their country. If we wanted to turn our country around, we would put more of our people in the military. We would give the military more money for the budget. We would give the minister more money for the budget. We would give Maurice Baril and whoever needs it more money.

Those men and women can never come up on this Hill with placards when in uniform and fight for what they need, but never do I want to see any of our people in the military taking their children to a soup kitchen.

That is with the understanding that about 50% of the defence department's infrastructure is aging rapidly and will need to be replaced within the next 10 years, at a heroic estimated cost of about \$1 billion. That is why they talk about closing bases.

Those are just the details that are known. Those are just the facts and figures that any Canadian can learn by picking up the newspaper. Imagine what might be hidden away beyond the reach of the Access to Information Act.

It was around this time last year that we began to see the very real need for our help in East Timor. The House will recall the flurry of activity on the part of the Minister of National Defence at that time, when out of pure uncompromising necessity he had to limit our commitment to other parts of the world to make Canadian participation in East Timor possible.

I am a proud member of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. It is very close to my heart. I attended committee meetings late last year when the chief of defence staff and his officers came and told us of the need to limit our international commitment until we had the resources to afford them.

My colleague for Richmond—Arthabaska is more knowledgeable than I in matters related to foreign affairs. I am certain he will have a greater understanding of and appreciation for the desperate situation now facing the Ethiopian people, but my duty here tonight is to speak for our armed forces and my responsibility to the House is to defend the best interests of the men and women in uniform.

If the merits of this mission are outweighed by the risks to our troops, then the cost is too great for our country. If the branch of peace can be extended to those desperate people, if a better life can be afforded to them by our action, it would be cruelly un-Canadian to turn our backs.

I will finish my remarks here tonight as I began, by praising the hard earned and well deserved reputation of Canadian peacekeepers. Here tonight it is under the watchful eye of a protective God that we dispatch them to help plant a Canadian seed of freedom in a land scorched by the fire of war and soaked by the tears of a crestfallen people. We pray for their safe return.

Godspeed and good luck.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Madam Speaker, this evening, two ministers started off this debate, and I would like to pay tribute to the tenacity of the Minister of National Defence, who has remained with us. It is greatly appreciated.

This evening we are to debate and vote on the deployment of troops with our allies from the Netherlands to a corner of the world we rarely hear about, except from journalists who are braving the war to show it to us in the papers and on television. There were over 100,000 dead in two years.

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• (2030)

It took some marketing and publicity to get the nations of the world to deal with this war. It is true that not all problems can be resolved; still, there are 100,000 dead.

There were one or two UN resolutions. Yet there are 100,000 dead. Why did intervention not come as quickly as in the case of Kosovo, for example? Was it because no aggressor could be identified? No one wanted to take sides. One hundred thousand dead. What lesson did we take from Rwanda in this? None. We have let things be. Men, women and children killed, massacred and tortured: 100,000 dead, and we did not intervene.

I do not blame this government. I believe that all of parliament, all of Canada and all of the world must share the blame. But 100,000 dead, that is unbelievable. We moved more quickly in Kosovo. Why? Was it because economic interests justified a western presence there, while Canada has virtually no economic ties to that part of the African continent? Who knows?

I congratulate the government, however. My colleague from Saint John has always been ready to support any peacekeeping initiative by the government in power, while pointing out the budgetary complications.

I trust that the prayers of my colleague from Saint John for the men and women over there will be granted. I hope that the wishes of the Minister of National Defence will also come true: to get the funding necessary to really have a quality military force over there. That is our wish as well.

What I would like to point out is that there has not been enough said about this. No aggressor has been identified.

When I look at the various UN resolutions, whether it be 1312 or earlier ones, what I conclude is that as of July 31 the decision was made to send people to set up a human rights unit. There is a co-ordinator, and he or she—I do not know which—is going to look into the charges of atrocities, abuses, by either side. I think that is a good thing, to be honest.

When we send our men and women from Canada and from the Netherlands to that part of the world, there will also be people over there who will have to look into the charges and prepare files on them.

My question is this: are there going to be charges? Canada is a leader in international law. There has been Louise Arbour, and Canada has done a great deal. Yet the fact remains that 100,000 persons were killed over a two year period. Will charges be laid? My prediction is that, unfortunately, no charges will be laid.

If charges are laid on one side rather than the other, people will refuse to let the international community get involved. Who will deal with those who killed 100,000 men and women? A report will be prepared, but it will be hidden away, because those involved

will feel that it is better not to accuse anyone than to resume the war.

It is like some bargaining negotiations that fail. They break everything in sight—I am not naming anyone—and then they say it is all right, as long as the strike comes to an end.

But here we are talking about human lives. I know that the government, parliament and all Canadians are receptive to that. We are leaders. If one commits a crime, there should be no haven for that person.

• (2035)

There are no havens, except that unfortunately in this specific case, those responsible for these atrocities will probably not be charged by the international criminal tribunal. It is not the fault of the Department of National Defence, not at all. I do not put the blame on the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. I cannot do that. It is a joint responsibility.

I hope the government will continue to exert proper pressure. I know the limitations of international diplomacy. I know that when we sign a treaty or a peace agreement, we must make sacrifices.

Under international law, will rounding up those responsible for atrocities be part of the peace negotiations? If so, all of the work Canada, other countries and Madam Justice Arbour have done will be for naught. It is said that 100,000 people were massacred in this war between two countries alone. Millions and millions of people have been massacred and mutilated in Africa, and the west has done nothing. I am not talking about the rest of the world; I am talking about the African continent. To get something done, journalists equipped with cameras would have to be sent to every corner of every country on the African continent.

That said, I draw attention to the efforts by the minister of defence. However, it is said that there can be no negotiation with terrorists. But sometimes negotiation is necessary. Should we negotiate with the people responsible for the massacres? For peace, perhaps.

If we say perhaps, we scrap all the efforts at ensuring accountability in international law. I know that the people in the government know this. They know very well that the people in this party also know about the basic right that applies to the world as a whole, which is the right to life. When this right is taken away, international law must come into play.

I join with my colleague from Saint John in the hope that the men and women who will be there will be absolutely safe and that the six month mandate is a success. It will probably be renewed with other countries. Canada has a truly magnificent international reputation.

On this side of the House, in this party, we support this initiative of the Minister of National Defence or the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the government to have Canada maintain and in fact increase its credibility and not simply observe massacres or the

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aftermath of war and indeed be a country that ensures peace ahead of any armed conflict.

[*English*]

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hillsborough.

I am very pleased and proud this evening to participate in this debate and obviously to support the government's position to send peacekeepers to Ethiopia.

As the minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency, I have been dealing with this area for some time, both with respect to the disastrous effects that the famine has had, which is a natural disaster as a result of drought in this region both in Eritrea as well as in Ethiopia, compounded with the war that exists between these two countries.

People have suffered on both sides. In Eritrea there are about one million people who have been displaced within the country as well as in Ethiopia. The war has caused a tremendous amount of hardship which was compounded by the famine. Safety in the area to provide assistance has been very difficult.

We are very thankful and very proud that my department, together with other departments in the Government of Canada and other partners, have managed to finally negotiate a peace agreement in this area. I congratulate the two countries and hope that this of course will hold. That is why I support wholeheartedly Canada's participation.

• (2040)

Canadian peacekeepers are, from what I saw when I travelled to Kosovo, a group of soldiers who are not only welcome but who become part of the community. In Kosovo they have become loved partners of the children of Kosovo. They have helped to rebuild the schools as well as doing their jobs as peacekeepers and keeping the young people away from mines.

CIDA has already announced \$200,000 to the UN mine co-ordination centre, \$100,000 for Eritrea and the other \$100,000 for Ethiopia. Unfortunately both sides have laid an untold number of land mines in the area and this has to be addressed very quickly.

Last month Canada made an important investment in peace in a broader sense. I am referring, of course, to the International Conference on War-Affected Children which was held in Winnipeg. Children and women are very much the people who pay the highest price in these circumstances. The conference was attended by Eritrean ministers and I urged them to sign and ratify the land mines treaty.

I am pleased to note that Ethiopia has signed the treaty and we still look forward to its early ratification. First and foremost, however, we look forward to both governments taking a leadership role in removing the mines laid during the conflict, which are major threats to Ethiopian and Eritrean people, especially children.

Both countries have a responsibility to utilize the strength of their soldiers who are no longer involved in hostilities and hopefully will continue to not be involved in hostilities but who will direct their energies toward the removal of the land mines with the assistance of the UN mine action committee which can certainly train, supervise and assist together with Canadian assistance.

According to the UN human development index, these two countries rank among the 15 poorest countries in the world. Already this year, in order to assist with the disasters that have occurred in that country, natural disasters, famine, as well as having the situation compounded by the war, Canada has provided \$25 million in assistance to meet the needs of the drought in war affected populations in the Horn of Africa. Most of that was provided to both Eritrea and Ethiopia.

During the last conference on war affected children, I made a commitment that from now on when peacekeepers go into an area we will also finance a child protection program that will be part of the peacekeeping unit. It is very important to understand that when peacekeepers move into an area there are people in various camps to separate the children and women. We want to be able to assist and to protect children from any situations that might arise and ensure that they are assisted with rehabilitation, education and nutrition. Most children in this situation have suffered tremendously from malnutrition, from fear and, quite often, are not just physically abused, but as a result of war are injured in many different ways.

In addition to that, I have asked my department to be very much involved. One of my advisers in this area is General Dallaire who will be working with me to define and shape some of the programs that we will be delivering to this region.

As members know, General Dallaire is someone who has a great deal of expertise in the field with respect to peacekeeping. He also has a great deal of understanding of what happens to children and people when they are affected by war and when they have gone through a very long period of hostilities. He knows about the kind of assistance that is required to assist people to rebuild their lives slowly and be able to function again.

My department and CIDA will be looking to working very closely with the peacekeepers in terms of protecting the children, providing the medical health care they require, the food aid, the nutrition, the education, the rehabilitation and possibly assistance in the area of shelter.

It is very critical to understand that we must begin to push very hard for the elimination of land mines.

Government Orders

• (2045)

Most of the land has not been tilled as a result of the war and the drought. The land that could be tilled and could be planted is full of land mines. If we do not de-mine as quickly as we can and with the assistance of the two military groups that were involved in laying many of these land mines, crops will not be planted. That means yet another season of crops will be missed, which will exacerbate the famine and the food shortage in the region as they exist today.

I am very proud to say that the staff at CIDA and our partners, the NGOs that we worked with, have been in the field for a very long time to assist with the famine as much as they could and with some of the displaced people in the camps. They will now be in a position to go in with our peacekeepers and make a much bigger difference.

I am proud today to support the Minister of National Defence and the Government of Canada with the initiative. I believe in it very strongly, having seen what happens to people when I visited some of the areas of conflict in Africa. I believe that Canada should be there. CIDA will be there to assist side by side in ensuring that people can get back to some normalcy of life.

Mr. George Proud (Hillsborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as a Canadian and as a parliamentarian I am very proud to rise in the House tonight to speak in support of the motion before us on possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Indeed it is an historic moment every time Canada deploys in an international operation such as this one. It reaffirms in no uncertain terms our steadfast commitment to world peace and security.

By supporting the proposal before the House we will be continuing in the fine Canadian tradition of coming to the aid of those in need. By participating in the United Nations mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea we will be showing the world that we not only speak of peace but we act on it as well.

We have heard today from some members of the House why this mission is important. After years of bloody war, an estimated 100,000 or more dead and about 1.5 million displaced, the fighting has finally stopped. What is more, the parties are now looking for help in their bid to establish a lasting peace.

From a moral standpoint there are very good reasons to participate in this mission. Furthermore, from a military perspective this mission is well within our means. In other words, we have both the will and the military potential to successfully contribute to this UN operation.

The conditions on the ground in Ethiopia and Eritrea are ready for a peacekeeping force. The parties have signed the agreement on cessation of hostilities and have called for a UN mission to monitor and ensure this agreement. The parties are prepared for peace and we are well placed to respond to their call for help.

With an end to open hostilities there is now little threat posed by the warring parties. In fact, the greatest dangers that our forces anticipate on this proposed mission are the harsh operating conditions, disease and unexploded munitions. These are threats that with proper precautions can be minimized and effectively managed by professional forces such as ours.

In fact, Canadian forces personnel would be well prepared for any possible contingency. They would receive thorough pre-deployment training, enabling them to deal effectively with everything from land mines to refugees. They would have the necessary equipment and support required to carry out their tasks effectively and safely. They would be physically prepared for the harsh conditions on the Horn of Africa with all the requisite medical support and attention this entails. The military preconditions are right for this mission. Furthermore, the proposed concept of the operation is sound.

Canadian soldiers would be there for six months only. This would ensure that our expertise is used at the most critical moment in the initial months of the mission. It would also ensure that the Canadian commitment of soldiers and resources would be temporary and would not place unreasonable long term demands on our forces.

• (2050)

Canada would be in good company. The proposed mission calls for the Canadian forces to operate alongside an experienced and professional allied force, that of the Netherlands, and under the operational command of the deployed standby forces high readiness brigade, better known as SHIRBRIG, from its headquarters. This, along with robust rules of engagement, would ensure that deployed Canadian forces are provided with the full support, leadership and authority required to effectively carry out their mission.

As hon. members may know, the proposal before the House calls for a company group of approximately 400 personnel to be committed to the United Nations mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Given the Canadian forces current operational tempo, this deployment is achievable.

The government's rationalization of overseas commitments is largely complete. The high operational tempo experienced just a year ago when close to 4,500 Canadian forces personnel were in operation is now behind us. This being said, the Canadian forces remain busy currently with about 2,500 personnel on overseas deployments.

The proposed commitment of approximately 400 personnel is therefore within our means. By providing a company group to the Dutch battalion, Canada would be making a substantial contribution to the overall success of the mission, while at the same time guarding the quality of life of its military personnel.

Government Orders

I would like to call once again on all members of the House to support the government's proposed involvement in the UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Our help is needed. Our soldiers are prepared and our objectives are achievable. Let us not fail to respond.

I will take a few moments to thank and say farewell to my colleagues on the last time that I will be speaking in this glorious Chamber. Over the last 12 years in parliament I have met some wonderful people on all sides of the House. My opposition colleagues, even in the toughest of times, have shown me non-partisan respect. I certainly appreciate this.

I would also like to recognize my own colleagues. I have met some lifelong friends that I will always hold close to my heart. I thank both the staff and members I have worked with in my capacity as parliamentary secretary to both veterans affairs and labour. I also thank those I have worked with in the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association and on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. I thank them all for their help, for their advice and for their friendship. I have had the most remarkable 12 years in the House and I have been privileged to serve the people of my riding of Hillsborough and the people of this great nation.

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of the motion before us respecting possible Canadian peacekeeping activities in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

I support the government's position in this regard. As a member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade I have followed this conflict. I have followed it as my friends in the Ethiopian and Eritrean community spoke to me about the loss of lives and the agony of the situation in those two countries. Since the parties are prepared for peace, as Canadians we cannot but support this effort.

I reinforce some of the points mentioned by the Minister of National Defence in describing Canada's proposed military contribution to the UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is important to restate some of the major points, bearing in mind that the final number of troops, the cost, et cetera, remain to be determined.

As many of us know and as we have heard here tonight from various speakers, the conditions and opportunity for a UN sponsored peacekeeping mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea began to take shape this past four months.

On June 18 Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a cessation of hostilities agreement sponsored by the Organization of African Unity. This agreement called upon the UN to establish a peacekeeping mission. In response, UN security council resolution 1312, adopted unanimously on July 31, authorized a mission consisting of up to 100 military observers to deploy to Ethiopia and Eritrea in anticipation of a larger peacekeeping operation.

• (2055)

The tasks of this initial mission are: to establish and maintain liaison with the parties; to visit the parties' military headquarters and other units in all areas of operation of the peacekeeping mission; to establish and put into operation the mechanism for verifying the cessation of hostilities; to prepare for the establishment of a military co-ordination commission provided for in the cessation of hostilities agreement; and to assist in the planning for a future peacekeeping operation.

The security council has called on Ethiopia and Eritrea to provide this advance mission with access, assistance, support, and protection required in the performance of its duties. Many of my constituents underlined that these are tremendously important: access, assistance, support and protection.

The two countries are also called upon to facilitate the deployment of mine action experts and the assets under the UN mine action service.

The security council has stressed the importance of a rapid delimitation and demarcation of the common border between Ethiopia and Eritrea in accordance with the Organization of African Unity framework agreement of 1998 and the cessation of hostilities agreement.

Six members of the Canadian forces are already committed to this mission. One lieutenant-colonel is already in theatre as the chief operations officer in support of the UN mission headquarters there. He has already been heavily involved in the initial deployment of military observers throughout the region.

Through discussion we know that we have five of our own military observers about to deploy. A Canadian major was also briefly deployed as part of a UN team that helped to train the initial cadre of observers.

On September 15, following a technical assessment by the team of observers, the UN security council adopted resolution 1320 authorizing the establishment of a UN mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea. This resolution precipitated our current proposal to make further Canadian contributions to the UN mission.

The main Canadian forces contribution would be a mechanized infantry company group. This would include a company headquarters and three infantry platoons equipped with armoured personnel carriers. It would also have engineering and logistics support and other combat service support. It may also include a reconnaissance platoon equipped with our Coyote vehicles.

We know that we as Canadian peacekeepers are equipped to carry out this mission. With regard to the total number of personnel deployed, as I said earlier we are still uncertain at this point, but there is an approximate number of 400 suggested. In addition, we are prepared to deploy, if needed and for a brief period, a surge of

up to 200 engineers and logisticians to establish the initial basic infrastructure such as shelter and services.

We will know more after we have conducted our reconnaissance mission. It is hoped that the Minister of National Defence will be notifying the House and Canadians as to the progress of this mission.

The minister also pointed out that the Canadian mechanized company group would be deployed as an integral part of a Dutch battalion operating in the central region under the UN mission headquarters. They will be joining other battalions from Jordan and from Kenya under the UN mission headquarters in the eastern and the western regions. The mission headquarters would have at its core the military headquarters staff from the standby high readiness brigade, or SHIRBRIG. Canada has committed up to seven officers to the planning element of this staff.

• (2100)

As with any deployment Canada would have its own national command and support elements in place in the combined Dutch-Canadian battalion. We have learned lessons from other peacekeeping areas we have been in and recognize that being under our own national command is important to us.

Deploying alongside the Dutch forces is a particular point of strength in this proposed peacekeeping mission. Our forces would be in very good company, operating alongside professional, well equipped and well led soldiers. We also have been working very closely with the government of the Netherlands on mission planning.

This would not be a long term commitment for Canada. The Canadian company group would be deployed for a period of no more than six months. The UN is well aware of our intent to hold to this six month commitment and to thereafter return our forces to Canada. Other speakers tonight mentioned the importance of our going in, getting the job done and safely coming out.

Government Orders

Following pre-deployment preparations and training, the company group could be ready to leave Canada in 45 days to 60 days from the time the government decides to deploy. Initial preparations are already under way. If a decision is made to deploy, Canadian and Dutch troops would start arriving in theatre at the end of November.

Once in Africa, Canadian forces would complete any necessary collective training with the Dutch contingent before commencing operations. It could take up to 25 days to get equipment. We know we have not only to fly in equipment but sail it in from this region to the African region.

Based on our initial planning, the department estimates that the incremental cost of this proposed operation will be about \$60 million for the six month period. I would imagine this is \$60 million Canadian.

We are calling upon the men and women of the Canadian forces to demonstrate our resolve in maintaining peace and stability in a troubled region of the world. Not many times do we see the western world running to the assistance of Africa, but this is one instance where I must commend the decision we are taking tonight to support that peace effort. Such decisions are not taken lightly by the government and the House. Everyone's support today is important to Canada and to our common goal of peace building.

I plead with and ask hon. members to support the government's proposal to deploy the Canadian forces to a UN mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Let us all pray that this six month mandate will be successful and that at the end of those six months we can say with the old psalmist "Peace at last".

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): There being no further members rising, pursuant to order made earlier this day, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 9.04 p.m.)

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