



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 017 • 1st SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

---

OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 20, 2001**

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

All parliamentary publications are available on the  
“Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire” at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 20, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### WAYS AND MEANS

#### NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion involving amendments to the Excise Tax Act, including explanatory notes. I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

These amendments to the Excise Tax Act deal with encouraging rental housing, with giving a competitive edge to our Canadian manufacturers who import and export, and with multi-employer pension funds. This is very worthwhile legislation that has come forth from members of the House acting on behalf of their constituents. We expect speedy passage of the legislation.

\* \* \*

• (1005)

### CANADA NATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS ACT

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-10, an act respecting the national marine conservation areas of Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very excited about the introduction of this act respecting the national conservation areas of Canada. I think it will add to the framework that we have for ensuring that our collective heritage is saved not just on land but also at sea.

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

## PETITIONS

### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition which has been signed by hundreds of residents of British Columbia that underscores the concern that Canadians do not wish to be party to a policy that involves the death of over 5,000 Iraqi children every month.

The petitioners note that Denis Halliday, the former UN under-secretary for Iraq and co-ordinator of the 661 committee, has said that the situation amounts to genocide.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to pursue urgently the de-linking of economic from military sanctions and to rapidly lift economic sanctions in order to improve significantly the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people. I support the petition strongly.

\* \* \*

## 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 Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

---

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—ELECTORAL REFORM

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP)** moved:

That this House strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

*Supply*

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to kick off this important debate this morning on electoral reform. I would like to indicate at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to congratulate the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his dogged, persistent, stubborn determination in pushing forward with electoral reform that is so badly needed.

I will talk a little bit about the problem that we believe very much needs fixing and I will also address some of the ways in which we can do that. We are all familiar with the expression, “if it ain't broke don't fix it”, but in this case there is something broken and there is a problem that we need to address.

**An hon. member:** There is nothing to fix.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** The member just said that we do not need to fix it. It speaks to the problem that we have too many government members who agree that our electoral system creates distortions, divisions and undemocratic results in terms of the composition of parliament, but in the same breath they ask what could be wrong with a political system that produces three majority Liberal governments in a row.

• (1010)

We have an electoral system based on a first past the post system. The problem with that is that the electoral system leaves too many people feeling that they do not have any way to make their vote count. They feel they may as well not vote because they know perfectly well that if they do not support the majority view then their view does not count at all and they do not have any way to influence the composition of parliament so that important, significant minority views are fairly and proportionately represented.

It is a problem that our first past the post system creates distortions and that kind of unrepresentativeness. It is equally a problem, perhaps even more of a problem, that it creates a winner takes all mentality. That is the seed of the kind of arrogance and unresponsiveness that comes from majority governments that are over-represented.

I know some people say that the NDP keeps pushing for electoral reform because it believes that if we had an electoral system that included a proportional representation element that it would likely end up with more seats in parliament. With many elections that is true, but even over-represented Liberals must recognize that it is a problem when we have an election in which, for example, the Liberals win 50% of the vote, but they win 97% of the seats as they did in the most recent election in Ontario.

It is not just about the over-representation of Liberals, which is the problem with the winner take all mentality of the Liberal government. It is also about other distortions.

Let me give another couple of examples. In the 1997 election the Reform Party got 19% of the vote. The Progressive Conservative Party got 19% of the vote. Did it have roughly the same number of seats? No, the Reform Party won 60 seats in the House of Commons and the Conservative Party won 20 seats in the House of Commons. Some may ask what is wrong with that because that is the system? They say that is just what it means to be in a democracy where the winner takes all.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** At least in a Canadian one.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Winnipeg—Transcona has exactly made the point with his comment. Canada is very much in a minority among democracies in the world in perpetuating this undemocratic electoral system.

It is a matter of fact not a matter of rhetoric that Canada is one of only three remaining democracies in the world that has a population of over eight million people that persists in a winner take all, first past the post electoral system. Every other democracy in the modern world with a population of over eight million people has incorporated some element of proportional representation into their electoral system.

There is a very good reason for that. We know the Liberal Party and its members do not know what the problem is because they like the results. The problem is that it does not work for the electorate.

We have watched a steady decline in the number of Canadians participating in election campaigns. Back in 1958, 75% of eligible citizens voted. In the most recent election, 58% of Canadians who were eligible to vote actually cast their vote. People want to know what is wrong with members of the public who do not get out and vote. I know what is wrong. They are correct when they feel that getting out and voting, if they do not embrace the majority view of the government in power, it means that their voice does not really get heard and their views do not get expressed.

• (1015)

We have a problem. The good news is that we know what to do to fix it. It is not a question of it being a pat formula. Let me make very clear what the motion is that we are putting forward today as our official opposition business because we think it is that important. Canadians want to see some leadership from all sides of the House on the issue.

The motion says that we need to have a debate, not just a debate in the House but a debate that will involve getting out and talking to Canadians about what the various forms of proportional representation could be; what it would actually mean for Canada; what a system of proportional representation would do to strengthen national unity so that we do not end up with regional divisions in the House which threaten the unity and future strength of the country; and what it would mean to ensure that caucuses are more representative and that in every caucus there would be some

representation that would allow for a more national view of what the country is, what people want to see in their parliament and what they want their government to do on their behalf.

This is not an easy problem for us to deal with as parliamentarians. To people who are hard pressed to pay their increasingly costly fuel bills, who are forced to choose between paying for their groceries or their prescription drugs because of broken promises by an arrogant Liberal government, the notion of electoral reform and proportional representation seems a bit abstract and esoteric.

I think our challenge, not just New Democrats who are pressing for electoral reform but all parliamentarians, is to talk to Canadians who properly expect and demand leadership about the issue of electoral reform to allow them to understand the problems they are struggling with, whether it is health care, inadequate income, the difficulty of paying for an education or whatever their bread and butter daily struggles, and why a more representative parliament would speak more concretely and effectively to their needs.

Let me finalize my comments by quoting a Chinese proverb: "If we do not change the direction we are going, we are likely to end up where we are headed". Too many citizens in the country do not feel they are represented in the House and we have a responsibility as parliamentarians to fix that.

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the opening remarks of the leader of the New Democratic Party. In spite of her belief that proportional representation is a cure-all for our political system, probably just as many Liberals stayed home in the last election as supporters of the opposition. Even if we had proportional representation we may well have ended up with the same results. I know she would not appreciate that.

I am concerned about proportional representation in areas where it has been used exclusively. I am thinking of Spain before Franco where there were 100 parties and Ukraine where there are 60 parties because they had proportional representation. Basically proportional representation would assist regionalism in Canada. It would allow for a multiplicity of political parties representing every little interest, every little farm community and so forth across the nation. It would weaken our form of government.

The leader of the NDP talks about strengthening national unity. I think it is a panacea for creating a weakened federation and a weakened government in Canada.

If the leader of the NDP wanted to talk about people who are concerned about relevancy, rather than bring an issue like proportional representation to the floor of the House of Commons, why did she not talk about health care? Why did she not talk about child poverty? Why did she not talk about the environment? Those are

### *Supply*

things that mean something to people, not proportional representation.

• (1020)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it is extremely depressing. There is a call by the Canadian people to do something about the fact that they are losing confidence in their parliamentary institutions. It is utterly irresponsible for any member of the House, and I do not care in which caucus, to stand and talk about something as absurd as going to a total PR representation system and creating 100 political parties. They should not insult the Canadian public like that.

There must be some reason every parliamentary democracy in the world with a population of over eight million has said that it needs to be more reflective and more representative of the people and that it has a responsibility to explore the options.

There are many different formulas for proportional representation, but in the name of heaven let us not misrepresent what is being proposed. Let us not display ignorance about why other democratic countries have moved to embrace some elements and formulas of proportional representation.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Halifax mentioned that there are only three countries left in the world which exclusively have the first past the post constituency system, but she failed to name those three countries and I will name them for her. They are Canada, the United States and Britain, the three oldest democracies and the three most successful democracies.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to have this debate because of the amount of self-serving representation that people will make. Let us be clear about something. Canada is not the only country with a crisis in terms of the decline of voter participation. The United States is in an even greater crisis in terms of the erosion of the participation of the electorate in the political system.

The U.K. is the second country. In the U.K. today the parliaments of Scotland, Ireland and Wales are all elected with an element of proportional representation. The government of the U.K. has also launched a process of electoral reform and indicated it is prepared to have a referendum on the issue of proportional representation.

I plead with members to take the opportunity today, a day we have chosen as our opposition day, to have an informed, earnest and sincere debate. We chose today not to make it a votable motion but for the reason of opening it up to thoughtful debate. We are not

*Supply*

asking people to commit to the bottom line. We are saying we should have a reasonable debate about the problems we have and about the solutions we know are at hand.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about this subject today. I appeal to the Liberals opposite to look seriously at the merits of changing our electoral system.

In Canada today there is a real crisis in democracy and I think we are sleepwalking toward that crisis. If we look at the turnout in the last election, fewer than 60% of the people voted. In 1997 it was 67%. Years ago it was 75%, 80% or 85%. People are being turned off by the political system and by politics.

If we walk down the street in any town or city in Canada we find people who are alienated from the political system. Part of the reason is that when people elect parliament their votes are not mirrored in the composition of the seats. That is one of the big problems we have today.

For example, the Liberal Party received around 40% of the vote last November. Only about 60% of the people voted. Therefore the Liberals received about 25% of the support of the electorate. About a quarter of the people have elected a government that will govern constitutionally for some five years. That is a problem in terms of the credibility of the House of Commons and the credibility of parliament. That is why we should seriously look at changing our electoral system.

It is amazing. Those of us who come here, come through the first past the post system. The last time there was a vote in parliament on proportional representation was before you were born, Mr. Speaker. The year 1923 was the last time there was a vote in the House of Commons on PR.

• (1025 )

Last fall my private member's motion was drawn and declared votable. We had one hour of debate and the election came before we had a chance to vote on the motion.

We are saying that we should strike an all-party committee to look at the merits of the various forms of proportional representation that might be incorporated in terms of an element into our electoral system. We must have a debate on the issue. It is a fundamental issue which we should be facing but parliamentarians are refusing to deal with it.

There is growing interest across the country in the whole idea of changing our electoral system. There is an organization called Fair Vote Canada. There are other organizations out there promoting a change. I will be hosting a conference in Ottawa on March 30 and March 31 at which all five political parties will be speaking to and supporting the idea of looking at the kind of PR that might be

relevant to our country. I call upon the Parliament of Canada to join the cause of looking at changing our electoral system into something that is more relevant to the 21st century.

Our system is outdated. There are now only three countries in the world with more than eight million people that do not have some form of PR. They are India, the United States and Canada. Britain, the mother parliament, has an element of PR in the Scottish, Irish and Welsh parliaments. All other members from Britain are elected to the European community by PR. In the election after next England will probably have a measure of PR in terms of what the Blair government is planning. Canada will be one of only three countries in the world without some element of PR.

Another problem with the lack of PR in the first past the post system is that a lot of people feel their votes are wasted. Many Canadians vote for people who are not elected to the House of Commons because of the winner take all political system. If we had a system of PR people would be empowered and included because their votes would be reflected in the House of Commons. If we received 20% of the votes we would have roughly 20% of the seats. That is not the case in the House of Commons today.

Canada has a very unfair system. Let us look at the last election. The party to my left over here, the Conservative Party, required 130,000 votes to elect a Conservative member of parliament while the Bloc Quebecois required 36,000 votes to elect a member of the Bloc Quebecois. That is how distorted our political system is.

Sometimes it works in favour of one party against another, but the first past the post system always distorts the outcome of elections. What we see in the House of Commons does not reflect the way Canadians are voting. That is why the political system must be changed.

In 1997 the Conservative Party got 19% of the vote and the Reform Party got 19% of the vote. The Conservatives got around 19 seats and the Reform Party got around 60 seats. The NDP and the Bloc each had 11% of the vote. We had 21 seats and the Bloc had 44. The Liberal Party, with just 38% of the vote, won a majority and can constitutionally govern for five years. That is not fair. That is not just.

In the province of Ontario we would think everyone is Liberal. In the last campaign the Liberals won about 50% of the votes and 97% of the seats. In 1997 they had fewer than half the votes, 49.6% or 49.7%, and had all but two members of parliament from the province of Ontario. The electoral system distorts the way Canadians think.

It is the same in the west. People might think all but a few people in the west vote for the Reform Party or the Alliance Party. In the

campaigns of 1993 and 1997 the reform alliance was a minority party in western Canada. It received 40% plus of the popular vote, yet it won the absolutely overwhelming majority of seats.

That is the unfairness of the system. Other countries have remedied the unfairness by bringing an element of PR into their electoral systems so that people's votes are counted in parliament. It is about time we caught up with the trend in terms of modernizing democracy.

There is also the whole question of national unity and regionalism. We are seeing more of a regional Canada all the time. We are seeing it increasing day by day. I am thinking in terms of the politics of the Harris government, of the Klein government and of the Parti Québécois that regionalize Canada. That is now reflected in the House of Commons where we have in essence five regional political parties representing one or two regions of the country.

If we had a system of PR, all parties would be forced to think of the country as a whole, of a national vision of what is best for Canada, because a vote in Newfoundland would have the same power as a vote in rural Saskatchewan or Montreal or Vancouver. It would force all political parties to have a national vision to knit and pull the country together. That is not happening today in terms of our first past the post political system.

There is also the whole question of empowerment. People feel excluded from the electoral system. If we had an element of PR in the electoral system everybody's vote would count. Nobody's vote would be wasted, not just on election night but throughout the term of the parliament. It would mean a radical change in the Parliament of Canada. It would mean almost certainly that most governments would be minority governments. It would force a radical thing upon the Parliament of Canada. It would force politicians to work together to come up with a consensus like most countries in the world.

• (1030)

Since 1921 we have only had three governments of a majority sense that were elected by the majority of the people. The other majorities have been fake majorities in terms of a minority electing a majority of MPs and then governing as a majority. That is true in the case of all three Liberal majorities.

There were very few majority governments elected by a majority of the people. There were Mackenzie King in 1945, John Diefenbaker in 1958 and indeed Brian Mulroney in 1984 who, with a big sweep, had about 49.9% or 50% of the votes.

Time and time again we are electing a parliament with a composition that does not reflect the voting pattern of the people of Canada. What we are saying today is that we should strike an all

### *Supply*

party committee to look at the various types of proportional representation that might be relevant to this unique federation of Canada and make a recommendation back to parliament as to the best type of system for the Canadian people.

People talk across the way of Israel and Spain and many years ago. There are all kinds of proportional representation systems. We are saying that we should bring an element of PR into the Canadian system. We are not specifying as to what that element should be, that is for the Canadian people to decide. It is the unique federation. Perhaps we could look at a model that is similar to Germany. It has half the members chosen on a riding by riding basis and half of the members chosen through the proportional representation of the parties. It has what is called the mixed member proportional system which seems to have worked very well for Germany as a federation.

There are all kinds of other examples. Some countries have 15%, 20% or 25% of their members elected by proportional representation and that may also work well for them.

These are some of the things we should be considering in reforming and changing our electoral system and making it more fair, more just and more reflective of how the Canadian people vote. People are losing confidence in the political institutions, in politicians and in the very democratic practice of voting by itself.

We are also saying in the motion today that we should look at other various electoral and democratic reforms as well. The time has come, for example, to abolish the unelected, undemocratic and unaccountable Senate. I would abolish it and bring those checks and balances into the House of Commons by way of stronger committees, more independence for committees, less power for the Prime Minister's office and better reflection of the regions through proportional representation.

Others want to elect the Senate, but either way we look at it, all the polling shows only about 5% of Canadians support the existing Senate. Yet members of parliament decade after decade support keeping the other place the way it is. No wonder Canadians are losing confidence in the people elected to the House of Commons. This is another reason why we have to change the electoral system in Canada.

My time is up but I want to move the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by inserting the word "immediately" after the word "House".

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment proposed by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is in order. Debate is on the amendment.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was obviously interested in what the member for Regina—Qu'Ap-

*Supply*

pelle had to say. I know he has worked on this issue for a long time. It is too bad that in the last parliament we did not get to vote on his private member's bill having to do with proportional representation. It was also raised in the last parliament by myself. I remember asking a question to the Prime Minister. We got the usual sort of partisan trivia from the Liberal front bench.

•(1035)

When I asked, on behalf of the NDP for an all party committee, for what is being asked for today, not for a particular solution but for a process by which these concerns of the Canadian people could be taken into account, the response of the Prime Minister was that because the NDP lost elections and they won them that was why it wanted an all party committee struck.

However, it seems to me, if I heard the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle correctly, we are talking about the country, not about the NDP, Tories or the Reform. We are talking about the political fabric of the country and the way in which certain fault lines are developing, both in terms of voter confidence and regional division, as a result of the first past the post system, the way in which it tends to throw up a homogeneous image of particular regions. As the member said, it looks like everybody in Alberta is a reformer, everybody in Quebec is a sovereigntist, everybody in Ontario is a Liberal or whatever the case may be.

Could the member elaborate on that?

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, the first past the post system tends to really distort the composition of the House of Commons. If we look at election after election we can see good examples of that.

I think of 1993, for example, when the Conservative Party was wiped out. One would have thought that nobody voted Conservative in the country. The party had two members, the member for Saint John and Jean Charest. However, the Conservatives received some 17% of the vote. It took over a million people or thereabouts, if my recollection is correct, to elect a Conservative member of parliament.

As much as I opposed the Brian Mulroney government, we should have had an electoral system that gave that party some representation which would have reflected the proportion of the vote in the country. What has happened now is even worse than that. We have the regional divisions that are setting into the country where we have people in the various provinces and regions voting as a block for their particular party. We come to parliament now with five regional parties. The Liberal Party itself is basically a regional party centred mainly in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. That is not good for the unity of the country.

If we had PR it would force all parties to address the regional issues. It would force Liberals, for example, to address the issue of

the farm crisis in the prairies, which they are not doing now because they do not have any members of parliament from there. It would force my party, the NDP, to address the issues of Quebec because a vote in Quebec would be worth as much as a vote in Regina. That is not happening in the current political system.

The other thing it would do is radically change the voting patterns in the country. People could afford to vote NDP in rural Alberta, Liberal in rural Saskatchewan and Reform in Newfoundland and the votes would count. That would change the voting pattern in Canada and the Canadian people would all of a sudden find a parliament that reflected the way they felt in terms of the common good of Canada.

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in spite of the comments of the member from Halifax, who I think said my comments were somehow ignorant and that we would have an intellectual discussion, I refer her to the fact that my political science professor was Dr. Pauline Jewett.

The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle made two what I think are conflicting statements. First, he went through a dissertation of majority governments in Canada and said we would never have a majority government had we had proportional representation. That is the very point I am trying to raise: we would never have majority governments in the country, which would basically weaken the federation.

He said the individual opposition parties would have a great national vision. Why should they when 40,000 votes from anywhere in the country would give them one seat? We would not have five political parties over there, we would have about 30 or 40.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, Pauline Jewett was my seat mate in the House, so I am wondering whether or not he really understood her lectures or knew Pauline very well.

The member talked about 40 or 50 different political parties. There are many countries in the world that have PR, like Germany which has very few political parties. There are different ways to model a PR system. Some countries have a threshold of 5%. Some countries have a threshold of 3% or 2%. These are different things we can do to model the proportional representation system.

In terms of majority governments, I said we would have very few majority governments likely in a PR system. We have only had three majority governments elected by a majority in the last 75 or 80 years. What is wrong with that if that is the way the Canadian people vote? If Canadian people want minority governments or even, dare I say it, a coalition government or government that works together with opposition parties, that is what they vote for. We want to elect a parliament that is reflective of how people vote.

*Supply*

• (1040)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the motion moved by the hon. member for Halifax, which states:

That this House strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

I listened attentively to the hon. member for Halifax and to the hon. member who spoke afterward. I must say that I am not at all convinced by these proposals.

Our election law is fundamental to our system of parliamentary democracy. Since confederation our electoral system has been based on geographically bound constituencies, each generally electing a single member to the House of Commons. This provides a clear chain of accountability from an individual member of parliament to his or her constituents.

When I go to my constituency office, I am the person who was elected by those people to represent them, not chosen from a list, not knowing whether I was the first, second, third, fourth, fifth or whatever on that list of preferences. The elector, of course, has a right in a subsequent election to directly remove a member if such is the wish at that time. That is direct accountability.

Similarly, and on a grander scale, Canadians can remove the government and replace it with another government if they chose to do so at a particular point of time, as the Canadian electorate so wisely did in 1993.

As the sole representative of his or her constituency, a member of parliament is directly responsible to his or her constituents on any issue with which parliament may be dealing. Our current arrangement is such that an MP is exposed to a broad range of issues and does not merely speak for his or her party. As the sole representative for an area, he or she must seek redress for all matters or grievances and take into account the concerns and views of all constituents.

All members of this House, including me, spend a considerable share of time responding to specific interests within a constituency on issues ranging from immigration to agriculture to everything else. I held constituency office yesterday morning before coming to Ottawa to discharge my functions both as an MP in this House and as a member of the Canadian cabinet. Consequently, an MP is encouraged, in very practical ways, to fulfil the basic requirements of any political system and that is the reconciliation of the wide variety of interests within each constituency and then right across the country.

I believe that Canadians want to be represented by someone from home, someone who knows them and someone they can talk to and

see in the House of Commons. If such was not the case, why do people who do not come from the particular constituency or from a district or from a city, in the case of an urban area where the boundaries are a little hard to determine, or from the riding have a much more difficult time getting elected than those who are? It is because people want to be generally represented by someone they know. That is only normal and, as far as I am concerned, that is only appropriate.

As the hon. member across the way indicated, proportional representation raises many issues. Our current electoral system allows much greater scope for the voters to judge the merits of a popular candidate than do countries with a proportional representation system where in some cases, and granted I will agree not all cases, voters have little choice but to support a party list as presented.

• (1045)

Another issue is political stability. We have seen examples in countries with proportional electoral systems where, after an election, it has taken weeks to form a government. After the government is formed, a coalition often involves narrow special interest parties and the government is often unable to continue to maintain the confidence of the legislature. That has been the case many times in places like Israel and Italy and in France, where they had a system like that which they later abandoned. France of course did away with proportional representation several years ago and, as far as I know, at the national level there is little appetite to bring it back.

Proportional electoral systems frequently require the formation of a coalition between parties of different political allegiances. As a result, proportional representation can mean that the government is formed by coalitions made through backroom political negotiations rather than through the ballot box. I believe that is a far less appropriate way of governing than the system we have now.

Proportional representation therefore allows small one-issue parties to become kingmakers of a sort, which enables them to sometimes force their own agenda on a nation as a whole, again, as has happened in some cases recently.

Some countries have found that proportional representation exacerbates regional differences and cleavages within society and makes it more difficult to reach a national consensus on key issues.

[*Translation*]

Proportional representation can also reduce MPs' independence and of course their ability to serve their ridings. Our first past the post system, however, encourages the formation of major parties

*Supply*

around a coalition of members representing different regions, different language groups, different ethnic groups and so on.

In his motion the hon. member claims that a system of proportional representation would remedy voter apathy. Where is her proof of this? There is none, of course.

The decline in voter turnout in Canada and other western democracies, for this is not a solely Canadian phenomenon, relates to a number of factors. We are not the only ones to have seen such a decline.

As I have said, it is obvious that there is no proof that proportional representation would have any effect on voter turnout. I am not aware of any country that has adopted proportional representation and seen an immediate improvement in voter turnout. Personally, I would venture to say that it might reduce participation, as I have already said. Proportional representation is bad for political stability and parliamentary effectiveness, and particularly bad for MPs' accountability to their electorate. There is no doubt that this is the price to be paid.

Devotees of the proportional representation system have maintained, and continue to maintain, that it favours representation of the major segments of the population or of certain groups, such as women.

Contrary to what certain people have stated, international experience has demonstrated very clearly that such an improvement is the result of the adoption of quotas, for example parties setting themselves the obligation to increase the participation of women or some other specific group. This improves the participation of women candidates or candidates from other target groups in society.

Finally, our electoral system is characterized by direct suffrage. All that the voter needs to do is indicate his or her preferred candidate. That is it. Nothing complicated. The voter participates, makes his choice quickly, and that choice is clear.

Our system makes it possible to reduce the number of invalid votes. As well, the votes are counted quickly in Canada. In general, Canadians know, within hours of the polls closing, who will form the government and who the opposition.

• (1050)

Need I remind the House that last fall there was an election in Canada and another country at the same time. In Canada, 17 million ballots were opened in the space of 90 minutes, or so. We knew the first and second place winners, the losers, and so on. This was done in 90 minutes.

A democracy south of us with a system that is not proportional, but is much more complicated than ours, took over two months to establish the winner in its election campaign.

This leads me to conclude that our system is better than many others. Of course, it may not be perfect, but it is better.

[*English*]

A paper on electoral reform released today by the Institute for Research on Public Policy notes some of these problems that other countries have experienced. IRPP still concludes that proportional representation, in its opinion, is a good idea, but even it argues that, and I will read from its press release, "the chief downside" of proportional representation is that large multi-member electoral districts "would be less suited to constituency work as Canadian MPs have traditionally practiced it". So even the group that likes proportional representation thinks that it is less accountable than what we have now. I believe that to be a major downside.

In my view, the IRPP paper understates the serious problems that other countries have had with proportional representation. It downplays the negative impact although it even states that there are some. It ignores the fact that there is little interest among Canadians for proportional representation, and let us not forget that either. It was not exactly an issue raised during the last election campaign as I canvassed door to door. As the hon. member for Durham said so astutely earlier, Canadians were asking about health care, child poverty, taxes, agriculture and so on and so forth. Very few people, I do not remember any, have raised with me the issue of proportional representation in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The paper also states that there is no consensus among academics as to how to implement a proportional system.

[*Translation*]

Of course, even the best of systems has faults, including ours. We must not forget, however, that Canada may be proud of having one of the most stable and democratic political systems in the world, a system that is used as a model and has in fact been exported to a number of other democracies.

The Canadian International Development Agency, Elections Canada and others—even parliamentarians in this House—have been involved in forums on democratic process around the world. We all have, of course, in the belief that our system is the right one, and I think so too.

Our electoral system has stood the test of time, being sufficiently flexible to allow us to change it as circumstances required.

In 1991, the Lortie commission, the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and the Party Financing, recommended that the existing system of single member constituencies be retained. So this is not just anyone.

The question of the proportional representation and of the entire electoral system is of course a difficult and complex one.

*Supply*

However, caution is at the heart of courage, especially since the public has shown almost no interest, as I mentioned, in proportional representation and since a national system of proportional representation would necessitate all sorts of changes, including changes to the Constitution.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I thank the hon. member for bringing this issue to public attention. However, I do not share her enthusiasm for proportional representation. Our current electoral system provides for clear accountability at constituency and national levels. It has a proven track record that is recognized around the world and it allows members of parliament to represent a specific and identified group of constituents, those living within the geographical boundaries of the area they represent.

Finally, having listened to the speech from the member across the way, I note that it has as a premise that each party purports to want to be a national party. That is not always the case. There is a case of a political party in the House of Commons, the orientation of which I do not share, which wants to represent a region, not the entire country. The Progressives of Manitoba did at some point in the past. The United Farmers of Ontario and a number of others wanted, by definition, to be regional parties. I do not share that view, but it is certainly their right to think so and to run with that premise if that is what they want to do.

• (1055)

All this is to say that I believe we should continue to modernize our electoral system, as we did in the last parliament with the adoption of the new Canada Elections Act. The House will be doing more of that this Thursday when it responds to election law pursuant to a court decision. Probably later in this parliament we will have another bill pursuant to the contributions of the chief electoral officer, which he always does before the committee, and we will strive to modernize our election laws again.

The government's gradual modernization of our election laws is, in my view, a prudent and balanced approach to a complex issue that is at the heart of our system of democracy. I believe it is the course that Canadians wish all hon. members to support. That is why I cannot agree with the motion put before the House today.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the government House leader for his comments and want to refer to a couple of things he said.

He said that people want someone from home to represent them. I do not disagree with that. There are PR systems in the world, like Germany's for example, where there are single member constituencies with half of the members elected riding by riding and half elected according to the party's PR vote. In Germany, for example,

when they vote they get two ballots. They vote for their local MP and their party of preference. They have what is called a mixed member proportional system, which compensates for these vagaries and distortions in the electoral system. In many ways they get the best of both worlds.

Even now I would argue that electors do not always get a member from home. The member's own leader, the Prime Minister, occasionally names candidates to run in various ridings, so we already have a system in which the party leader can refuse to sign the nomination papers of someone who is nominated in a particular riding and can parachute in a certain person. That has happened. I remember sitting on that side of the House when it happened. It has also happened on this side of the House and it happens today, so I do not think that is an argument pro or con a PR system.

The other point is the whole question of regional parties. I agree with the minister across the way. I like to have broad national parties with a national vision. I think it is good for the country in terms of knitting the country together, but a PR system could easily be designed, particularly in a federation where we can have regional parties.

We could have PR done on a region by region or province by province basis. I would not want to have a PR system where we took the vote of the country as a whole and apportioned parties in accordance with the national vote. My own preference would be the German type of system, which is a mixed member proportional system, doing it region by region or province by province. We could still have the United Farmers of Ontario or the Bloc Québécois. We could still have a party in western Canada. What is wrong with that? We could design a PR system that fits that criteria as well.

I ask the government House leader across the way why he would not be in favour of striking an all party committee to at least look at the merits of PR and the kinds of PR models that might be relevant to our country. Almost every democracy in the world has PR of one sort or another.

We have a crisis in the country in terms of falling voter turnout, alienation toward the political system and a parliament that is very distorted in terms of its composition compared to how people vote, so why not take a look at this? Let us have a true political democracy wherein members of parliament can debate the real issues of the day. Is there any greater issue than the fundamental issue of democracy and voting? I do not think there is.

This also leads to all kinds of other issues, so why not have a parliamentary committee look at this issue, look at the various models and then make a recommendation? We have not done that in this country. If we do it, I would argue that we would be doing the Canadian people a great service.

*Supply*

**Hon. Don Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, I profoundly disagree with what the hon. member says.

First of all, he and his leader have stated that Canada is only one of three countries with a population threshold of above eight million—I do not know why that number is important—which, she says, does not have a proportional representation system.

• (1100)

The U.K. does not have a proportional representation system. As far as the argument about Wales, since when is that a national government? I would hope that is not what she is suggesting on the floor of the House of Commons. France does not have a proportional representation system. Actually it probably has the closest to the reverse of that anywhere. It has a second round to weed out even someone who had 49% of the vote. That system is the opposite of what she says. It simply does not do that.

The member is arguing that a modification of the proportional representation system on a region by region or province by province basis is really what he wants. That is the opposite proposition that was raised by his own leader about an hour ago in the House when she argued that this would be a way to have representation from across the country.

The member is now advocating that this is a way to ensure that regions would have a higher proportion of people who purport to represent that region rather than the national interest. That is the opposite proposition which has now been raised. It is not the same at all. As a matter of fact I agree with him. His proposition, although undesirable, is probably what would result.

The member cites the German example where the greatest virtue is that half of the MPs have no riding. Half of the MPs are elected per riding; the others are proportional. The translation is that half of them do not have a riding. I do not want a system where half of the MPs do not have a riding, where they represent no one except the whip of their party.

If there has been criticism around this place that party discipline is too strong, could we imagine what it would do to have people whose names would go up and down on the list only based on whether or not the officials of their party would like them? That is what we would have: no riding for half of the members and, on top of that, chosen from a party list according to the whims of someone who has nothing to do with what the electors want.

Is that supposed to be better than what we have? I do not think so. Our system may not be perfect, but it certainly will not be improved by advocating a policy like that one.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was following the debate and I will start off by saying that I was a

little concerned by the reaction of the leader of the NDP to my colleague, the member for Durham, who laid out some points of view to his best knowledge. The leader of the NDP decided that he was ignorant, arrogant and a few other words that she used. That represents intolerance, which is exactly what Canadians do not want. I think the member should accept that we have to be open to ideas.

I should like to ask the member a question. Would he explain whether or not the proportional representation typical model the NDP is advocating would mean that a party could designate a region where a person could come from and deem him or her to be representative of the region simply because it does not have an elected member there?

**Hon. Don Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, that is difficult to say. I suppose it would depend on what model we would adopt, but presumably that is exactly why this system is wanted. In other words, a party that would not win the seat in a first past the post system would have a second crack at it to take people from its list and make them responsible or somehow the spokesperson for the particular area of the country.

I do not know if that is bad per se. I do not believe that part is inherently bad. I suppose all political parties where they are not represented in the country have their shadow critics visiting the area or they twin with another riding. They do all these things right now. This is something that is done informally by probably most caucuses in the House, save perhaps for the Bloc Québécois. Because of its particular orientation that is not something it wants to do. I accept that, but for most others that would probably be the case at the present time.

That in itself is not what is wrong. It is the whole business of having MPs, who are not elected directly by anyone and who do not represent ridings, sitting in the House with us and having the same kind of participation as the rest of us even though no one directly voted for them. To me that is not democratic.

• (1105)

Some perhaps would say, and it is arguable, that a second round is an idea. Of course that has nothing to do with proportional representation. It is actually the reverse of it. It is a debate.

However the issue of proportional representation, particularly when tampered with in the way that it was advocated in some of the speeches, is a form of proportional representation that is not really proportional anyway. We kind of wonder what it is supposed to achieve. If it is moderated by all these factors then it ceases to be proportional. We have all of the negative effects from it and presumably none of the benefits.

*Supply*

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to give a speech in the House since the last election, although I did ask a question a week or two ago.

I guess the time is appropriate to thank my constituents for sending the Liberal appointee in my riding packing. My vote percentage went up again for the third time, so that was pretty good. The appointee in my riding, an NDPer who switched horses in the middle of the NDP's mandate in B.C. to join the Liberals, was sent packing with a lower percentage of the vote than the previous Liberal candidate, so that was pretty good too. Actually NDP members provincially are jumping ship at an increasing rate because there is an election any day and the NDP are expected to go down in a massive defeat in B.C.

I will read the motion and the amendment we are debating today:

That this House immediately strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections

The motion is really about fairness, despite all the words we heard from the minister just a few minutes ago. Frankly it is hopeless talking to the minister about fairness or about the idea of proportional representation, because after all his party has 100% of the power with considerably less than 50% of the popular vote. Why would he be the slightest bit interested in any fairness? He has well under 50% of the vote and 100% of the power. What could be better for them? It is not surprising.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** That is democracy.

**Mr. Ted White:** Somebody yelled out "That is democracy". How in anybody's mind could it be democratic that they have 100% of the power with less than 50% of the votes? It just does not make any sense.

I heard the minister say a few minutes ago that he does not like the idea of any type of proportional representation because there is no consensus on how to go about implementing it. New Zealand, the country that I am originally from, gave us a wonderful example of how to go about doing it. In 1994, I think it was, there was a referendum in New Zealand that asked the people whether they wanted to change the system. That is democracy.

The people of New Zealand decided they did want to change the system. Over the next 12 to 18 months elections New Zealand, or whatever the body responsible for elections in New Zealand is called, set about informing the people of New Zealand of the alternatives.

Every home in New Zealand received a booklet of about 28 to 30 pages describing the various forms of proportional representation and the likely outcome in an election. I have a copy of it in my

office. At the end of that period there was a second referendum where the people of New Zealand chose the system they favoured. They chose mixed member proportional, which is similar to the system in Germany.

Within that system there are many variations: how the list is appointed and whether they are elected or appointed.

• (1110)

For the minister to stand there and say that there is no consensus on how to proceed is silly. Frankly, I am surprised the minister would be that silly.

Unfortunately, the motion is non-votable, so we all know that it is pretty much meaningless to have this day of debate. It is sad to say it but that is the reality. I heard the minister himself say that it was like shovelling air. That is true. What a disgrace that we can spend a whole day here debating and giving careful thought to this topic but at the end of the day we cannot even vote.

I realize the NDP members have the opportunity to choose which of their motions will be votable and which will not, but I put the question forward: Why should there even be any non-votable motions? Why should anything in this place where there has been a debate be non-votable? It defies logic to have a whole day of debate in this place at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to run this place every day and not even be allowed to vote on the issue at the end of the day.

The same logic applies to private members' bills. I spoke this morning with a member from the Liberal side of the House who was very disappointed that his private member's bill was made non-votable. He had the feeling that it was because of opposition members on the committee that his bill was not made votable. The fact is we should not be facing this sort of position. All private members' bills should be votable, just like government business is votable in the House.

It is sad that we have a motion that is non-votable, but on top of that we have a motion that the NDP members already raised in this place less than a year ago. It puzzles me why they would be revisiting something that we already debated less than a year ago. Why did they not use their day on a votable motion about parliamentary reform? Goodness knows there is plenty that needs to be done in this place to make it more democratic. Why on earth did they waste a whole day debating something they already thrashed in private member's business a year ago?

Regarding the subject of the motion, I constantly hear the NDP members bleating about the growing gap between the rich and the poor. I hear them talking about child poverty, about NAFTA and

*Supply*

about the need for more social programs. Why have they not brought any of those issues forward today instead of bringing forward something they already debated 12 months ago?

The debate illustrates the reason why the NDP is in decline. There is no new thinking there. There is nothing stimulating about what it is doing. No wonder it is in decline. I guess because it never wants to be the government it can pretty well say anything it wants to.

I will give an example. During the election campaign I was at an all candidates debate at Capilano College in my riding, which is a well known hotbed of socialism in my riding. The NDP candidate for North Vancouver was unable to come, so the member for Vancouver East filled in that day. I must say that I do enjoy debating the member for Vancouver East. It is always very entertaining for both of us and for the audience as well.

In this particular case, the audience at Capilano College was entirely on the side of the member for Vancouver East. The member for Vancouver East promised anything. The students could have free tuition as much as they wanted. They could have interest free student loans. They could have their student loans waived. They could have gay marriages. They could have anything they wanted. Everything they asked for she said an NDP government would give them.

Some of the students were in tears. They were so happy at what they were being promised by the NDP they were sobbing in their seats. Of course I got the thumbs down. I probably got a two pointer out of ten.

The fact is that the NDP members are out of touch. They know they can promise anything to any special interest group and never be faced with having to enact those measures in this place.

One NDP member has talked a lot about parliamentary reform. One way those members could have contributed would have been to have proposed a motion today about parliamentary reform and what needs to be done differently in the House. We could have even re-debated the child poverty issue. They even get their own history incorrect.

A motion was introduced and debated in the House on November 24, 1989. Every November we get regurgitated throughout the country about how parliament promised to get rid of child poverty by the year 2000 and the NDP rush around the country saying that it promises to get rid of child poverty by the year 2000.

• (1115)

The fact is that is not what the NDP motion said in 1989. I can read the exact wording. It states:

That this House express its concern for the more than 1 million Canadian children currently living in poverty and seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.

It was not to get rid of it but to seek to achieve it. The reason it was worded that way is that it was the last day in the House for Mr. Broadbent, the leader of the NDP at the time. It was a votable motion and the whole place wanted to send him off on a high note.

It was of course a motherhood and apple pie motion that would seek to achieve and to try to eliminate something at some time in the future, and everybody voted for it. Since then the NDP has regurgitated the motion every February by promising to get rid of child poverty by the year 2000.

Frankly, if the NDP can point to a country anywhere in the world that has managed to do that—

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hate to interrupt the hon. member but there is such a thing as a rule of relevancy. We have a motion before the House on parliamentary reform for proportional representation. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether you would ask the member speaking to be more relevant to the point.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sure at some point in time the hon. member for North Vancouver will tie everything that he has said to date to the motion that is before the House.

**Mr. Ted White:** Mr. Speaker, of course I am tying it to the debate. What I am trying to point out is that the members of the NDP had a wealth of subjects that it could have debated today and I am trying to assist them. If they had debated something a bit different, the benches above us would be filled with the media wanting to report it. Instead there is not a single person from the media in this place today. I would be willing to bet that there will be nothing, not a word, of a report in a newspaper anywhere about what has happened in the debate today.

What I trying to do is help members of the NDP to see that perhaps they could have got more bang for their buck if they had discussed one of their critical issues instead of talking about something we already talked about and got nowhere on less than a year ago.

With regard to the parliamentary reform aspects, if we had truly meaningful free votes in this place, the first past the post system would not be as critical. It would not matter so much. If each of us was truly representing our constituency views and voting that way in this place, it would not matter that we were elected by first past the post because representation would be the key issue not how we got here.

*Supply*

On the other hand, as the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle knows, I and my party are supportive—and the critic will be speaking about this in more detail later—of the general thrust of the motion. We spoke in favour of it in past times when he brought this issue forward. The issue is not whether we are in favour of the motion, it is whether they are getting a good bang for their buck today.

Let us talk a bit more about parliamentary reform that they could have introduced, quite apart from free votes. If the private members' business was all votable then it would be meaningful to bring back this motion in a votable form and during private members' business.

We should have the ability to vote from our ridings when we are there on business, as is done in some other countries. In this day of technology, why do we actually have to be physically here to stand in our places and vote on an issue, which we fully understand and which we have been following? Just because we are in our riding for a day should not exclude us from the ability to vote. That is not democratic.

There are systems available now. We could even have fingerprint recognition where we would put one of our digits into a little machine which would recognize us in our riding. There is no reason that we should not be able to vote remotely. When we are away on parliamentary committees or overseas on some important issue to do with parliamentary business, why should we be deprived of the ability to represent our constituents by voting in this place? It just does not make sense.

The only reason we are not moving toward some of these reforms is the intransigence of the minister opposite. He is not willing to accept anything that represents a greater degree of democracy. He talks the good talk about modernizing the elections act but when push comes to shove he is not interested in doing that. He had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the bill that he tabled this week to change the Canada Elections Act to allow parties with 12 candidates to have their names on the ballot during elections.

• (1120)

When the new elections act came through this place several months ago and the small parties, including the Communist Party and the Green Party, came to Ottawa to give committee evidence, they all said that the 50 candidate rule was unfair. I agreed with them. We worked out a compromise; 12 candidates, the number that is recognized in this place.

We went to the minister with that compromise and he said no. What happened? He got involved in an expensive court case which was won by the Communist Party of Canada. The court ruled that two members were sufficient to constitute a party and insisted that

the minister come back to this place and fix the problem before February 15. The day before the deadline he introduced a bill to change the number to 12.

The minister argued that he was trying to improve democracy by modernizing the bill but he had to be dragged kicking and screaming to that point, only to accept the number that was proposed in a compromise nine or twelve months ago. In the meantime, he spent huge amounts of taxpayer dollars defending that position.

I would predict confidently that he is into the same problem with the Canada Elections Act, with the challenge by the National Citizens' Coalition over third party advertising. He will spend a fortune, probably millions of dollars, challenging it in the courts only to have it struck down as unconstitutional as it has been three times previously.

Those are the sorts of issues, if the NDP really wanted to be forward thinking and creative, that would have moved us forward from where we are. We should be talking about the things that would make this place work better for the people we represent.

Another modernization we could do is, if the government would not accept absolutely total outright free votes, maybe we could agree that if, say, 30% of the total membership of the House, which would be about 60 members at the moment, demanded a secret ballot, that we would do something completely different. Let us get outside the box. If 60 members in this place demanded a secret ballot on a private member's bill or on a government motion or a government bill, then we have a secret ballot. I know the minister would argue immediately that we could not do that because our constituents want to see how we voted. There is some validity to that sort of statement.

However, the fact is that sometimes democracy would be served by having a secret ballot in this place. The example I just gave, of the 12 candidate rule, is a good example of where a secret ballot could have fixed the problem. That side of the House was compelled to vote for something that the courts were saying was wrong. In a couple of weeks time they will vote 180 degrees opposite for something completely different because they are whipped into voting the way they are told, instead of voting with common sense. There are good debates in the House where common sense prevails. Members from the opposite side have told me that they liked the idea I had talked about with a proposed bill but that they could not vote for it.

There is something wrong with our democratic process when we have that state of affairs in the House of Commons, where people on the government side know that they should not be voting against something but they are compelled to vote against it by the whipping on that side of the House.

*Supply*

We could achieve a lot with a decent piece of parliamentary reform.

Apart from parliamentary reform, members of the NDP could have talked about other issues. I mentioned child poverty. They are always on about taxing the rich and that corporations do not pay enough income tax or that 1,000 corporations did not pay any income tax this year. I have been in at least three public debates with the member from Vancouver East where she has spouted the usual rhetoric about corporations that do not pay income tax. I have challenged her on all three occasions to name the companies that did not pay the income tax and to tell me why they did not. She has never come up with a list and has never come up with the reasons. I know why. As soon as she gets the names of the companies and looks at the reasons, she will see there are very good reasons for not paying the income tax.

For example, the Royal Trust, I think, was used as an example one time. It is a subsidiary of another company. It transferred its profits to the parent company which then paid the income tax.

• (1125)

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There is such a thing as a rule of relevancy. No wonder people do not think much of the institution. We have a debate on a specific topic, PR, and we have a member who is hardly talking about it at all. Mr. Speaker, I would like you to call him to order and get him to address the motion before the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Of course we are all expecting the hon. member for North Vancouver to indeed tie up his remarks to the subject at hand. On the other hand, if the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has questions or comments, he should feel free to stand up and I will recognize him.

**Mr. Ted White:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, I always manage to tie it into the topic in the end and I certainly will in this case.

As I was stating, this day could have been used to debate critical NDP issues, such as corporations that do not pay any taxes. I am sure that at least half of the reason the member wants to keep stopping me is if there are NDP members watching today all manner of myths are being dispelled about the rhetoric that is handed out to them on a daily basis. Whenever I have these people approach me in my office I always ask for examples of the corporations that did not pay taxes and the reasons they did not. When they do the research they find out that it is all nonsense.

The NDP members could have used their day today for these other topics and we could have talked about these critical key issues. Instead of that, we are stuck with an issue that we have debated before.

As other members of my party will say, we do support the thrust of the motion. If it were votable today, we would be voting in

favour of it. Unfortunately, it is non-votable. That is just an example of how undemocratic this place really is.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the member opposite for his remarks, particularly as they are aimed at the issue at point, proportional representation. I would like to ask the member a somewhat delicate question.

He alluded in his remarks to the possibility of being able, with electronic voting, to vote from one's constituency. I would like to ask him a question. Does he feel that an MP's primary responsibility should be to be at parliament, on this hill at least if not in this Chamber, when parliament is in session? In other words, do his voters not actually expect him to be here in Ottawa, at parliament, when the House is sitting?

**Mr. Ted White:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from the member on the Liberal side: Do the constituents expect us to be here in parliament when the House is sitting? That is a wide ranging question.

In my experience, I have found that most people do not even know when parliament is sitting, for a start. In the summertime, they quite often ask when we are going back to parliament. I would expect the hon. member probably gets the same sorts of questions. People do not even know when parliament is sitting. However, they also recognize, certainly in the west, that this place is not terribly relevant to the process of governing.

Unfortunately, because of the lack of democracy in this place, they know that the outcome of every vote is known before the debates begin. They know that today when I stand here and give a 20 minute speech and answer questions it will not make one bit of difference to the outcome of today's business.

In 1993, I made a promise to my constituents, and I repeated it in writing in the *North Shore News* four days before the vote in the election of 2000. I promised that while parliament was in session that I would be here three days and in my riding two days. The reason for doing that is so that I can meet with my constituents and deal with their concerns, assist those who want to come here to give evidence before parliamentary committees, talk about the bills that are before the House and be available because, frankly, many of us would recognize that a lot more can be achieved dealing with our constituents than can be achieved in this place.

There are many surveys that have been done in Canada by Ipsos-Reid and other polling companies that have discovered that the longer a person is in this place as a member the more emphasis he or she places on helping constituents because it is the one area where there is satisfaction, and virtually nothing in this place gives satisfaction.

In terms of the voting from the constituency, of course at any time while parliament is in session there are always large numbers of people away on committee travel and overseas travel. Those people should be able to vote remotely.

• (1130)

In New Zealand there is a house rule that was adopted in 1996, at first on an experimental basis and made permanent a year later. Up to 20% of the caucus of each party can be absent at any time and the whip votes by proxy for that 20%. That gives flexibility for people to be away on committee travel or overseas travel and yet there is 100% attendance all the time. Some may argue it is cheating the system, but it is really no different from being able to vote from the riding.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke has been fighting the B.C. election that is going to come in a few weeks' time, and I find it very strange that he would also talk about why we are once again putting the motion forward.

The Library of Parliament tells us that the last time there was a vote on PR in this parliament was in 1923. The last time it was debated as a private member's initiative prior to last fall, when I had a motion that was votable before the House, was in 1979 when Jean-Luc Pepin, who was a Liberal member at the time, had a non-votable motion on looking at the wisdom of the PR system being part of our electoral system in Canada.

Last fall my Motion No. 155, which was votable and was similar to the motion today, asked to strike an all party committee to look at the wisdom of looking at elements of PR for our system. This initiative has hardly ever been discussed in the Parliament of Canada, so I am very surprised the member would be criticizing us for putting forth an idea that has hardly ever been talked about before. Just last week the member's own party had a motion in the House dealing with the ethics counsellor. That was a repetitive thing too because that was a promise of the Liberal Party in the 1993 red book. The argument he is making is a rather strange one indeed.

I want to ask the hon. member specifically about proportional representation. He has studied the New Zealand system and I would like to have him tell the House what kind of model of PR he would think is relevant for our country. We are a unique federation. We have the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Quebec. Geographically we are the second largest country in the world outside of Russia. We have very diverse histories and so on. What kind of a model would he suggest we look at if indeed we did have an all-party committee to take a look at this?

I also remind the House that I think the chief electoral officer has a mandate in which he could look at PR. Therefore all we need to

### *Supply*

do is strike a committee to look at various electoral systems. I wonder what contribution he would make in regard to the kind of model if we indeed had such a committee.

**Mr. Ted White:** Mr. Speaker, I would first say that the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle should not be complaining that we have not had a vote in this place since 1923 when he has made the NDP's own motion today non-votable. If NDP members wanted a vote, why did they not make it votable today? Why use today for a non-votable motion if they only get one votable motion?

Everyone is laughing. Is that not a sad commentary? This is what I said earlier. Why on earth are these motions non-votable? It is an affront to democracy and everyone in this place should be absolutely ashamed that it even happens.

In terms of our motion last week, which was votable, I think the member would have to agree there was good bang for the buck in that one. The Liberals voted against their own policy. The newspapers and the media were very happy to talk about that one. It is a shame that there will not be any coverage of today's discussions.

In terms of the system I would support myself, as the member knows I have been the critic for direct democracy right up to the last election. I always took the position that I needed to be neutral because people tend to be wedded to one form or another of proportional representation. I always felt it would be difficult for me to continue in my role as critic if people felt that I was predisposed toward one system or another. I would prefer to retain that neutrality at this time just on the off chance that we ever get that all party committee. I would like to be sitting on the committee with people knowing that I am taking a neutral stand.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that the member refers to the issue of the 1989 resolution of parliament with regard to child poverty. I think his recollection is quite right. In fact, it was a Friday, there were only 25 members in the House and there was no vote.

In any event, the member did make a statement which I think is heard in this place often enough, and maybe it deserves the question. The member said that this place is not relevant because the results of most votes are known even before they are held. The member is probably right. It is reflective of the fact that there are 172 members of the Liberal Party out of 301 members of parliament.

• (1135)

I wonder whether the member would like to tell the House what number of members a government needs to have to be able to win a vote. Does it require 90% of the seats in the House and 90% of the votes? Would that be acceptable to make it relevant? At what level would he deem it to be relevant when there is a vote in the House

*Supply*

and there is a majority government? There must be a point somewhere. If 100% of the seats were held by one party and there was a vote, would it be relevant? I would really like to know whether or not the member has a position in regard to at what point the result of a vote of democratically elected members of parliament has relevance.

**Mr. Ted White:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that we know the outcome of votes in this place before the debates begin is not reflective of the fact that the government has 172 members out of 301. It is reflective of the fact that there are no free votes. The fact is that because there are no free votes in this place we know the outcome of every vote.

The member asks me what numbers the government needs. If this were truly a democratic place, the number the government would need is the number it could convince to vote for its measure, so that we could have meaningful debates here and meaningful input at committees because the government would be challenged with the task of convincing every member in this place that it was a good measure. Each one of us would have a lot more power to influence, to tweak and to make minor adjustments. Earlier today I gave the example of the 12 candidate rule; it never would have wasted millions of dollars of taxpayers' money because it could have been solved right in this place with a free vote.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the core issue being debated today is democracy and how it is exercised in Canada, allow me to first congratulate the Speaker of the House on his election, since I had not yet had the opportunity to do so. Mr. Speaker, I also congratulate you on your appointment to the Chair.

I would also like to thank the people of Verchères—Les-Patriotes who, for the third time, in November 2000, elected me to represent them in the House of Commons.

Let us now turn our attention to the motion before us. The Canadian Alliance member who just spoke seemed surprised that the media will not be reporting on today's proceedings in the House in the news at midday, this evening or tomorrow.

Based on what I have heard so far, I personally am not surprised that the media are not interested in reporting such debates.

First, the New Democratic Party brought forward this motion in favour of a system based on proportional representation. Then, the government House leader rose and, for all sorts of reasons—some legitimate and others totally fallacious—opposed any form of proportional representation. He went so far as to say “We do not even want to debate and discuss this motion”. Finally, the member of the Canadian Alliance member got up and said “This may be an

important issue, but you should have discussed this or that other issue instead”.

I respectfully submit to member of the Canadian Alliance that this is none of his business. It is not up to him to decide which issues other political parties may wish to debate.

The New Democratic Party is perfectly entitled to choose whatever issue it may want to submit to the attention of this House, without having to put up with criticism from other political parties.

Furthermore, when the Canadian Alliance member said that the debates in the House were utterly pointless because they were not put to a vote, I think that he is underestimating or trivializing their importance.

• (1140)

Of course, it would be eminently desirable for every debate to be followed by a vote so that parliamentarians' intentions could be put on record. But I think it is pretty insulting to us as parliamentarians to say that the discussions and debates we have in the House are pointless, to say, if I may take the logic to its ultimate extreme, that freedom of expression is basically a waste of time.

I think that we have this privilege of full free freedom of expression here in the House especially. In no way would I want to see us attempt to trivialize the opportunity we have to express our views on a whole range of public interest issues.

As I said earlier and I repeat, it would be eminently desirable for us to be able to vote on each subject debated, but the fact of the matter is that this is not now the case. While we are on the topic of the whole issue of electoral reform, we should perhaps in fact look at a parliamentary reform that would eventually result in votes on all issues that attract the attention of the House.

I would like to address more specifically the New Democratic Party motion, which reads as follows:

That this House strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

There are a number of elements of interest in this motion. First, in connection with the statement about the desire to create an all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other issue of electoral reform, I do not feel it is heretical in any way to state that it would be desirable for all parties to meet together in a committee to debate such issues. The matter of striking a committee is, I believe, an idea that merits looking at, merits examination and analysis.

*Supply*

Now some may claim that there is already a committee in the House mandated to examine all matters relating to the electoral system, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Should the government, for one reason or another, as seems likely to be the case, for there will be no vote on this, decide not to follow up on the wishes expressed by the New Democratic Party for the striking of a special all party committee to examine matters of electoral reform, perhaps the procedure and House affairs committee, which is made up of representatives of all parties in the House, could decide to act on this wish. This could be done as a follow up on the report the Chief Electoral Officer must file on the last federal election and to ensure that we are able to make some amendments to the Elections Act in order to modernize it and bring it more in line with the expectations of Canadians and Quebecers.

There is another very important element in this motion: the consideration of various models of proportional representation—I will come back to this in a few minutes—and other forms of electoral reform. Naturally, since the start of the debate, the Liberals and the Canadian Alliance have taken some care to limit the discussion to the question of proportional representation. However, I draw to the attention of the House the fact that the NDP motion is also intended to make us think about other potential or foreseeable electoral reforms.

There is another part to the motion. Reference is made to committee deliberations leading to a way to combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections. I will return to this in a few minutes.

First, though, I would say quite simply that it is a simplification to claim that the growing regionalization of Canadian politics and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections is the fault solely of the current electoral system.

• (1145)

I think that there is a host of reasons behind these two phenomena, and I think that it would be simplistic to say it was the fault of the electoral system alone.

I would now like to say a few words on proportional representation itself. Naturally the system of proportional representation appears attractive from several standpoints and would modernize the Canadian electoral system, since most democracies in the world have either integrated an element of proportional representation or have adopted the system of proportional representation in its entirety.

There are some significant benefits. Proportional representation, or at least the integration of a proportional component, could

ensure better representation for minority groups such as cultural communities, the disabled and women.

Political parties could decide to strike a balance between the number of women and men in the House of Commons and ensure that a larger number of women are on party lists, so as to increase women's representation. The same would go for young people. When it comes to representation, there are a number innovative solutions to be considered here.

Another very important and interesting factor with a system that is fully or partially based on proportional representation is the idea that parliament would better reflect the various ideologies among the public, that the House would better reflect these ideologies. This would allow the small political parties that have a difficult time getting candidates elected under a single constituency single ballot system to have a voice in parliament.

Incidentally, if Germany's electoral system did not have a proportional component, the Green Party would never have been represented in the Bundestag. Therefore, it is very important for small political parties to have a system based on proportional representation, so that they can be heard in parliament.

Proportional representation would also eliminate the inevitable distortions of the first past the post system. In a system such as ours, it is paradoxical that a government elected with 38% or 40% of the vote can run the country and have almost 100% of the power concentrated in its hands. With a system of proportional representation, the distortions inherent in the present system could be avoided.

As was pointed out earlier, a system of proportional representation would result in greater co-operation among the various political parties in the House, since the very survival of a government, or its composition, depends on co-operation and even coalitions between various political parties.

In countries with proportional representation, there is less of this very rigid dichotomy between the government, which has all the powers and sees itself as being in a position of almost dictatorial authority for four years between elections, and the opposition, which does its best to represent the public interest to the fullest extent possible.

There are certain disadvantages to the system of proportional representation. Thought needs to be given to how proportional representation can eventually be incorporated into the existing system while trying to avoid those disadvantages. We need only think of the instability to which a system of proportional representation can lead. We have seen this especially in countries with a pure representation by population system, such as Israel. This gives

*Supply*

rise to a certain instability. Governments are not in power for long and depend on the co-operation of the various parties forming a coalition.

There was talk of a pizza parliament here, with five political parties. What sort of parliament would there be with seven, eight or nine parties?

• (1150)

This would definitely be problematical and the situation will have to be addressed within a study of electoral and parliamentary reform. There could eventually be more than five political parties. The rules would have to be changed to accommodate that reality.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has raised the problems connected to integrating proportional representation with a first past the post system, in Germany for example. To all intents and purposes, this leads to the creation of two categories of MPs. How can the two categories be reconciled: those elected by a riding and those elected from a list put forward by their party?

This takes us to another problem we will eventually have to address: to whom MPs are answerable in a pure or mixed proportional representation system. To whom are they answerable? If elected by the population of a riding, we tend to think they are answerable to the people who elected them. If elected from a list provided by the party, are they still answerable to the people, or to the party? There is a problem here. How are we going to reconcile all this?

I can foresee another really serious problem with the proportional representation system, for the same reasons as were just given by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle relating to the opportunity the various regions and components of a federation would have to make their voice heard, if the electoral system tends to uniformize expectations and programs countrywide.

As the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has said, a vote in Newfoundland has the same importance as a vote in British Columbia, Saskatchewan or Quebec. Obviously, for members of a federation who have particular needs and expectations and wish to make these known through a federal parliament, a proportional representation system can be somewhat problematic. I am, of course, referring to the very specific case of Quebec's position within the Canadian federation.

How could we, if the system of proportional representation is intended to give a platform to the most isolated ideas, give a platform in a system such as this to a province that is, to all intents and purposes, isolated within a federation, because it is the only province with a francophone majority? Clearly in our case this could create fairly significant problems.

The motion before us talks as well of examining other forms of electoral reform. I would not want the government to close the door on this idea of the NDP simply because it does not share the view that there should be proportional representation.

At the moment, a system is in place in Canada, and, as we know full well, it has certain imperfections. Winston Churchill said that democracy was the least perfect of the political systems. Our elections act, however democratic it may be, contains certain imperfections and warrants a look.

The last election showed us just how many gaps there are in the current elections act. It needs corrective measures. If there is one thing the all party committee should consider with respect to the Elections Act, it is first and foremost applying corrective measures immediately to the existing act.

We need think only of the issue of the appointment of returning officers. In the latest election, a number of incidents occurred across Canada arising clearly from the inexperience and, in certain cases, I would even say the incompetence of returning officers in a number of ridings. Why is this the case? Simply because returning officers are appointed not for their ability but because of their partisan allegiance.

• (1155)

Opposition parties are not the only ones to be concerned. The Lortie commission, which the government House leader quoted extensively earlier, wrote the following on page 483 of its report, and I quote:

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

This is not from mere opposition members. It is from the report of the Lortie commission on electoral reform and party financing.

Let me also mention a statement made by the chief electoral officer himself, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, on October 28, 1999. He said:

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

Some changes could definitely be made to the existing Elections Act regarding the appointment of returning officers, the financing of political parties, the cap on contributions and the restrictions as to their source.

I will conclude by saying that it is wrong to think or to suggest that all the problems referred to in the motion, whether regionalization or the declining interest of Canadians in institutions and policies, are only due to the electoral system.

One only has to think about the government's ethics to see why the public is losing interest, or why the Canadian federation is dysfunctional when it comes to regionalization.

We should not try to explain or trivialize this issue by saying that it is simply a matter of reforming the Elections Act.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the comments made on both sides of the House. The proportional representation being discussed today is very valuable, and it should have been raised. I appreciate the fact that everyone has been able to comment on this.

There were some things that were said that I take exception to though. One came from my colleague in the Bloc who paraphrased my caucus colleague's comments as freedom of expression is a waste of time. That is not the case at all. That is not what he was saying. He was saying why raise the expectations of the House if there will be no a vote on the issue.

Another thing I find very offensive is that part of this is saying there should be quotas. I do not accept quotas in any form. I do not think people should be put in the House of parliament based on their gender, disabilities or anything of that nature. People are put in the House to represent the public based on merit. That is the way it should stay.

I also took exception to some comments that were made by the government House leader when he said "force their own agenda on a nation as a whole". I believe that is what we are talking about when we talk about having some sort of reform. There are people in parts of this country who rightly believe that they have had the agendas of one party forced on them. Any sort of parliamentary change that could lead to more freedom across the country would be a benefit to all of us.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments. First of all, I must say that I tend to agree with her last comment regarding the intrinsic merits of parliamentary reform, of electoral reform or of reform of our democratic institutions in general and of its impact on the public good.

• (1200)

I would, however, like to make two points with respect to my comment on freedom of expression. For the benefit of the Canadian

*Supply*

Alliance member, I did indeed understand that the point she was making was simply that there is not much use raising an issue in the House if it is not put to a vote. I have already said that I agreed with this point of view.

Nonetheless, and contrary to what she said, I am far from thinking that what we are doing here today is a pointless waste of time. In this regard, I pointed out that, if we took logic to its ultimate extreme, we could conclude that freedom of expression is a waste of time.

As for the issue of quotas, I do not know if she was referring to my own speech, but I did not advance the suggestion that there should be quotas for youth, the disabled, cultural minorities and women, far from it.

I merely said that, in a system of proportional representation, political parties could increase the representation of women, youth, the disabled or cultural minorities simply by selecting those whose competence is beyond reproach and who also meet these other criteria, if I may say so, by putting them on their lists for proportional representation.

To reply to my colleague's question with respect to quotas, that was what I was talking about.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask a question of the hon. member of the Bloc Quebecois.

If I recall correctly, some time ago, when he was the Premier of Quebec and leader of the Parti Quebecois, René Lévesque was in favour of proportional representation. I am certain that all members of the Bloc Quebecois share Mr. Lévesque's point of view.

Is the Bloc Quebecois whip in favour of a particular model of proportional representation? This is my first question.

My second relates to Australia, which has the same system for the House of Commons and also a Senate that is elected by a system of proportional representation. That would be another way to go.

Today, we are having a discussion just on the principle of proportional representation. There are, however, a number of models of this, including the Italian, German, Australian, and English models. There are a variety of models, therefore.

If we had an agreement in principle to use certain elements of this system here, we could have an important discussion on the which model we could have in Canada. This is why I have these questions for my friend and colleague from the Bloc Quebecois.

Is he in favour now of a model for the system of proportional representation and what does he want to see done with the Senate,

*Supply*

which is not elected? Do we need to have elections for the Senate? What could we do about that other institution?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I think that my colleague is quite right to point out that, like the Parti Québécois, the Bloc Québécois came out at its last convention in support of the idea of proportional representation in an independent Quebec. There is not a shadow of a doubt about that.

I explained earlier that, within the present federal system, for the reasons he gave regarding the protection of smaller or less important groups, we have some concerns about the application of a system of proportional representation across Canada.

I also expressed other concerns and reservations with respect to the system of proportional representation, but generally we recognize the advantages of such a system.

That said, to respond to my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle, I return to the wording of the motion, which invites us to examine various models with a view to defining what would be most desirable for Canada and, more broadly, and not simply with respect to proportional representation, what electoral reforms would be appropriate for Canada.

In this regard, I agree entirely with the idea of creating such a committee, or of giving such a mandate to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Generally speaking, the committee's mandate is to oversee the reform, if necessary, of federal parliamentary structures and procedures.

● (1205)

As for the Senate, Canadians' lack of interest in federal politics in general, which is growing as we saw during the last federal election, since the participation rate was among the lowest in Canadian history, relates, as I said earlier, to this whole issue of rather opaque transparency, if I can use that expression, on the government's part, to its control over the affairs of the state. The government's ethics are questionable, to say the least.

I do think that the Senate is itself a perpetual irritant to the collective psyche of Canadians and Quebecers, who do not see the need, in a modern world, for such an archaic institution. If the Senate must be reformed, then so be it. But as I think the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle said, I feel that we should consider abolishing it instead.

It is clear that in the current context the Senate, in its present form, does not arouse, if I may use that expression, the interest of voters in federal politics. Rather, they feel that an old system is being perpetuated, a system that no longer matches the new realities, a transparent democratic policy, an exemplary public policy of integrity.

The majority of our fellow citizens, as we know, see the Senate as a house of patronage.

[English]

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to share my time with this handsome young man, the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

The motion before us calls attention to the serious problem confronting the Canadian system of government. I congratulate and thank the New Democratic Party for bringing forward the matter for debate in the House.

Our system of government and the means by which we are elected are in crisis. This is a horrible situation brought about by voter cynicism and apathy. I need not tell the House that voter turnout rates have been declining. Everyone has been talking about it. There is a marked sense that it does not matter if I vote or not. That is what I hear back home.

They talk about the fact that many of the backbenchers on the government side have to do what they are told. They have to vote the way they are told. People have lost faith in the parliamentary system.

It is insufficient for us to examine only the problems facing our system if we do not take a critical look at ourselves to determine what has caused this dark shadow which has cast itself over our democracy. While we do not as yet have the official report from the chief electoral officer on the 2000 general election, it is clear that there is a growing indifference toward the political system across Canada.

Canadians are opting for single issue groups instead of political parties as a place to voice their concerns. We see it every day on the Hill. People come up here to protest because they feel that their voices are not being heard in the House of Commons.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Yours is.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** I am glad to hear that. The Liberal member just said that my voice is being heard. I would like my people back in Saint John to know that.

As the motion points out, there is disturbing evidence of continued regional alienation. That is a sad thing. Today we see a five party system in the House of Commons. Before 1993 we did not see that. This has caused a great deal of problems in the House. A government that makes light of regional differences and whose Canada is the Canada of the sixties and seventies has created part of that problem.

Another problem is the abuse of the trust and authority vested in us as members of parliament and in the members yonder who have formed the government.

*Supply*

• (1210)

Last fall's election was totally unnecessary. It was called early, not out of conviction but out of convenience for the Liberal Party. Calling an election when the opposition was not yet prepared was about politics and not about principles.

Elections Canada has suggested that the federal election cost taxpayers over \$200 million. Let us imagine what incredible benefits we could have received by using that \$200 million in other ways.

Let us think of the ever present crisis in the health care system. If we assume an average of \$150,000 for a doctor, we could have afforded 1,274 more family physicians. We could have had over 5,000 more nurses. We could have funded a four year medical program at Dalhousie University for over 6,000 students.

Let us imagine the appreciation of the Canadian people had the federal government invested in 80 MRI units at a cost of about \$2.5 million each instead of wasting \$200 million. St. Joseph's Hospital and the Saint John Regional Hospital in my riding would have been eternally grateful if the federal government had invested in new equipment for our hospitals.

The government could have chosen to give that money directly back to Canadian taxpayers. If it wanted to give a GST rebate on heating oil, it could have provided all Canadians with it, not just those who are in jail. This would have cost a total of \$118 million.

The government could have provided a \$500 tax credit for emergency service volunteers, such as our brave volunteer fire-fighters. The excise tax on diesel fuel could have been eliminated. This is a tax that is crippling our trucking industry for the same \$200 million that the government instead chose to spend on an exercise in personal ambition.

Fifteen minutes ago I was passed a document which states that Canadian government officials suggest that the monetary funding of the Kosovo project for the RCMP and the police forces for budget years 2001-02 and 2002-03 will suffer significant budget cuts. This is once again because the money was wasted. This is not what the people of Canada want.

I do not have to tell members that there are many in our country who are far less fortunate than we are. A \$200 million investment in our food banks could provide well over 36 million meals, 2 million food baskets for families in need or could fund 610 food banks for a full year. The possibilities are endless.

Three areas where that money could have been spent that are close to my heart include fully compensating the merchant navy veterans, putting that money directly into new equipment for our armed forces, or even the establishment once and for all of a national shipbuilding policy.

When Canadians see such government waste, when they see so many missed opportunities, is it any wonder why they have lost

faith in parliament? It distresses me greatly that our people are so indifferent to who now forms the government of our country that they are unwilling to vote. In the process they elect officials by default.

The NDP motion suggests that one option might be some form of proportional representation but it also allows for other electoral reforms. The door is open to other potential avenues of change.

In the last election the PC Party platform recognized the importance of electoral reform and promised to examine a number of possible changes, including proportional representation in run off elections.

We also recognize that many people are happy with the status quo. We do agree that there needs to be a full and open debate before any change can be contemplated. We must gauge whether there is an appetite in the country for the kind of dramatic changes to our basic principles of government that might well be needed to set our system straight. The motion agrees with our position and calls on the House to begin a serious study of all the alternatives that are worthy of our support.

Reaching back through our PC heritage, I must caution members of the perils of opening what are really constitutional questions. There are always difficulties in the details.

• (1215)

Discussions of that kind have always brought with them a balanced share of both unity and division. I believe we all agree in the House that one thing our country does not need is further division.

My party has proposed that we restore the value of our parliament for Canadians to have faith in their system of government. The onus is on us to make the system worthy of their pride.

Part of the restoration involves our giving power back to the people and the elected representatives who they send to Ottawa, not only the Prime Minister or those he chooses for his cabinet.

Our American neighbours elect a president and I am thankful to the Fathers of Confederation that they resisted the temptation to forge our country in their image. Simple matters of compassion and common sense have become issues of competence in government.

We all know of examples when members of the governing party have wanted to vote against their party's stand but have been intimidated and threatened until they have literally broken down into tears or they have been forced to sit on the opposite side as an independent. This was the case with respect to child pornography, hepatitis C and the ethics counsellor.

It is important for us to praise those precious few members on the other side who have had the courage in the past, some even in the recent past, to challenge their government when they believe it to be wrong.

*Supply*

At the end of the day the challenges we must overcome as a parliament are varied and wide ranging, so too must be the options we examine.

I say again without hesitation that the New Democratic Party and the member for Halifax should be commended for bringing the issue to the House for debate. Whatever the solution to our problems may be, it is only through reasoned debate in this great House and in the homes of Canadian families that we will arrive at it.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a comment in terms of our electoral system compared to the rest of the world. I have a list of 98 countries that have a proportional representation system or a semi-proportional representation system in their legislatures dependent on whether they are a unicameral state or, in the lower house, of a bicameral state like we have in our country.

There are also countries that have proportional representation in the second House. Australia, for example, has first past the post in the lower house and they have proportional representation in the senate. Most countries in the world do have a system that has PR.

I would like to take a minute to place on the record some of the countries that do have a PR system. They are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Venezuela, just to mention a few. Since PR—

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, I do protest. This is a debate in the House on an issue that the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has told us he thinks is important. Reading a list into the record is not part of the debate nor relevant to what we are discussing. I would suggest that he should go on with his question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** This is not really a point of order, but I would ask the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle to come to the point, please.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, this period of time is for either questions or comments. I said I had a comment. This demonstrates the need in our country when there are 100 countries in the world that have an element of PR in their lower houses or in their house if they are a unicameral system. Other countries, like Australia, have it in the other house, the senate, where all the members are chosen by PR.

This is extremely relevant in terms of looking at what we want and perhaps learning a little bit from other countries around the world. We may not have all the solutions in Canada. Perhaps the Germans, the Scandinavians or others have some answers to the questions we are looking at.

Would the member for Saint John like to comment on the fact that so many other countries have at least an element of PR?

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that there are other countries with PR. When I was mayor, I was asked to go to Germany to look at unification. I met with many of the representatives of the German government while I was there. I have also had the opportunity to do that in St. Petersburg, Russia and in other countries.

• (1220)

There are different forms of government. When I sit here and see how torn are some of my colleagues on the government side, for whom I have great respect, I realize the system in place now must change. It is time to have an all-party committee where we sit down and work it out all together.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am someone on the government side who has voted against the government on major legislation at least four times and countless times on private members' legislation. I do not feel torn. I feel that I am still a valued member of this side. The reality is that we always, as MPs, have the option of voting as we think it is necessary, not just for our constituents but for the issues as we understand them.

I have not noticed many instances where her party members have actually voted against their party's position on any major legislation. I would ask the member for Saint John to comment on that. Does she apply free votes only on the government side or would she see them on her side as well?

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the hon. member has raised this point. In 1993 when I was elected and Jean Charest was the leader of our party, he told me that he wanted me to stay. I told him that I would stay but I told him never to tell me how to vote, and he never ever did.

Since then on this side of the House we have had the freedom to vote on all the moral and major issues. When the Liberal member said he voted against his government and that he is still sitting there, I wonder whatever happened to poor old Nunziata after he stood up and voted against the government. They told him to go over there and sit in the corner somewhere, but he could not vote again with the Liberals. He was gone. We have a lot of free votes and we will continue to have them because we—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to take part in the debate on what is a very important issue and again to echo the comments of the ever loquacious and relevant member for Saint John, New Brunswick. She has pointed out that the NDP has brought forward a

motion that is very much relevant and very much on the minds of many Canadians.

I have listened with interest to the comments of the government House leader that this was not something he encountered during the past campaign. He did not feel that the majority of Canadians were bursting with enthusiasm for any sort of parliamentary reform.

However, the outcome of the election is what highlights the importance of this issue. As we saw in previous elections, for example in 1997, we had a majority government elected by 38% of the Canadian electorate, which resulted in a disproportionate majority government.

**Mr. John Bryden:** You wouldn't say that if it was a Conservative government, would you?

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, when in opposition the member opposite like most Liberal members used to rail against the government and the need for proportional representation. We have seen this kind of pliable stance taken time and time again by not only that member but the government House leader saying that things had to be changed and that a new system has to be brought about.

Now they sit pretty. They sit in an opportunity before Canadians with the chance to bring about real parliamentary reform. Will it happen? Absolutely not. Will they give lip service to it? Will they talk about ways to modernize parliament? Yes, they will.

They will talk to Canadians endlessly about the pressing need for electronic voting and try to pass it off as electoral reform. It is absolute nonsense. It would allow government members to stay away from the Chamber and it would allow voices of the opposition to be further muted.

We have seen an unprecedented period in the last seven to eight years of Liberal administration where the government has done everything in its power to mute the opposition. It has done everything to essentially take away methods by which the opposition could raise relevant issues, important objections to whether it be government legislation, policy direction or legitimate issues the opposition has heard from its constituents. We have seen systematic efforts to emasculate the opposition in that regard.

● (1225)

I would characterize the motion that is before the House in a very non-partisan way. It is to be commended for recommending a special all party committee to examine the merits of various methods of proportional representation. It also does not limit the debate to just proportional representation. It is a broad, all encompassing, all inclusive motion that calls upon all members of the Chamber to take part in the debate, to flesh out the matter and to give it some substance. We know that is the last thing the

### *Supply*

government wants to do and the last thing we will see. The simple reason for that—and the member opposite may holler his righteous indignation—is that it is not in the government's interests to change a system that rewards it. There is no appetite to bring about a change that will undermine the current government's ability to be elected.

As was demonstrated in the past, by low voter turnout and the proportionately low electoral support, there is no interest in changing the system that might eke away or somehow result in the government not being re-elected. That is not in the interests of the current government.

The temptation in the debate will be to focus on proportional representation but I do not believe that is the intention or the fashion in which the motion is before us. It mentions proportional representation but it leaves the door open to look at other methods of electoral reform.

Going outside the traditional party parliament system is a way in which this place can gain greater relevance in the hearts and minds of Canadians. Empowering individual members of parliament is also a very important part of the debate.

The faith that Canadians have in their representatives is at the very root of this issue and is at the very heart of what should be accomplished throughout the debate and throughout future debates if this motion were to pass in a committee.

It is important that Canadians understand the significance of committees. Committees go on sometimes out of the glare of the media. They are without the partisan tone that we all tend to fall into in the Chamber. Committees are where legitimate work can be done, the heavy slogging, and where the opportunity exists to hear from impartial stakeholders in matters such as this.

Committee work is crucial to the inner workings and the success of parliament. On the one hand it is unfortunate that the public does not have access to all of that work, but it is important that it is done in a forum where real ideas can be discussed without the sometimes poison partisanship that ekes into the public debate.

It has been mentioned as well that much of the power that is lost by members of parliament has been consumed by lobby groups or interest groups that take a particular position on any given issue. That is fine. That is a natural system that has evolved as well.

However, lobby groups that have access or trade on access to government becomes a little more troubling. When power is increasingly concentrated, as we have seen under the Liberal government, in the PMO and those who surround the Prime Minister, either by favour or appointment, this is where it becomes undemocratic. It becomes most troubling when people trade on access and when people can bring about and effect decisions because of a personal or past connection, whether it be former

*Supply*

cabinet ministers or otherwise. This is where democracy starts to come undone. The erosion and the rot sets in when individual members are not feeling empowered to the extent that they feel they have legitimate input into our system.

Time and time again in the House of Commons, the practice of this government has been to make public announcements, important shifts in policy, important public pronouncements in the press gallery across Wellington Street as opposed to standing here before Canadians and displaying respect for not only their own colleagues but for opposition members who carry the same burden, and I do not say burden in the negative sense, but carry the same responsibility of being elected by Canadians. Those announcements are not made here. They are most often made across the way in front of the press or they are leaked. The trial balloons are sent out prior to the announcements actually being made public. That practice has to stop.

• (1230)

I come back to the issue of committees. There was a recent opportunity to empower and put greater faith in committees by giving them the opportunity to elect chairmen, but again this would not be consistent with the PMO's reign of power, with the hold on those committees to control the agenda and to control the membership. If one is representing the PMO, one does not want to have a rogue chairman who might somehow be out of step or out of line with the PMO's thinking on any given issue. The government completely passed up this opportunity, displaying once again my point that this talk of parliamentary reform, this lip service that we hear from the government, is really just that. There is really no genuine intent to reform this place, because it would undermine, undercut and erode the ever increasing concentration of power that we have seen in the Prime Minister's office.

Do not take my word for it. Do not take any member of parliament's word for it. History will bear this out. Professors of politics have repeatedly suggested that this is the case in the country. It is well documented.

I know my time is brief. I want to again suggest that we have an opportunity here to take part in a very meaningful debate to discuss ideas about parliamentary reform and electoral reform. I very much associate those two because it lends greater legitimacy to parliament if we have a system in place in which Canadians have faith.

The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has listed at length the number of countries—100 plus—around the world that have embraced a system of proportional representation or a derivation thereof. This is an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about what sometimes is seen as an overly complicated system but is not. There are systems that working very effectively in places like Australia and Ireland and in places that have a history of democracy much longer than our own.

I appreciate the opportunity to partake in the debate, although I do not appreciate the endless hyena heckling that is coming from across the way. This debate once again demonstrates that we in this place have an opportunity to say what we have to say on an important subject such as this.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the debate with great interest. I have studied this from time to time, maybe not as much as the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, but I have been very interested in it.

I would like to ask the member a question. You mentioned the fact that the Liberals formed a government with 38% of the vote. That too was a regionalized vote. How would proportional representation affect or change the position that I find my constituents in, where we have two government members elected from the province and some 16 or 14 more from across the west? If we had proportional representation, you still would not find a member of the ruling party standing on his or her feet and speaking out for the constituents who are going downhill very quickly. Proportional representation might change the composition, but in a country as wide as Canada I still think we would fail to get regional issues addressed by the House.

At present Saskatchewan has two Liberal members. Never once, going into my second term, have I seen anyone on that side of the House standing up in support of true agricultural reform that would benefit the people in western Canada. Look at what happened in the November election. Could the hon. member tell us how proportional representation would benefit my constituents and put them at ease that their voice was going to be heard by the government?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Before I give the floor to my colleague, I would like to remind members to address their comments and questions to the Chair, please.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, to respond directly to the question, I think there are two issues that the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain has pointed out. There is the issue of whether there would there be more opposition, as opposed to whether the members elected under the current system in government would have a greater say or a greater ability to speak out for regional issues.

• (1235)

I think it is fair to say that there will always be regional issues that arise. I am very proud of the province that I come from and of that region in northern Nova Scotia of Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough and all that it has accomplished and will accomplish. I bring those issues forward on behalf of my constituents, as does the hon. member.

There are two separate issues here. One is the issue of having a voice in government, and the effective individual ability to raise

regional issues or issues of importance also on a national scale is something different. The dynamic that exists within the current government does not speak to that. It does not encourage that. It does not embrace individuality.

The other issue about how it would result in a change in the current dynamic or the current makeup of the House is that under proportional representation, for one thing, we would not have a majority government. Second, I would suggest that there would be greater representation under that system in terms of it really expressing the will of the people. For example, if we had not a first past the post system but a system of runoff, we would not have these types of anomalies whereby members of parliament are elected with such a low proportion of the vote. I think that is how the dynamic might differ if we had a system such as that.

I thank the hon. member for his question. I know that he is engaged and interested in this issue as well.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is always very interesting when new ideas such as these are advanced. The danger, however, comes when they are taken to extremes. A politically correct attitude can go too far.

I worked in a party that talked about proportional representation. One thing led to another and suddenly all sorts of minorities—visible and invisible minorities, women, sexual dissidents—wanted to be represented in parliament. The result would be that one person could have four votes: one by virtue of his citizenship and three more by virtue of his other attributes. Is this not a danger?

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I think the issue is not to rush towards judgment in changing our system. No one is advocating that. Even the mover of the motion has suggested that we go about this in a very pragmatic and practical way, which is to have an all party committee look at different forms of potential proportional representation or other changes to the electoral system.

I agree that minority rights are always important. That is very much a part of this debate. I am encouraged by the level of interest of those who have taken part in the debate today.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is encouraged by the level of debate because to some extent, although I was encouraged by the level of debate coming forward from the Progressive Conservatives on the issue, I have not been encouraged by the level of debate coming forward from some quarters of the

### *Supply*

House. I think the attitude of the Liberal members on this has generally been far too defensive and not open and exploratory enough as to how we might address some agreed upon problems in our electoral system.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member from Winnipeg North Centre.

I am disappointed in the defensiveness of the Liberals on the motion. We made this a non-votable motion for a reason. We thought that we might create an opportunity for non-partisan debate in this place. There are legitimate arguments to be made in favour of incorporating some element of proportional representation and there are legitimate criticisms of proportional representation as it has been implemented in many countries.

It would have been nice to have had that kind of debate. We were trying to transcend the sort of cheap shot culture that sometimes develops in the House. Some members who I sometimes associate with a higher level of debate have disappointed me today by being so ready to partisanize the debate.

• (1240)

In any event, I want to pick up on the point made by the member for Souris—Moose Mountain. He was a member who did try to engage the topic and I thought he asked a good question of the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. He said that even if there were more members from the west on the government side, he had no confidence that they would be saying what he wanted them to say.

However, that is to miss the point. It is to miss the point that regions have diverse points of view. What the problem is in our current system the way it has developed is that it creates the impression that regions only have one point of view: that there is only one point of view from Alberta, the Alliance point of view; that there is only one point of view from Ontario, the Liberal point of view; that in the last two parliaments there has been only one point of view from Quebec, the Bloc point of view. The list goes on and on of times in which it seems, if we look at parliament, that there is only one point of view from a particular region.

I say to the hon. member from Moose Mountain that his question is a good example of the problem. He assumes that there is only one point of view from the west. Indeed, I think that is a characteristic of his party, which I sometimes find offensive, that is, the fact that it sometimes pretends to speak for all of the west in the way that western Progressive Conservatives once did. Even when there were three NDP governments and NDP members of parliament galore in western Canada, there was still this pretension, particularly on the part of right wing western Canadians, that

*Supply*

somehow they spoke for the west. They speak for one point of view in the west, but they do not speak for all westerners.

What we want to see is a parliament in which that diversity of views that exists within regions, not between regions, is reflected here in the House of Commons, not just for the sake of accuracy, but because we believe that would lead to a parliament and a political culture that would be less divisive, that would tend more toward national unity, that would create fewer opportunities and less temptation for political parties to exploit regional perceptions, regional hostilities and regional grievances, both real and perceived, in order to obtain electoral success, electoral success in a particular region but often at the expense of a more national political success.

At a time when we are talking about national unity in Canada, as we always are, I suppose we could say, at a time when western alienation is in the headlines and of course at a time when Quebec separatism is still in the headlines, it would be very important for us to at least consider—and this is all the motion asks parliament to do—setting up a process by which we could consider ways in which we might, through electoral reform, alleviate the problem that I have just identified. We would then stop having, as I tried to say earlier in a question and comment opportunity, an electoral system which throws up, no pun intended, these homogeneous regional identities that mislead Canadians and lead Canadians into a way of looking at political parties and the political culture in their regions that denies the heterogeneous as opposed to the homogeneous nature of their regions when it comes to politics.

If only, and I say this partly facetiously, all provinces could be like some provinces that tend to have a diverse political culture and elect members from all political parties. I am thinking of my home province of Manitoba as a province that does so more consistently than others. There are other provinces like Nova Scotia which will do that, although sometimes a certain party gets blanked out there as the Liberals did in 1997.

• (1245)

My point is this, without wanting to get into the sort of parliamentary and political trivia of who got elected where and when, we have a serious problem in Canada in terms of the regionalization of our politics and the regionalization of our parliament.

What the motion is asking the House to do could be done if there was consensus, but obviously there is not. We were wise on two counts. We rightly predicted that if we moved a votable motion it would lose because the government has demonstrated no interest in this project. We wanted to make it non-votable at this point because if there was a consensus we could move by consensus or by unanimous consent. We wanted to make the point that we should be

having this debate in a non-partisan context with the best interests of the country in mind, rather than the best interests of the Liberal Party in mind.

I do not make any apologies for being partisan. I have seen the smiles on the faces of the Liberal members. They are basically saying what the Prime Minister said to me last year when I asked him a question based on this very same idea. I asked him whether or not he would consider agreeing to an all party committee that would look at proportional representation. He said “the NDP always lose, no wonder they want a different system”.

Yes, we always lose, that is fair enough, and the Liberals always win, or so they think they do, and most often they do. It is a very successful political party. Surely there is a responsibility on the part of a political party with so much responsibility to ask itself just every once in a while, or on a day like today on a non-votable motion, whether or not there is not something that might be in the interests of the country which is not in the short term interest, or for that matter the long term interest, of the Liberal Party.

If the Liberals are interested in the whole question of majority and minority government, which is another thing talked about, I do not take it for granted that whatever system we might come up with will always produce minority governments. Some studies have been done that showed how one could have an element of proportional representation but would also still ensure majorities, except that those majorities would be more representative. Canadians would know that the people who were in that majority caucus were from right across the country and not exclusively from one particular region.

If the majority-minority hang up is the Liberal hang up, take that hang up into the all party committee meeting and look at models that might be designed to address that concern, rather than dismissing out of hand the idea that this would be a good thing to do.

I am very disappointed in the government's response today and in the response of some members. However, all in all it has been partly the kind of debate that we had hoped to achieve.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague who is a long time veteran of the House of Commons. He has been pushing reforms like this in a very even handed manner. He is not saying that it will benefit strictly our party or diminish another party. He is basically saying is we need this debate for all Canadians.

My question for him would be how do we translate the debate today into the average Canadians' lives to make it relevant so that they can push their members of parliament to have this debate in the future?

*Supply*

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, one thing that would be nice is if this particular debate was being covered more thoroughly by the media. Maybe it is being covered remotely, anonymously.

Sometimes we are criticized in this place because all we do is engage in scandal mongering and partisan activity. When a political party brings forward a motion that tries to elicit an intelligent, constructive debate on a topic which elsewhere in the country is being discussed in an intelligent, non-partisan way and to the extent that we have, but not totally, I would hope this would be the kind of thing that would be covered.

This is a concern that goes right across the political spectrum. I say this particularly to the member for North Vancouver who spoke on behalf of the Alliance Party. I am told he was not at his best in contributing to the debate.

• (1250)

This is the kind of issue that brings together a Judy Rebick on the left and a Walter Robinson on the right, the National Citizens Coalition. I guess where it does not have any resonance, or so it would seem today, is in the so-called centre, the Liberals. I say so-called centre because the Liberals really are as right wing a party as we would ever want to find on most issues. They see themselves as exercising the modern equivalent of the divine right of kings to govern. It is that sense that comes from the Liberals that somehow they have this divine right. It is such an illegitimate divine right. It is a divine right that comes from very seldom obtaining a majority of the votes in any given federal election.

In answer to the question, we need to get out there and talk to individual Canadians about the need for electoral reform and for proportional representation so that they can make their vote count. That might not always be helpful to the NDP. I do not think we should assume that. There are people who would like to vote for the Green Party, for instance. They vote NDP now, where the NDP is competitive or either the incumbent is NDP or is seen to be a possible winner, because they see the NDP as being more of an environmental party than the other parties. However, if they could vote green and make their vote count, in terms of getting Green members into the House of Commons on the basis of proportional representation, that might be harmful to New Democrats.

We will all win and lose in various ways depending on the various permutations and combinations at any given proportional representation system and any given election. However, the real winner, if we do it right, would be Canadian democracy.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona for what I think is his hallmark to make an appeal to all members to rise

above the short term considerations, to rise above the partisan considerations and think about what the objective of this exercise is and what is the objective of the debate is.

I know the member for North Vancouver used up half his time beating up on the NDP because we did not make the motion votable. We brought in motions that have been votable in the past. In fact, we had some success in getting the government to support some of our votable motions. For instance, we had motions on banning bulk water exports and advancing the Tobin tax. These have been helpful as a way of registering support but they do not necessarily get the job done. We get the support on the motion but the object of the exercise is to engage parliamentarians in doing what is right for Canada.

Today is an opportunity for us to advance that and for us to work together, not just opposition parties against government but hopefully all parliamentarians who understand that we have a crisis in terms of the low voter participation and in terms of how regionalized our politics are. One of the things that is very disappointing is that the Alliance Party says it supports the notion of proportional representation but what did the Alliance spokesperson do? He spent half his time beating up on the NDP for things that have nothing to do with this issue.

I would like to ask a brief question of the member for Winnipeg—Transcona. Frankly, it arises from a well known Canadian political scientist by the name of Henry Milner who said “It is one thing to lament polarization; it is another to insist on maintaining the very institutions that exacerbate it”.

Could the hon. member elaborate on how the kind of polarization we have seen in the last few years, that is surely tearing the country apart and taking us away from the focus on moving forward, could be cut down by a system of proportional representation?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, if we incorporated some element of proportional representation into our system and incorporated it in a way that would led to the regions being better represented in all caucuses and led to less temptation on the part of all political parties to play regional cards in their politics, we would have a country much more inclined to national unity in its politics rather than to national or inter-regional hostility in its politics.

• (1255)

I want to second the sentiment expressed by my leader with respect to the member for North Vancouver. I know there is sympathy within the Alliance Party ranks. I have talked to individual members. I thought that this was the kind of debate that they would relish in terms of democratic reform. It would have been an

*Supply*

opportunity for them to bring forward some of their proposals. Instead, we get the kind of performance that we got from the member for North Vancouver.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to follow my colleague, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, in discussing this very serious proposal before parliament. I share the member's comments and concerns about how members of the Liberal Party and the Alliance caucus have treated this motion with so much disdain.

Who better than the member for Winnipeg—Transcona to acknowledge the problem that that creates for the future of this place and for democracy in this country. The member from Transcona has served this place for almost 22 years. That kind of service certainly gives him the right to speak in this place with force. He ought to be listened to by all members.

One would think that after representing a constituency and serving in this place for some 22 years, one would get stuck in one's ways, get hung up on tradition and not be willing to look at new innovative approaches. Well, that is not always the case. In fact the opposite is the case for the member for Winnipeg—Transcona who has continued over the course of those years to respect the traditions of this place while at the same time fighting for innovations and improvements.

The same goes for our colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle, another longstanding member of the House who has for many years persistently raised the idea of electoral reform and proportional representation in this place and everywhere possible across the country. That should be a lesson and a model for members of the government side, at least, those members who have served this place for great lengths and who should be reminded about how important it is to get out of the rut and look at new innovation.

The same cannot be said for the Alliance. The most recent political party on the scene seems to be the most resistant to change and the most contrary to any kind of cross party productive debate and dialogue on the part of parliamentarians.

I hope all members in the House will see the seriousness of this motion and look at it in terms of what we can do to make a difference in this place in addressing a very serious problem in Canada today. Let us remember, this motion is about a problem we have in Canadian society and is proposing a way to solve the problem. It is not coming forward with a set prescription and a fixed idea but is proposing that parliament look at the problem and come up with solutions.

The problem is quite simple. It is something each and every one of us deals with on a day to day basis, and that is the growing sense from Canadians that they feel helpless and hopeless in this political system and in this changing global economy. If we stop and think about the apathy, the cynicism, the doubt and despair that people

feel about our political system and about some of us as politicians, is that not enough of a reason to look at an alternative to how we elect our members?

It is not just members of the New Democratic Party who are proposing this. This is not about what is good for the NDP. This is, as my colleague said, something that is about the future of the country and the health of democracy. I want to quote from a reputable organization, the Centre for Research and Information on Canada, and refer to the January 18, 2001 issue of *Opinion Canada* where it is clearly stated that:

There is a profound political malaise in Canada. It has developed gradually. There have been various signs of it, which when viewed in isolation, mean little. When taken together, however, a disconcerting reality emerges.

● (1300)

Surely this accurate description of the political malaise in Canada ought to be taken seriously. Surely every issue and idea that is put on the table to deal with the malaise ought to be taken seriously and not just dismissed out of hand, as members of the Liberal party are wont to do today.

We have heard from my colleagues about why the motion is before us. We have heard from many members about why proportional representation needs to be considered in the context of the political malaise and of voter apathy. We have heard from members that reform needs to be considered because of Canada's Balkanization along regional lines. Surely that kind of devastating and disastrous development ought to be redressed as soon as possible.

There is another reason that we need to look at proportional representation. I refer to a left-wing magazine, *Canadian Dimension*, and to an article written by Denis Pilon in its November-December 2000 issue. Mr. Pilon says that Canada needs proportional representation to deal with Balkanization and the fact that our electoral system has become inherently perverse in terms of reflecting the will of voters. He also suggests that we need to look at PR as a way to deal with the fact that our electoral system has become dominated by spin and media. He goes on to talk about the money driven politics of media and spin. He refers to some of the long term structural changes in campaign finance, voter contact and political communication that have led to Canadian politics becoming more media dominated and more open to spin and the tools of commercial advertising than ever before.

This is another reason we need to look at proportional representation. It is another justification for opening up discussion on this very important matter.

Denis Pilon in that article also suggested:

Clearly needed to adopt some form of PR. By doing so we will open up more democratic space for new ideas, new representational concerns and even new parties if that is what Canadians want. At the same time, PR will contribute to a different kind of

democratic process. Election results will be more transparent and less open to spin and horse race coverage. Majority governments will likely result from a coalition of parties, and media will have to comment on the deliberations and negotiations with more than just sound bites. Money will still make itself felt in the political process but it will have to work harder and longer. PR will open more space to resist its machinations.

That is another very important reason for looking at a complete revamping of our electoral system and for considering proportional representation or a mix of our present first past the post system and the PR model.

The malaise I talked about is serious. It is not just a result of our electoral system and the way we elect members, although the first past the post system is a significant part of the growing cynicism and apathy among Canadians.

Just as important is the way our present election system works against people. Many members have commented before and during the debate about the serious disenfranchisement people feel and have experienced in terms of the way our present elections are run.

Many have commented on the damaging consequences of the permanent voters list in terms of denying low income Canadians, students and people who must move regularly, the ability to exercise their democratic rights and freedoms.

● (1305)

My colleague, the member for Palliser, has described the impact of the permanent voters list on Canadians as rank discrimination. I cannot agree with him more coming from a constituency where some 40% of the people live below the low income cutoff line. If time permitted I could describe in great detail how these people felt about being left off the voters list, about the difficulty they had getting on the voters list and about their sense of being completely disenfranchised from the democratic process.

The double whammy comes from an electoral system that does not reflect the majority will of Canadians. It comes from a system that makes it very difficult for people to get on the voters list and exercise their right to vote with as few barriers as possible. Those things have to be addressed, and that is the purpose behind the motion today.

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue, especially in a system like ours.

The hon. member mentioned that she is supporting proportional representation. Some countries in the world, especially east European countries, have such a system. Some countries have a mix of PR and first past the post.

If proportional representation is NDP policy, would it consider adopting it in the two provinces that have NDP governments? It could be tested at the provincial level before being tested at the

### *Supply*

federal level. If PR is that party's policy, perhaps it should consider adopting proportional representation in a province where it has control. We could then see how the public would react, and perhaps it could then be adopted federally.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting proposition on the part of the Liberal member.

We in the New Democratic Party prefer to show leadership at the federal level. That is why we have the motion before the House today.

It is the federal New Democratic Party's policy to pursue the idea of proportional representation and to ensure that the necessary changes to our electoral system are made so that people would not feel disenfranchised and would believe the votes they cast actually counted and made a difference. That is the kind of leadership we would like the federal government to show.

What is wrong with this place taking the lead and providing direction for the rest of the country? What is wrong with this place having dialogue on the merits and possibilities of electoral reform and proportional representation?

The question skirts the issue at hand, which is why Liberal members today have been dismissive of the motion, a motion that simply calls for a dialogue on the possibilities and merits of proportional representation.

When we have a serious problem of political apathy and cynicism, it surely must be taken up by the federal government. That is where we must begin. That is what Canadians are counting on us to do.

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member as she talked about leadership. I do not see this as a question of leadership.

I come from a rural area in southwestern Ontario. I am of the view that my constituents elected me to represent them. I have a lot of concern with the idea of proportional representation because it means that the party will choose the people it wants to run. I believe in the democratic principle that we are here as the result of the work we do in our ridings and as a result of every person in my riding having the ability to run for parliament.

I do not think this is a question of leadership, as the hon. member has tried to say. I think there are differing opinions in the House and from across the country on that. We in rural areas are scared to adopt such a system because of our small numbers. There are a small number of people in agriculture, and we understand how important the crisis in agriculture is. If we adopt a system of proportional representation, as it exists in certain other countries, I do not think will not have the same representation.

*Supply*

• (1310)

I would say to the hon. member that it is not only a question of whether the government wants to show leadership. I suggest to her that in many ways we have shown leadership in the House on this issue, particularly with regard to electoral reform and making changes to it.

I am not saying we could not do more. I would invite a debate on that. However, I would say to the member that there are real feelings of differences in the country, which have nothing to do with the politics of it.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague from the Liberal Party that there are different views in the House, but that is the very essence of the motion that is before the House today.

The motion recognizes that there is a looming crisis of political legitimacy. It points to, what we all talked about and heard about, the problems with our electoral system, with parliamentary reform and with providing real ways for citizens to participate and to believe that their actions make a difference. If that is the case then surely the member can support the motion.

To conclude, I refer the member to one comment in the January issue of *Opinion Canada* which states:

Electoral reform has been described as “the plaintiff chorus of the perennial losers.” However, a study commissioned by the Privy Council Office and conducted by C.E.S. Franks, a noted Professor of Political Science, pinpointed several aspects of the political system for reform. Among them was the suggestion that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I have been as generous as I think the Chair can be. There may be an opportunity to conclude those remarks at another time.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very good and very personal reason for being opposed in principle to the idea of proportional representation.

That reason is simply this. If this parliament had proportional representation I would not be here. You can hear the applause, Mr. Speaker. It is true that some on all sides of the House, my own side as well, and a number of special interest groups out there in the community would be probably quite delighted if I were not here, but in fact I am here and I am here because of the first past the post constituency system that we have.

I would like to explain to the Canadians who may be watching a feature of proportional representation that tends to be overlooked in the debate, and that is that no matter what version of proportional representation we have, one way or another the leader, or the party leadership, gets to choose who sits in the House.

The way it works is that if it is a percentage system, and proportional representation is a percentage system, if the particular party gets say 10% to 20% of the vote, then that party is entitled to have a proportionate number of seats. What happens in all systems of proportional representation is that in one way or another the party leader or the party leadership—sometimes it is the party leadership rather than just the leader himself—gets to decide after the election who gets to sit in the Chamber.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you in the very first place that I would never have been even allowed by my party to even stand a chance, because in 1993 when I first ran for election I was an unknown in the Liberal Party. I had never had anything to do with the Liberal Party. When I ran for my nomination in my particular riding of Hamilton-Wentworth, as it was called at the time, the party backroom people had decided on an entirely different person. The only reason I won the nomination and arrived here in this House was because I had been born and brought up in the community and I was able to produce more memberships and get more votes at the nomination meeting.

The reason I am here is because I had grassroots support, not from the party, not from the party leader at the time, who was indeed our present Prime Minister, but from the people in my community. That is one of the great strengths of the first past the post system.

It goes on, if I may say so, because I think it is very important for people to understand that proportional representation, rather than enhancing the opportunities of people to be represented, or of MPs in this House, it actually diminishes it because proportional representation, which gives such power to the leader to choose who sits in the House, makes it very impossible to have the kind of healthy dissent that indeed we do have on this side of the House.

• (1315)

Indeed, I recall very vividly when the election was on in 1993, I ran a campaign that presented myself as a Liberal certainly, and a Liberal I am still, but as a very independent minded Liberal. In my own campaign brochure I announced that I was against the red book plan for a billion dollars to be spent on national day care. I thought that was the wrong thing to do.

I also said in my brochure that I was against the funding of multicultural groups for organizational assistance. I am certainly in support of multiculturalism in general, but I do not think organizations need government largesse in order to exist. I ran that in my brochure during the 1993 election.

There were people, Liberals in the riding, who were very unhappy with the fact that I had won the nomination because I was not the chosen person and they reported back to party headquarters that they had this renegade during the election campaign. I got an

*Supply*

amusing call from a person right in the middle of the campaign, who identified himself as somebody called Paul Martin and apparently this Paul Martin, I did not know him from Adam, was one of the architects of the red book.

On the other end of the phone he said "Well, this is Mr. Martin calling". You will find out, Mr. Speaker, that this was before anyone was elected. This Mr. Martin was on the end of the line and he said "Well, Mr. Bryden, I understand you have trouble with our red book". "Well, Mr. Martin", I said, "I do. There are a couple of things in it that I disagree with very strongly and in fact would not go down in my riding really; they just do not work". He said "Do you not feel a little uncomfortable, you know, saying these things during the election campaign?" I replied "Mr. Martin, do not worry, when I get elected I will come back up to Ottawa and I will persuade the Liberal Party not to go ahead with these programs". Because, of course, I felt very strongly then, as I do now, that they were not the best policy planks for the red book.

I do point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that the government never did actually proceed to spend a billion dollars on day care and there has been enormous efforts over the years to rein in government spending without accountability. There is a lot of progress to go into that department but I feel very confident that as a backbench MP who was not afraid to speak out against my party, not "against" my party, speak out independently of my party, independently of the leadership, and have my own voice.

In proportionate representation, it is that kind of independence of members of parliament that would not exist. First of all, Mr. Speaker, you would not even get there because no leader would in his right mind accept somebody who already at the very beginning says that he does not agree, I do not agree, with all the aspects of the basic platform of the party and yet I and so many in that election of 1993 did come to this parliament.

I think it is because we represent our constituents, and it is not proportionate representation, that we have been tremendously successful in changing the whole attitude, the way this parliament, at least on this side, operates because I would observe and you, Mr. Speaker, are a person who has a long memory of this House, you will appreciate that there have been more votes against government policy on this side of the House than has ever occurred in parliamentary history.

The member for Cambridge and I were talking together during the debate and I was observing to him that I believe I had voted against the government on major policy legislation four times. The member for Cambridge, who sits just not very far from me, he went a little crimson, a little embarrassment there, because he had to admit that he had voted against the government even more often.

We are still valued members of this party and we have never had any hesitation to stand up in this House and speak our minds, no

matter what these people on the opposition say from time to time. We have made changes when we have spoken our minds. I point out that as recently as the opposition motion of last week, four members of this side voted against the government.

• (1320)

What happens is we consider very carefully and the reality, when we talk about free votes in the House, the reality is that any member on any side of the House does not have the time to examine every issue in the kind of depth that we would all like to examine every issue. In fact the reason why the ability to vote independently, not freely, is important is when you have studied an issue very carefully and you want to send a message to your government, you do that by standing in the House, Mr. Speaker.

I have done that on four occasions. The one most important to me, and very successful, was about five years ago the government was introducing a piece of legislation pertaining to electronic monitoring of people who were accused of sexual stalking. The government's legislation proposed that this electronic bracelet would be put on the individual based simply on an information to the police authorities.

I felt very strongly that this was contrary to the fundamental human rights of the accused. We are not supposed to be subject to arbitrary arrest. Even if it was an electronic bracelet operated by global positioning, if it was applied to an individual involuntarily in my view it was a fundamental breach of the rights of the accused and the presumption of innocence. I failed to persuade my government in caucus and I failed to persuade the minister of the day so I wound up standing alone in this House. Mr. Speaker, you just try it; you try standing alone in this House when everyone is supporting the legislation.

As it happened, I just happened to be the person who had studied it in depth that I knew it was a fundamental issue. I am happy to report that the government paid attention and in the end it made the amendments that eliminated this offensive clause. Mr. Speaker, you do have this opportunity in this current system, but you have this opportunity because in the end you are not nominated because of your party loyalty. You arrive in this place in our system because of the will of your constituents.

In the end you are answerable to your constituents. In the end the Prime Minister, no matter what he wants in this House, has to always allow for the fact that everyone in this House, on this side and that side are ultimately answerable to their constituents. In the end if the government leadership steps out of line, the members on this side along with the members on the other side can get rid of the government like that, one vote of confidence.

It has been said, I think quite correctly, that the Canadian parliamentary system concentrates more power in the House of Commons and in the leadership of the party, the governing party,

*Supply*

than any other parliament or democracy in the world. It also provides for the instant dismissal of that government.

What the dynamic is over on this side, and I have to allow for the fact that the opposition parties, particularly the NDP and the Bloc Québécois and the Canadian Alliance, but particularly the NDP, have never had the experience of being on the government side, so they have no idea of the dynamics that operate with the members here.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister always has to take careful account of what is happening in the opinion that exists on this side. We always want to support the leadership. We always want to give the leadership the benefit of the doubt, and that is the correct thing to do, but it is still at our discretion, not at the leadership's discretion.

That is one of the fundamental differences between the constituency system and the proportional representation system, because the proportional representation system gives the discretion to the leader or the leadership. They get to say whether you are nominated or not. They get to say whether you sit in the next parliament. So if you do not mind your *ps* and *qs* with your leadership, you stand a good chance of not being named under proportional representation to the following parliament.

We have a very strong system. It is not a system that does not need reform. I would agree that there are things that need to be done, but the one thing we do not need to do is convert to proportional representation.

• (1325)

I must also, just in passing, make the observation that the opposition movers of this motion, in counting all the countries that have proportional representation, conveniently ignore the fact that the four countries that retain the first past the post system are the most successful and oldest democracies in the world. At least the top three are the oldest democracies in the world. They are Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom and, as we learned earlier, India as well.

I point out to you, Mr. Speaker, that in three of those cases these are countries of enormous land mass. We cannot possibly hold together in a democratic system spaces that go from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, that are as enormous as Canada and India with its one billion population, and the United States, which is the fourth largest country in the world. The three largest countries in the world, three out of four, are the ones that have the first past the post constituency system. There is a reason for that. The reason for it is that it works.

If we had minority government after minority government, as happens with proportional representation, I do not think we would last more than two decades. We just could not last. We could never

tolerate what goes on in the parliaments of Israel or the parliaments of Italy and many other countries in the world in which small interest groups, which may have only 5% or 6% of the proportion of MPs in parliament, actually control the debate. We would then be held to ransom by small special interest groups. We have to have a system, and we do have a system, that one way or another creates as many majority governments as possible.

It is not our fault, it is not parliament's fault, and it is not the system's fault that at this moment in time the opposition is fractured into four parties. I would venture to predict that in the next election that will change very dramatically, because the natural balance in the Canadian and the British parliamentary systems is to have two parties or three parties at the most.

We have a very unusual situation, but it is only a matter of the Alliance and the Conservatives getting together plus the NDP finding a life. I do not know where the Bloc are going to go. I suspect we will see more Quebecers realizing that the Liberal Party is a better future for the people of Quebec than the separatist Bloc Québécois, but I do not want to make this into a partisan dissertation.

On the subject, though, of the power of MPs on this side to make their presence felt, I would like to take advantage of the fact that the motion is phrased widely and the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle talked about the Senate. I would like to just extend it a little bit, too, and talk about electronic voting, because that is an issue that is very relevant right now.

I would like to go on record right at this moment for my opposition colleagues to say that I am totally opposed to electronic voting. I have been arguing against it in principle for several years. Obviously I am not winning all of those arguments on this side. I feel that electronic voting, the danger of it, is as the member for Vancouver Island North mentioned in his speech as a positive. He said "Look, what can happen is that I can press a button and vote from my constituency and I would not even have to be here".

If we talk about maintaining the relevance of parliament and maintaining the abilities of members of parliament to influence the course of politics in this country, to influence the government, we have to be here in this Chamber. The terrible temptation of electronic voting is to do precisely what the member for Vancouver Island North suggested. We could have electronic voting only in this Chamber and require the presence of everyone, but that has its flaws as well.

I will come back to the dynamics of what happens on this side as government MPs. It becomes terribly important whether or not you stand with your party or you do not stand with your party. Prior to 1993 the tradition in this House among all the parties was that if members did not agree with their parties, whether it was in the

*Supply*

opposition or on the government side, they would just refuse to come into the Chamber. Some of us after 1993 took issue with this, and I have to admit that I am very much an original mover in this.

I said to my constituents and I say to them now “You voted for me to come here to vote, not to hide”. So when a vote comes that I do not like, I am going to rise here in my place against the government. I cannot help it. It is important for me to show how I vote.

• (1330)

The trouble with electronic voting is it takes away that privilege. I would be able to sit in my place and press a button and no one would know. The beauty of that is that the government would never have to experience the difficulty of feeling the pressure of the backbench behind it not in agreement.

We had a bill last year in the previous parliament that dealt with pension reform and the rights of same sex couples. I believe about 16 members of the Liberal side stood against the government on that. Mr. Speaker, that is healthy democracy. That is important because it shows all Canadians everywhere in the country that we are independent and that we do vote our consciences. I regret that I cannot say the same for the other side because too often they have not stood and voted against their own party lines.

Rarely, Mr. Speaker, rarely do we ever see the NDP, the Conservatives or the Bloc Quebecois stand against their own party's position. Never, Mr. Speaker. Occasionally with private member's bills but never with their opposition to government bills.

In conclusion, I do not know why it is that we cannot as parliamentarians realize that this country is 134 years old, with a democratic system that has stood the test of time and is one of the oldest in the world. It is one of the best in the world and I do not think it needs the kind of fundamental change that this motion is talking about.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member made a minor factual error when he cited the number of countries of large geographical size in the world that have the first past the post system. He mentioned two of the top three. Russia and China are both larger than the United States. Therefore, strictly speaking, it is two of the top four.

Leaving that aside, he also made the observation that it is difficult to maintain the unity of a continent sized country, such as Canada or the United States, without a first past the post system. I would dispute that and then invite his comments upon the observation.

Australia, where I lived for several years, does not have a first past the post system. It has a single transferable ballot at the level

of the house of representatives, its equivalent to our House of Commons. The Australian system has not created any form of disunity.

At the level of its senate, Australia has a system in which each of its six states has 12 senators. The senators are elected through a form of multiple voting in which each elector gets to choose 12 candidates from a list which can have, depending upon the state, as many as 100 or more candidates for office.

Some problems can be pointed out in the Australian system, which I will return to later in the debate, but it causes no national unity problem.

The first past the post system has had splendid success in other countries. However, we should consider our unity problems, the current ones, as well as the more spectacular conflicts of the late 1970s and the early 1980s when there were only two Liberal members west of the Ontario-Manitoba boundary and only two Conservative members between 1979 and 1980 in Quebec. We see therefore that the first past the post system has served our national unity very poorly indeed.

The United States is one of the most spectacular failures of national unity in the world. Its first past the post system ensured that the democrats would dominate the south prior to the civil war and that a variety of parties, first the whigs and then the republicans, would dominate the north. That was one of the primary reasons for the tremendous split in the U.S. congress, and particularly in its senate, which was one of the fundamental reasons for its civil war.

In looking at the spectacular record of failure, would the member be willing to consider the possibility that there are alternatives that perhaps create a superior sense of national unity in large, ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed countries such as Canada, Australia or the United States?

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know that Australia is really a fair comparison in any event because it is a much smaller country than Canada. It is in isolation and it is not anywhere near as ethnically diverse as Canada.

• (1335)

Very few countries in the world are founded on two great cultural and linguistic roots, as is Canada. I point out in Canadian history that up until the creation of Canada, the French and British cultures had been at one another's throats since 1066. The traditional enemies in Europe are the English and the French.

Yet through our democratic system, and we were one of the very first democracies, Mr. Speaker, who brought in the parliamentary system as you see it, we are one of the first just after the United

*Supply*

States and after Britain. We have managed to keep this country united, and I just do not understand where the member is coming from, because we have held together one of the largest land masses in the world and one of the two most distinct populations in the world, the French and the British. That is an incredible success.

I am glad he raised the point, though, because I think one of the reasons why it is successful is because everyone in this country, including my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, including my colleagues from Quebec or Nova Scotia or Acadia or New Brunswick, do have the option of representing their regions.

That is the very gift and genius of this country. It would be absolutely dreadful if some leader came along and said to the Bloc Québécois, or because he was a Bloc Québécois leader, said "Well, you have to have a representative in Vancouver". That would be crazy.

No, Mr. Speaker, we are on the right track with this. I congratulate Australia on its limited success, but it is not better than what we are doing here in Canada.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of comments. The hon. member said that never has a member of the NDP or the Conservative Party voted against the party stand. If we look at history that is not the case.

In 1980 I was the constitutional critic for the party. When Mr. Trudeau tried to unilaterally repatriate the constitution, I resigned as critic. There were four of us who voted against the stand of the caucus at the time. There are many cases throughout history where that has happened, and in the Conservative Party as well.

I wanted to ask the member about majority governments. He said one reason he wants the status quo is that he likes to have majority governments. I could also make the assertion that many of Canada's minority governments have been very productive.

Lester Pearson was never the leader of a majority government. He became prime minister in 1963 with a minority. He won again in 1965 with a minority and he stayed on as a minority prime minister until he retired in 1968. That was probably one of the best periods in Canada's history in terms of good progressive government that reflected the country as a whole.

The Trudeau government between 1972 and 1974 was also a minority government. The most productive of the parliaments that Mr. Trudeau led was probably 1972 to 1974. One reason was that there had to be some give and take and consensus with the opposition parties to reflect the country as a whole better than a majority government often does when it is bulked up in certain regions.

The last thing I wanted to ask the member about was the Senate. It is an institution that is, by definition, not democratic. What will

we do about the Senate? Only about 5% of Canadians who have been polled support the existing Senate.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that I only go back to 1993, not to 1980. I can assure the member opposite since 1993 I have not seen any. I do not think I can remember a single instance of NDP members voting against their own party on a policy issue in the House of Commons. I have not seen much action in that direction with the Conservatives, either.

As to the question of minority versus majority governments in Canada, I think the key word with our system is not a question of whether the government is a minority or majority; it is decisiveness. What our system provides for is a decisive government rather than indecisive government.

We do not have a system where we would have small parties of five or six that come up and hold the balance of power. So when we have a minority government, it is still a decisive government in our system. In the proportional representation system, you could have the potential for a lot of minority parties and consequently when you have minority governments, they would be indecisive governments.

Finally, the Senate: I have had to change my mind about the Senate quite a bit because I have watched what has happened in Ontario. In Ontario there is no Senate obviously at the provincial level. The Ontario government last year sat only 40 days of the year. We will sit 135 days this year and we will discuss legislation back and forth.

What happens in Ontario is the Ontario government rockets legislation through that is poorly conceived and it is suddenly passed into law. Where I see the advantage of the Senate is the Senate really is a potential check.

• (1340)

When this House, be it a private member's bill or a public bill, if it goes through the House too fast, and it is possible for us all to get onside and send it through too fast, is that the Senate is an important check, and the evidence of that is what is happening in Ontario now where laws are being passed that really need a second thought.

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed with the hon. member opposite. I have been impressed with him before because he is a very deep student of democracy and democratic behaviour.

I was struck by three words he kept repeating about halfway through his speech, "in the end". I wondered when he was going to come to the end. He did come to the end of his speech, but he also suggested that, in the end, he and every elected member here is responsible to their constituents. I could not agree with him more.

*Supply*

He actually said something sensible about the other place just a moment ago. That is good. If he would now only add that we will elect those people as well, he would really be in the good books.

There is a question I want to ask the hon. member. I believe he was elected on the promise that the Government of Canada and parliament would appoint an ethics counsellor who would report to the House and to parliament.

I noticed when I looked at *Hansard* and at the voting record of the hon. member that he voted nay on that issue. Whom was he representing: himself, his constituents, or the Prime Minister?

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, I do wish the member had taken the time to look at my speech as well as my voting record, because he would have seen that I made the argument that indeed we kept that red book promise because that clause in the red book only referred to public officials and lobbyists. It did not refer to members of parliament, so there was no reason. I regret to say that I did not feel that those members on this side of the House who felt that they had to vote against the government on that issue were correct. I thought they were incorrect. The promise was fulfilled.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to read the motion once more.

That this House strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

As I address this question I will talk about not only proportional representation but electoral reforms of other sorts as well, and some of the issues that go along with those considerations.

I will start by making the objection that the system in Canada really is broken at this point. We saw that in 1997 a 38% vote of the Canadian people gave the Liberal Party a majority government. In 1993 a 41% vote gave the Liberals 60% of the seats in this place, whereas the Tories got 16% of the vote and less than 1% of the seats.

In Ontario 2.3 million votes in the 2000 election gave the Liberals 100 seats. By contrast, one million votes gave my party, the Alliance, two seats, one of which I hold. While I am honoured at the thought that I represent 500,000 Ontarians, I think it is an incorrect assumption to look at the results and think it is an acceptable system when 98% of the seats go to a party that had only about half the vote.

This is about democracy. As we talk about democracy and democratic reform we must think as well about other related issues of importance which tie in with the question of electoral reform.

I want to run through some of these by way of suggesting that we have a problem that goes far beyond the mere problem of an inadequate electoral system. We have a serious problem, as my hon. colleague from the New Democrats pointed out, with the Senate. He proposes abolishing the Senate. That is certainly an alternative.

• (1345)

My own party has proposed a triple E model for the Senate. We have suggested an elected Senate as opposed to an appointed Senate and a Senate that is equal in representation, at least more equitable in representation and a great deal fairer than what we have right now.

I cite as examples of countries with pure triple E senate models, Australia and the United States. Switzerland has something close to a pure model. Some of the smallest cantons are referred to as half cantons and get half representation, but otherwise there is full equality. It provides for some kind of representation for those more peripheral areas of the country and prevents the kind of inner Canada, outer Canada phenomenon that we see here occurring there.

At the very least one would think that there would be some form of regional equity which would ensure that British Columbia, for example, would have a substantially larger number of senators than New Brunswick. This would make sense given that British Columbia has a much larger population.

It is in the spirit of our original plans for the Senate, going back to 1867, that there should be some form of regional equity. In 1867 there was equal representation for the maritime region, which consisted of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and for Ontario and Quebec. Those were the three regions of Canada at that time. That was a good system and we favour some kind of return to it.

Reforms should also take place for the rules that govern this place. This House was intended to be a legislature in a country which was, while nominally a monarchy, a republic in the Aristotelian sense of the term; that is, a country which had an equal balance of the democratic, oligarchic or aristocratic and monarchical elements in its constitution.

In practise, what has happened is that the Prime Minister has become our real monarch and the House sits, not as a legislature, but as an electoral college in perpetual session and required periodically, frequently in fact, to give its assent once more to the king continuing to sit in his place reigning over us all.

This form of elected dictatorship is completely unsuitable and needs to be reformed. There are many reforms that could take place, but I will simply mention one or two.

*Supply*

First, secret ballots for the election of committee chairs just as secret ballots are used for the election of the Speaker.

Second, more free votes, and a simple change to the rules of the House would accomplish this goal. Many other proposals have been made by a number of scholars, commissions and committees.

Reforms to the Election Act would also make a substantial difference. I cite, as an example of us going in the wrong direction, clause 11 of the government's proposed act to amend the Canada Elections Act, which has the effect of depriving small parties of access to the voters list. This is a very undemocratic move in the wrong direction and something that needs to be stopped in order to ensure that we continue to be democratic in our elections, elections that bring people here, even if we cannot function democratically in how we act within this place.

I note as well that clause 17 of that proposed act would deprive independents and small parties of access to free broadcast time in order to spread their message and educate the public, which after all is the function that these parties see for themselves, small parties like the Green Party, the Canadian Action Party and so on, as well as many independents. Many of these parties and independents who realize they will not be elected, see the election as an opportunity to spread what they believe to be important truths. It is also the only time when they have the public eye and they deserve that.

Recall is another measure that could accomplish a great deal. If members of a constituency had the right to petition for their members to be forced into a byelection situation, a number of very undemocratic and unpopular measures could never have made it through the House. The GST, the Meech Lake accord and many other measures would not have been approved. Many members would have considered very carefully whether they could continue to support the kind of action that occurred the other day when the government voted against its own 1993 red book promise.

Electronic voting could take place. Citizen initiated referendum is another possibility that would do substantial things to change the way in which Canada operates as a democracy.

I turn now to the question of proportional representation and to the question of what type of proportional representation is most appropriate.

I take it from the language of the motion that the New Democratic sponsor of it feels that democratic reforms to the electoral system, other than actual changes to the manner in which individual members are chosen, is something the New Democratic Party would support.

• (1350)

Fixed election dates as something that would perhaps be beneficial and that they would perhaps support as we do on this side of the House. That would prevent the sort of nonsense that goes on where

the Prime Minister consults the polls and tries to arrange to hold an election when the governing party is in fact at the top of the polls. This has been unconstitutional in the United States for two centuries and something that other countries, which have a system similar to our own such as Australia, have tried to restrict by having shorter periods between elections.

I note that there are several different proportional representation models and in the remaining time I will go through them very quickly. Our party does not favour any particular model. We think that the first past the post system is broken and is probably not acceptable to most Canadians. We also think the decision on whether the system should be replaced is one that should be made by the Canadian people by means of a referendum.

We have turned to our friends in New Zealand and would like to follow its model. They held a referendum on whether in fact they should abandon their first past the post system. The people advised them that they wanted change. Then a commission travelled across the country, consulted widely, proposed several models, and the people selected the multi-member proportional system which is not the only system that could have been chosen. It is the one that appears to have made New Zealanders happy.

I am not sure that model would work here. I am not sure it is my business to say it is the model that would work. I cite as another possible example the pure list system. I am not a particular fan of that system but it is used in Israel and has been used in Italy. In addition to New Zealand a somewhat different version of the mixed member proportional system has been used in Germany. In Australia, which is my former home, I observed that there are several different systems at work at different levels of that country's government.

The house of representatives, as I mentioned when questioning another member earlier, uses a single member system but a transferable ballot so that a more consensual process goes on in selecting a member in an individual district. Its senate uses a 12 member system. Each state chooses its members at large and each voter can choose their 12 top choices from a list.

Tasmania uses yet another system for its house. It has a system whereby there are districts with five or six members. The Australian capital territory has selected yet another system which I think would not be appropriate for Canada but reflects the fact the particular jurisdiction has an evenly spread highly homogeneous population. They had the danger of perpetually electing all members of one party over and over, and so they had to choose some other method to assure that there would be some form of genuine democracy, opposition and debate within their own legislature. This has been very successfully accomplished there.

I therefore put before the House the suggestion that what ought to happen in this country is that there should be a vigorous debate

as our friends in the New Democratic Party are suggesting and that in the end the people be the ones to make the decision on what is in fact the best approach.

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the member supports the motion introduced by the NDP. He addressed the question of regional issues in this Confederation, but I am sure he knows that the headquarters of the Alliance Party is in Alberta.

How could he claim the Alliance Party is a national party when its headquarters are in Alberta? Would this be supporting separatist concepts in the west, or is he talking about moving the national headquarters of the Alliance Party from Alberta to where it belongs in Ottawa?

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I am not exactly sure how the hon. gentleman feels that having one's headquarters in Calgary constitutes support for western separatism.

If that were the case, surely when the federal government made the decision in the 1970s to cast its own votes as a partial shareholder in Sun Life, in favour of Sun Life keeping its headquarters in Montreal, that was in fact hidden support for separatists in Quebec. I cannot give any other interpretation to that bizarre assertion.

• (1355)

Having widespread representation for members of all parties in all parts of the country, unless the party is completely unacceptable to voters, is something that is profitable. Almost any system other than the current one does a better job at that.

Again I look at the example of Ontario. We know that in 1998 Ontarians did not vote 97% in favour of the Liberal Party but in fact 100 of 103 members came from Ontario. That block then dominated the House. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister it had 100% control of all legislation that came out here. There is spectacular insensitivity to the regional concerns of many regions, the west being one.

We see perpetual lack of concern about the interests of Quebec, which is the reason Quebec separatism over 30 years of almost perpetual Liberal administration has risen from being a fractional concern to being a movement that almost split apart the country under the watch of the Prime Minister. We see Premier Hamm of Nova Scotia being essentially told to hit the road when he comes forward with very intelligent proposals for equalization changes.

I just cannot see how anything the hon. member has said adds to the debate. It is just typical of the kind of arrogance we see from some members of the Ontario caucus of the government. That is most disappointing.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who has just spoken, my colleague from

Windsor—St. Clair and another member of the Reform Party represent almost half of the voters in the province of Ontario and 100 Liberals represent the other half, which shows the great distortion in our electoral system.

I will make a couple of other comments and ask for a response from the member from Ontario. In terms of referenda, I think we should use them very sparingly in our political system. My party and I would only use them for great issues of the day such as a constitutional issue and maybe one or two other exceptions. I think we could have too many referenda.

I believe the power of the Prime Minister's Office is much too strong, with the power to appoint by himself or herself all the judges, the head of the military or the RCMP and other major appointments. Many of these should be vetted by a parliamentary committee that is relevant to the issue being discussed. I also believe that we should have fixed election dates constitutionally to take away that power from the premiers and the Prime Minister both at the federal and the provincial level.

I think we should have fewer confidence votes in the House of Commons and stronger parliamentary committees with more independence to set their own legislative timetable.

These are some of the other reforms that should go along with the idea of looking at proportional representation and getting rid of the unelected Senate.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with just about everything that the hon. member has said. I personally think there should be a somewhat broader scope for referenda, particularly for citizen initiated referenda.

He would probably agree with me that the system used in Switzerland and Australia, whereby the people have to approve any form of constitutional amendment, has been profitable in those countries and might likewise be profitable here.

I think we disagree a little over the Senate, but I think hearts are in the right place in his party when they say that there really needs to be change to that dysfunctional institution.

---

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West—Mississauga, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs committee unanimously called for

*S. O. 31*

the de-linking of sanctions against Iraq. Canada is one of only four countries continuing to insist that sanctions remain intact.

Five thousand young children die each month in Iraq as a result of the sanctions. Health experts report that the southern part of Iraq has one of the highest rates of childhood leukemia in the world due to the effects of spent uranium.

High profile UN workers have resigned over these sanctions. We collectively condemn the actions of Saddam Hussein. However we must realistically acknowledge that our sanctions are hurting the children of Iraq, not the military.

The U.S. dropped yet another bomb last week. This time in a populated area. I believe it is time for us to stand up and be counted. Mr. Bush had been in power for 28 days when he bombed civilians. Perhaps a thorough review of his policy is in order before more bombs are dropped.

I also encourage our minister to look for creative ways to help solve the serious crisis in Iraq.

\* \* \*

**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to serve as the member of parliament for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre. There is a wonderful spirit of co-operation and community in my constituency. This extends to community based policing. The RCMP knows the dangers of losing touch with the citizens in the communities in which it serves. RCMP F Division headquarters and depot training academy are in my constituency. It is there that every RCMP recruit in the country is trained.

● (1400)

With increasing costs for policing, the Canadian public wants a police service that is accountable, efficient and effective. In an effort to meet public expectations, the RCMP has developed community based policing. I am proud of the effort it has made since the 1980s to get back into the communities in which it serves.

I trust the government shares the pride all Canadians feel for the RCMP. I believe, however, that it is absurd that we would spend nearly half a billion dollars on registering guns and manufacturing criminals when funds are so badly needed by those responsible for arresting criminals and protecting law-abiding citizens.

\* \* \*

**PAUL DEMPSEY**

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I wish to pay tribute to Ireland's ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Paul Dempsey, and his wife Janet. This wonderful couple have been outstanding representatives of the Republic of Ireland in Canada for over five years.

Ambassador Dempsey has travelled extensively in Canada and has visited every region of our country. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of many initiatives important to Canadians of Irish ancestry throughout Canada.

The Dempseys have encouraged and successfully co-ordinated the visits to Canada of many of Ireland's leading public figures, including President Mary McAleese.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Canada-Ireland Interparliamentary Friendship Group, may I thank Ambassador and Mrs. Dempsey for their great friendship to and support of our group here in Ottawa. May Paul and Jan enjoy a long and happy retirement.

I invite all parliamentarians and you, Mr. Speaker, to say farewell to Ambassador Dempsey today between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. in Room 238-S, the Commonwealth Room, in Centre Block.

\* \* \*

**CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL**

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I extend congratulations to the Credit Valley Hospital in the city of Mississauga on joining the energy innovators initiative of Natural Resources Canada.

The energy innovators initiative is set up to support Canadian companies and institutions in adopting environmentally friendly practices, procedures and technologies. As one of 850 energy innovators, Credit Valley Hospital has made a long term commitment to use energy efficiently to reduce costs and slow the growth of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions.

The leadership shown by energy innovators such as the Credit Valley Hospital will assist Canada in meeting its environmental objective of reducing atmospheric emissions that contribute to climate change.

Once again I congratulate the Credit Valley Hospital for its voluntary commitment to energy efficiency and for doing its share in assisting Canada with its goals toward the ongoing protection of our environment.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS**

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening Canadian Women in Communications celebrated its 10th anniversary at its annual awards dinner held in Ottawa.

Canadian Women in Communications is a national, bilingual, not for profit organization supporting the progress and impact of women in the communications and telecommunications industries. It has almost 1,500 members across the country.

I take this opportunity to congratulate three outstanding individuals who were honoured last evening. The Canadian Women in Communications woman of the year is Denise Donlon, president of

Sony Music of Canada. The award for mentor of the year was awarded to Michael McCabe, president and CEO of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, who helped create the organization that grew into this communications organization. The trailblazer of the year award went to Michèle Fortin, CBC's vice-president of French television services.

I congratulate these individuals and Canadian Women in Communications for their superb work in advancing the role of women in the communications industry. This industry and the country benefit from their great efforts.

\* \* \*

### EDUARDO SEBRANGO RODRIGUEZ

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to petition the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and seek her intercession in rectifying an oversight which has brought an unintentional injustice to an individual who requires expedited Canadian citizenship in order for him to represent Canada on the Canadian soccer team competing in the 2002 World Cup.

Eduardo Sebrango Rodriguez recently lost his appeal for expedited Canadian citizenship due to his inability and modesty to articulate to a federal court judge that he is a world class soccer player who has an opportunity to represent our country in the World Cup in 2002. By the judge's own explanation, she said had he raised this aspect for consideration his citizenship might have been expedited.

• (1405)

It would be a shame to preclude this talented individual from having all relevant information and facts taken into consideration by the court before a final decision is rendered.

I submit to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that Eduardo Sebrango Rodriguez did not get a complete hearing of his complete set of circumstances warranting expedited citizenship. We ask for her help in getting this done.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### WATER CONTAMINATION

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 1993, the Department of Transport learned that the product it was using to de-ice the runways at the Sept-Îles airport could contaminate the drinking water in the Plages sector and pose a threat to the public. Despite that, it continued to use it for another three years.

Only in 1998 did the Minister of Transport recognize his culpability, and since then no long term solution has been imple-

*S. O. 31*

mented. Three years later, parents are still washing babies in bottled water according to the experts' directives.

In the throne speech, the federal government announced its intention to increase standards on the quality of drinking water.

The residents of the Plages sector of Sept-Îles have developed a thirst for water and justice. The federal government has a duty to follow its own guidelines and apply a permanent solution immediately to this disaster it has itself caused.

\* \* \*

[English]

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Ovid Jackson (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in the House since the last election. I thank the people of my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for electing me for a third time. I also take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to the chair.

Part of my job is to walk around in my community and listen to the concerns of my community. What I am hearing from my farmers, who by the way have provided cheap, affordable and healthy foodstuff for us over the years, is that there are some hardships in one commodity group in particular, that of grains and oilseeds.

This group says that it requires some help right now. My job in the House is to say to the government and all my colleagues that we should make sure that this commodity group gets some help immediately for the short term and that in the longer term it is protected from some of the tariff protections of other countries.

\* \* \*

### SOPHIE ZEBER

**Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a very special constituent and friend, Mrs. Sophie Zeber, on the occasion of her 80th birthday. Sophie has been living in my riding for over 30 years and is an active and influential member of our community.

She has been a voice for many people of different backgrounds who may not have had the language skills necessary to make their concerns heard. She is a passionate advocate for seniors in the community and her efforts are directed at enriching the quality of life for all seniors.

Sophie works tirelessly. She organizes fitness classes. She constantly represents her community. She is a woman of unbelievable energy and continues to fight for all of us and for our community. I wish Sophie a happy 80th birthday.

*S. O. 31*

## VETERANS

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, George Harry Mullin and John Robert Osborn are Victoria Cross recipients and their names are legendary in my constituency.

Today I want to inform the House of another hero. Roy Sweet is a World War II vet in his 80s who wanted to preserve the memory of these Victoria Cross heroes. They were honoured years ago with plaques placed on a corner of the land owned by their families, but over the years the families moved away and the plaques became overgrown with weeds and were seldom accessible to the public.

Mr. Sweet and members of the local legion wanted to move the plaques, one to a local cemetery in Wapella and the other to the cenotaph in Moosomin. They ran into numerous obstacles and it seemed the plaques would languish in obscurity in the seldom visited farm fields, but thanks to the intervention of many, the plaques were eventually moved to their new locations and are accessible to the public all year round.

I ask the House to join me in saluting veteran Roy Sweet for his thoughtfulness in preserving the memories of two of Canada's Victoria Cross recipients.

\* \* \*

## LORIE KANE

**Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and salute the accomplishments of a resident of the constituency of Hillsborough, Canada's premier female golfer, Lorie Kane.

During the past 12 months Lorie has been on a real hot streak on the ladies professional golf tour. In August of last year she won the Michelob Light Classic, played in St. Louis, Missouri. In September of last year she won the New Albany Classic, played in New Albany. In October of last year she won the Mizuno Classic, played in the country of Japan. Two weeks ago she won the Takefuji Tournament, played in Hawaii.

● (1410)

In the year 2000 her earnings exceeded \$800,000, placing her fifth on the LPGA money earnings list. This year she has earned in excess of \$250,000, placing her second on the LPGA money earnings list. I should point out to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Minister of Finance that we are talking about American dollars here. Recently she received the honour of being named Canada's Female Athlete of the Year for the year 2000.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today in Winnipeg closing arguments are being heard on the first charter challenge that the government's Employment Insurance Act discriminates against women and part time workers.

Women make up 70% of the part time workforce and still carry most of the responsibility for raising children, making it difficult to qualify for benefits under an hours based system. Last July a federal government survey indicated an 8% gender gap that favours men over women in being eligible for benefits.

Kelly Lesiuk, a part time nurse, was unable to claim maternity benefits in 1998 because she fell 33 hours short of qualifying. Problems with her pregnancy had forced her to stop work at five months. To make ends meet she had to return to work six weeks after undergoing a Cesarean section and the family had to deplete its savings and borrow money.

Over 60 other similar cases are waiting to be heard. It is unfortunate that Canadian women and part time workers must resort to lawsuits in order to receive fair treatment. Why will the federal government not act to change this discriminatory legislation to reflect the realities of the present labour force?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## HEATING COST REBATES

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents have expressed their disapproval of the federal heating cost rebate program.

I would like to read part of a letter from Lise Arseneault of Beauport, who summarizes very well the dissatisfaction this program causes:

When this promise was fulfilled, I obviously thought that the government had finally begun to understand us middle income earners and taxpayers.

I own an oil heated home. I am married and the mother of two. My husband and I have worked from the age of 17 for an average income. So we pay, as our kids put it "full taxes" and have never benefited from an assistance program.

I would like it if one day you could help the right people. This year, the price of heating oil was double that of last year, and you provided help, to a large extent, to those who do not even use this type of heating.

The government explains its failure by its haste in acting. The Bloc Quebecois considers it vital to quickly implement specific measures to help those affected by the rise in the cost of heating oil.

## Oral Questions

[English]

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

## MASTERWORKS

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the wonderful MasterWorks program and its founding organization, the AV Preservation Trust.

The MasterWorks program recognizes 12 culturally significant classics each year, drawn from the archives of Canadian film, radio, television, video and sound recording industries, and provides the necessary funding to underwrite the preservation and restoration costs of each master work.

This year's selections in radio are: *The 1927 Jubilee Broadcast*, *L'heure provinciale*, and Glenn Gould's *Solitude Trilogy*.

This year's film winners are: *La vraie nature de Bernadette* by Gilles Carle; *The Loon's Necklace* by Crawley Films; and *The Grey Fox* by the late Philip Borsos, with the wonderful Jackie Burroughs and produced by my husband, Peter O'Brien.

Sound recording selections were awarded to Robert Charlebois, Raul Jobin and Gordon Lightfoot, and in television and video *Cré-Basile! Télé-Métropole* and *Femme d'aujourd'hui* were recognized.

I congratulate everyone who received an award. I encourage my colleagues to support the endeavours of the MasterWorks preservation program for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

\* \* \*

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I now have in my possession a document that details in unprecedented terms the horrible conditions to which our soldiers are being subjected in Bosnia. It is a letter to the Minister of National Defence, dated February 8, from the Dominion President of the Royal Canadian Legion, Mr. Barclay.

Mr. Barclay writes of the conditions witnessed by a concerned legion funded group that travelled to Bosnia. The shocking details of that report compelled Mr. Barclay to contact the minister directly.

The report details in critical terms the "poor state of morale, tattered and unsightly clothing and equipment deficiencies that were experienced". On the issue of clothing alone, the observer reported "worn, threadbare, stained and patched combat clothing, and a lack of uniformity among Canadian soldiers".

The Geneva convention requires us to treat enemy forces better than we appear to be treating our own soldiers. This is totally unacceptable. How can the minister possibly account for these disgraceful standards?

• (1415)

[English]

## THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Deputy Prime Minister admitted after weeks of denial that we are into an economic downturn. Yesterday the finance minister admitted after some denial that we need a financial update and that he will be bringing one in. I am encouraged by that because overcoming denial is the first step on the road to recovery.

Because the Minister of Finance asked for our suggestions, in his mini budget he said that he would lower some marginal rates but would not increase either personal exemptions or spousal exemptions. Will he do that to take thousands of low income workers off from paying any federal income tax at all?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that we are raising the threshold. It was this government that brought in indexation which makes sure that it happens automatically each and every year.

I would simply ask a question of the hon. member. If the hon. member wants to cut taxes, which I understand is his point of view, will he also at the same time have to cut spending in order to pay for those tax cuts? If he is to cut spending, does he think that cutting government spending will add stimulus to the economy?

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we are asking the questions here. That is why we need to see that financial update. Since he will not do anything—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We will hear the question. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking a question.

**Mr. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Speaker, since he will not indicate that he will help low income workers, will the minister take a look at the corporate tax rates because our corporate taxes, our business taxes, are higher than the average of countries with which we trade at the OECD?

Will he accelerate his indicated reduction of those taxes, the 28% to 21% reduction, to reflect his confidence in the economy?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I might as well ask the questions as well as answer them. Somebody had better ask decent questions in the House.

The hon. member ought to know that as a result of our tax cuts our corporate taxes will be five percentage points lower than those in the United States. Our capital gains taxes are now lower than those in the United States. Our treatment of stock options is now lower and more generous than that in the United States. As a result we have the largest fiscal stimulus ever brought in by a Canadian government.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister well knows that the ratio of taxes vis-à-vis the GDP is 43% in Canada and 31% in the United States. He should keep that in mind.

[Translation]

I thought the Minister of Finance was being sincere yesterday in asking for our suggestions. Today, I do not know. Can he at least assure workers that his economic statement will announce a cut in EI contributions from \$2.25 to \$2?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since we became the government, we have reduced contributions to employment insurance by over \$6 million. Again in November, we made another 15 cent cut.

We have already indicated our intention to lower taxes and contributions and to encourage the Canadian economy. That is why we are going to get by despite the downturn in the United States. That is why Canada is going to have the best growth rate of all G7 countries this year.

[English]

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, one little fact the finance minister forgets to mention is that with his CPP tax hikes there will actually be an increase in payroll taxes this year.

In his political statement in the fall the finance minister projected growth at 3.5%. Then the Governor of the Bank of Canada said 3% in January. His parliamentary secretary speculated about growth as low as 2% last week. I was on a show yesterday with the member for Markham who speculated about a 1.5% growth.

• (1420)

Among all these incredible shrinking growth projections where does the finance minister stand? What does he believe growth will be in Canada this year? How will he incorporate that into his fiscal plan?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows we operate on the basis of the consensus of private sector economists and that consensus will be out somewhere near the end of March. The hon. member also knows that in

October we set in place a substantial contingency reserve and prudence to cover exactly the kind of slowdown we are now seeing.

I have another question, if I might. When the hon. member refers to the Canada pension plan premiums, is he referring to the Canada pension plan premiums which we and the provinces, me and the then treasurer of Alberta, the current Leader of the Opposition, increased? Are those the ones that he is referring to?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I know there is a lot of exuberance in the House today but we are losing time on the 45 minutes for question period.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I can understand the exuberance when this tax on the CPP represents one of the largest tax increases in Canadian history. It was opposed by this opposition. The Alberta government sought a way to treat Albertans through a separate system.

What I can tell the finance minister is that we continue to have a tax burden which is 12% higher as a percentage of our GDP than that of the United States. How can he stand in this place and tell Canadians who are leaving this country in the brain drain that our taxes are lower when every available statistic demonstrates that our tax burden is substantially higher than that of our major trading partner?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, and our health care system is a lot better. I want to go back to the Canada pension plan. To the best of my knowledge, at all of the federal provincial meetings that I was at, including that with the then treasurer of Alberta, there was support for the Canada pension plan.

Is it now the position of the Alliance that it is against the Canada pension plan? Is it the position of the Alliance that it would renege on the unfunded liability?

What is the Alliance saying about the Canada pension plan, which is one of the pillars of our retirement system? It is one that all Canadians believe in. The hon. member ought to stand now and tell us if he supports it or if he does not.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on February 8, the Prime Minister said that he could not make the negotiating documents for the Summit of the Americas available because certain countries were opposed.

But three weeks prior to his statement, the 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the 100 U.S. senators already had access to these very documents.

*Oral Questions*

How can the Prime Minister explain the response he gave in the House, when he knew that U.S. parliamentarians had access to these documents?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, instead of talking about the American system, let us talk about our own Canadian one.

Here, we include parliamentarians in the development of policies and priorities having to do with trade negotiations. Here, we listen to Canadians, and we will continue to listen to them and to communicate with them by various means.

Our government defends its position on trade negotiations before the House committee. This government is more inclusive than any that has gone before it.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is amazing. We are told that there is transparency and that we have access to these debates, but we are not even permitted to have the agenda for these meetings.

We do not know what will be discussed there, and we are told that we are involved in the development of a position.

I once again ask the Prime Minister, who was so quick to tell us on February 8 that he could not show us the documents because certain countries were opposed, how is it that we may not see them here but they are available in the United States?

The Prime Minister is aware of this. If he is not, there is a problem. How can he tell us such a thing when he knows it is not the case? Did he not tell members the exact opposite—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister for International Trade.

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is our strong belief that all Canadians—not just parliamentarians, but all Canadians—should have access to the drafts of negotiating texts, and we are bringing pressure to bear on our 33 partners in the Americas for the very purpose of having these texts made public. We cannot take unilateral action. Our partners must be in agreement.

• (1425)

Once again, I can assure you of one thing: Canada leads the hemisphere with respect to open and transparent initiatives.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, with such a protector, Canada is not out of the woods.

On the same issue, yesterday, during Oral Question Period, the Minister for International Trade said, and I quote: “If it is available to congress, it will not be long before it becomes public”. A few minutes later, during a media scrum, he said that members of congress are bound by a confidentiality rule.

My question to the Minister for International Trade is: Does he not have a serious credibility problem in the area of international trade, as he did with human resources, when he says one thing and then the exact opposite a few minutes later?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I clearly said that the United States and Canada have different ways of doing things.

In this case, the parliamentary committee was consulted, and our negotiating positions in Buenos Aires reflected what the parliamentary committee had heard.

We have our own way of doing things. We will continue to closely consult with the provinces, and also with parliamentarians.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what trust can we put in the comments of the Minister for International Trade when he tells us in the House that it is impossible for us, as parliamentarians, to have access to the texts of that agreement because, as he puts it, our partners are opposed to that? We assume leadership when it comes to transparency. We are clear.

The U.S. congress is no Mickey Mouse institution; its members have access to these documents. How can we find the minister credible?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we were the first country to make our negotiating mandate public. The Canadian positions were the first ones available on the Internet for all Canadians to see.

We have offered leadership to the countries of the hemispheres at the meeting in Toronto, at the last meeting of trade ministers, and we will continue to take steps in that direction, but also in the respect of our partners, contrary to what Bloc Quebecois members are requesting.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TRADE**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is the website that has no position for Canada on services. In the rush to give market access to multinational health corporations, the federal government is recklessly abandoning our universal health care system.

When the U.S. wants to protect something it values like its national security measures, it demands a general exception as a condition of signing any trade deal. Surely health care for Canadians deserves similar safeguards.

Instead of recklessly abandoning it, will the government make a clear exception for health care a condition of signing any trade deal?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have said many times that the health care system will not be affected at all by any negotiation in relation to a trade agreement with the Americas.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, maybe we should see that on the website where there is no position set out now. The auto pact was supposed to be safe and yesterday it died a permanent death. Our environment was supposed to be safe and yet yesterday citizens and the government had to go to court to fight a NAFTA tribunal decision to let polluters pollute.

Canadians want trade deals and trade rules that safeguard what they value most. Will the government refuse to sign any GATS deal that fails to safeguard such priorities as health, environment and decent jobs?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have established rules clearly on the question of the environment and, as I mentioned clearly, on the question of health that cannot be affected by NAFTA or by the trade agreements we are having with the Americas.

● (1430)

It is also not against GATS to have medicare in Canada. On the environment, we signed international agreements and we respect them. Sometimes there are appeals in front of the NAFTA or GATS panels and we defend our interests there, as any other country has the right to do.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

I wonder if the Prime Minister would confirm that a memorandum was prepared in the spring of 1999 by officials in the Prime Minister's office and delivered by Mr. Jean Carle through the office of the president of the Business Development Bank proposing answers to inquiries about the Prime Minister's intervention in the Yvon Duhaime and Auberge Grand-Mère file.

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think most members of the House, in light of the very clear and definitive statement yesterday by the RCMP, would have expected the right hon. gentleman to stand today and apologize to the Prime Minister of Canada.

I say with respect that this Joe runs the risk of going from Joe who to Joe McCarthy if he does not stop this kind of politics.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote from that memorandum to the president of the Business Development Bank.

[Translation]

The memo reads:

Jean Carle gave us the questions and answers that the Prime Minister's office had prepared on the Duhaime file.

[English]

This memo confirms the direct involvement of Mr. Jean Carle. Why did the Prime Minister tell the House so categorically on February 7 that Mr. Carle had no involvement in any way in the Auberge Grand-Mère file?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a definitive statement from the ethics counsellor saying that this matter has been investigated and there is no basis for the allegations being made.

Yesterday we had an RCMP statement saying that the matter raised by the member has been investigated and that there is no basis for any further investigation.

What we have is a stubborn leader of a party in the far shadows of the Commons that cannot accept the right and decent way to proceed and to apologize to the Prime Minister for his behaviour.

\* \* \*

**THE PRIME MINISTER**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, while it is no bombshell, it is no secret that the Prime Minister has been propping up the Auberge Grand-Mère for years. By coincidence, of course, the better the hotel did the better the golf course did next door.

There are a couple of competing hotels in town: the Prime Minister's favourite, the Auberge Grand-Mère, and of course the Gouverneur. The Gouverneur is close to the Prime Minister's constituency office and the Grand-Mère is across town. Can anyone guess where his staff stayed, though, to the tune of \$33,000? It was at the Grand-Mère, of course. Over at the Gouverneur less than \$300 was spent, although it was far more convenient for them.

The question is, what could it be that draws the staff of the Prime Minister over to the Grand-Mère?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would have thought the member would be amazed by the fact that after visiting the riding and doing all of the work, the total payout was only half as much as the payout to the Alliance Party from a law firm that benefited by some \$300,000 from the taxpayers of Alberta to cover the last bit of slander coming from that party.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I guess we could spend the next 40 minutes apologizing back and forth across the aisle. However, from 1999 until 2001—

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

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair cannot hear the question. It is very important that we all hear the questions and the answers. The hon. member for Edmonton North has the floor.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, from 1999 to 2001 the Prime Minister's staff spent a grand total of 330 nights and \$33,000 at the Auberge Grand-Mère. By stark contrast, they spent exactly three nights and less than \$300 at the Gouverneur. The Grand-Mère is clear across town and the Gouverneur is practically next door. Was it official policy that they would stay at the Auberge Grand-Mère or just a subtle—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Industry.

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, having the member stand and explain why the Prime Minister got such a big majority because he visited his riding quite often over the last number of years is frankly something we appreciate. However, trying to turn that into something suspect or questionable should be beneath the member. Sadly it is not.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

[Translation]

#### FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, problems like those currently being experienced in relation to negotiations on the free trade area of the Americas have already arisen, when the multilateral agreement on investment was being negotiated. Why? Because of the same desire as today to keep everything secret.

When the government was asked what was going on, its answer to us was "Everything is fine. Trust us. There is no reason to be afraid".

When the texts became known, we realized that we were headed for catastrophe and that a good portion of what is known as the Quebec model would have been passed over.

Are we to understand today that the minister is again asking us to place blind trust in him as far as the free trade area of the Americas is concerned? Is this what we are to understand?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we have undertaken to negotiate is on the Internet. We have made our position absolutely public in the tables available there.

The mandate entrusted to me by the Canadian government is known. The positions have been discussed with the provinces. Each province has access to the Internet site in question and is providing us with its position on each of the points.

We held a federal-provincial conference here on February 5, and there were discussions precisely on this matter. I can assure the

House that Canada is going to play an important role in Buenos Aires.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what the minister appears not to understand is that the Canadian positions cannot be evaluated if we do not know the positions that are on the table being negotiated.

Does the minister understand that more and more bodies in civil society, in all communities throughout Canada and Quebec, are mobilizing against this negotiation? Does the minister not recognize that his lack of transparency and his close-mouthed attitude are responsible for this mounting public opposition?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are going to respect our partners in the hemispheres of the Americas. We are going to continue to ask them to be so kind as to make these texts public, because they should be and we want them to be. Canada will not do so unilaterally, however, out of respect for the other countries with whom we are in negotiation.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence tried to pretend that Canada's coastal defence is not compromised despite the cut in Aurora flying hours to 8,000. His air force chief disagrees. We have a document signed by General Campbell warning that any cut of Aurora flying hours below 11,500 would seriously impair the ability of the air force to protect Canadian sovereignty.

Given this warning from a soldier who ought to know, why has the minister pushed for these cuts?

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is in fact what General Campbell and the air force staff have recommended. They are saying that because we can invest more in upgrading our equipment and putting better technology into the equipment so that we can get more efficiency out of it, we will get a better quality product and be able to do just as much patrolling as we were been able to do before.

Where they will save money and time is in the fact that they will do more on land simulation to train people in terms of flying. This will cut down on the number of hours that the aircraft are needed in the air.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have the document right here. They are either in the air or they are not.

When the Liberals took office in 1993 annual Aurora flying hours were 19,200. Now the minister wants only 8,000 hours. Yesterday the minister denied these numbers but we have the proof

*Oral Questions*

right here. General Campbell thinks this 58% cut will have an unacceptable impact “on border protection”.

Why should we trust a career politician instead of the expertise of a career soldier?

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again I repeat that this is not something that comes from me or from the government. It is a recommendation from the air force. It is a recommendation from General Campbell and others in the air force who feel that they can operate this in a more efficient fashion and that we should put more investment into upgrading equipment, and that is exactly what we are doing.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Minister for International Trade often praise the European model.

The European Commission, which negotiates trade agreements on behalf of the European Union, is mandated directly by the countries in the European Union.

● (1440)

Is the government prepared to set up a similar mechanism for co-operation with the provinces, that is to have the team of Canadian negotiators mandated explicitly by the federal government and the provinces?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that the Bloc Québécois continues to look for inspiration from models elsewhere. After wanting the American model, here it is back again with the European model, now.

I can tell the hon. member that we are very happy with the co-operation we have initiated with the provinces. We have had a federal provincial conference where we discussed all the issues in the negotiations, and the discussion was very useful. We are definitely on the same wavelength as regards most of the issues.

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the mandate to negotiate is defined and given by the governments comprising the European Union and they must also formally approve the result of the negotiations.

If, once again, they are serious in their praise for the virtues of the European model, as was the Minister for International Trade in the media recently, is the government prepared to set it up here, in other words to have the provinces approve the outcome of the negotiations as well?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that the European model is evolving pretty quickly toward our model of federalism.

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

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew:** So it is clear that, if Europe is becoming a federation, it is the choice of many.

I can tell the member that we will continue to work very closely with the provinces in this area, because it is vital to us that the Canadian position reflect all of our interests across the country.

\* \* \*

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence wants to reduce the Aurora's patrol hours from 19,000 when the Liberals took office to just 8,000 hours today.

When it comes to determining minimum operational requirements, who is more qualified, the chief of the air force with 30 years of military experience or the minister with 2 years?

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, the recommendation does not come from me. The recommendation is bottom up not top down. It comes from the air force.

**Mr. Rob Anders:** Have you not read it?

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** They frequently get all their research wrong, and I am sure I will find out where they got it wrong on this one as well.

First, they are wrong to say 19,000 because it is currently at 11,000. We are talking about an 8,000 difference. However the difference will be in terms of a more efficient training system, not in terms of any fewer patrols to ensure the security of the country. That will continue to be maintained.

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, recently the cannons used for the Governor General's gun salute for the Speech from the Throne had to be brought to Parliament Hill by autoclub tow trucks because the military truck wheels are unserviceable.

Obviously, operational readiness is at a low ebb and has little priority by the Liberals.

Would the minister tell us when the wheels of our army will be turning again?

**Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the army did a magnificent firing the cannons to honour the Governor General when she was here.

*Oral Questions*

Let me say that the government is replacing or upgrading every piece of equipment in the Canadian forces. In fact, I was just over in Eritrea, Ethiopia. Our troops are raving about the new armoured personnel carrier known as the LAV III. It is state of the art, up to date equipment. Even the Americans now want to buy Canadian.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS**

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Given the importance that an agreement on the free trade area of the Americas would have for Canadians, does the minister agree that it would be reasonable to have all members of the House express their views and those of their constituents?

Is the minister prepared to recommend a take note debate on this issue before the summit in Quebec City, in April?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for his question and his continued interest in this very important issue.

I am pleased to announce to the House that, indeed, I pledge to ensure that our government ask the House to hold a special take note debate on the FTAA before the summit in Quebec City.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

[English]

**TRADE**

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the trade minister. Yesterday Metalclad Corporation was in a B.C. court defending its NAFTA right to run a toxic waste dump in Mexico, which ignores the health and environmental concerns of elected local and state governments.

While the federal government has intervened in this corporate attack on democracy, will the minister assure the House that Canada will not sign any new FTAA accord that includes any type of investor state provision like that in chapter 11 in NAFTA which led to this dangerous and destructive Metalclad tribunal decision?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that I have been quite clear that we are already seeking clarifications on chapter 11 of NAFTA as drafted.

We have been working with the Mexicans and the Americans to bring those clarifications in order to ensure that chapter 11 reflects the intentions of the drafters of NAFTA at the time. In an eventual FTAA we would not bring elements of ambiguity to a situation that we are trying to correct.

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister could have just said no. The minister has said that he will not make the FTAA negotiating documents public unless we get permission from all 33 of our FTAA partners.

Why is the minister giving effectively a veto to these countries over the right of Canadians to know the contents of these important documents that affect our future? Why is he paying more respect to the governments of St. Lucia, Barbados and Peru than he is to the people of Canada? Why the contempt for Canadian people?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when we negotiate with partners we respect them. We respect the name of the game of the negotiations.

We are the first country to have put our position on the Internet. On behalf of Canada I have been asking to have all documents published. We will try to persuade our partners to do so because we believe it would be in the best interest of all citizens and all parliamentarians to have them.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, with evidence that has now been put before the House that clearly shows an intervention by Jean Carle on behalf of the Prime Minister to the BDC in the auberge file, could the Prime Minister tell us whether or not there has been any further intervention from himself, from Jean Carle or any other member of the Prime Minister's staff with respect to the Auberge Grand-Mère affair?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, given the issues surrounding agriculture, given the issues surrounding the auto industry, given the issues surrounding the IT sector and given the kind of issues that concern Canadians where they live in their communities, the people of Canada should be asking themselves why that party, with the evidence of an ethics counsellor and an RCMP investigation saying there is no basis for any further investigation, continues to ask questions that are designed to smear the reputation of somebody who has given 38 years to public life and who has emerged after 38 years with a sterling reputation and a sterling character. He does not deserve these kinds of attacks.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, why does the Prime Minister not stand in the House and have the courage to speak for himself and tell us why he assured the House

*Oral Questions*

that Mr. Jean Carle was not involved in this file when this memorandum proves the opposite? I would be prepared to lay this memorandum on the table of the House of Commons.

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, quite frankly the real question that is consuming most members of the House and those who watch it is what exactly is the right hon. gentleman trying to do.

I will quote what the right hon. gentleman said yesterday. He said:

The RCMP appears to have decided that there was no criminal wrongdoing and I accept their decision on the basis of the facts that are known now.

What happened since yesterday? Did he have another conversation with the former president of the BDC?

\* \* \*

• (1450)

**PRIVACY COMMISSIONER**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, after more than five years the justice minister continues to ignore the recommendations of the privacy commissioner. Three and a half million Canadians are labelled as potentially dangerous because their names are contained in a police database.

The minister claims success for her registry because of information in that database. This turns out to be a bogus claim. The privacy commissioner revealed the minister's database even contains the names of witnesses and victims of crime.

Why is the minister ignoring the privacy commissioner? Why has she not fixed this mess?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me reassure the House that we have not ignored the privacy commissioner. In fact, on a number of occasions over the past seven years we have consulted with the privacy commissioner.

We have laid before the privacy commissioner questions that we would ask. The privacy commissioner and his staff indicated that those questions were appropriate.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true, according to the privacy commissioner. Most of these 3.5 million Canadians in the police database do not even know the police have a file on them. They do not even know that they could become targets of police action because of the incorrect information the minister has on them.

The privacy commissioner raises other concerns in his letter that information in the police database is irrelevant and exceeds the

authority granted to the minister in the Firearms Act. Millions of Canadians have to abide by the Firearms Act. Why not the minister?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate for the hon. member that we have consulted with the previous privacy commissioner on a number of occasions over the past seven years.

If the member is referring to the new privacy commissioner and if the new privacy commissioner wishes to talk to me about concerns he might have, I am certainly willing to do that. I would expect that he would give me the courtesy of contacting me directly to discuss any concerns he might have.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade just told us that he wanted the House to hold a debate on the free trade area of the Americas issue before the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

In all logic, in order for us to have a serious debate and before parliamentarians express their points of view, will he undertake to make available to us the texts which will form the basic of negotiations for the free trade area of the Americas?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the House is perfectly aware that the free trade agreement will bear a strong resemblance to the other free trade agreements we have negotiated. Obviously, one free trade agreement is pretty much like another.

The Canadian government's negotiating position is there. I can assure the House that, on the basis of the information contained therein, parliamentarians, who have already made a large contribution to the Canadian government's position through their participation in House committees, will be perfectly able to express very interesting points of view, and I am looking forward to taking part in this debate.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, earlier, I was happy that the minister agreed to a debate, but surely he cannot mean what he just said. If we want to debate the negotiating position in the House, we must have the texts.

Why did he earlier tell us that it would be a lack of respect to make them available to us? Is he saying that the United States showed a lack of respect towards the other countries by doing what the Bloc Quebecois is asking be done?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Americans have a process allowing the release of a certain number of documents. It is a different one from the one we have in Canada.

The Canadian system also has a large number of other advantages, because parliamentarians, through committees, have already been consulted by the government, which is not necessarily the case in other systems.

We can assure the House that we will have an ongoing dialogue on this very important issue with all parties and with every province in Canada, so that we can make a fine contribution in Buenos Aires.

\* \* \*

[English]

**COAST GUARD**

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans a question about the disbanding of the Canadian Coast Guard search and rescue divers. Tragically on Sunday Paul Sandhu died when his car jumped a dike and landed in the Fraser River.

● (1455)

The search and rescue hovercraft was there within three minutes. Divers could have attempted a rescue but they were not allowed to bring their diving gear due to the minister's order. They were forced to stand by as firefighters pulled the vehicle from the water.

Will the minister explain to the House how he could justify this bureaucratic decision that has already resulted in one lost life?

**Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I extend from all of us in the House our sympathies to the Sandhu family on this tragic accident.

The hon. member should know that rescue diving is not a core mandate of the coast guard. In fact it is a mandate of the Department of National Defence. However, the coast guard has had a pilot project which it assessed over the last six years. As a result of the comprehensive assessment it decided to discontinue that pilot project.

This was an operational decision by the experts. Judging from the question the member asked earlier, I think he wants—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's own advisory committee advised and recommended against this move. The coast guard rescue team was implemented in 1994 because there was a pressing need, and there still is. The rapid response of the Sea Island hovercraft and the diving team create a unique capability that cannot be matched by DND or the RCMP.

The minister has cancelled this against the recommendations of his own advisory group. Why is the minister saying no when his experts are saying yes?

**Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me repeat for the hon. member that rescue diving is not a core mandate of the coast guard. This is consistent with the U.S. and British coast guard.

This was a pilot project for six years started by this government. There was a comprehensive assessment of the pilot project. As a result of that assessment the experts decided on an operational basis that this could not be continued, but I can assure the member that the Department of Defence will continue to provide the excellent service that it has in rescue diving.

\* \* \*

**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry. Yesterday a delegation from Canadian Auto Workers, led by Buzz Hargrove, met with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Industry and members of the caucus to discuss the current situation of the Canadian auto industry in the light of the end of the Canada-U.S. auto pact.

Will the minister inform the House what impact this development will have and what the position of the Canadian government will be in the context of NAFTA following the expiry of the auto pact?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Brampton Centre for his question. There is no doubt that Canada has been extremely successful in the auto business in North America. In fact, we make two cars for every one we sell in this country, so we have done very well.

The purpose of the CAW visit was to say that it is important to look to the future. We agreed to re-establish the auto industry advisory panel. We agreed to look at the possibility of R and D investment to keep Canada competitive and to ensure that innovation is very much present in the sector. We agreed to continue to work with members of parliament, such as the hon. member, who represent their constituents in this area and who are very concerned about ensuring that our competitive edge is maintained in this country.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Cheviot coal mine in my riding is still waiting for an

*Supply*

answer from the government with regard to environmental assessment. It has been waiting for five years.

It was approved in 1997. Appeal after appeal has delayed it, so much so that the buyers now have torn up their contracts and have gone elsewhere looking for coal. Twelve hundred jobs have been lost in my riding. It sets a bad precedence and puts a chill in Canadian development.

Will the minister today commit to the House that he will streamline the government's red tape before any more jobs are lost in Canada?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this case there was a joint federal-provincial panel that examined the potential for any negative effects with respect to the Cheviot coal project. It determined that there were likely to be none that could not be mitigated or compensated for. Obviously in the meantime the company involved has taken some other decisions with respect to its future business plan.

The hon. gentleman raises an issue with respect to streamlining regulatory processes. That is a suggestion the government takes seriously. Over the last number of years I am pleased to say we have made some progress. We have some further—

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

• (1500)

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting day. We blew it on Cheviot, but it is our lucky day because we have another chance. Just up the road from Cheviot there is the Grande Cache coal mine that is going through exactly the same thing in trying to reopen an existing mine and trying to complete an environmental study at the same time so that miners can go back to work.

The government has a chance to streamline that process and give a good project the Canadian advantage. Will the government show some leadership and get rid of the red tape so that Canada is open for business in the 21st century?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a number of cases that involve complexities with respect to regulatory procedures we have made some very good progress in recent years. I think, for example, of the development of diamonds in the Northwest Territories, the Cheviot case that was referred to earlier, and some of the activities offshore.

There are a number of regulatory agencies that are engaged in these projects. Some of them are federal. Some of them are provincial. We always do our very best to streamline the processes so there can be a very definite beginning, a clear set of rules, an end and a decision that investors can rely on. We will continue our efforts to make that system better.

[Translation]

**FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the statement by the Minister for International Trade, there would appear to be two methods, the Canadian and the American.

If I understand the minister rightly, the American method appears to consist in a debate based on the texts that will make up the agreement, while the Canadian one would be a debate based on what the government, or in fact the minister, feels like telling us. Is that what I am to understand?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is also a third, the European method referred to by our colleague, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier.

However, I can say this. Before the Summit of the Americas, an exploratory debate will be held in the House—and I think this is a piece of very good news—on the free trade area of the Americas.

This will, I believe, be of very great help to the government and to the negotiators who will be heading to Buenos Aires.

[English]

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would seek consent of the House to table the documents referred to by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre with respect to the involvement of Jean Carle in the Auberge Grand-Mère file and the Business Development Bank.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

---

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

• (1505)

[English]

**SUPPLY****ALLOTTED DAY—ELECTORAL REFORM**

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a fairly substantial amount of activity going on around here, but I will try to focus on this particular debate.

The interesting thing about this motion in one sense is where it comes from. The motion comes from the New Democratic Party, which all of a sudden, in this place at least, seems to have discovered something on the road to Damascus: that perhaps there is a better way of getting elected. I can certainly understand why the NDP would want to look for a better way to get elected given the lack of success that it has endured over the past many years.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

I can understand why the NDP would want to make changes and I can understand why members of the official opposition might want to support those changes. This issue of representation and how people arrive at this place is something that generally occupies the minds and time of those who cannot succeed under the current system.

The proof of that would seem to be in the fact that when the New Democrats have enjoyed power for some number of years in British Columbia there is no talk of proportional representation or changing the system. I suspect that after the next provincial election the NDP will be reduced to a rump of their current status and of course the first thing on their agenda will be to change the way the NDP gets elected in British Columbia.

The other example would be the province of Ontario, where Bob Rae enjoyed five years in office. The rest of us did not, but he did. During that five year period when I had the challenge, shall we say, of serving in opposition with the Liberal Party of Ontario, I do not recall the government of the day, the New Democratic government of the province of Ontario, leaping forward, standing up and shouting that it would have to find a new way to get elected.

Clearly this only occurs when someone is either bitter or confused or is looking for something that might work because the current system simply will not work.

The other issue that I find curious coming from opposition parties is this constant feeding frenzy about reform in the House. The denigration of members of parliament, particularly on the government side, I personally find offensive. I know the great work that many of my colleagues have done and continue to do. I have talked about it in this place so I will not go there today.

I would suggest that is another example of the bitterness that a political machine or a party has when it arrives in this place and realizes that over 90% of the Canadian public did not vote for it, that it is not the government and that it does not get to make the decisions about how the country runs, whether it is the budget or whatever it happens to be. These parties can only try to put some pieces of metal into the spokes of the wheel of the governing party to see if they cannot trip it up.

### *Supply*

Frankly that is what is happening here. This is the second time we have had an opposition motion. We have not had a motion here that deals with the substantive issues Canadians are concerned about, such as the changes in our health care policies that are occurring at the provincial level, such as upholding the Canada Health Act and the role of the national government. I have not seen a position come from the opposition saying that the government should do that, even though that indeed is what we do. I have not seen concern expressed by the opposition with great indignation about the two tier health care systems that are on the verge of occurring in the province of Alberta and, who knows, possibly even in the province of Ontario.

• (1510)

I do not see an opposition motion coming forward dealing with the recent decision that perhaps should be debated in this place, the decision of George W. Bush to bomb Iraq. I do not see anything coming forward. That is an issue that I think Canadians care about. Canadians care about what is happening in that part of the world.

I do not see an opposition motion coming forward to deal with the government's recent announcement to put \$120 million into clean air in the province and the country to meet the standards we committed to at Kyoto.

What do we hear from opposition members? We hear them saying let us find a different way to get elected, because it did not work in 2001, it did not work in 1997 and it did not work in 1993. All they want to do is talk about how they can change the electoral system.

There are perhaps some areas where reform could and should be looked at. The Lortie commission was started by this government and reported here. There were bills adopted and there were changes made. It makes sense. We should not just say everything we do is right.

Surely to goodness there are other areas of concern that parliamentarians should be putting their minds to. I am sure that the Canadian Alliance would get somewhat nervous if we were to have parliamentary reforms that dealt with the referendum policy we all heard about with such fondness during the last election, about how if 3% of the people would submit a petition there could be a referendum on any particular item. Then the leader of course distanced himself from that particular issue and said it was not necessarily 3%, that it could be greater, that the party members were not sure. In fact at one point, I think, they were going to conduct a referendum on what the percentage should be so that they could then determine when and where they should hold a referendum.

Maybe we should have a look at reforming policies like that, at reform in the electoral system and making it more transparent.

*Supply*

How about releasing the names of people who contribute to leadership campaigns? Would that not be interesting?

We do that. We have no difficulty with it. Members opposite do not seem to want to do that, yet we see as recently as yesterday and today the Leader of the Opposition trying to respond, in a rather feeble way, to questions put by the media about a \$70,000 contribution to the Canadian Alliance Party made by a member of a law firm that was paid some \$300,000 or \$400,000 to defend the Leader of the Opposition in his defamation suit. Interestingly enough, the payment of that \$300,000 or \$400,000 came from Alberta taxpayers. Maybe there should be some way for us to investigate that.

Is it appropriate in electoral reform that when a leader of the opposition or a leader of any party in the House is elected at a party convention that the party then has the moral and legal authority to write a cheque for \$50,000 to a sitting member so that person will vacate a safe seat, in the case of the Canadian Alliance, obviously, to allow the leader to run in that seat? Is it proper? Is that appropriate?

**An hon. member:** Why don't you talk about the motion?

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Is that not something the member chirping over there thinks is the kind of electoral reform we should undertake? I would have no difficulty with that. I do not think it is not right to pay off a sitting member to vacate his seat so that the leader can simply come walking in.

We know that the Canadian Alliance, like its predecessor, the Reform Party, simply wants to adopt the American system. I have heard some rumours the Alliance is going to take a committee of its own down to Florida to learn how to count in the electoral process. We have—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lanark—Carleton.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is my understanding that the rules of the House require that all speakers actually address the question at hand, and I can see absolutely no connection between what the member is saying and the matter at hand. It is a partisan rant.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** The motion before the House deals with electoral reform. The hon. member for Mississauga West, the last I heard, was addressing the question of adopting an American system, which I assume he was going to say dealt with elections. Perhaps it was a bold assumption on my part. The hon. member for Mississauga West.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I know the Alliance members do not like it when people bring up the problems they have within

their own organization, I understand that. However, it is about electoral reform, there is no question.

The motion here is that the NDP members wants to change the system so they can get elected a little easier and in greater numbers than they have been able to up to now. If we are going to do electoral reform, should we look at what does it mean to get elected as a leader in a party structure? I think that is relevant to this motion.

We cannot get to this place until we are nominated and elected by the party, either to be the candidate in a given riding or to be the leader of the party. Do we want to just talk about what they want to talk about or do we want to talk about the entire issue?

I will close by saying we have to compare apples to apples. If we are going to reform the system then we have to look at some of the mistakes and the unusual circumstances that have been going on across the way.

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also join in on the NDP motion that the House strike a special all party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms.

I am happy to participate in the debate because in the last session I had the opportunity to discuss the whole issue of proportional representation and proportional electoral systems in Alberta. I was there as the federal representative to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is the only parliamentary association in Canada which actually has separate provinces as its members. Once a year, I, my colleagues from the other provincial legislatures and members of the federal branch meet to discuss topical issues. We did so in Alberta. It provided for lively debate but we could not reach consensus. It was a very emotional debate. People felt strongly one way or the other way. However, we could not arrive at consensus, not only at the federal level but also looking at it provincially.

I know this matter was actually the subject of an international conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association two years ago in New Zealand, when the member for Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant was the chair of the CPA. Again we led an all party delegation and again no consensus was achieved at that time.

I would like to address the motion in the context of whether or not the proportional system works best as far as women are concerned. Does it increase women's participation in the political process? Does it actually increase the number of elected women?

Two years ago another parliamentary association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, released a global analysis of what has worked for women in politics and what has not between the years 1975 and 1998. It also surveyed all of its members.

One of the questions addressed was “Which electoral system works best for women”. Was it the majority system, was it a proportional system, was it a mixed system? Interestingly enough, the IPU’s world inquiries led one to be rather prudent in its conclusions. While it found that the proportional system may be the most conducive to the election of women, it was only conducive provided there were a number of safeguards that were applied.

The safeguards included, for example, including at least one woman or giving a percentage of women in each electoral list and including at least one woman in an elected position in every closed list. It found that it worked well if it alternated between men and women in every list. Also, it needed to establish that a certain percentage of lists would be headed by women.

The issues to be dealt with in putting women on a list or people on a list are quite complex. In addition, quite surprisingly the study found that a proportional system, even with the safeguards that I just talked about, was only a temporary measure for a long existing imbalance. We still have a long way to go to ensure that the House of Commons is represented 50:50, that being 50% women, 50% men, which reflects our population.

• (1520)

While at first glance one might argue that the proportional system assists in increasing the number of elected women, I would respectfully submit that the proportional system does not in itself ensure the increased participation of women in politics.

Here are the important things that have to be decided. Who decides whose name appears on the list? Who decides how many men will appear on the list? Who decides how many women will appear on the list? Who decides what percentage of women will appear on each electoral list? More important, who decides what percentage of the list will actually be headed by women?

It is not our riding associations or constituents at grassroots who decide who is going to be on those list. It is the political parties and the people in power who decide. The grassroots, the constituents and the riding associations have no input whatsoever into those lists. However, they are the people to whom we are all accountable, not the powers that be.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with my colleagues what has recently transpired in France. The last two or three weeks the front page story of the *New York Times* has been about France’s new parity law. Last year France passed a law which requires all political parties to field an equal number of male and female candidates in almost all elections, starting with the municipal elections which are coming up in March.

This is the first country in the world that has actually required this and I would submit that the jury is still out on it. We do not know what will happen and how this will increase women’s

### *Supply*

participation in the political system or being elected, but it is a novel way. Again, it is not just a proportional system. Where there is a list it requires 50:50 parity. It is an interesting experiment and is something we should all watch very carefully.

Let us go back to the Inter-Parliamentary Union study of what has worked to increase the number of elected women, which has nothing to do with the proportional system. The study found that women’s chances of getting nominated are higher when their party has realized that women can be and are an electoral asset.

It found the success higher if the party had incorporated the gender dimension in taking on a number of steps, be it establishing a committee on gender equality, or gender focal point with a mandate to scrutinize the party’s policy in that connection, or re-orienting the party’s women’s wing so that it promotes women’s vision and it secures support for women within the party, not just offering women support to the party.

It also found it was important that the parties reviewed rules and practices for internal elections to ensure equality of access by women and men to the leadership positions in the party and to local and national elected mandates.

As an aside, today I was speaking to my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. He said that he just had his annual meeting of his riding association and the majority of people on his executive are women. I do not believe it had a list at that time or that it was done on a proportional basis. Again, it goes to how the party promotes from within and how the party values its women.

The study also interestingly found that quotas established by law did not work. It found that quotas do not permit the development of a real political space for women. That is something that we as parties have to deal with ourselves. Moreover, requiring political parties to have a given percentage of women candidates failed because there was no sanctions for failing to meet that type of quota.

What the study found to be most effective was self-imposed quotas. The self-imposed quotas result from recognition that women are not only an electoral asset, but that women’s full participation in all aspects of the political process is not only essential for the good of society but is also an essential ingredient of democracy.

• (1525)

Witness the leadership of the Prime Minister and his commitment to ensure the full participation of women in Canada. It was our present Prime Minister who appointed a woman, Canada’s first chief justice of the supreme court, the Right Hon. Beverley McLachlin, an appointment that was applauded, not just by women or by members of this party, but by the legal community across Canada.

*Supply*

It was our present Prime Minister who also appointed the first woman commissioner of official languages, Madame Dyane Adam. It was the Prime Minister who appointed the Right Hon. Adrienne Clarkson as the Governor General of Canada. Also, since taking office our Prime Minister has indeed made sure that half of all Canadians appointed to the Senate are women and one-third of the Canadians appointed to our judiciary are women as well.

Certainly, this is a leader who leads by example. He shows us the important role that women play in our society, within our party, within our major institutions and within our government. This is a man who understands, and I am proud to be part of that team.

Last but not least let us not forget, as I said a few weeks ago in the House, that our Prime Minister made history once again on January 15, 2001 when he appointed the first woman to occupy the position of chief government whip, the hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that was a truly, legitimate, well thought out and excellent speech as compared to some of the other speeches we heard today. She spoke clearly and honestly. I appreciate that very much and so will Canadians who will be reading this and perhaps viewing this today.

She said the magic word quotas at a certain point in her speech. I am just curious as to why. Having an all-party parliamentary committee looking at some aspects of electoral reform, is it possibly a bridge to the kind of reforms that she is looking at about opening up a system to have more access for women as she described? There is no reason why that could not be included in this exact motion, or that this motion could not be an avenue to precisely that kind of reform that she is concerned about. That could be contained entirely within this motion as well. The fact that she speaks against the motion is unfortunate.

I also notice that, just like some of the previous speakers, she took the issue of proportional representation and grossly oversimplified it. She analysed the issue of proportional representation in the macro level quite well, then tried to apply it vis-a-vis concerns about having more women candidates and a more proportional voice in the House for women. That is fair enough. However, the oversimplification of proportional representation being just this sort of big balloon that she pops from the one angle of having more women in this place does not do this debate justice. It does not do the issue of proportional representation justice.

There are all sorts of models of proportional representation out there. I personally do not happen to be a fan of proportional representation.

I have a couple of questions for the member. She spoke of the need of political parties, maybe her own, to have a quota system for

candidates, that 50% of candidates should perhaps be women. Some political parties have that. For example, the NDP in British Columbia has that in its platform.

I am not sure if she thinks that candidacies for political parties should be prorated on some other physical characteristics, for example, income. Should we have candidates of different brackets of income? Some political parties and political scientists have seriously advocated that. Should we have candidates for political parties who represent a wide variety of people with disabilities? Should we have political candidates who represent or are prorated on a wide variety of ages? Different people have advocated that.

If she is willing to bend on this one principle that we ditch equality and prorated candidates based on physical characteristics when it comes to gender, is she willing or interested in doing the same thing with some other characteristics that people have and people are concerned about?

I come to this Chamber having replaced a Liberal member of parliament. Prior to that member of parliament, there was a female candidate who represented my constituency of Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. Her name is Sharon Hayes. She represented my constituency very well. She is a woman of honour and class.

• (1530)

I asked her what was her greatest frustration as a member of parliament. She said it was her inability to stand up and say what was of concern to her constituents, to have tangible legislative powers at the committee level, to have tangible powers in the House of Commons and to have real reform possibilities in this place. She said those powers are not there because the government, and it is a long entrenched history, does not allow people to stand up for what they believe and that affects everybody, men and women.

Could the member please address the issue of quotas and other aspects? Could she please address the issue of allowing this place to allow more members to have more power and how that affects women?

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have enough time to answer all the questions but I will certainly try.

First, I looked at the whole issue of proportional representation in the context of getting more women elected to the House of Commons or to government. There seems to be this belief that by having a proportional system we are automatically going to get more women into the House of Commons. That is too simplistic.

*Supply*

My whole point in raising this issue is that it is incumbent upon all parties to encourage women to participate in the political system. Twenty-one per cent of the House is composed of women members of all parties, yet women represent 50% of the population. It is important that we encourage more women to participate in politics so they have a say.

One of the great and wonderful things about being a Liberal member of the government, and in being a woman, is that this is a party that encourages women to participate. It encourages us to stand up, to be heard and to speak on behalf of our constituents.

I know this is the hon. member's first term, but I hope he will be able to watch me. As I did in the last term, I stood up many times and spoke on behalf of my constituents. I watched the concerns that I brought to the House finally take place in the form of legislation and policy by the government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first speech House in the House since the November 27 general election. I have risen to speak at other times but not on a motion. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans for showing their confidence in me for the third time.

I would also like to congratulate them for their wise judgment in being able to separate in their minds the work of an MP and an issue that was really not pertinent to this election, namely the whole matter of municipal mergers. As we know, certain of my colleagues were defeated, unfortunately, because of the Liberal party's special knack of deflecting attention from real issues.

Having made this point, I am pleased to speak to this motion by the New Democratic Party calling for the striking of an all party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms.

I would like to begin by stating that no one can oppose what is right. I believe that there is some merit to having committees address certain methods of representation. We would respectfully submit, however, that what lies behind all this, whether general elections or voting, is the entire issue of democracy. It is a matter, above all, of the exercise of democratic rights. It is a matter of democratic institutions.

Before thinking about creating an all party committee, it would be a good idea, in my opinion, for the government to focus some effort of reflection on certain aspects of the electoral process.

• (1535)

Among other things, for the purposes of the debate, I would like to raise three questions. Let us ask ourselves, and I think that this concerns those watching these proceedings at the moment, if democracy can be improved. Is the electoral process, whether we mean a uninominal single ballot system or a proportional system, a component of democracy? Third, is proportional representation a means of improving the democratic process?

As I do not have enough time allotted me, I will not be able to answer each question in detail. However, I want to make it clear in my remarks that we must consider this question a lot more and in much broader terms than by just looking at the way the representatives of the people of Canada are chosen.

Among other things, and it would have been useful for the NDP to mention this, we should look at the whole question of corporate funding of political party coffers. Today, we note, and I think the report of the chief electoral officer is clear, contributions by individuals and we see those of the major corporations, which contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars to party coffers.

In the case of the six major banks, which had profits of some \$9 billion last year, if we looked at their contributions to the traditional parties, such as the Liberal Party or the Progressive Conservative Party, or at those of the oil industry lobby, which contributes happily to the election fund of our colleagues in the Canadian Alliance, we would see that there is a sort of two-tiered funding in Canada.

On the one hand, there are the big contributors representing corporations, to the detriment of mere voters. When I say "mere voters", members will of course understand that I do not wish to minimize the importance of a middle class worker who supports a particular party and who calls his MP or candidate to tell him: "I have studied your party's platform. You have been my MP for  $x$  number of years. I have looked at what you are doing, the stands you take, and I think that you are representing me well. It is with pleasure that I am sending you a cheque for \$20 or \$25".

I think that members understand very well that my remarks are not intended to pass the same judgment on all contributors to campaign funds. I think that there is a difference between a major bank or a large oil company or multinational that is going to invest several hundreds of thousands of dollars in a party seeking office. Naturally they will expect the favour to be returned.

That is why I say that we have a two tier funding system in Canada. When one has funded an election campaign such as the one last fall, when we had people giving us \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20 and sometimes, if we were luckier, \$50 or \$100, to whom is one

*Supply*

accountable when the election is over? We are accountable to the ordinary members of the public who funded the election campaign, and not big companies and powerful lobbies.

Another point that this motion should address is the whole issue of how election officials are appointed.

• (1540)

The timing is good, because we just finished an electoral process. The 301 members who are here were elected by the people. I do not think that any of those who voted in Canada did so with a loaded gun to their head. Members of parliament were democratically elected.

We could ask ourselves, however, why voter turnout was so low in the last election. Why? This reflects a lack of democracy system that is becoming increasingly more serious.

I am sure that even though you are now the Speaker of the House, you are back in your riding of Kingston and the Islands on the weekends. You can see that, unfortunately, a percentage of the population has totally lost confidence in the political system and in politicians. This is a realistic conclusion.

We, the 301 elected members of the House of Commons, should wonder why some people have lost their trust in democracy. Why are some people telling us “We do not want to be bothered anymore. You are all the same. It is all the same. You are trying to fill up your pockets. We see you during election campaigns, but once you are elected, you ignore us”?

Félix Leclerc lived on Île d'Orléans, which is in my riding. In one of his songs, he said “On the eve of an election, he'd call you son. The day after, of course, he had no clue what your name was”. This song dates from the 1950s and I think it is as current today as ever. Why did people not put themselves out to vote on November 27? Because of cynicism, if not outright disgust, with politicians. In a democracy, that is cause for alarm.

The candidates for all parties who were defeated and the ones who won seats, as the 301 of us here in the House of Commons did, have experienced the process. We had to deal with a government-appointed electoral machine as far as the returning officers went, reporting to the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley.

The objective of the Bloc Québécois is going to be to ensure that the government reaches a decision on specific improvements to the Elections Act and to the electoral process, including the whole matter of how election workers are appointed.

During the 36th parliament, we had the opportunity to introduce some amendments in committee, because we believed that the government was not contributing to democratizing the electoral

process. Far from it. It was our opinion, our firm opinion, in the Bloc Québécois, that the government is leaving an unacceptable degree of power with the governor in council when it comes to the selection of election workers.

What does governor in council mean for those watching, who are not familiar with this jargon? It means that the Prime Minister, with his cabinet and caucus, makes the appointments, and only rarely are these appointments not partisan. We need only look at the returning officers in each of our ridings.

When the Liberals are in government, these are the people who have been very good Liberal organizers, who have done things in the Liberal association. When the Conservatives were in government, returning officers were Conservatives. This is known as the theory of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Under the Liberals, they wear red, under the Conservatives, they wear blue.

• (1545)

In any case, some of the members, such as the one for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, who changed from blue, to independent, to red, will perhaps be wearing green on the eve of St. Patrick's Day on March 17. Who knows?

We in the Bloc Québécois propose that the appointment of the Chief Electoral Officer be made by a resolution of the House of Commons approved by the opposition parties and not just the party in office. At the moment, the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley, was appointed by the party in power, after it had informed the opposition parties.

I think it is worth while looking at what is done elsewhere. The large number of very competent researchers put at our disposal could check to see how these appointments are handled in the Quebec National Assembly, and also in other parliaments and provincial legislative assemblies.

I want to talk about a legislative assembly I am more familiar with. In the National Assembly, important appointments require a two thirds majority and sometimes even a unanimous vote, whether it is for the position of ombudsman, chief electoral officer or other senior public positions whose duties require a very high level of credibility and impartiality. We are far from such an appointment process.

What we are asking is simple. We want the federal Elections Act to be transparent and we want to ensure there is no appearance of conflict of interest.

As I mentioned earlier, the appointments of returning officers, that is those responsible for the voting process in the ridings, are partisan appointments. This is why the Bloc Québécois is asking that officials and returning officers in the ridings be appointed

*Supply*

following a public, official, open and transparent competition, as is the case in other jurisdictions. Again, I would ask our researchers to look at what is being done in the National Assembly.

This morning, in his reply to the NDP motion, the government House leader referred to the Lortie commission, formally known as the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing. That commission addressed the need for the independence of election officers. On page 483 of its report, the Lortie commission reached the following conclusion:

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

Even Canada's chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, in his appearance before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, said:

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

All this is a concern. When Canada's chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, is in other countries, he recommends that they not use the Canadian model to appoint returning officers.

But we know that Canada likes to give lessons on democracy in many countries and to monitor elections in Zimbabwe, in Haiti, and all over the world. It likes to pass itself off as the guardian of democracy and a model to follow.

I think that some serious questions are in order when we see that Elections Canada is disavowing this system, that the chief electoral officer describes it as an anachronism.

• (1550)

Finally, still on the issue of transparency, there is the major point of identifying voters. During consideration in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Bloc Québécois asked that a voter identification process be included in the legislation. The primary objective is to prevent a voter from usurping someone else's voting right. Once again, the government turned down this request.

We might wonder what the government has to hide. Why is it against transparency? Why is it against a system that would improve democracy, with one person one vote? What is the government trying to hide? There is cause for concern.

The Bloc Québécois was asking for a new appointment process for at least the chief electoral officer, who is more or less

responsible for the enforcement of the elections act, in order to reduce the government's control over this area.

We need to ensure that the chief electoral officer is appointed by at least the majority of the opposition members. If we, in the opposition, were to take part in the appointment process, then we would not be able to criticize the government, because we would have given our support. Members on both sides of the House would have to agree on the qualifications required of the incumbent.

To conclude, I would like to say that, whatever happens, if we can make democracy more transparent by dealing with the flaws in the current system, we might then be able to consider other options of representation, including proportional representation. The government still has a lot of work to do before we can get to that point. I have discussed this issue with some Liberal members and I know they also expect some improvements to the electoral system.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw attention to the work of my colleague. When he says that there is always room for improvement, he is right. In fact, many members of this parliament want to see the electoral process improved by being made more transparent.

There are two expressions heard very often from members of the Bloc Québécois: more transparency, more democracy. We need to check that we do not have a beam in our eye, before trying to remove the mote from our neighbour's.

My colleague referred to electoral democracy. It is always a good thing to stick to the things one knows best. In the last election, in my own riding, as was reported in the media, the Bloc Québécois had trouble accepting a profoundly democratic process. One of their top members for the past 10, 15, maybe 20 years sold 600 membership cards in order to gain eligibility for the fine position of official candidate to run against André Harvey in the last election campaign.

Unfortunately, as members are aware, this was against the most elementary rules of democracy. A candidate was refused access to a convention that seemed above-board in everyone's eyes. Those who claimed in the House of Commons to be profoundly democratic, highly respectful of the basic rules of citizen participation in the elector process, got pushed around, shunted aside, by their leader. The leader of the Bloc Québécois arrived with his parliamentary leader, the ineffable member for Roberval, to announce "You no longer have a spot, so move over".

• (1555)

As hon. members have seen, two days before the election, the Bloc Québécois leader was in my riding, both times proclaiming me the winner. So sure was he of my victory, perhaps, that he

*Supply*

decided to ignore the elementary rules of democracy and did not even nominate a candidate.

Before thinking about reforming the entire world, what does my honourable colleague think of each of the parties in our own ridings? a young fellow sold 600 memberships, yet he could not even take part in a convention, because the Bloc Quebecois had decided that a certain person was to be the candidate.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has really mastered the art of dodging. That would make him a very good boxer, except that he does not know how to throw a good punch.

I agree with him that Sylvain Gaudreault was an excellent candidate. There is no question about that. The best proof that the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has a natural tendency to exaggerate is when he says that that person has been a very active supporter of the Bloc for 15 or 20 years, when we all know that the Bloc will be celebrating its 10th anniversary on May 15.

According to the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, that man was so loyal to the Bloc that he was an active supporter of that party even before it was formed. That is loyalty for you. To support a party 10 years before it is formed, it takes some extraordinary powers and a good crystal ball.

I remember a few things that happened on his new side of the House. We could ask the people of Markham how they felt about having the former chief economist of the Bank of Montreal being forced upon them as a candidate. Were they happy about that? We see these kinds of things everywhere.

There are some unfortunate events. There may be different ways of doing things, but that is not the issue. The member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, from 1997 until the 2000 election, did not base his campaign on the merit of his own candidacy, but rather on internal divisions, on other parties' problems. Good for him if he can do that. I wish him a lot of success in his career. He will probably be appointed Minister of Transport because he is certainly a good candidate to become a member of the cabinet.

**An hon. member:** He will build roads.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** He will build roads and he will build bridges, even if there is no river. We will relive the Duplessis years with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

**Mr. Serge Marcil (Beauharnois—Salaberry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this debate on the motion by the NDP on proportional representation.

I always like to speak following a member of the Bloc in the House of Commons. It is rather amusing to see how these people demean democracy. They are very good in speeches, but in practice, they do not necessarily serve as a model.

They say "Why have voting percentages dropped in the country as a whole?" This sort of speech, where they say any old thing, contributes to people's impressions that politicians do not in fact have much to say.

However, on the plus side of our democracy—I will use the Bloc Quebecois member's example—who elected our candidate in the riding of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord? The people did. They decided André Harvey was the candidate they wanted to represent the people in that riding.

● (1600)

André Harvey appeared to be the most competent person. So, democracy as such always finds expression in our system.

Let us return to the NDP motion. The question that perhaps should be put at the outset is, why are we questioning our electoral system in Canada? There is always some reason for doing so. I have never seen a party in government advocate proportional representation. It is always the opposition parties that do.

I could refer to Quebec. Between 1970 and 1976, there was a party called the Parti Quebecois advocating proportional representation. When it was in office, between 1976 and 1985, nothing more was said. In 1985, it was back in the opposition and began talking about it again.

As we know, this is an issue that was discussed by the Bloc Quebecois. At one of their conventions, they even considered including it in their platform. But I think they were told by their head office in Quebec City to take it off the agenda as quickly as possible.

Proportional representation has a beginning and an end. But in fact there should be no limits regarding proportions, because we are talking about numbers of parties and numbers of votes.

Earlier, my colleague also mentioned the lists of candidates and the proportion of women on these lists. That could also apply to ethnic groups. It could apply to the number of women from each ethnic group. It could apply to languages. It could apply to a number of elements. Therefore, this concept should not be restricted to proportional representation.

The fundamental question is: Why are we proposing to establish a multi-party committee to take another look at the possibility of establishing a new electoral process whereby anyone in this place may speak on the behalf of whom? The majority, the minority, the minorities of the minorities? This is what we must ask ourselves.

This is basically what it is all about. This is a problem in just about every house of every legislature. Studies are conducted, usually after each electoral process. Commissions are set up, and committees do studies, organize public hearings, and consult the

parties in the House and the public. After every election, the same conclusion is always reached here in Canada, and that is that the Canadian electoral system, our electoral system, is perhaps not perfect, but that so far—as Churchill said—none better has been found.

The system of proportional representation has also been tried in other countries, and people went back and changed their system. Why always go back and keep asking the same question?

Does our electoral system allow all citizens to express their views in an election? I can compare two electoral laws. I can compare the electoral laws of Quebec and of Canada. I was pleasantly surprised to see how Canada's law encouraged Canadians to vote. If an individual citizen does not wish to vote in Canada, and does not vote, it is because they have decided not to do so.

People can register at any time. They can register when they arrive at the polling station. They have only to show identification and say "I am a Canadian citizen; I live at such and such an address; here is my identification" and they are registered and allowed to vote. This is not the case with Quebec's electoral law. It is more limiting in this regard.

• (1605)

So, as far as the Elections Act is concerned, I find that our legislation is a model compared to other democracies around the world. Let us draw a parallel with the election of the U.S. president, where there is no popular vote per se. The president is never elected directly by popular vote, but rather by an electoral college. In this country, however, the people decide who is going to represent them in the Quebec National Assembly, or in the House of Commons in Ottawa. Thus, anyone can vote, provided he or she is a Canadian citizen with identification.

The Elections Act, therefore, is not restrictive. In fact, it is extremely permissive. We are going to refer to those who administer it, and say it is up to the returning officers in each area, because they are the ones running the show.

I have had experiences. As far as I know, I represent the Liberal Party of Canada, but the person in charge of the election, the returning officer for the riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry—I do not know what happened on election day—did not rule in our favour on many points in applying the legislation.

When someone is appointed to this position, on the face of it, that person is objective and has only to apply the legislation. Overall, this is done in a highly satisfactory manner. Often, when there is a problem, it is with the political organizations and the riding level, not with the administration of the act itself.

Why then this idea of proportional representation? I keep coming back to this point. Our electoral system allows all citizens in all ridings throughout the country to voice their opinion on the

### *Supply*

candidates. There is no limit on the number of candidates in one riding. In some ridings, we can find up to 12 names on the list of candidates and on the ballot. So anyone, if a citizen, is free to run for election. There is no limit.

We can say today that, obviously, only one person per riding will get elected. That person is usually chosen by the majority of the voters in his or her riding. A person is elected when a majority of voters decide to vote for the candidate of the political party whose message and agenda appeal to them, and this is true right across the country. A majority elects a candidate who is part of a team representing a political party and its leader. Of course, a political party is made up of many supporters.

If we look at the results of the last election, we see that the Liberal Party of Canada was elected in all the provinces. Liberal candidates were elected in Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon, the Maritimes, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, everywhere. The question is, and that brings me back to the motion before the House, why should we once again examine the merits of proportional representation? What political party is raising this issue?

To promote democracy and to provide a greater choice to the people, maybe the political parties should ensure that their agenda is for all the people of Canada. We are elected by the people of Canada. That is what it is all about. Is our message reaching everyone in Canada or is it heard only by the residents of a particular region?

• (1610)

The results lead to the conclusion that some political parties are regional whereas others are national.

First and foremost, we must work with the various political parties to help them develop a message or a platform for all Canadians. If the majority of Canadians across the country decide to choose a particular political party, it should be because their analysis showed that the platform put forward by the Liberal Party of Canada best responded to their needs. Other parties may have more specialized platforms that are more responsive to the needs of a particular region.

Before we think about changing the mechanism or the structure, or the electoral process, we should reflect on what we stand for as individuals and also on what each political party stands for.

In Quebec, there are more than 30 members of the Bloc Québécois. However, that party's platform does not respond to the needs of Canadians in general nor is it accepted by them.

To have an even more democratic system in Canada—and I should not say more democratic—we could say in the Canada Elections Act that any political party that wants to be active on the national scene must have a federalist vision and not a separatist vision.

*Supply*

One can see how far democracy is applied in Canada. Even those parties whose goals oppose the Canadian federation are allowed to take their place on the Canadian chessboard. Let us see whether, in other countries, such parties, within a federal system, are allowed to take up a position on the national chessboard. It is fairly peculiar to Canada to allow a party, whatever its origins or its vision, to become part of the Canadian electoral process.

In this regard, I think we have done enough studies in the past 20 or 25 years. Reports have been prepared and tabled, softcover reports and others in five volumes.

I think we should first encourage parliamentarians or the members of political parties to give more thought to what they represent, to the message they want to get across to the people of Canada. Let us allow the people, the population as a whole, to decide.

One of our principles is to let the people in a riding decide on the candidate to represent them in the House of Commons. They voted for that person. It must not be a question of mathematics applied after the fact because a political party obtained a percentage of votes and must therefore then be allotted a representative or two. This is not quite how our House should be organized.

We always say that, when a member speaks in the House, it is on behalf of the people in his or her riding. This is why as well ridings are set up with a percentage, an almost identical number of voters. There are a few exceptions, but on the whole there are approximately the same number of voters, give or take 10,000 federally, because the ridings are very large compared to the provincial ones.

When I rise in the House, I represent my fellow citizens, not just those who voted for me, but all of them, all the voters whose names were on the voters' lists. Such is the principle that guides us.

The idea is not to develop new rules that would allow just about anyone to create a political party and to be here in the House because he or she represents 1% of the population. That is not the idea.

Our system works well since there is a rotation. The problem may be that some political parties in this House convey a message that does not meet the expectations of all Canadians. That, in my opinion, is the problem.

The party in office changes the moment another party carries a message that better reflects the views of the majority of Canadians. We must develop national messages and programs, not regional ones.

• (1615)

In conclusion, a good friend of mine, Michel Bélanger, who is no longer with us, held prestigious positions in Quebec, both in the banking industry and in the Quebec government. He was involved

in the referendum. He left a message that his son read in church, at his funeral, in which he said "What is feasible is not necessarily desirable".

I wanted to end on this note, but before I conclude, I would like to pick up on a few points raised by Bloc Québécois members when they spoke about party financing. Quebec has its own legislation on party financing, but so do other countries. Canada's system allows political parties to receive donations from individuals and from corporations, but this should apply to all political parties.

It makes me smile to hear members of a political party criticizing this form of financing while they use it indirectly. During the last election campaign, the Bloc Québécois invited a minister of the Government of Quebec, who was bound by the legislation prohibiting corporations from making campaign donations, to a fundraising dinner as a guest speaker. Honestly. They sometimes take a pretty ambiguous stand.

I will conclude by quoting the headline of an article in *La Presse*, which read "According to Michel Gauthier, the Bloc Québécois must disappear". This would perhaps be a little more in line with our electoral process, the representation system we have developed in the House of Commons.

[English]

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on the fact that he presented his speech without notes from government officials but regret the fact that his remarks were so redundant and circular in nature. In particular, it seems like this was a pretty fatuous effort simply to defend the status quo, which is after all the driving motive of force of the government.

The member suggested that the opposition parties support the motion in principle because they fail to garner the support of most Canadians for their programs. Would the hon. member not admit that the party of which he is a member has failed to obtain the support of most Canadians in each of the last three elections?

In the last two elections respectively, the Liberal Party earned 38% and 41% of the popular vote, which was far short of majority. Yet, with roughly 60% of Canadians opposing its program, it managed to completely monopolize political power in the country. Does he think that is in the best interest of democracy?

Furthermore, does he not think it would be helpful to national unity if the composition of parliament in some way reflected the diversity and plurality of political views which we find in the regions? Would he not think that the 25% of the voters of my province of Alberta who voted for Liberal candidates should have a larger representation in this place than they currently have?

Would he not similarly concur that the 1.5 million Ontarians, the 25% of Ontarians who voted for the Canadian Alliance, should

have more than 1.5% of the representation of this province? Is he not at all disturbed that roughly half of Ontarians have virtually no voice in this place in terms of their partisan choices?

Does he have any regard at all for the fact that Canada is now the only multiparty advanced democracy in the world that has a system of voting designed in and for 16th century England when candidates really were non-partisan candidates elected for the purpose of representation?

Would he not concur with me that we should be mindful of the many international precedents in other parliamentary systems, such as sister Commonwealth countries including Great Britain which has adopted a form of modified PR for its regional assemblies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland?

• (1620)

I wonder if the member could address these points. Does he not think that a greater reflection of the plurality of views in different parts of the country would be healthy for democracy? Does he apologize at all for the fact that his government shamelessly exercises completely uncontrolled power, even though it is opposed in elections by 60% of Canadians? Does he think that every other complex multi-party democracy in the world has it wrong and Canada alone has it right?

Now that we have managed to drive voter turnout down to 60%, does he think that is a record of success and vibrancy in our democracy?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Serge Marcil:** Mr. Speaker, first, if my approach is circular, it covers all of Canada. It goes beyond a regional vision.

In the last election, the Liberal Party of Canada won 41% of the vote, the Canadian Alliance 26%, the Bloc Québécois, 11%, the Progressive Conservative Party, 12% and the New Democratic Party, 9%. So the people spoke.

Italy has an electoral process. It has approximately one government a year. It is therefore always dealing with coalition governments. I think a government should not constantly be blocked by silly games being played in the House because when a political party goes to the people it presents a platform and makes commitments. If it is elected with a majority, it has four or five years to honour those commitments.

Having a majority government gives that party a better chance of honouring its commitments and following up on its platform. That means it is also assessed on its platform at the end of its mandate.

Should we ignore that? The electoral process has evolved both at the federal and provincial level. I remember when candidates could run in two or three ridings during a campaign. That has changed. Now there is one candidate per riding. No candidate can run in more than one riding.

### *Supply*

There was a time when candidates could be both a member of parliament and the mayor of a municipality at the same time. Today, the system has been changed so a member of parliament can no longer hold any other position.

The Canadian electoral and parliamentary systems have evolved over the centuries as a result of pressure coming from the people. It is not only because of individuals expressing ideas here and there. It is often when these ideas are accepted or assimilated by the general public that our system starts to change gradually. That is something we can see in the provinces as well as here, in the House of Commons.

I always come back to the expression “What is feasible is not necessarily desirable”. It should be demonstrated that the present system does not meet the aspirations of Canadians. Canadians should be asked if they want changes in the parliamentary system because, if they can vote, they can say what they want.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry who unfortunately has to sit on this side of the House. That shows how the government chose to treat him on his arrival here.

He talked about transparency, openness and improvements to our electoral system and the way we run election campaigns, among other things.

I would like to know what the member thinks of the approach used by his own party in the last election campaign, where they promised to build roads and bridges here and there. What does he think about that?

• (1625)

**Mr. Serge Marcil:** Mr. Speaker, the difference between my hon. colleague and I is that I am not afraid to make commitments and to fight to uphold them.

I would tell him this: I could ask all the Bloc members here in this House to show what they have done for their ridings since 1993. How have the people in their riding benefited from Canada's economic growth?

Back home that was our priority during the election campaign. People realized that the economy was growing in Quebec and in Canada, but that they had yet to reap any benefits in their riding.

I would go even further than that. I even challenge them to read all the speeches Daniel Turp, the Bloc member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, made in this House. I challenge them to find in all his speeches in his three and a half years here the number of times he mentioned highway 30, used the words “riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry”, “of my fellow citizens”, “at home”. I would like that. This is where the difference lies.

*Supply*

I will talk about home. And, here in the House of Commons, I will talk and represent the people of my riding. I will represent all Quebecers. I will defend their rights. I will defend Quebec's interests, but I will not represent the separatists. I will represent all of the people.

I hear them saying all the time in the House and everywhere in public that they speak on behalf of Quebecers, when they got barely 36% of the vote compared to the federalists, who got 64% of the vote. And, in the case of the Quebec provincial election of 1998, the Liberals in Quebec got 200,000 more votes than the PQ, and yet they are still saying they speak on behalf of the majority of Quebecers.

If democracy is to be the subject, then the rules of democracy must be followed and applied, especially.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching the debate I would like to indicate that every so often opposition parties have an opportunity to set the subject for debate during a particular day. Today the New Democratic Party has set the subject for debate with the following motion:

That this House strike a special all-party committee to examine the merits of various models of proportional representation and other electoral reforms, with a view to recommending reforms that would combat the increasing regionalization of Canadian politics, and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

Others before me have given some statistics about the regionalization of this place: most government members are from one province of the country; other parties mostly draw their members mostly from a particular part of the country; and voter turnout in the recent election fell somewhat dramatically.

Our party has taken the following position with respect to electoral reform. We have long argued that the Canadian political system has a long way to go to achieve the standards of democracy, openness, representativeness and accountability that we have set for ourselves as Canadians.

The Canadian Alliance takes the position that elections must be conducted in a way that best allows the people to express their will, not only about the person they wish to represent them in Ottawa but on the kinds of policies they wish their national government to pursue. We also take the position that another vital principle is that elections must be held in the most open and fair manner possible so that Canadians will feel absolute confidence that there is no manipulation of the vote.

I could go in a number of directions in expanding on those basic positions of the Canadian Alliance Party, but I should like to spend some time on the issue of proportional representation, the one issue of parliamentary reform specifically mentioned in the New Demo-

cratic motion. It is fair to say that the New Democrats have a particular interest in this kind of reform. If the seats in the House were allocated strictly by proportional representation, instead of 13 seats the New Democratic Party would have 25 seats given the percentage of popular support that it garnered in the last election. Members can see why the party feels somewhat cheated in that the results of the popular vote are not reflected its proportion in the House of Commons.

• (1630)

Our party struck a task force on democratic reform a little while ago. It was a very good task force because it had as one of its members my colleague from Lanark—Carleton. It came down with a report on a number of issues. I should like to read to the House and to Canadians watching some of our observations about the matter of proportional representation.

The principle is that representation in parliament of groups of like-minded voters is in proportion to the groups' voting strength. For example, if a party wins 40% of the popular vote it obtains 40% of the seats. Proportional representation, says the task force, is sort of like ice cream. It comes in many flavours and colours and includes everything from the Italian and Israeli variety, which has some downside, to the mixed member proportional system used in Germany and New Zealand.

The proportional representation principle ensures fairness to parties because no party is overcompensated or under-rewarded. In addition, the PR principle aims at fairness for voters in that few votes are wasted. Election results under proportional representation are more truly shaped by the voters and hence produce governments that are more accurately representative of citizens.

Voter turnout was highlighted in the New Democratic motion today. Voter turnout under proportional representation is between 8% to 11% higher. In addition, when few votes are wasted voters need not resort to strategic voting. Voters can be true to their own honest beliefs without the worry that their vote will be wasted or that they will inadvertently elect the least desirable party. That is particularly the case in the province of Quebec, to which the previous speaker alluded.

Under proportional representation the allocation of seats in parliament would more accurately represent the political diversity which exists among Canadian voters. No party is likely to hold a majority of seats. The result would be a fundamental realignment of power within parliament, breaking down Canadian practices which have excessively concentrated power in the executive.

Especially beginning with this parliament there has been much gnashing of teeth about the centralization of power in the executive in the Prime Minister's Office. Proportional representation would be a fair and obvious way to address that.

*Supply*

It is asserted by some, rightly or wrongly, that our country is run out of the Prime Minister's Office by a handful of mostly unelected political appointees. The concentration of power leads to abuse of power. The House of Commons is unable to fulfil its function, which is to hold the government responsible.

You have already heard, Mr. Speaker, points of order and questions of privilege in which members have expressed concern about not being able to do their job, to be heard in this place or to hold the government to account. Combined with party discipline such parliamentary majorities permit Canadian prime ministers to be elected dictators. Those are strong words, but some members feel there is a strong reason to use them.

A proportional representation voting system would eliminate such dictatorial tendencies and redress the imbalance of power within parliament. How is that? It is because no party could enjoy a majority, or rarely in any event. Proportional representation would transform parliamentary practice from an adversarial confrontational style which concentrates power and excludes most MPs from participating to a practice of inclusion, rule by consensus and meaningful participation by all.

• (1635)

Mr. Speaker, you would hear a lot fewer howls of outrage and heckling because under proportional representation members would have a more meaningful role.

There is strong evidence suggesting that a less adversarial style of governing, aimed at the long term public good rather than short term partisan interests, results in a more efficient government.

The conventional wisdom among political scientists is that the British Westminster responsible government model delivers strong government while proportional representation, coalition consensual governments are weak, was turned on its head by the findings of political scientist Jankowski who devised a study to measure economic results and efficiency under different voting systems.

Jankowski's study encompasses 12 democracies over a 100 year time span and measured per capita gross domestic product. His conclusion was that:

The statistical evidence rejects the responsible, or Westminster political parties argument. Strong, centralized two-party systems do not promote economic efficiency. . . Westminster parties actually reduce economic growth relative to weak, or multi-party systems.

In addition, there is much circumstantial evidence that Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Scandinavian countries each have educational systems and economies that out performed or did as well as Canada's throughout the last 40 years.

Most governments cannot resist influencing the economy for purely political reasons. They inflate the economy before elections and deflate the economy after elections. I find this hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure you do to, but this is the finding of the task force.

Academic Edward Tufte studied the frequency of this self-serving practice and found that all but eight democratic governments worldwide were guilty. Each of the eight exceptions have a proportional representation system. The opportunity to manipulate the economy for short term political gain is less likely when power is shared.

The task force also concluded that Canada has precisely the wrong voting system for its social realities and regional differences. Countries such as Belgium, Switzerland and South Africa have successfully incorporated differences more numerous and more pronounced than Canada's. These countries have proportional representation.

The task force made a number of findings that proportional representation would be a much better way of dealing with the national unity issue, and I know other speakers have elaborated on that.

In summary, the task force found that proportional representation has the potential to give fair results to parties, give voters more choice, waste fewer votes, bring greater political diversity into parliament, build national unity, weaken the power of the Prime Minister and cabinet, increase the power of parliament, encourage responsible government, render government more responsive to changing public demands, deliver a more efficient government, connect the government to the people, and foster a political culture of democratic participation.

Would it not be wonderful if we had even half of those changes in our particular democracy?

Although there are advantages and disadvantages to be weighed and different approaches to proportional representation, I believe that the NDP's motion, if we were to support it in the House and set up a committee to conduct such a study, would serve the interests of Canadians. It would further the democratic aims and objectives of our country and be a positive step for us to take.

• (1640)

In addition, my colleague from Fraser Valley has over the last several months spoken a great deal about other democratic reforms we believe the House should pursue: that there be free votes in the House; that the ethics counsellor become an officer of parliament rather than an employee of the Prime Minister, which we debated and voted on in the last few days; that there be a new standing committee on privacy, access and ethics; that appointments for

*Supply*

officers of parliament be made more democratically; that there be more restricted use of closure and time allocation; and that there be more spending accountability on the part of the government.

There is a lot of scope for us to move forward in our democracy by examining those measures. I support the motion by the New Democratic Party. I also urge other members of the House to support the very sensible step of actively and vigorously examining these measures, hopefully with a view to reinvigorating and re-democratizing the institutions that serve Canadians from coast to coast.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the comments she made about the motion before the House today. She pointed out the need for a committee to look at proportional representation, an idea whose time has come. Most countries have an element of PR in their systems.

I should like to hear the member comment on other kinds of electoral and parliamentary reforms that we should perhaps look at. It seems to me that the Senate must be reformed, elected or abolished. Very few Canadians, about 5% according to the polling, actually support the unelected, unaccountable and undemocratic Senate.

The power of the Prime Minister's Office under the constitution is much too great in terms of its ability to appoint so many people without a proper vetting of his appointments by the appropriate parliamentary committee.

We should also have set dates for elections, throne speeches and budgets so that we can properly plan those important events. The power of timing should be taken out of the Prime Minister's hands and indeed out of the hands of the premiers who enjoy similar powers under the constitution.

I believe there should be fewer confidence votes and more free votes in the House so that we can reflect on what is best for the country, for the common good for Canada and for all their constituents. It goes without saying that House of Commons committees should have more power and independence in terms of initiating and timetabling legislation and in the free vote of committee chairs.

Those are just some of the things that are important. Added to that is the motion the other day by the Leader of the Opposition to have an independent ethics counsellor reporting to the House of Commons and not to the Prime Minister.

That is the sort of package my party and I look at in terms of providing a bigger democracy and more democracy in terms of our electoral and parliamentary systems. In addition, we need more economic democracy in terms of the power that transnational corporations take away from ordinary people and from govern-

ments in trade deals and the like. However that is another issue for another day.

Could the hon. member sum up her vision or her party's vision of a bigger democracy in terms of our electoral and parliamentary systems?

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, our party, the Canadian Alliance, has a complete section in its policy book on democratic reform. We have a section on economic principles. We have a section on social principles, and we have a whole section on democratic governing principles and democratic reform.

Our policy book includes many of the measures the hon. member just mentioned, such as free votes in the House of Commons, fixed election dates, looking at proportional representation, and putting more power in the hands of people to hold their government and elected members accountable.

As the member mentions, most democratic countries have moved toward proportional representation. Of thirty-six liberal democracies with over two million people only three have still not implemented proportional representation. They are Canada, the U.S. and Jamaica. Britain, Scotland and Wales brought proportional representation to the political table and their discussions began in 1999. Canada is a bit behind the curve in looking at more democratic ways to arrange its electoral affairs.

● (1645)

One area where I disagree with the member who asked the question is in the whole area of abolishing the Senate. I think that would be a big mistake, unless there are some electoral reforms made in the way the House operates.

The Senate represents regional issues as opposed to the one person one vote way of representation that this Chamber represents. If the Senate were abolished there would be imbalances and regional inequities, which are reflected in this Chamber where the governing party comes mostly from one province, the province of Ontario. There would be much less of a voice and much less vigour in defending and representing the views of other parts of the country. If that were the only arrangement whereby issues could be dealt with, there would be a real imbalance in the way regional interests were handled.

It is because we have a Senate that regional issues have a fighting chance of being properly considered in the second chamber. I urge the member to think about the implications of abolishing the Senate because of the need to reflect more properly and more truly regional interests.

**Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the New Democratic Party bringing this proposition before the House today. It would have a little

more credibility if the New Democrats had tried this kind of system in provinces where they have been in power. As far as I know the NDP has not tried that.

The Alliance has a lot of time for this proposal. It has a lot of friends in Alberta and as far as I know Alberta does not use the PR system. It is still very much using the first past the post system.

What I have to say is nothing new. I am sure the member for Calgary—Nose Hill knows that the first past the post system gives a much better chance of a majority government. From a majority government there should be more accountability and more focus on responsibility.

For example, when Bill Clinton came to the presidency in the White House back in January 1993, in his campaign throughout 1992 he had more or less promised a public health care system across the United States. We all know what happened to it. It did not happen mainly because he could not get the support. He could not strike up a coalition among fellow democrats and republicans.

If Mr. Clinton had been a prime minister with a majority under a parliamentary system, he could have got that kind of proposal through. That speaks well of a parliamentary system and it speaks well of a system that very often produces a majority government. Would the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill like to comment on that aspect?

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very important point. His argument, as I understand it, is essentially that a strong majority government which does not have to compromise or be diluted with input from other groups is able to push an agenda through more vigorously and more effectively than a government that has to be dependent upon the support and concurrence of more groups than just its own members.

We have to look at how effective that system of government has been in Canada. In my short time in the House, which has been just over seven years, I have personally seen the effective input of members and the opportunities to hold the government accountable and have a system of checks and balances on what government wishes to do significantly eroded. Committees now are simply run as closed shops by a particular department. The ministers do not really have to answer to committees or change their legislation because of committees.

• (1650)

If we think dictatorship without a lot of checks and balances is an effective way to go, perhaps we should go all the way toward a totalitarian state. Then the governing head of state could do whatever he or she wishes to do. However, we would argue that according to democratic convention that is not a desirable way to run a country.

### *Supply*

I would certainly be aghast if the member suggests that we need to go more in the direction of unchecked majority power and less on the need to build consensus and support to bring a broad coalition of thought and support behind a particular initiative. I reject the member's premise and I think if he is a democrat he should too.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, Health.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Waterloo—Wellington. Today the opposition motion concerns the issue of striking an all-party committee to look at various models of proportional representation and other parliamentary reforms. It also concludes or hypothesises that it would combat the increasing regionalization in Canadian politics and the declining turnout of Canadians in federal elections.

It is an important motion. I listened to much of the debate today. I listened to the lead speech by the leader of the New Democratic Party. I was confused why the New Democratic Party did not want to have a vote in the House on the motion. It seems strange since one of its strong points is that the matter has not been voted on in the House since the 1920s.

It is a broad motion. It is a broad issue. It raises some interesting points that I think members have spoken about quite a bit.

Proportional representation is probably a concept which is foreign to Canadians generally because it is not simply defined. There are various models, as members have noted in their speeches, such those in Israel, Russia or Germany. However there is one principle that is characteristic to all of them: Should a party that receives 20% of the votes in an election also have 20% of the seats in the parliament as a reflection of that support in the national vote?

In principle Canadians would probably agree that the representation within a parliament should be fairly reflective of their views. However in our parliamentary system votes are not split riding by riding in the same proportion, which raises some interesting questions.

Most members have not talked today about the practicality or the implementation of such a plan and what it would mean to parliament. I tried to think about it a bit. Today we have 301 members of parliament representing each of the 301 constituencies. There are some 30 million people, which means that on average we each represent about 100,000 people.

The role of the parliamentarian is extremely important. Most members would agree that serving the needs of their constituents is

*Supply*

probably one of the most important and relevant activities discharged by a member of parliament. It is a difficult job because in most ridings members of parliament do not get elected with much more than 50% of the vote. Many in fact get elected with only 40% of the vote.

We have five official parties. In most provinces there are at least four candidates representing official parties and many other candidates representing other parties that are not as well known. It does mean that we do have representation by members who do not have the majority of votes.

• (1655)

As we go across the country and look at who is first past the post, in the last election the Liberal government elected 172 members of parliament. That represents a majority government. It is interesting to consider that although members of parliament would like to think we are elected substantively on our own merit they are running on behalf of a party with an election platform and with a foundation of policy and a philosophy of party structure that have evolved over long periods of time.

Electors have many reasons for voting for a particular member of parliament representing a party and a platform. I would think that a large majority of them would say that they vote for the party first, maybe for the platform and then for the leader. If they still have some doubts they might look to the candidate. Others are so dedicated to and such great fans of their members of parliament that they would look to them as long as they are pleased with the representation they give and trust that they will use their best judgment in all matters before the House. Some experts have suggested that members of parliament could be worth as much as 10% of the vote in most ridings.

The system of proportional representation is an attack on the accountability of parliamentarians in this place. We are elected to represent constituencies with defined boundaries. We are elected, not so much on what we promise to do but on what we have done. Canadians would find that the common bond of association we have in this place is that we have all been very involved in our communities through charitable work, volunteer service and other levels of representation.

Much of it was done on a voluntary basis, much of it without compensation and much of it because we were involved and love our communities. We wanted to make them better places for our families. Those kinds of things distinguish members of parliament in this place. It is what they have done, not what they promise to do. There is an integrity issue.

Proportional representation basically says that we want to add another class of parliamentarian. Many basically say they want a

list of people particular parties would like to have. In the event they have a greater percentage of the vote and get a greater percentage of seats, they would like some of the members on their lists to become members of parliament.

I am not sure how we could pragmatically implement it in Canada. I am not sure which ridings they would represent. I am not sure whether constituents would have a place to go to talk to them. I am not sure whether or not they would be people who could be elected if they actually ran in an election. I am not sure they would reflect the quality of people who Canadians would like to see in their parliament.

It raises some questions. There are some very good people out there, but can we imagine having another class of parliamentarian in this place? One would be elected by the constituents of a riding and the other be slotted in or deemed to be here simply because the party as a whole somehow got a few more votes.

There are many examples of the pitfalls of proportional representation. Let us imagine an area in the country where some group was able to organize itself and to make outlandish promises that very enticing and alluring but knew it would never have to deliver because it would never form a government. Could we consider a party that said it would come in here and eliminate the GST, reduce income taxes by another 20%, give every Canadian \$500 a year in heating rebates or take care of our families? The list could go on. A lot of these things would be nice to have but fiscally imprudent.

Is it possible that a group which could lay out a very alluring and enticing platform could in fact get 10% of the vote across Canada? I have a feeling that it is possible.

• (1700)

In fact, what would happen in this bizarre case would be that 10% of the members in this place would not be elected in any riding but would be here simply because of their party, which had an imprudent platform, and then they all of a sudden would be members of parliament in this place. That is what I characterize as the affront to democracy and the affront to members of parliament and the accountability and integrity members bring here.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what would happen, for instance, if you were to have 20 more members of parliament in this place. Would that mean that we would have 20 more seats in here, which I am not sure would be a great platform to run on, or would it mean that existing members of parliament would have to represent 20% more people? There are a lot of implementation problems with such a thing.

I would just suggest to members that these kinds of ideas, although they have been operating in other countries, all have had significant problems. What I do know is that people across Canada,

riding by riding, know, respect and care for their member of parliament, because I think all members here legitimately do the best they can to represent the best interests of their constituents.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member does do the best he can for his own constituents and I respect him for that.

However, when we face a situation in which some members, and I use my own example, are elected with pluralities that are far lower than an absolute majority of constituents—in my case 38% of the vote and in the case of one of my colleagues on this side of the House when he was initially elected less than 30% of the vote—it is hard to say that we have a system that is genuinely representative of the well-being of all of the constituents, no matter how hard that member tries to do his or her best on behalf of those constituents.

This leads to curious cases. In one riding I know of, in 1993, a riding moving from the New Democrats to the Reform Party, as it then was, based on a very small shift in votes in what was essentially a four way race, there was not a dramatic ideological shift from left to right among constituents.

There is one way to overcome this that I think might address some of the concerns the hon. gentleman raised and I wonder if he would consider this as a possibility. It is to use the model of the single transferable vote. I do not think that falls outside the suggestions made by the New Democrats. It has been used successfully in a number of jurisdictions. Again, I cite my own experience in Australia watching elections being held on this basis.

When there is a transferable ballot, one member per district, voters have the opportunity to cast their ballot for their preferred choice as candidate and then for a second and third and so on down the list. If they have someone they particularly dislike and think is inappropriate, they can mark that person at the bottom of the list.

The consensus candidate tends to emerge, so that in a very real sense everybody except those who absolutely put that candidate last can say that to some degree he or she is being represented by that member and that member has the obligation to do so. Indeed, if he or she wants to get elected he or she must respect that breadth of wishes. A more consensual candidate tends to get elected.

Would that kind of proposal perhaps accomplish some of the goals that the hon. member has brought up in some of his concerns?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, this is one of the many models that the NDP is suggesting we consider. There is no question that we do have colleagues in this place who did not get 50% of the vote—some got as low as 30% and maybe even in the low 20%

### *Supply*

range in some parliaments—but that is part of democracy. I think there are well over 150 official registered parties in Canada and that is part of our democracy.

It may very well mean that we will not have high numbers, but generally speaking I believe that the vast majority of members here have earned sufficient support within their ridings to do a good job. We will never get 100% of the vote and we should not be naive enough to think that is what we should be striving for. What we should be striving for, once elected here, is to do the best job possible and remember that we are part of a party system, that we ran on a platform and that when we are elected to come here we should be supporting what we ran on. We have to do that, because if we cannot support our party's platform then we should resign from our own caucus and sit as independents.

• (1705 )

There are some fundamental principles here which members tend to forget sometimes in the heat of debate: that we have been elected for certain reasons and that when we vote, even as a group, it is not because of any reason other than it is what we ran on in front of our constituents.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make the same point the member from Ontario just made. The member across the way talked about certain MPs just being slotted in. I would certainly oppose that. It would be like the present Senate where senators are slotted in.

I think we could look at making as democratic as possible the single transferable vote, which is what I certainly favour as a member of the House, or a preferential ballot. We used that, by the way, in Saskatchewan for the NDP leadership vote about a month ago where there were seven candidates. People could mail in a ballot and choose their candidate among one, two, three, four, five, six or seven. A real consensus candidate emerged from the process.

We can use that as well in terms of PR. For example, in Saskatchewan right now we have 14 MPs. We could have seven ridings and have seven people elected riding by riding. We could have the other seven elected from democratically chosen lists and allow the voters to vote in terms of a single transferable ballot. I think that would be real democracy. I wonder if the member across the way would be open to that kind of idea.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech this morning as well. I understand that there are a number of models. However, I think the experience that Canadians have had over history has shown that we have a stable system of parliament. In fact, our first past the post system tends to produce majority

*Supply*

governments, which allows governments to implement the platforms they run on in elections. That is a very important part of it.

As well, I noted in the NDP leader's speech this morning that she tends to think this would improve regional representation, but what the member described to me will not increase regional representation, simply because in the case of a party such as his own there are not many spaces open considering the popular support that his party received.

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak to this motion today.

I want to begin my comments by saying that our country, Canada, has over time developed a very strong and good electoral system. I think it is fair to say, too, that people across the country have supported it and have cast their ballots accordingly. I think it is democratic in the sense that it underscores the very foundations and values of Canadians, wherever they are in this country.

I also want to point out that it seems to me that other countries have emulated Canada when it comes to our electoral system and that is something worth noting. It is also worth noting that with our electoral system as it is we have a kind of built in flexibility which enables us, then, to do the kinds of things that are necessary, especially in a country as growing and dynamic as Canada. That too is worthy of note.

I find it a little bit ironic that the New Democratic Party has this motion before us today. After all, 91.5% of Canadians voted against it. Under proportional representation it would fall from being the fourth party to the fifth party. It has no members in the territories. It has no members in a number of provinces. It had a chance under a number of provincial governments, quite frankly, to implement proportional representation and it did not choose to do it. Typical New Democrats: always talk a good line but never quite follow through.

I also find it a bit interesting that when it comes to regionalization, New Democrats are going down this path as well. I find it a little hard to take, but after all, they are like that. They like to kind of tinker around and make grandiose, grandstanding kinds of comments, but when it comes time to deliver they cannot quite seem to do it.

By the way, I should add that in the New Democrats' electoral platform there were maybe one or two lines about proportional representation, so yet again there they go. They did not really give it the prominence that they pretend to give it today.

What I want to say is this: we have over time had our critics on our electoral system, but I think it is important to note that at the end of the day it has been a very good system which has benefited Canada. While all the systems fall under the heading of proportion-

al representation in other parts of the world that have it, it seems to me that they vary enormously as a result and there are different approaches used as a result.

• (1710)

Let me just outline a couple of them. First is the preferential ballot, whereby voters rank candidates in order of preference with votes for low-polling candidates being transferred to remaining candidates according to voter preference. Another point is the pure proportional representation system, where the entire country is treated as one constituency and members are selected from party lists based on the percentage of the popular vote received by the parties. Finally, there is another system, a mixed system, whereby some members are chosen on the basis of first past the post contests while others are chosen from party lists.

As we can see, this is a complex issue and a number of alternatives are presented. I might point out that there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

I hear the members of the Alliance heckling me. It is interesting that they would heckle. As we start into electoral reform, remember their referendum question where they were going to have 3% of the voters across Canada triggering a referendum? Can we imagine the ludicrousness of that kind of situation, where 3% could change a motion on major issues? That is how out of touch those members are with what Canada wants and what people see.

What if electoral reform went down the path of asking, for example, whether or not parties should release the names of donors who donated to political leadership campaigns? We did that. Why does that party not do it? Or what about making payments to former MPs? Was it not \$50,000 for Jim Hart's seat so the leader of the loyal opposition—yes, loyal, let us think about that for a while—could take his seat? Why do we not examine that under electoral reform? What about checking out and auditing the Gaspé in terms of people on the list? Remember that boondoggle in the Gaspé when those people, those reformed Alliance people opposite—

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe the member for Waterloo—Wellington is steering dramatically far from the issue at hand, which is proportional representation. He is talking about all sorts of issues that have absolutely nothing to do with the motion at hand. Frankly I think it is not showing the due respect that the motion deserves.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harvey):** I would ask members to limit their comments, as much as possible, to the subject matter of the motion now before the House.

*Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with electoral reform because the motion actually calls for a review, an all party committee to examine various models.

I just wanted to say that the committee, in its wisdom, could broaden into looking at those kinds of issues. This is part of the give and take of debate.

The committee could take a look at whether or not it is legitimate, for example, for a leader to spend \$800,000 of taxpayers' money and then have Mr. Britton, a lawyer in the firm of Bennett Jones, turn around and cut a cheque for \$70,000. That is real electoral reform. Perhaps the spotlight should turn on the Alliance people.

I note with great interest that the motion deals with regionalization of Canadian politics. What better way to try to regionalize than the member for Okanagan—Shuswap and the member for Wild Rose going to the separatist meetings in Alberta? Boy, there is division for you. There is a chance and an opportunity for people to sew the seeds of regionalism, in this case, western separation.

Did the member who is the leader sanction that? He certainly did not rebuke them and quite frankly I think he should have. He should have rapped their knuckles in the interest, as they point out, of preventing regionalization of Canadian politics.

It seems to me, as is the case with their national counsellor who went to the east and said that all easterners are lazy and always want a handout and other things, that the Alliance Party is trying to have it both ways as usual. It is unbelievable to hear about the kinds of things it is doing.

• (1715)

Let me get back to the point at hand with respect to what we are dealing with.

Listen to them. They can always give it out but they cannot take it, those holier than thou sitting over there. It just goes back to the whole point about the fact that they will talk as they did last week about ethics, morality and all the kinds of things that they claim the moral high ground. They preach with their evangelical zeal and on they go.

However, the leader spent \$800,000 of taxpayers' money on a court case that he could have settled for \$60,000, and \$70,000 was kicked back by way of Mr. Britton of Bennett Jones. It is outrageous.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the rhetorical flights of fancy from the member opposite, I noticed he was actually in his own seat, which is unusual. Normally he would be behind a minister looking for a free camera shot.

Once I heard him refer specifically to this bill and that is unusual for him because normally he is completely irrelevant. I wonder if he could just once keep with the topic at hand and perhaps finish the debate off in style, for a change. It would be unusual for him but I wonder if he could do that.

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to continue and speak from this great seat her as the member for Waterloo—Wellington.

The people who are irrelevant are those Alliance people, those people who are hypocrites, those people who, with great duplicity, end up always taking the moral high ground. However, when it is really down and dirty, the Leader of the Opposition is there taking a \$70,000 handout from Britton, the man who is part of the law firm of Bennett Jones.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** I rise on a point of order. Mr. Speaker, no wonder this institution is being degraded. There is irrelevancy, there is a motion before the House, the speaker must speak to the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to tell everyone on either side of the House but the time has lapsed and we are now into questions and comments. I am sure the questions will be very relevant.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will assuredly give my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle time because he is the mover of this motion. I just want to recognize his determined advocacy of electoral reform and a principled advocacy it is.

I had the pleasure of speaking with his former leader, Mr. Broadbent, about this issue and agreed that, in principle, we could join in common cause from left to right across the political spectrum to advance the cause of democracy in the country. I am disappointed but not the least bit surprised, and nor were any of my colleagues opposite, with the kind of partisan rant which just came forward from the member opposite, who has a reputation about his seating patterns, as well as other things. I see the Minister of Finance has almost put that member in a camera angle. It is amazing, he just attracts cabinet ministers.

Does the member care at all about the fact that Canadian electoral turnout has gone down to 60%, the lowest percentage in history? Does he care at all that Canada is now the only complex multiparty democracy in the developed world which still relies on a 15th century voting system designed for medieval England? Does he care at all that 60% of Canadians in the last election voted against his government's program and yet the government holds 100% of the political power?

Does he have the capacity for one moment to transcend partisanship and his government's defence of the status quo to suggest that yes, perhaps this place, the voice of the people, the place where we

*Supply*

speak, parliament, should consider an electoral system which allows the plurality and diversity of political views to be properly reflected in this, the people's House?

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Mr. Speaker, it is so nice to see the member oppose in the Chamber for a change. He has been most invisible recently. I guess he is feeling the heat a little out of that disastrous election campaign his party ran. In fact, he was in my city, Kitchener, when he made that big brouhaha about having two tier health care. It went all downhill from there.

I can say this, I care passionately about Canada. Despite what the presumptive finance critic opposite, who has never met a payroll in his life, would tell us, we on the government side have a very dynamic electoral system in place. We will stand by a system that makes sure that Canadians, wherever they live in this great country of ours, are well served.

• (1720)

We on the government side will continue to present that kind of good peace, order and good government which is the very foundation of this country. Why? It is because of the values Canadians cherish very much. We will ensure those values, unlike the Alliance people who flip and flop and say one thing and do another. They say things with great hypocrisy and duplicity. They are all over the map. Their leader gets \$70,000. They are the holier than thou. They just cannot seem to get their act together. It is unfortunate, but Canadians have ruled and they have spoken very loudly.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to compliment the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle who has dedicated much of his career to the topic of electoral reform. At the end of the last parliament he saw fit to bring forward a private member's bill which stimulated a great deal of interest and debate. He is now using our opposition day motion to debate this same important issue of electoral reform in Canada.

Why reform our electoral system? Our system is outdated and needs to be amended. It needs to be put back into a condition where it actually works for Canadians. It has to be a living institution. As our country evolves and grows our system needs change. We have been saddled with an outdated system that is not serving our needs. Low voter turnout, which speaker after speaker has pointed to, is the most graphic illustration of this.

In 1968, 80% of Canadians voted. There are those who argue that during good times people do not bother going to the polls. The economy was fairly buoyant in 1968 as well and 80% of Canadians chose to exercise their franchise and cast a ballot.

In the most recent election about 60% of Canadians voted. Sixty percent of those who were registered voted. Fifty percent of all eligible voters actually voted. This is a horrific record. It is as bad a

level of disinterest as in the United States. That is what we see with our partners to the south.

Many people have given up on the idea that the electoral process is some way they can get satisfaction. Many people are completely disillusioned with the electoral process that they do not bother to exercise their right to vote. That is a serious problem. There is something fundamentally wrong with the state of democracy today.

We have heard the full range of debate from the sublime to the ridiculous today. The most poignant thing about the debate that I heard, especially from the government benches, is their complete unwillingness to revisit the issue in any kind of a serious way. It makes us wonder what they are afraid of. Why would they not embrace the idea of being able to reach more Canadians and have more Canadians play an active role in the political system?

One of the most interesting points raised during this debate was made by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle in his argument, and an argument that I accept, that some form of PR would help foster a greater sense of national unity. What could be of more interest to the people in this room than some way to bring the country closer together?

The logic he used was that under PR to win seats in a federal election the political parties would have to run on platforms that would appeal to citizens right across the country. In other words, if my only interest was representing the interests of my home province of Manitoba, I might be able to get elected on that basis by being a booster for the home team. Under PR I would also have to have a platform and a campaign that addressed the issues in various regions. One would think that that in itself would be a good enough reason to seriously visit the idea of introducing proportional representation.

The way things are now, unity is not served because there really are no truly national parties. We take care of our base of strength. The Liberal Party takes very good care of the province of Ontario. The Bloc Quebecois does an admirable job representing the interests of the province of Quebec. The Albertans have their party.

• (1725)

It would seem that if we are serious about threading the country together with some real vision of national unity, one of the elements has to be reforming our electoral system. I believe the PR system is the way we can do that.

The reason many people are not voting today is because they are concerned that their vote is wasted. Under PR every vote weighs equally. Even if one is an NDPer living in downtown Edmonton, a person could cast a ballot for the party of choice knowing it would do some good. It would not be a throwaway vote. That makes some sense in the interest of fairness and in the interest of balance.

If a person is a reformer in Newfoundland, the person could have the confidence that his or her vote would not be meaningless. That is a positive thing. I do not know what the resistance was to this idea from the opposite benches. I find it frustrating that they would not at least seriously entertain the idea.

We are also seeing part of the cynicism about Canadian politics. Low voter turnout stems from the messaging that is going on in federal elections today. There is a growing awareness. The pollsters, the Hill and Knowltons of the world et cetera, will advise political parties that the lowest 15% or 20% income bracket do not really vote. Why would someone bother addressing messages to them?

In other words, the people who actually need representation the most and arguably need the services of strong advocacy in the House of Commons, do not bother to vote at all. Frankly, at the other end of the political spectrum, we all know how the top 15% or 20% of the economic scale vote. There is no point in addressing our messages to them either.

All the messaging goes to the middle class band. It is a homogenizing of the political messaging because those are the people we have to reach. Even there voter turnout is tragically poor.

If we are going to move forward as a country we have to engage more of the population. The most basic way we can do that is by having them take part in the political process, which is obviously a gift in a free society. To not exercise their right to vote is an absolute shame as there are places in the world that do not have those rights and freedoms.

I have nothing but admiration for the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his dedication to this cause. He is doing a great service to all Canadians to try and move this issue forward. If we could have a proper and an honest debate, nobody could guess what the outcome would be. However, the motion does not try to dictate any particular solutions. It only calls for the creation of a committee to review the subject.

Who knows what kind of positive outcomes we could have if we embraced this idea in a fair and honest way and visited it without all the rancour and some of the parry and thrust that we have heard today. That dialogue deviated so far away from the actual issue at hand that it did a disservice to all of those people listening and the people who would benefit very much if Canada adopted something along those lines of PR.

The other frustrating thing is that the people who need the representation the most are now the least likely to vote. Those are the people that we have an obligation to address, to reach out to, to engage and to ask them their opinion. Under this system of PR their opinion would weigh just as much as our opinion.

In closing, we all know that something is fundamentally wrong with the democratic process and the state of democracy in Canada today when only 50% of all eligible voters bother to come to the

### *Supply*

polls. We could give them a new confidence if we seriously embraced the idea of proportional representation and increased that to an acceptable level of engagement.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired.

[*Translation*]

#### ALLOTTED DAY—FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

The House resumed from February 15 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order adopted on Thursday, February 15, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred divisions pertaining to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1750)

*Before the taking of the vote:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the amendment.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent that the amendment now before the House be deemed defeated on division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The proposition of the chief government whip is that the amendment be defeated on division. Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Amendment negated)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

*Supply*

● (1800)

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

*(Division No. 9)*

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott  
Anders  
Asselin  
Bellehumeur  
Bigras  
Borotsik  
Breitkreuz  
Brisson  
Cadman  
Casey  
Chatters  
Comartin  
Dalphond-Guiral  
Desrochers  
Dubé  
Duncan  
Epp  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Gallant  
Girard-Bujold  
Goldring  
Grey (Edmonton North)  
Guimond  
Hill (Macleod)  
Hillstrom  
Jaffer  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Lalonde  
Lebel  
Loubier  
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)  
Manning  
Mark  
Mayfield  
McNally  
Meredith  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Nystrom  
Pallister  
Paquette  
Perron  
Picard (Drummond)  
Proctor  
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)  
Ritz  
Roy  
Schmidt  
Solberg  
Spencer  
Stinson  
Strahl  
Thompson (Wild Rose)  
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)  
Vellacott  
Wasylycia-Leis  
White (North Vancouver)  
Yelich—113

Ablonczy  
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)  
Bailey  
Bergeron  
Blaikie  
Bourgeois  
Brien  
Burton  
Cardin  
Casson  
Clark  
Crête  
Day  
Doyle  
Duceppe  
Elley  
Fitzpatrick  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Gauthier  
Godin  
Grewal  
Guay  
Hearn  
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)  
Hinton  
Johnston  
Laframboise  
Lancôt  
Lill  
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
Marceau  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
McDonough  
Ménard  
Merrifield  
Moore  
Obhrai  
Pankiw  
Penson  
Peschisolido  
Plamondon  
Rajotte  
Reynolds  
Robinson  
Sauvageau  
Skelton  
Sorenson  
St-Hilaire  
Stoffer  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Toews  
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)  
Venne  
Wayne  
Williams

## NAYS

## Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assad  
Bagnell  
Beaumier  
Bellemare  
Bertrand

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Augustine  
Baker  
Bélair  
Bennett  
Bevilacqua

Binet  
Bonin  
Boudria  
Bryden  
Caccia  
Cannis  
Carignan  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Collenette  
Copps  
Cullen  
DeVillers  
Dion  
Drouin  
Duplain  
Eggleton  
Farrah  
Folco  
Gagliano  
Godfrey  
Gray (Windsor West)  
Guarnieri  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jackson  
Jordan  
Keyes  
Laliberte  
Lee  
Lincoln  
MacAulay  
Mahoney  
Maloney  
Marcil  
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)  
McCallum  
McGuire  
McLellan  
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)  
Mitchell  
Myers  
Neville  
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
Owen  
Patry  
Peterson  
Phinney  
Pillitteri  
Proulx  
Redman  
Richardson  
Saada  
Scherrer  
Serré  
Shepherd  
St. Denis  
St-Julien  
Stewart  
Telegdi  
Tirabassi  
Tonks  
Ur  
Vanclief  
Whelan  
Wood—147

Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Brown  
Bulte  
Calder  
Caplan  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Coderre  
Comuzzi  
Cotler  
Cuzner  
Dhaliwal  
Dromisky  
Duhamel  
Easter  
Eyking  
Finlay  
Fontana  
Galloway  
Graham  
Grose  
Harb  
Harvey  
Ianno  
Jennings  
Karetak-Lindell  
Knutson  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
Macklin  
Malhi  
Manley  
Marleau  
Matthews  
McCormick  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
McTeague  
Minna  
Murphy  
Nault  
O'Brien (Labrador)  
O'Reilly  
Paradis  
Peric  
Pettigrew  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Price  
Provenzano  
Reed (Halton)  
Robillard  
Savoy  
Scott  
Sgro  
Speller  
St-Jacques  
Steckle  
Szabo  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Tobin  
Torsney  
Valeri  
Wappel  
Wilfert

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
Regan

Fry  
Rocheleau

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADA FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY ACT**

The House resumed from February 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to establish a foundation to fund sustainable development technology, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-4. The question is on the motion.

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, if the House would agree, I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House with the Liberal members voting in favour.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the House give its consent to proceed in such a fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance members present vote no to the motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, members of the New Democratic Party will vote against this motion.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote in favour of this motion.

[English]

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

(Division No. 10)

**YEAS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Augustine
Bagnell	Baker
Beaumier	Bélair
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Boudria
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carignan	Carroll

Casey	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Clark	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Doyle
Dromisky	Drouin
Duhamel	Duplain
Easter	Eggleton
Eyking	Farrah
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Gagliano
Galloway	Godfrey
Graham	Gray (Windsor West)
Grose	Guarnieri
Harb	Harvard
Harvey	Hearn
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Keyes	Knutson
Laliberte	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
MacAulay	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Macklin	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews	McCallum
McCormick	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan
McTeague	Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Neville
O'Brien (Labrador)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Paradis	Patry
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Price	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Reed (Halton)	Richardson
Robillard	Saada
Savoy	Scherrer
Scott	Serré
Sgro	Shepherd
Speller	St. Denis
St-Jacques	St-Julien
Steckle	Stewart
Szabo	Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tirabassi	Tobin
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Wappel
Wayne	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood—156

**NAYS**

Members

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Bergeron
Blaikie
Breitkreuz
Burton
Cardin
Chatters
Crête
Day

*Private Members' Business*

Desrochers	Dubé
Duceppe	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)	Gallant
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Goldring
Grewal	Grey (Edmonton North)
Guay	Guimond
Hill (MacLeod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Hinton
Jaffer	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Landôt
Lebel	Lill
Loubier	Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	Manning
Marceau	Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Mayfield
McDonough	McNally
Ménard	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Nystrom
Obhrai	Pallister
Pankiw	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Peschisolido	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Proctor
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Robinson	Roy
Sauvageau	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
St-Hilaire	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)
Vellacott	Venne
Wasylycia-Leis	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich—104

## PAIRED MEMBERS

Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Fry
Regan	Rocheleau

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

## WAYS AND MEANS

## EXCISE TAX ACT

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation among House leaders and I understand that there would be

unanimous consent to deem that a motion to concur in the notice of ways and means tabled earlier this day by the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions to have been duly proposed and adopted on division.

• (1805)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the government House leader have consent to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.06 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

## CANADIAN SIKHS

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP)** moved:

That this House recognize the importance of April 13 to all Sikhs and the contributions that Canadian Sikhs have made to our country, and that this House also recognize the importance of the five K's: the KIRPAN—a sword representing indomitable spirit; KES—unshorn hair, representing a simple life, saintliness and devotion to God; KARA—a steel bangle worn as a sign of the eternity of God; KANGA—a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body; and KACHA—short breeches, representing hygienic living.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me today to bring this motion before the House for debate and hopefully even for passage at the end of the hour.

The motion that is before the House today is a motion that was originally passed by the Manitoba legislature on July 13, 1999 with the support of all parties in that house. It was with the intention or the hope that this motion might also pass this House that I brought it forward at the request of the Sikh community.

It was with that in mind that I sought to have this motion made votable when I appeared before the Subcommittee on private members' business. However, since it was not chosen as votable, now we are only debating it. I am still hopeful that perhaps we might find our way to passing the motion.

There are three dimensions to the motion. The first one is recognizing the importance of April 13, the festival of *Vaisakhi*, which is the anniversary of the creation of the *Khalsa*.

The second dimension is recognizing the contribution of Canadian Sikhs to Canada.

The third dimension is recognizing the importance of the five K's: the *kirpan*, the *kes*, the *kara*, the *kanga* and the *kacha* to the Sikh community.

• (1810)

I begin with April 13, the anniversary of the day in 1699 when Sikhism's last guru, Guru Gobind Singh created the brotherhood of the Khalsa. The brotherhood was built on the sense of community that Sikhism's first guru, Guru Nanak, established much earlier when he started among other things the tradition of the community kitchen, or the Langar which continues to this day. The Langar is such a great practical symbol of the egalitarian spirit that permeates the Sikh tradition. It is a spirit of equality that extends to men and women and which distinguished Sikhism from the values of the caste system long before it became popular to do so in any modern sense of the word.

The story of Sikhs in Canada, according to a book I am reading about Canadian Sikhs and written by Narindar Singh, probably goes back to Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897 when Sikh regiments passed through Canada on their way to London. They passed through again in 1902 for the coronation of Edward VII.

By 1903 Sikh immigration to Canada had begun. Between 1903 and 1908 nearly 6,000 Sikhs entered Canada, most of them travelling directly from their village in the Punjab to British Columbia. Unfortunately, their arrival in B.C. was greeted with opposition in many quarters. There were Vancouver members of parliament and the mayor of Vancouver who called for a ban on further immigration of Sikhs.

In April 1907 Sikhs were denied the right to vote in B.C. and laws were passed prohibiting Asians from entering the professions, serving on juries, obtaining government contracts, and buying property in some parts of Vancouver. The recently arrived Sikhs were included in this category and therefore these laws also affected them, although they were not directed only at them.

To make a long story short, Sikhs were eventually prevented from entering Canada by virtue of the continuous journey mechanism that flowed from the then deputy minister of labour, a man by the name of William Lyon Mackenzie King. The consequence of this was that Sikh immigration did not resume until the late 1940s with the exception of the wives and children of people who were already here.

Sikhs were employed in many jobs, but they were employed mainly in the sawmills of British Columbia. An almost exclusively male community until 1920, they maintained their sense of community and tradition by living together, supporting each other and gathering in their gurdwaras or temples. I am pleased to now have

### *Private Members' Business*

two in my riding, the Khalsa Diwan Society Temple and the Guru Nanak Darbar Temple. The Khalsa Diwan Society was formed in B.C. in 1907 for the protection of Sikhs in Canada.

In 1913 the worst incident of anti-Sikhism in Canada occurred when the ship the Komagata Maru arrived in Vancouver on May 21, 1913 and was kept from landing for two months and then was eventually sent away. This is a story that I do not have the time to tell in great detail, but the details are both fascinating and embarrassing in this day of multiculturalism, human rights and racial and religious tolerance and pluralism.

Given this early experience of Sikhs in this country, we should be all the more pleased with the attachment that so many Sikh Canadians feel today for Canada. We should be all the more pleased to recognize, through the passage of this motion and speaking to this motion, the great contribution they went on to make to all of Canada, as Sikhs immigrated to provinces other than British Columbia and made their mark in many Canadian cities in all walks of life.

Certainly in my own city, the Sikh community has made a tremendous contribution to the growth, development and the nature of the city of Winnipeg. Winnipeg is a city that has always prided itself on its diversity.

• (1815)

Sikhs in Winnipeg have certainly enriched and enhanced that diversity by bringing to it the values that emanate from their way of life and their religion: the values of equality, social responsibility, community service and the importance of family. It is an ethic that resonates with the values that Canadians want to uphold as Canadians, no matter what their origin or religion.

It is in this spirit that I urge members of the House to contribute their own comments to the debate on this particular motion and to consider whether or not at the end of the debate we might find our way through to passing the motion.

I am not going to take up all my time because I believe there should be an opportunity for as many members as possible to contribute to this particular debate. I will finish by reciting words often heard in gurdwaras across the country and which I have had occasion to utter myself when speaking to Sikh congregations in my riding:

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I participate in tonight's debate on the motion of the member of parliament for Winnipeg—Transcona, Motion No. 32.

The Sikh community has made many contributions to Canadian society. The success of the Sikhs in participating in the political process is increasing in all levels of government. This success

*Private Members' Business*

should be applauded as the experience and knowledge within the Sikh community brings another perspective to the Canadian political stage.

The Sikh community, along with Canada's other ethnic and cultural communities, not only contributed to the diversity of the nation but also helped to challenge and change Canadian society through mutual understanding. Canada's experience with diversity distinguishes it from other countries. Our 30 million inhabitants reflect a cultural, ethnic and linguistic makeup found nowhere else on earth. Approximately 200,000 immigrants a year from all parts of the globe continue to choose Canada, drawn by its quality of life and its reputation as an open, peaceful and caring society that welcomes newcomers and values diversity.

The bill of rights in 1960 barred discrimination by federal agencies on the grounds of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex. Changes to Canada's Immigration Act in 1962 specifically stated that "any suitably qualified person from any part of the world could be considered for immigration to Canada, without regard for his race, colour, national origin, or the country from which he comes".

As a consequence, Canada's immigration policies gradually became less European and the mix of source countries shifted to nations in Southern Europe, Asia and the West Indies. Substantial increases during the 1970s and 1980s in the number of immigrants admitted as refugees under humanitarian and compassionate grounds further diversified the ethnocultural origins of newcomers to Canada.

Canada has learned a great deal from its diversity. Accepting, and then coming to value the differences between our peoples, has changed and continues to change Canada, making our country a better place. However, as Canadians look to the future it is clear that new pressures will make balancing diversity and unity even more challenging.

Through practice we have come to understand that the differences between us do not have to divide us. This encourages citizens who face common challenges to step forward and claim their right to full participation in Canadian society.

As a consequence, Canada's concept of what constitutes diversity is constantly expanding. Diversity is moving beyond language, ethnicity, race and religion to include cross-cutting characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation and range of ability and age. The same approaches that have helped Canadians develop into a bilingual, multicultural society are now helping to bring down other barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their full potential.

• (1820)

Lessons learned through experience with bilingualism and multiculturalism have taught Canada that acceptance and understanding of differences between peoples make collective development possible. However, experience with diversity also shows that

inequities must be acknowledged and addressed for a diverse people to move forward together. This is sometimes a slow and sometimes a painful process, but it is essential if all Canadians are to enjoy the same sense of belonging and attachment to their country. It also serves to familiarize Canadians with the history that they share and the obligations that their history confers.

Making equality of opportunity meaningful in a diverse society requires more than constitutional measures and legislation. All levels of government in Canada deliver programs that mobilize communities to promote dialogue and help people overcome barriers to their participation in society.

As with official languages and multiculturalism, Canada has learned that constitutional measures and legislation alone are not enough to assure equal opportunity in a diverse society. To contribute fully and achieve their full potential, all peoples must have a voice in society and a chance to shape the future direction of the country of which they are part.

Canada's future depends on maintaining and strengthening its capacity to bring together peoples with many differences, even grievances, and building an inclusive society where no one's identity or cultural heritage should be compromised.

Canada's approach to diversity is based on the belief that the common good is served when everyone is accepted and respected for who they are and that this ultimately makes for a more resilient, more harmonious and creative society. This faith in the value of diversity recognizes that respect for cultural distinctiveness is intrinsic to an individual's sense of self-worth and identity, and a society that accommodates everyone equally is a society that encourages achievement, participation, attachment to country and a sense of belonging.

Canada has embraced diversity, or cultural pluralism as some people refer to it, in both policy and practice. It is viewed as one of Canada's most important attributes, socially and economically. Canadians value diversity for enriching cultural expression and making daily life more varied and interesting. Businesses and employers recognize that diversity in the workplace promotes innovation, stimulates teamwork and creativity and helps expand markets for goods and services.

As the diversity of the population expands, new links are forged with the world at a time when Canadians recognize the increasing importance of having a credible voice in international affairs and strengthening our advantages in the global economy.

Canada stands as proof that it is possible for women and men of the world's many races, religions and cultures to live together. We admit our problems and we work across our differences to find solutions. We show the world that different people can accept and respect one another and work collaboratively to build one of the most open, resilient, creative and caring societies on earth.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, as a Sikh member of parliament and as the chief critic for multiculturalism for the official opposition of Canada, I am very pleased to speak in favour of Motion No. 32: that this House recognize the importance of April 13 to all Sikhs and the contributions that Canadian Sikhs have made to our country, and that this House also recognize the importance of the symbols of the Sikh religion called the five Ks, which I will be talking about later.

I congratulate and appreciate the efforts of the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona in tabling this motion. In 1999 the Manitoba legislature recognized a similar motion to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the birth of *khalsa*, the pure Sikhs.

It is also important that one should respect all religions, irrespective of one's own faith. According to Sikhism, a Sikh should try to become a better Sikh, a Hindu a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Jew a better Jew and so on.

• (1825)

However, when the Prime Minister's office allegedly interfered with the services for the Swissair tragedy at Peggy's Cove by asking them not to refer to Jesus in the prayers in services, that was not fair. I stood up for my Christian brothers and sisters to oppose that interference by the Prime Minister's office.

Surrey Central, the largest constituency in Canada in population, has a large population of many ethnic communities, with a huge majority of Sikhs. In fact, the highest concentration of Sikhs in the world outside India's Punjab state live in Surrey.

The Sikhs are basically inhabitants of Punjab, which has about 3% of the area and 2.5% of the population of India. That state of Punjab produces over 70% of the food in the country. Sikhs participated in large numbers in the British and Indian armies. Their contribution in the great wars, World War I and World War II, has been recognized by the Queen. Of the total sacrifices made to get freedom for India, 97% were made by Sikhs. Their contribution to the Indian Olympic teams has also been very significant. Lastly, according to a recent congressional report in the U.S. senate, Punjabis have the highest per capita income and the highest per capita education level of any ethnic community in North America.

The history of Sikhs in Canada is about 100 years old. During this period, Sikhs have contributed in the making of railway tracks and in work in the sawmills and have made professional contributions in the fields of medicine, law, education, engineering, et cetera. Sikhs own big businesses and industries and of course contribute in politics, as we see by their contributions in the House.

Sikhs all over the world have been renowned for their hard work, great courage and enterprise, but a big scar in Canadian history is the *Kamagatamaru* ship incident, as the hon. member from the

NDP mentioned. Most of the passengers on that ship were Sikhs who were fighting for human rights and freedom. Because of their country of origin and their race, the Liberal government did not allow them to land on Canadian soil. Upon the ship's return to India, most of the passengers were killed by the British army.

The history of Sikhs is about half a millennium old. It starts with the birth of the first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who was born in 1469. On April 13, 1699, at a huge gathering, with a glittering sword in his hand, the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, gave a call for those who would protect the truth and live the faith even at the cost of their lives.

The first five who offered themselves to the guru were called *panj pyaras*, or the five beloved ones. They were baptized and then were requested by the guru to admit him into the *panth* by administering *amrit* to him, or baptizing him. About 20,000 persons took *amrit* and became members of the *khalsa panth* that day. This was the birth of *Khalsa* and the day is called *Vaisakhi*.

The *amrit* is partaken of after adopting the essential five external Sikh symbols, called the five Ks, which are a unique gift from the great Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. A Sikh is not supposed to part with any of these symbols.

To be a member of the *khalsa panth*, all individuals, even the guru, had to take *amrit*, adopt the five K uniform and have the name Singh for a male, which means lion, and Kaur for a female. Partaking of *amrit* is open to everyone, irrespective of caste, creed, race et cetera.

Now let me talk about the five Ks I referred to.

• (1830)

Out of the five K's, the first one is *kes*, or hair. *Kes* is a symbol of saintliness or holiness and is considered an important part of the human body. The hair of *Khalsa* creates a blessed appearance and outlook.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji said "*Khalsa* is my special form. I live in the *Khalsa*". To keep hair intact and not meddle with hair is the first and foremost duty of a Sikh. Even the place where baptism of five beloved ones at *Anadpur Sahib* took place was named *Kesh-Garh*.

It is required of every Sikh to keep his or her head covered. Males do it by tying a turban while females keep a big scarf called a *chunni* or a smaller turban called a *keski*. The turban is a very important part of the Sikh religious tradition and also a matter of huge respect, pride and honour. This is why Sikhs cannot be asked to remove their turbans in any place under any circumstances.

In the past, oppressive Mughal emperors forcefully ordered Sikhs to cut their hair which resulted in Sikhs choosing to be beheaded rather than succumb to the orders of the oppressors.

*Private Members' Business*

The second K is for *kangha*, usually a small wooden comb. *Khalsa* combs the hair twice daily, ties the hair on the head in a topknot, sticks the *kangha* behind the knot and then ties the turban with pride.

The third K is *kirpan*, a stainless steel sword that is a symbol of power, dignity, courage, self-confidence and faith in the victory of good over evil. It is also called *sri sahib*. It is a weapon of defence and not offence. It is regarded as a scourge of the tyrant and the wicked. It is used to provide for the protection of a good or righteous cause. Sikhs keep the *kirpan*, the active symbol, in a sheath and wear it in a belt called *gatra*.

The Sikhs had to struggle to get concessions in regard to keeping these symbols intact as part and parcel of the \**Khalsa* code of conduct at all places, including the army, jails, flying or even on motorcycle rides.

In recognition of the loyal and distinguished services rendered by the Sikhs in the great wars to the Queen, in September 1920 Sikhs were allowed to wear the *kirpan* even in the army both in uniform and in plain clothes.

In the past, Singhs used the *kirpan* to free young Hindu ladies who were abducted and raped in the thousands by oppressive rulers and traded in the market. Sikhs freed them and returned them to their respective families safely.

The fourth K is *kara*, a stainless steel bracelet worn on the right wrist. It reminds the Sikhs of the vows of baptism. Thus it prevents *Khalsa* from doing anything evil that is unworthy of a *Khalsa*. Additionally, it serves the purpose of a shield to protect the arm while fighting with an enemy. Even those Sikhs who have not taken *amrit* wear *kara*.

The fifth K is *kash* or *kashehra*, which is underpants or drawers. It is so tailored that it covers the private parts well and does not restrict movements of the marshall *Khalsa*. It is a symbol of sexual restraint and moral purity. *Khalsa* has been known for not committing adultery.

On the day celebrated as *Vaisakhi*, the *sangat* founded by the first Guru Nanak Dev Ji was transformed into the *Khalsa Panth*. The mandate of the *Khalsa* is to spread righteousness, protect the human rights of truthful people and destroy tyranny.

The *Vaisakhi* brings the spirit of *chardi kala*, that is the high spirit to the *Panth* and reminds them of their great heritage, self-esteem and high character. To be a member of the *Panth*, one has to follow the life of *Sewa-Simran* and wish all humanity well.

● (1835)

During the 18th century becoming a Sikh was against the law of the land ruled by oppressive Mughal rulers who ordered that

anyone who could find a Sikh could chop his head off and could exchange that head at any police station for about one year's wages.

Sikhs not only survived this elimination or genocide, but also before the turn of the century Sikhs became the formal rulers of the Punjab from Pishawar to Delhi. The Sikhs were famous for their pure conduct, bravery, love for humanity and the protection they provided the poor and helpless, even at the cost of their own lives.

The high character of Sikhs was so popular with the people that even a Muslim historian, Kazi Noor Mohammed, could not help recognizing it and recorded it on pages 156 to 159 in his book *Jang Nama*.

In conclusion, I congratulate the member for Winnipeg—Transcona for the motion and urge all members of the House to support it. Recognizing the importance of *Vaisakhi*, the Reform Party of Canada and now the Canadian Alliance, Her Majesty's Loyal Official Opposition of Canada, proudly celebrates *Vaisakhi* in parliament every year since 1998. This year's annual celebration of *Vaisakhi* will be celebrated on Wednesday, April 4, in Room 237-C, Centre Block, from 4 to 6 p.m. As always, I invite members of all parties and the public in general to join us in the celebration.

In 1998 the leader of the Reform Party was the first and only federal leader of any political party in Canada to visit the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs and the Durgiana Mander in Amritsar.

I would also like to say that I am a politician and not a religious leader in any way. Due to my limited knowledge, wisdom and time, I may have unknowingly made omissions or statements that may not have expressed the exact feelings or principles, for which I apologize.

However I am proud to end the speech with the *Khalsa* slogan, *Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akaal* and share the Guru's greetings, *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*.

[Translation]

**Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, states do evolve over the years.

Quebec and Canada are no exception to this rule and one of the main reasons for changes in states is, of course, the contribution of new citizens, new communities, people different from us.

Many groups have come to Quebec and to Canada to seek a better life and more dignity. Some of them chose to settle here to escape famine or persecution or simply to try to build a better life for themselves.

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona is giving us today the opportunity to talk briefly about a community that is not well known in Quebec, because not many of its members are living in Quebec.

Sikhs came to Canada toward the end of the 19th century. They made their way over here as members of a unit of the British Army. They were on their way home to India after the celebrations surrounding Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee when they chose to stay in Canada. That was probably not a bad choice.

A few years later, following King Edward VII's coronation, a second group arrived in Canada. All of them had a military background.

There are currently 300,000 Sikhs in Canada and the motion put forward by the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona asks the House to recognize the importance of April 13 for all Sikhs and the contributions that Canadian Sikhs have made to our country.

The motion also reads as follows:

—that this House also recognize the importance of the five K's: the KIRPAN—a sword representing indomitable spirit; KES—unshorn hair, representing a simple life, saintliness and devotion to God; KARA—a steel bangle worn as a sign of the eternity of God; KANGA—a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body; and KACHA—short breeches, representing hygienic living.

● (1840)

I personally have a great deal of admiration and respect for communities that show their attachment to the symbols that represent them. In the life of all people, symbols are part of their vitality, culture and identity.

In that context, I wish to thank the hon. member for putting forward this motion. Clearly, I hope that the House will recognize the importance of April 13, because to the Sikh community April 13 is what New Year's Day is to us. It is the first day of the new Sikh year, the *Vaisakhi*. Unfortunately, that is the extent of what I can read in Sikh.

In 1999, Canada Post recognized the Sikh community by issuing a stamp. Canada Post issues many stamps, but this one was quite special since it stressed the importance of the Sikh community, of the April 13 celebrations for that community and of the role that its members play in their communities.

That is what I had to say. I hope that after today's debate, April 13 will be an important date for Canadians and Quebecers.

[English]

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, we are here today to acknowledge, as part and parcel of the motion, the significant contribution that has been made by Canadian Sikhs to Canadian society and to recognize the importance of April 13 as the birthday of *Khalsa*.

I extend sincere congratulations to the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, a respected colleague, fellow House leader and a

### *Private Members' Business*

dean of the House of Commons, on his attempt to have the whole House support the particular motion.

As you will undoubtedly be aware, Mr. Speaker, Canada has a rich history of diversity and one that spans many religions, cultures, languages and ethnicities. I believe it is in our very best interest to support and celebrate each and every one of these diverse cultures to the extent that we recognize important religious heritage days.

Canada as a whole was built upon the efforts of immigrants, coupled with the foundation and origins of our aboriginal peoples. On this special day, April 13, Sikhs across the world celebrate *Vaisakhi*, the Sikh New Year. Today in Canada we have close to 300,000 Sikhs. On this day the Sikhs pay tribute to their faith, not unlike the Christian significance of Christmas, and we join in that celebration.

While the Sikh population in my constituency of Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is relatively small compared to that of more urban centres across the country, we recognize the contribution Sikhs make in each and every riding, in each and every corridor and corner of Canada.

I support the motion that has been presented to us by the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona for a number of reasons. First and foremost, Canada's diversity is only strengthened by the encouragement of all religions and ethnicities to participate fully in Canadian society and to integrate themselves further into the social fabric in our economy, in our culture and in our way of life.

By supporting resolutions such as this one we are setting a landmark example of the acceptance of religions, ethnicities and cultures in Canada, again a very fundamental founding principle that all Canadians embrace.

● (1845)

Second, I unequivocally support this motion, as do members of my party, as one would not question the significant contributions the Sikh community has made in Canada in the business sector, in the human rights field and in numerous other fields.

During the early settlement of this country, Sikhs laboriously and reliably worked in lumber mills and yards to better their lives and to better the lives of those in their communities. Some Sikhs eventually went on to own their own mills like the Mayo Lumber Company and the Kapoor Lumber Company in British Columbia.

The wealth accumulated from those particular businesses was used to benefit the advancement of the Sikh community on the west coast by building schools, temples, homes and other contributions. You will be the first to agree. Mr. Speaker, that this type of dedication and determination is commendable and it is a symbol to

*Private Members' Business*

all Canadians of innovation, perseverance and entrepreneurial spirit.

During this same period Sikhs were actively promoting human rights in their new land, not only for Sikhs in Canada but for Sikhs around the world. Often we will hear about the early days when those in Sikh communities across this nation would raise money for humanitarian efforts such as natural disasters that occurred in their homeland or in other countries. Their commitment to Sikhs in this country was also equally intense.

Fighting for equality, the Sikhs were diligent in overturning and rewriting discriminatory laws that many immigrants faced when arriving on our shores. The Khalsa Diwan Society was started and led this immigration fight, lobbying both the Canadian government and the government of India for fair immigration policies. These were laudable efforts and significant accomplishments. This group was successful in finally working toward a more equitable and non-discriminatory immigration policy.

I truly believe that this community has worked hard to earn the right to call Canada their home and to be fully embraced by all Canadians. We in this parliament can take a significant and symbolic step by embracing this motion. I know there may be efforts made later to make this matter votable. We fully endorse the significance that would attach by having a vote by all parliamentarians on this motion.

I believe, like all Canadians, that anyone who pays taxes, who abides by the laws of the land, who makes and works toward a better Canada deserves the respect of all of us in the Chamber. I say this and say it in the hope that each and every member of the House of Commons will see it within themselves to support this motion and recognize the importance of April 13 to all Sikhs and to further acknowledge the importance of their spiritual symbols.

As the Sikh community grows in numbers and they continue to observe and practice the customs and traditions of their new country, as well as their former country, I believe it is only appropriate that we extend this goodwill. Through this motion and others like it, we can find a common meeting place that all Canadians, whether they be Sikh, Christian, Muslim, Jewish or those of any background, can take pride in having a sense of ownership. Mutual understanding and respect are the keys to a more balanced and solid fabric in Canada. I do not believe that Sikh Canadians, or any Canadians for that matter, should feel obliged to alter their customs or belief. These should be a source of pride and a source of beauty.

I want to record again the unequivocal support of the Progressive Conservative Party for this motion. I call upon all members of the House to do the same. It is with pride that the Progressive Conservative Party does attach itself to this particular motion. As mentioned by the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, it is a motion

that originated in legislature of his home province. A Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba embraced a similar motion.

All Canadians, all religions, all spiritual beliefs should be given this significant recognition by this, the home that all Canadians should look to. The symbolism would be significant. By working together, a motion like this embraces the very essence of this country and the great culture and the cultural mosaic that has become the catchphrase for Canada.

My congratulations to the NDP member for bringing this motion forward. He will certainly have our support on this motion.

• (1850)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me in the few minutes available to me say how proud I am to second the motion before us today sponsored by the member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

Like my colleague who represents an area that has a very significant population of Sikhs, I too have been blessed with the opportunity to represent an area where the Sikh population is large, active and contributes a great deal to the health and well-being of our whole community.

In my area, the constituency of Winnipeg North Centre, there are two *gurdwaras* that have been a source of inspiration to me and to our whole community. They are the *gurdwara* of Singh Sabha and the Sikh Society of Manitoba. Those two *gurdwaras* have played a very active role in bringing the community together to appreciate the cultural significance of Sikhism and to share with everyone the sense of spirituality that really signifies this community and the contributions it makes to the country.

I too am very pleased to join with my colleagues in the House in recognizing the significance of the April 13 birthday and to pay tribute to my colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona for taking this initiative to bring the motion before the House.

It would certainly be my hope, as I am sure is a hope shared by colleagues from all parties in the House, that we could agree to support the motion with a vote of confidence and make it a unanimous recommendation from the House of Commons.

It is a significant moment to pay tribute to Sikhism and the contribution by Sikhs in the history and development of the country. I certainly have felt that contribution in my community and value very much the sense of spirituality of Sikhs. Their devotion to the values of justice, equality and dignity is very much a part of the faith and culture that surrounds Sikhism in Manitoba and in Canada.

I would pass the speaking over to my colleague and hope that the House would agree to unanimously support the motion.

*Adjournment Debate*

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking all members of the House who have contributed to this debate. It is the kind of debate that I had in mind when I put forward the motion. This is an opportunity for members from all parties to put on the record their views on the importance of April 13 with respect to the contribution of the Sikh community to Canada and with respect to the importance of the five Ks to the Sikh community.

I hope the Sikh community will be able to look back on this day, February 20, 2001, as a day when the Canadian parliament saw fit, not only to debate in a consensual and harmonious way this particular motion, but also, as I will very shortly request, to go beyond that and use the powers we have through unanimous consent to deem the motion votable and to pass it by unanimous consent, which is within our power to do so.

I know it is somewhat unusual, and I apologize to the House for the unusual nature of the request, but it is not without precedent. I have seen it happen on a number of occasions when people felt that it was a special enough occasion for us to use that particular power. I think today is that kind of day.

• (1855)

Again I thank the hon. members who have spoken. I thank the person in Winnipeg, Mr. Kewal Singh, who initially suggested this to me as a measure that I might bring forward. I am very grateful that we see the kind of unanimity we have here. Everyone has spoken in favour of the motion.

If the motion passes, if we deem the motion votable and put the question, no particular burden, legislative or otherwise, will flow from this except that the Sikh community in this country will know that at this particular time in our history we were able to reflect on their history in Canada, to reflect on some of the things that were done that we wish had never been done, to reflect on many of the great things they have done in this country and finally to express ourselves as the House of Commons in the way that this motion suggests.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you seek unanimous consent to deem this motion votable. I am not exactly sure what the procedure is. I ask the House for unanimous consent that it be deemed votable and passed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona have consent to present his motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, who put Motion No. 22 before the House, asked for unanimous consent of the House to

make it votable. I want to point out that members of the Canadian Alliance said yes, and it was Liberal members who said no.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

---

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to request more information on a question I asked earlier with respect to the Vienna Convention and the immunity for diplomats, which has been brought to light because of the very unfortunate accident in Ottawa involving a Russian diplomat which resulted in a fatality and the serious injury of another person and a pet. It certainly put the focus of attention for all of Ottawa and a great deal of the country on this issue of diplomatic immunity and just how far diplomatic immunity extends.

Although for a while it did not look like the Russian diplomat would be charged, it now looks like there is at least a chance he will be charged for this fatality. There will be an investigation done in Russia under article 264 of their criminal code, which appears to be the appropriate place for it.

In any case, the problem with this issue is that the diplomat was known to be an abusive person and was also known to have a record of driving while intoxicated. The diplomatic immunity that we have and need as politicians and diplomats around the world was used to protect this person from prosecution or even from discipline for driving while intoxicated.

While we realize the Vienna Convention is very important, we think there are serious flaws in it and we would like the minister to lead the charge to change the Vienna Convention. Canada is not the only country to have experienced difficulties with diplomats who abuse the immunity rules. We think there would be consensus in other countries to change the Vienna Convention with respect to immunity to prevent diplomats from abusing the system, repeatedly breaking the law and endangering people's lives like the Russian diplomat did in Canada.

*Adjournment Debate*

I would also like to point out that I believe the administration of the Russian embassy is partly responsible for this, because it knew that it had a diplomat who was acting in a dangerous manner and was abusive to the police every time he was stopped. He abused his immunity rules to protect himself when really they should not have been used for that purpose. They were never intended for that.

• (1900)

We want the minister to take the initiative to change the Vienna convention to prevent diplomats from abusing it in cases where they are endangering lives of people in other countries. We think that Canada should take a leading role in spearheading the amendment to the Vienna convention. We think there would be a great deal of support around the world for it.

The question I asked before is the same question I am asking now. Will the Government of Canada spearhead an international initiative to change the rules on diplomatic immunity and in particular to stop protecting drunk and dangerous drivers?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, Catherine MacLean was killed and Catherine Doré was seriously injured in a tragic accident that happened in Ottawa, on January 27.

The driver of the car that struck both women was Andrei Knyazev, a Russian diplomat who was apparently driving under the influence.

[English]

Immediately after the accident the Department of Foreign Affairs sought a waiver of Mr. Knyazev's diplomatic immunity by the Russian government. As is normally the practice in such cases, the Russian government refused to waive his immunity and Mr. Knyazev returned to Moscow on January 29.

[Translation]

Since the accident, the Minister and the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Canadian embassy in Moscow, have been working hard to see that justice is done in Russia. We have just learned that the Russian attorney general has announced that criminal charges will be laid against Mr. Knyazev.

[English]

We understand that the case is now being turned over to the Moscow police for investigation. The Canadian police file on the accident involving Mr. Knyazev was sent directly to the Russian authorities through police channels on February 12. It has now arrived in Moscow.

[Translation]

The tragedy that occurred on January 27 has led the Minister of Foreign Affairs to ask for an urgent review of the policies and

procedures followed by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The results of this review carried out by the deputy minister will be made public shortly.

The department recognizes that diplomatic immunity was crucial to bilateral relations and allowed diplomats to appropriately serve their countries.

The convention is clearly supported by the world community.

[English]

## HEALTH

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to elaborate further on my question in the House on February 13. It pertains to the whole Brazilian beef episode. It refers to the treatment of Health Canada scientists. Most significantly, it pertains to the very serious matter of mad cow disease in our society today.

Without going into great detail about the whole Brazilian beef fiasco which is unfolding as we speak, suffice it to say the entire issue has highlighted the adequacy or inadequacy of Canada's food safety system. It has raised serious questions about the ability of our government to protect Canadians from mad cow disease.

The question I raised on February 13 followed the fact that two senior Health Canada scientists spoke out in early February suggesting that there was no sustainable argument for singling out Brazilian beef products ahead of those from other countries. It also referred to the fact that the government chose to gag the scientists who had spoken out.

Whatever the sequence of events, the critical issue scientists have raised for all of us is: What is the state of our food safety system? Are there reasons to be concerned? What is the process that the government has in place for ensuring a completely fail-safe science based system to protect Canadians from mad cow disease?

Various questions have been raised. The scientists themselves have asked why Brazil. What about the beef we get from other countries such as Australia, Argentina, India and so on?

• (1905)

Other reports talk about the fact that, contrary to the minister of agriculture's assertion, Canada did import beef products and bone meal products from Britain at the very time that it knew about mad cow disease.

Recent reports have come out of the United States, in particular from a biologist associated with the U.S. consumers union, suggesting that Canadians may be at risk of contracting the human form of mad cow disease from domestic beef because current testing is inadequate. Those are the questions behind the whole issue.

The scientists chose to speak out. They were the same scientists who had spoken out about bovine growth hormone and were

subsequently intimidated and gagged by this government. However, they pursued that case through the courts and won the right to speak out whenever they felt the public interest or the public good was in question.

Today we face the same situation, a repeat of that sad chapter in our history, and yet the government has not come forward with any explanation for gagging those scientists, let alone assure Canadians it has a fail-proof, science based system in place.

The questions today for the parliamentary secretary are: Will the government come forward with precise details about how to protect Canadians from mad cow disease? Will the government tell Canadians whether the precautionary principle is truly at work and whether scientists with expertise in the area of research on beef products will be included in the review of the area?

Canadians must be absolutely confident that the beef they buy in supermarkets is safe and that there is no reason for concern in terms of this very serious and dangerous disease.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a great many scientists work at Health Canada. They are responsible for public health and food safety, but they do not all work in the area of mad cow disease.

I assure the House that Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency each have a team of specialists who oversee the scientific, political and administrative aspects of this issue.

### *Adjournment Debate*

The Health Canada scientists who were recently quoted in the media and by the opposition member were not members of either of these teams.

[*English*]

In addition to that, I have the pleasure to communicate to the House that an independent science advisory panel within Health Canada has endorsed the government's controversial decision to temporarily ban Brazilian beef over concerns that it may be contaminated with mad cow disease.

The science advisory board is headed by astronaut Roberta Bondar and composed of people with expertise in areas such as science, medicine and bioethics. The board has stated that the temporary suspension of imports and the removal of Brazilian beef products are justified actions on scientific grounds.

[*Translation*]

As can be seen, the opposition member is committing a serious error in implying that this decision was unfounded scientifically.

When it comes to public health, Canada has clear policies which are based on a scientific approach developed by experts, an approach supported by independent experts, as we have just seen, and this enables us to reduce to a minimum all known or apprehended threats to public health in Canada.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 7.09 p.m.)

---



# CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 20, 2001

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Ways and Means

#### Notice of motion

Mr. Peterson ..... 911

### Canada National Marine Conservation Areas Act

Bill C-10. Introduction and first reading ..... 911

Ms. Copps ..... 911

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time  
and printed) ..... 911

### Petitions

#### Human Rights

Mr. Robinson ..... 911

### Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lee ..... 911

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Supply

#### Allotted Day—Electoral Reform

Ms. McDonough ..... 911

Motion ..... 911

Ms. McDonough ..... 912

Mr. Blaikie ..... 912

Ms. McDonough ..... 912

Mr. Shepherd ..... 913

Ms. McDonough ..... 913

Mr. Bryden ..... 913

Ms. McDonough ..... 913

Mr. Nystrom ..... 914

Amendment ..... 915

Mr. Blaikie ..... 915

Mr. Nystrom ..... 916

Mr. Shepherd ..... 916

Mr. Nystrom ..... 916

Mr. Boudria ..... 917

Mr. Nystrom ..... 919

Mr. Boudria ..... 920

Mr. Szabo ..... 920

Mr. Boudria ..... 920

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 921

Mr. Szabo ..... 921

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 921

Mr. Nystrom ..... 922

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 922

Mr. Nystrom ..... 924

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 924

Mr. Bryden ..... 924

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 924

Mr. Nystrom ..... 925

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 925

Mr. Szabo ..... 925

Mr. White (North Vancouver) ..... 926

Mr. Bergeron ..... 926

Mrs. Hinton ..... 929

Mr. Bergeron ..... 929

Mr. Nystrom ..... 929

Mr. Bergeron ..... 930

Mrs. Wayne ..... 930

Mr. Bryden ..... 930

Mrs. Wayne ..... 930

Mr. Nystrom ..... 932

Mr. Bryden ..... 932

Mr. Nystrom ..... 932

Mrs. Wayne ..... 932

Mr. Bryden ..... 932

Mrs. Wayne ..... 932

Mr. MacKay ..... 932

Mr. Bryden ..... 933

Mr. MacKay ..... 933

Mr. Bailey ..... 934

Mr. MacKay ..... 934

Mr. Lebel ..... 935

Mr. MacKay ..... 935

Mr. Blaikie ..... 935

Mr. Stoffer ..... 936

Mr. Blaikie ..... 937

Ms. McDonough ..... 937

Mr. Blaikie ..... 937

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis ..... 938

Mr. Assadourian ..... 939

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis ..... 939

Mr. Speller ..... 939

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis ..... 940

Mr. Bryden ..... 940

Mr. Reid ..... 943

Mr. Bryden ..... 943

Mr. Nystrom ..... 944

Mr. Bryden ..... 944

Mr. Schmidt ..... 944

Mr. Bryden ..... 945

Mr. Reid ..... 945

Mr. Assadourian ..... 947

Mr. Reid ..... 947

Mr. Nystrom ..... 947

Mr. Reid ..... 947

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Foreign Affairs

Ms. Beaumier ..... 947

### Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Mr. Spencer ..... 948

### Paul Dempsey

Mr. O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) ..... 948

### Credit Valley Hospital

Mr. Mahoney ..... 948

### Canadian Women in Communications

Ms. Bulte ..... 948

### Eduardo Sebrango Rodriguez

Mr. Reynolds ..... 949

### Water Contamination

Mr. Fournier ..... 949

<b>Agriculture</b>	
Mr. Jackson .....	949
<b>Sophie Zeber</b>	
Ms. Sgro .....	949
<b>Veterans</b>	
Mr. Bailey .....	950
<b>Lorie Kane</b>	
Mr. Murphy .....	950
<b>Employment Insurance</b>	
Ms. Wasylycia-Leis .....	950
<b>Heating Cost Rebates</b>	
Mr. Guimond .....	950
<b>MasterWorks</b>	
Ms. Bennett .....	951
<b>National Defence</b>	
Mrs. Wayne .....	951

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

<b>The Economy</b>	
Mr. Day .....	951
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) .....	951
Mr. Day .....	951
Mr. Day .....	951
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) .....	952
Mr. Day .....	952
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) .....	952
Mr. Kenney .....	952
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) .....	952
Mr. Kenney .....	952
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) .....	952
<b>Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Mr. Duceppe .....	952
Mr. Pettigrew .....	953
Mr. Duceppe .....	953
Mr. Pettigrew .....	953
Mr. Gauthier .....	953
Mr. Pettigrew .....	953
Mr. Gauthier .....	953
Mr. Pettigrew .....	953
<b>Trade</b>	
Ms. McDonough .....	953
Mr. Chrétien .....	954
Ms. McDonough .....	954
Mr. Chrétien .....	954
<b>Business Development Bank</b>	
Mr. Clark .....	954
Mr. Tobin .....	954
Mr. Clark .....	954
Mr. Tobin .....	954
<b>The Prime Minister</b>	
Miss Grey .....	954
Mr. Tobin .....	954
Miss Grey .....	954
Miss Grey .....	955
Mr. Tobin .....	955

<b>Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Mr. Paquette .....	955
Mr. Pettigrew .....	955
Mr. Paquette .....	955
Mr. Pettigrew .....	955
<b>National Defence</b>	
Mr. Anders .....	955
Mr. Eggleton .....	955
Mr. Anders .....	955
Mr. Eggleton .....	956
<b>International Trade</b>	
Mr. Marceau .....	956
Mr. Pettigrew .....	956
Mr. Marceau .....	956
Mr. Pettigrew .....	956
Mr. Pettigrew .....	956
<b>National Defence</b>	
Mr. Goldring .....	956
Mr. Eggleton .....	956
Mr. Anders .....	956
Mr. Eggleton .....	956
Mr. Goldring .....	956
Mr. Eggleton .....	956
<b>Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Mr. Bélanger .....	957
Mr. Pettigrew .....	957
<b>Trade</b>	
Mr. Robinson .....	957
Mr. Pettigrew .....	957
Mr. Robinson .....	957
Mr. Pettigrew .....	957
<b>Business Development Bank</b>	
Mr. MacKay .....	957
Mr. Tobin .....	957
Mr. Clark .....	957
Mr. Tobin .....	958
<b>Privacy Commissioner</b>	
Mr. Breitzkreuz .....	958
Ms. McLellan .....	958
Mr. Breitzkreuz .....	958
Ms. McLellan .....	958
<b>Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Ms. Lalonde .....	958
Mr. Pettigrew .....	958
Ms. Lalonde .....	958
Mr. Pettigrew .....	959
<b>Coast Guard</b>	
Mr. Lunney .....	959
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	959
Mr. Duncan .....	959
Mr. Dhaliwal .....	959
<b>Automobile Industry</b>	
Mr. Assadourian .....	959
Mr. Tobin .....	959
<b>The Environment</b>	
Mr. Merrifield .....	959
Mr. Goodale .....	960
Mr. Merrifield .....	960

Mr. Goodale .....	960
<b>Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Ms. St-Hilaire .....	960
Mr. Pettigrew .....	960
Mr. MacKay .....	960

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Supply

#### Allotted Day—Electoral Reform

Motion .....	960
Mr. Mahoney .....	960
Mr. Mahoney .....	962
Mr. Reid .....	962
Mr. Mahoney .....	962
Ms. Bulte .....	962
Mr. Moore .....	964
Ms. Bulte .....	964
Mr. Guimond .....	965
Mr. Harvey .....	967
Mr. Guimond .....	968
Mr. Marcil .....	968
Mr. Kenney .....	970
Mr. Marcil .....	971
Mr. Bigras .....	971
Mr. Marcil .....	971
Mrs. Ablonczy .....	972
Mr. Nystrom .....	974
Mrs. Ablonczy .....	974
Mr. Harvard .....	974
Mrs. Ablonczy .....	975
Mr. Szabo .....	975
Mr. Reid .....	977
Mr. Szabo .....	977
Mr. Nystrom .....	977
Mr. Szabo .....	977
Mr. Myers .....	978
Mr. Moore .....	978
Mr. Myers .....	979
Mr. Strahl .....	979
Mr. Myers .....	979
Mr. Nystrom .....	979
Mr. Kenney .....	979

Mr. Myers .....	980
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre) .....	980
<b>Allotted Day—Free Trade Area of the Americas</b>	
Motion .....	981
Ms. Catterall .....	981
(Amendment negatived) .....	981
Motion negatived .....	982

### Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development

#### Technology Act

Bill C-4. Second reading .....	983
Ms. Catterall .....	983
Mr. Reynolds .....	983
Mr. Bergeron .....	983
Mr. Godin .....	983
Mr. Borotsik .....	983
Motion agreed to .....	984
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee) ...	984

### Ways and Means

#### Excise Tax Act

Motion for concurrence .....	984
Mr. Boudria .....	984
(Motion agreed to) .....	984

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Canadian Sikhs

Mr. Blaikie .....	984
Motion .....	985
Ms. Bulte .....	985
Mr. Grewal .....	987
Ms. Dalphond-Guiral .....	988
Mr. MacKay .....	989
Ms. Wasylcia-Leis .....	990
Mr. Blaikie .....	991
Mr. Grewal .....	991

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

### Foreign Affairs

Mr. Casey .....	991
Mr. Charbonneau .....	992

### Health

Ms. Wasylcia-Leis .....	992
Mr. Charbonneau .....	993

**MAIL  POSTE**

Canada Post Corporation/Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

**Lettermail**

**Poste – lettre**

**03159442**

**Ottawa**

*If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:*

Canadian Government Publishing,  
45 Sacré–Coeur Boulevard,  
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

*En cas de non–livraison,*

*retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à:*

Les Éditions du gouvernement du Canada,  
45 boulevard Sacré–Coeur,  
Hull, Québec, Canada, K1A 0S9

**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:**

**Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique «Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire» à l'adresse suivante :**  
**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Additional copies may be obtained from Canadian Government Publishing, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions du gouvernement du Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9**

**On peut obtenir la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Les Éditions du gouvernement du Canada, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0S9**