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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, May 2, 2001

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 2, 2001

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the youth of Canada are our future and must be given every opportunity to reach their potential.

Nunavut possesses a fast growing population and a very young population, so making sure our children and youth are well taken care of is a high priority. In partnership with the Government of Canada, the new territory is aiming to do just that.

Nunavut aboriginal human resource development agreement holders are committed to the development of a well functioning, comprehensive core of child care services in Nunavut.

The child care forum held in Iqaluit in September 2000 was attended by child care workers from all over Nunavut and was very productive. Nunavut AHRDA holders are currently entering the implementation phase of the Nunavut child care planning project and I extend to them wishes for every success.

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HIGHWAYS

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, with summer approaching Canadians are

on the move again. This year they will notice not only the horrendous price of gas compared to the same time last year but the condition of their highways.

The highway infrastructure in the country is falling apart. The present government has a pitiful record on the upkeep of Canada's roads. Last year in British Columbia the government collected some \$750 million in gasoline excise taxes yet spent only \$400,000.

Recently \$60 million was announced for highway improvements in British Columbia, a pittance that ignores the real problems we are facing.

For example, in my neighbourhood a residential street serves as a major highway connecting the Fraser Surrey docks and other major transportation hubs and routes, yet there is no federal money to alleviate the problem. Over 2,000 trucks a day pass through a residential neighbourhood, trucks carrying Lord knows what, yet the Liberal government continues to collect our money and ignore the problem.

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[Translation]

CANADA'S FISCAL POLICY

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 10, the Canadian Minister of Finance took part in the inauguration of a fine initiative, the launch of a multimedia CD-ROM. It is on Canada's fiscal policy and was created by two members of the Institute of Applied Economics at l'École des Hautes Études Commerciales.

Essentially, its purpose is to present economics not as a disembodied science but a management and decision making problem.

• (1405)

This CD-ROM constitutes a top notch teaching tool providing access to a broad range of information to aid in understanding Canada's fiscal policy.

My congratulations to the creators of this project, which I hope will set an example for other disciplines in the educational field.

I extend congratulations to the École des Hautes Études Commerciales.

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[English]

E-GOVERNMENT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the incorporation of information and communications technologies into the operation of government is believed by many to be the greatest challenge facing democratic institutions during the next decade.

Every industrialized democracy around the world has set aggressive deadlines for the completion of their transition to e-government. All are struggling, in large part due to the unanticipated consequences of embracing a technology that changes everything.

There are huge benefits to be realized by those countries that are able to overcome these challenges. I am pleased to point out that in a recent international study of progress to date, Canada has been recognized as first in the world.

Our successes are built upon the efforts of literally thousands of public servants at all three levels of government throughout Canada, public servants who get it and who are not afraid to accept the challenge and search for the value that exists in the proper use of these new tools.

At the same time change needs a champion. In that regard, I wish to congratulate the President of the Treasury Board and her staff for their leadership in this important initiative.

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CURLING

Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I recognize the achievements of Brad Gushue, Mark Nichols, Brent Hamilton, Mike Adam, Jamie Korab and coach Jeff Thomas, the Canadian junior men's curling champions who went on to win the world junior men's curling championship in Ogden, Utah, on March 25.

Mark and Mike are from my Labrador riding. They will be showing their teammates a warm Labrador welcome on their victory tour this week. I congratulate them on a fine performance and extend to them my best wishes on behalf of all Labradorians.

Another Labrador west foursome, Keith Ryan, Garry Pinsent, Mike Ryan and Dennis Langdon, represented Newfoundland and Labrador at this year's senior men's brier.

Labrador west and the Carol Curling Club have always been hot spots for cool winter sports. With spirit and determination, our teams have overcome the distance and expense involved in competing at provincial, national and international levels.

On behalf of all members, I extend my congratulations to the boys for their world class curling achievements.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the month of May usually means tulip season in Ottawa, but today we are wearing carnations to recognize Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month.

MS is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults today. Each day three more Canadians are diagnosed with this unpredictable and often debilitating disease.

The causes of MS are still not known but research is getting closer to finding some answers. For those who suffer with MS, treatments are available to modify the course of the disease and promising new therapies are being developed.

The MS Society of Canada is in the middle of its spring fundraising campaign and across the country thousands of Canadians will be participating in MS carnation campaigns as well as walks for MS.

I encourage members of parliament and all Canadians to participate and to give generously to this important cause, because together we can find the answer.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 7 to 13 marks the celebration of National Nursing Week 2001. This year's theme, "Nurses, Champions for Health", is significant on two fronts.

[English]

The nurses of Canada truly have acted as champions, standing by, supporting and leading Canadians in a collective effort to maintain and improve health.

Their efforts in a very difficult situation have not gone unnoticed. Once again the people of Canada have said that they place more of their trust in nurses than in any other group of professionals.

Just as important as speaking up for patients, nurses have consistently voiced their concerns about the health of our cherished health care system.

During times of significant restructuring and upheaval, nurses in Canada have stood by both patients and the system. They have spoken loudly in defence of the system, especially in support of its public funding. This is at a time when the very same system appears to be extracting a cost from their own health and well-being.

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[Translation]

I invite my colleagues to join me in acknowledging National Nursing Week 2001 and saying a warm thank you to the nurses of Canada, our champions for health.

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CENTRE COMMUNAUTAIRE DE BEAUPORT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, community activity in a neighbourhood or a town speaks most clearly of the dynamism of its people and of their attachment to their community.

In my riding, the Centre communautaire de Beauport, a non-profit corporation, has set itself the task of providing educational, recreational, cultural and sports leadership in order to encourage, support and promote community recreation.

● (1410)

The originality and diversity of the activities organized by an experienced team of employees and over 275 volunteers mean that nearly 15,000 people of all ages can enjoy a whole range of quality activities.

On the occasion of the International Year of Volunteers, I would like to praise the exceptional work done by the employees of the Beauport community centre who, with many volunteers, contribute to the welfare and quality of life of our society.

Without their contribution, many services would stop existing. Their time, energy and generosity does them great credit.

Quebec needs men and women like them.

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MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Association of Yukon Communities and the FCM will be holding their general meetings this month.

I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the municipal orders of government in Canada.

[English]

I would like to celebrate the great Yukon municipalities of Dawson City, Teslin, Faro, Carmacks, Haines Junction, Mayo, Watson Lake and Whitehorse.

As all of us in parliament work to solve Canada's problems, we should remember that the municipal order of government is the closest to the people and the resources. It has been and will continue to be an valuable partner with us in creating solutions for improving our nation.

When municipalities were created over 100 years ago, the prescription for their governments was paternalistic and stilted.

Today I continue to support their efforts to achieve the autonomy and flexibility they need to exercise the powers within their jurisdiction in our rapidly changing modern world.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, spring has arrived and farmers are in the fields. As always they are looking ahead with anticipation. It seems wheat prices might even rise this spring, but that is immaterial because farmers' grain cannot be marketed.

Durum growers are only allowed to deliver 60% of last year's production and are prohibited from selling the remaining 40% elsewhere. During one of the worst farm income crises ever in the grain industry, the Canadian Wheat Board is forcing farmers to survive on only 60% of their income.

Voluntary Canadian Wheat Board participation would allow farmers to find markets and to process their own grain. Current buyback requirements inhibit producers from selling or processing their own wheat. Farmers must be allowed to find buyers for their grain, especially when the wheat board cannot sell it.

When will the government make the Canadian Wheat Board voluntary so that farmers can sell and process what they grow?

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[Translation]

ASSOCIATION POUR L'INTÉGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE DE L'OUTAOUAIS

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 5, I had the opportunity to attend a benefit dinner organized by the Association pour l'intégration communautaire de l'Outaouais.

I am very pleased to pay tribute today to the volunteer work done since 1957 by members of this association, and to highlight the efforts of the men and women who daily face challenges to become autonomous.

Founded by a group of parents who wanted to improve the quality of life of their intellectually disabled children, the association has had the same goal for the past 44 years: to advance the cause of intellectual disabilities.

Through the many services made available to persons with intellectual disabilities and their families, the Association pour l'intégration communautaire de l'Outaouais makes it possible for them to become full members of our community.

Long live this association, its president, Lucie Charron, and its 200 volunteers and 28 employees.

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[English]

PARA TRANSPO

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Ottawa 10,000 people with mobility problems rely on Para Transpo to get to work, to school and to see their friends, families and doctors. These Canadians are being held captive in a labour dispute, a dispute caused by privatization.

The drivers for Para Transpo are asking to be treated the same as OC Transpo workers, but the municipality has privatized this essential service and the private company is not treating the workers fairly. It is unacceptable for essential services like Para Transpo to be hived off to the private sector as somehow less important.

Canadians with disabilities should not be at the back of the bus when it comes to transit, especially in a federally regulated transit system like the one in Ottawa.

I call for the federal Minister of Labour to bring in binding arbitration in this dispute. I also call on all MPs from Ottawa to pressure their municipal colleagues to put Para Transpo back in the public sector.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a letter published in yesterday's *La Presse*, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that even if Quebec were a nation in the French sense of the word, it was not necessary to recognize it formally in the Canadian constitution. He went on to add that the Canadian constitution did not even recognize the Canadian nation.

How can the minister not realize that the very existence of a constitution presupposed the existence of a Canadian nation in the eyes and minds of those who wrote it?

If we are to follow his logic, why does the federal government make such a point of calling Ottawa its national capital? Similarly, what are we to make of the holding of a national summit on sport? Should we have doubts about the contents of the National Archives of Canada or of the National Library? What is performed at the National Arts Centre? What is studied at the National Research Council? Worse yet, what is the role of the Department of National Defence?

If the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs wants to be consistent, what is he waiting for to ask his colleagues to stop referring to all—

The Speaker: The hon. member for York West.

* * *

[English]

DIABETES

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that the federal government's diabetes strategy is progressing well in our commitment to fight diabetes in Canada.

Initiatives are happening throughout Canada, such as the recent announcement by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice for regional and national funding in Alberta of close to \$12 million. Alberta is part of the national diabetes surveillance system which will yield national statistics and trends in diabetes in Canada. This money also goes toward education and awareness programs to help citizens learn about preventing diabetes and its complications and programs to promote healthy eating and active living.

I say to my friend, Gerry Tuzi, and thousands of others suffering from diabetes, that our government's commitment is to reach our goal of reducing the burden of diabetes and its complications.

* * *

SIERRA CLUB

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, Elizabeth May, director of the Sierra Club of Canada, is on a hunger strike. Her message is clear: Families residing in Whitney Pier are in danger and need to be relocated.

According to a private sector study released just last week, area soil and water are heavily contaminated and the health and well-being of some of the community residents are at serious risk.

Families residing on Frederick Street, Curry's Lane, Laurier Street and Tupper Street are routinely exposed to approximately 30 carcinogens, well above Health Canada's prescribed limits, including arsenic levels 70 times greater than Health Canada says is acceptable.

Residents in Sydney already experience cancer rates higher than the national average. There is no reason that Health Canada cannot address this issue immediately.

The federal government has a moral and financial obligation to engage and be a partner in the solution. Liberal Nova Scotia MPs have been shamelessly silent in addressing this issue. We call on the government to meet with the residents of this area to ensure that we end the hunger strike of Elizabeth May.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Order please. Everyone will want to hear the lead question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, I cannot say it often of the Liberals but today I can. Can you not just feel the love?

It was just two days ago that we heard that Canadians have to rely on U.S. agencies for health warnings related to prescription drugs. The minister gave the impression yesterday that everything was fine, but just yesterday Michael Decter, of the Canadian Institute for Health Information, said “This is a sad turn of events. We’re going to a second best method of having physicians informed by another country’s agency”.

We ask the question again. How could this have happened? As the auditor general reflected on finance matters with his question, we now ask: Who was minding the store when this health problem developed?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, this is an odd line of inquiry from a leader and a party that during the election campaign questioned the need for Health Canada at all.

During the last year the hon. Leader of the Opposition was quoted as saying “I have to ask why we need to spend \$1.2 billion and have a staff of over 3,000 in a federal department of health that does not administer a single hospital, pay a single nurse or fund a single surgical procedure”. That was his position then. I am glad to see the Leader of the Opposition understands the need for a strong Health Canada.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Once again, Mr. Speaker, no response.

During a different campaign, the 1995 referendum campaign in Quebec to be precise, the Government of Canada told Quebecers that one of the advantages to remaining in Canada was the protection offered by Health Canada’s examination and approval of prescription drugs.

Now that we know that no such protection exists, what can the minister tell Quebecers and all Canadians about the work done by Health Canada?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, the hon. member’s questions derive in large part from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. Today the editor of that journal, Dr. John Hoey, was quoted as saying:

Health Canada. . .does a remarkable job in getting warnings out. In fact Health Canada issued warnings, or had some data on this particular drug perhaps even in advance of the FDA in the U.S.

He went on to say:

In the past couple of days what we’ve done has been a little bit misinterpreted as a criticism of Health Canada, which it isn’t.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister has quoted the editor of that journal. I hope he was not trying to blame the media for his problems.

Yesterday the Minister of Health said that Health Canada had some things in place and that it would put up some warnings on the website. I do not know if he is aware of this but a majority of Canadians still do not enjoy Internet service and certainly most seniors do not. What are those seniors supposed to do? They do not have a website to go to. They are worried about this. What is the minister’s proposal there? Why is he leaving them without the proper warning?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if this keeps up we will need to put health warnings on the Leader of the Opposition.

As to access to information by consumers, naturally, whether they are seniors or others, we are talking about prescription drugs. The access to information is in the hands of the physicians who are doing the prescribing and in the hands of the pharmacists. That is the important thing.

The bottom line is that Health Canada wants to make sure Canadians have access to safe drugs and as much information as they or their doctors need, which has been the focus of our work. According to the Canadian Medical Association, we are doing a pretty darn good job.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, specifically, if 15 year old Vanessa Young had lived in the U.S. she and her doctor would have known two things: first, she should not have taken the drug at all because she was under 16; and second, that this drug could cause arrhythmia and possibly death.

Just exactly why is it that Canada’s health warnings are inferior to those in the U.S.?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member would join with me in saying that nothing said in this partisan or political discussion in the House today detracts from a moment from the tragic loss of a 15 year old child in Ontario. Our hearts are with her family.

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Let us focus on making sure that we have the most effective and safest health system in the world.

Coming to this particular question, we accepted every recommendation made by the jury in the Vanessa Young case. We will work toward making the health care system and the warning system safer and even better. We are starting from a pretty good base. Health Canada does do a good job, as the CMA pointed out, and we will try to make it better.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, when I practised medicine I trusted Health Canada to provide me with the best warnings, as did my colleagues and my patients. Does the minister know that those warnings are inferior to those in the U.S.? The sad thing is that Vanessa Young's family trusted those warnings as well.

Where is the ministerial responsibility on this failure?

• (1425)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was right to trust the Health Canada warnings because Health Canada does a very good job. There is room for improvement, as there is in any system, and we are determined to make sure we do even better.

It is very refreshing to hear the opposition party express such confidence in the role and the need for Health Canada. That party's critic for health, the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, said in August 2000, "If I were minister of health, I would have my department people try to convince me why we are in the business of health at all". I think they now know why and I am glad of it.

* * *

[Translation]

ANTIMISSILE SHIELD

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when Lloyd Axworthy was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada was far more vocal in its criticism of the planned U.S. missile defence shield.

In March 2000, Minister Axworthy stated that the system being proposed by the U.S. was not the best defence against nuclear proliferation. Today, the government is more accommodating.

How can the Prime Minister explain his government's change of attitude toward the United States' proposed national missile defence system?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always made it clear that we had questions on this.

What President Bush did yesterday was to make a statement of his intent to continue with the project initiated by President Clinton.

At that time, we had some questions, and today we still do. That is why President Bush has assured us that an envoy will meet with us to discuss his plan. We will share our observations with him because we feel this is a very serious situation. We are going to give it all the attention it requires before reaching a final decision.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the questions the Prime Minister needs to keep in mind is the one on the impact of such a project on current treaties.

Yesterday President Bush described the Antiballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, which has contributed greatly to reigning in nuclear escalation, as outmoded.

Does the Prime Minister also feel this treaty is out of date, and that from now on the arms race needs to be given precedence over treaty diplomacy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to hold a dialogue with the United States on their defence plan, but they have also said they want to hold discussions with our European allies in NATO, with Russia and with China.

There will, therefore, be dialogue of course. We feel that the system of balances already in place was sufficient. If the Americans want a better one, we will have a look at it.

It is my belief, however, that the balance is the result of treaties signed several decades ago, which are still valid. If they have something better in mind, we are prepared to look at the potential improvements.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when Lloyd Axworthy was Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada's foreign policy was more rigorous. Today, we have the unpleasant feeling that Canada's foreign policy is patterned on U.S. foreign policy.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs recognize that, by supporting the U.S. space shield project, there is a serious risk that he will also support a renewed arms race?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not give such support, but I want to point out, because I think the hon. member will agree, that the summit held two weeks ago in Quebec City was a true success for our foreign policy.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, President Bush said that he would send envoys to explain his project to his allies. Will the Prime Minister pledge that, contrary to what he did with the FTAA, once he has met that envoy he will hold a debate and a vote in the House on the position that Canada ought to take on this issue?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as regards the FTAA, a debate took place in the House and all members were able to state their views before the meeting in Quebec City. This is the beginning of a negotiation process that

will last four years. It will take several years before the final documents are produced.

The hon. member may well no longer be here in four years, but many of us on this side will still be.

* * *

• (1430)

ARMS RACE

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the United States is leading us into an arms race.

Before making his announcement yesterday afternoon, President Bush spoke on the telephone with the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister tell us what commitments he made on behalf of Canadians concerning star wars II during this conversation with President Bush?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the answer is none.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has again indicated that Canada has taken no position on Star Wars II. He knows that Lloyd Axworthy has called for extensive consultation on Star Wars II. The Prime Minister will also recall that he and Mr. Axworthy served together on a parliamentary committee that travelled across the country to invite public input on Canada's response to Star Wars I.

Canadians want to know if the Prime Minister is open to similar consultations this time. He has already stated this afternoon that he is committed to a dialogue with the U.S. Is he open to a dialogue with Canadians on the latest Star Wars proposal?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the members of the House who have an interest in this subject to look into it, debate it and report to the government. I do not think we will be confronted with a decision very rapidly.

Members of any committee of this House can consult with the Canadian public, prepare reports and give the House of Commons and the Canadian public their views. The government of course will consider these views before it decides.

* * *

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, this question is about the Duhaime loan application.

Yvon Duhaime confirmed that he owed \$154,160. He confirmed that about one-quarter of that was owed to his father-in-law. He will not reveal to whom the other \$107,000 was owed. The *National Post* has one version of that document. The Business

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Development Bank claims to have another version. One of them is forged.

Will the Prime Minister guarantee that both versions will be examined equally to determine which is the forgery, and that the investigation will reveal the names of every entity to which money was owed?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a letter in today's *Ottawa Citizen* which says:

I see a mountain of smoke, fanned by his political adversaries, but no flames. Nor any evidence of wrongdoing.

The letter is signed by Clayton Ruby, Ruby & Edwardh, Barristers, Toronto. I think that says it all.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): That says nothing at all, Mr. Speaker. It is evasion as usual.

The Business Development Bank has refused to disclose the identity of the person at the BDC who signed the request asking the RCMP to investigate the alleged forgery of the BDC loan application. I wonder if it was the same person who gave instructions to request the destruction of documents.

Will the Prime Minister table in the House the request to the RCMP to investigate the forgery, as well as any supporting documents the BDC provided to substantiate this request?

Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that same letter went on to say that to constantly be asked to prove one's innocence in a public forum was bad public policy and even worse constitutional law.

The problem for the leader of the Conservative Party is that he is a one trick pony and is upset that the Leader of the Opposition has finally managed to steal the headlines.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the immigration minister told the House that her department does not read seized mail. However her training manual goes through step by step instructions on how her officials are to input details into the national database, such as the place of birth, family members' names, and there is even a place for comments.

Would the minister explain how her officials can obtain this detailed information if they do not read the opened mail first?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat again for the member who obviously was not listening yesterday.

My department does not open mail. When customs rightly opens packages that are sent into this country and it discovers documents which it has reasonable grounds to believe are fraudulent and could be used for fraudulent purposes in Canada, it sends them to my department. My department then examines them using the latest

Oral Questions

forensic techniques, including optical scanners. However sometimes it is enough to just feel the paper to determine that it is false, fraudulent or forged.

• (1435)

That is the way it works.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, she can try to blame the customs department but it is not customs, it is the immigration department that is violating the concerns of Canadians and of the privacy commissioner.

Some items intercepted have been affidavits which have then ended up in the hands of government lawyers. The minister is indiscriminately reading mail as a form of intelligence gathering.

I will ask once again if she will explain to us how affidavits can be distributed throughout her department if they have not been read first.

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again for the member opposite that we do not read his grandmother's mail nor anyone else's mail. We do gather fraudulent documents to stop the criminals and the terrorists who want to use these documents.

Those who are concerned about stopping organized crime and terrorism and not providing a safe haven for fraudulent documents to be either imported or produced in Canada, would join with me in saying that the member's position is not in the public—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everyone admits that there are problems and that genetically modified foods have already entered the food chain.

Today, four scientists sounded the alarm and said that the public is unaware that it is consuming GMOs.

Does the minister not see this new warning as confirmation that it is urgent to act and to make the labelling of genetically modified foods mandatory?

[*English*]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the comments of the scientists who commented today. We also welcome the comments and the recommendations of the Royal Society of Canada, which the Minister of Health, the Minister of the Environment and I ap-

pointed, the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Council and all others.

I have said in the House many times that there is a process being led by many Canadian organizations, governments, government organizations and consumers to develop a system of labelling that could be used. However we know that it must be meaningful, credible and enforceable.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question was clear, but the minister keeps singing the same old tune.

Will he continue serving up his lovely speeches, or will he finally do something concrete to restore the public's confidence and take action while there is still time?

[*English*]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will continue to make the lovely speeches that the hon. member compliments me for, and I thank her for that.

We will continue the same process so we can have a system in the future, if we so desire, that is meaningful, credible and enforceable, so that Canadians can have the continued trust in the food system which they have at the present time.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, President Bush is looking to replace mid-east oil with North American oil. The Prime Minister has recently been promoting the tar sands in my riding for that purpose.

Increased tar sands production to the levels suggested by the Prime Minister would significantly increase levels of greenhouse gas emissions for Canada.

Yesterday in the House the Prime Minister stated that this government policy is to achieve our Kyoto commitments. If Alberta accepts this level of American investment to develop our tar sands, will the government also insist on the U.S. transfer credits under the Kyoto accord for our increased emissions?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has repeatedly said that it is in Canada's interest in our relationships with the United States to secure credits accruing to Canada for the clean energy exports that we send to other countries, particularly the United States, when that replaces a more carbon intensive source in that country. Obviously the search for carbon credits to Canadian advantage is very much a part of our agenda.

• (1440)

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, given the president's and the vice-president's comments recently about making energy development a higher priority than the environment, just how would the minister and the government plan to achieve the transfer of those credits to Canada?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously this will take discussion and negotiation with the United States. We believe very much that, in respect of the North American energy situation, there is an important opportunity for Canadians to pursue which can bring economic growth, jobs and technological sophistication to our country.

At the same time, we will also pursue our other parallel objectives that relate to renewable energy, alternative fuels, energy efficiency, energy conservation and sustainable development, all of which are characteristics of an intelligent society.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL AIRPORTS

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the latest trick of the federal government is to hold the sovereignists responsible for the decline of Aéroports de Montréal.

According to the Minister of Transport, ADM's problems are due to the sovereignty project.

How can the minister make such an offensive statement as that, when the problems of Aéroports de Montréal are the direct result of a series of very bad decisions by the federal government, including one that made Toronto the new gateway to Canada, which was previously Montreal's role?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly the reduction in air traffic in Montreal over the past 25 years is a consequence of the political situation.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. David Collette: That is one of the reasons, but with this government's policy on national airports, I have confidence in the future of Aéroports de Montréal and the region of Montreal.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, coming from a member from Toronto, that does not surprise me.

While we are at it, could the Minister of Transport tell us if he also ascribes to the sovereignty project the fact that the region of Montreal is the world's main producer of civilian helicopters, second only to Seattle in providing jobs in aeronautics, the third

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largest producer worldwide of biopharmaceuticals and fourth in the world in developing information technologies?

Do these successes also reflect this discomfort created by the sovereignty project?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must thank the member for promoting Montreal, thanks to the policies of this government.

I should also inform the hon. member that I am a member from Toronto, but I am a Canadian member and I speak for all Canadians.

* * *

[English]

HIGHWAYS

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. government has committed to spending more on British Columbia cross-border highway projects than the Canadian government.

Last year the federal government collected \$750 million from British Columbia fuel taxes and spent \$408,000 on B.C. highways. That works out to the grand total of one-twentieth of one per cent of revenues returned to British Columbia highways.

Why is the federal government gouging taxpayers and ignoring our highways?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that highway building in this country is the responsibility of the provincial government. It is true that the federal government has been involved by use of the spending power for about 80 years and we still are.

The hon. member should take note that the Minister of Finance in last year's budget allocated \$600 million toward highway construction, and those agreements are about to be negotiated.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the federal government collects federal fuel taxes. The provinces spend on highways what they collect in provincial fuel taxes. In 1998-99 the federal government collected over \$4.7 billion in gas taxes and spent only 4% of that across Canada on roads and highways. It is called highway robbery.

When is the government going to commit to fund a national highway strategy that meets Canada's needs and is not a national embarrassment?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ought to know that the Canadian government receives tax revenues from a multitude of sources and those revenues are then invested. They have been invested heavily in the British Columbia health care system. They have been invested heavily in the British Columbia education system. They have been

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invested heavily in research and development throughout British Columbia.

• (1445)

The federal government is working in partnership with the people of British Columbia to improve the quality of life of the people of British Columbia.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at last month's meeting of the group of 20 finance ministers there was agreement reached on what has been termed the Montreal consensus, which seeks to better integrate social as well as economic objectives around the world.

Could the Minister of Finance tell the House what further efforts are being made to advance and reinforce the Montreal consensus?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Washington consensus in place for a number of years now states that economic growth is a prerequisite to poverty reduction in the poorest of the poor countries. We agree with that, but as well we believe we must go beyond the Washington consensus.

Industrialized countries must recognize that health care, education, a quality environment, investing in the young and protecting the aged are also essential constituents if poverty reduction is to occur. That is known as the Montreal consensus.

I am pleased to say that it was endorsed yesterday at the United Nations, at the economic and social committee.

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EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. It deals with the reinstatement of the cap on equalization payments.

Recent information provided by the recipient provinces shows the reinstatement of the cap will cause them great harm. Given the fact that the Prime Minister, right before the election last fall, called for removal of the cap on equalization payments and all the provincial finance ministers now agree with that, will the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance now lift the ceiling or at least rebase it on 1999-2000 levels, which would be \$10.8 billion instead of \$10 billion?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in September, at the time of the signing of the accord with the provinces, the Prime Minister agreed to lift the cap for one year. I

am pleased to say that the government has carried through on that commitment of the Prime Minister.

The hon. member also ought to know that equalization is at an all time high. Equalization was one of the few programs that was not cut in 1995, recognizing the constitutional, social and economic responsibilities the Canadian government has to the provinces. Equalization has grown consistently ever since the government took office and it is now at an all time high.

* * *

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, long distance drivers are being pushed beyond the limit, yet the Minister of Transport is advocating a proposal that would allow truck and bus drivers to drive 14 hours a day, 84 hours a week, week after week. In the United States drivers are limited to 60 hours a week.

The minister knows that driver fatigue is one of the main causes of road crashes. Will he tell the House and millions of Canadian travellers why it is necessary to have transport drivers work limits 40% higher in Canada than in the United States?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to a recommendation from the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, which is an organization composed of all the provinces and the federal government that is responding to the trucking industry which wants a regularization of the trucking hours and an enforced rest period.

So hon. members of the House can give their views in this very difficult debate, I have asked the transport committee to study the issue on an expeditious basis. I believe the committee is about to agree to that. I would invite the hon. member to make her views known at that committee.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has repeatedly stated in the House that the Lancaster Aviation contract to sell surplus DND Challenger jets was awarded by public tender. Does the minister stand by that comment today or will he retract his statement?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have tried to get the co-operation of the hon. member to tell us what kind of information he has because we have not found anything that would in any way change the position I have taken before.

When in fact this contract was awarded to Lancaster to dispose of these aviation assets there were five bidders. There was a

competition earlier this year in which it again won the contract. The assets it sold brought value to the Canadian government with the selling price being at market value.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, the minister would know that the first contract to Lancaster was to sell spare parts. There was no mention of Challenger aircraft or of helicopters.

• (1450)

The Challenger contract was awarded “as a special contract without going to tender”. Will the minister now admit that he was wrong and will he explain why two contracts worth \$80 million were awarded without going to public tender?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contract that was awarded in 1997 provided for the disposal of surplus aviation assets by Lancaster, the successful competitor.

There was also a provision for a special project sale identified as being unique project sales which may include high dollar value items. On that basis the sale of the twin Huey helicopters and the Challengers met the conditions of the contract.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs stonewalls serious concerns about the situation in Zimbabwe, attacks on members of the judiciary, business leaders and the recent threat against aid donor countries continue to escalate.

Will the minister responsible for CIDA temporarily suspend all Canadian aid to Zimbabwe until democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights are restored?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what stonewalling the hon. member is talking about. He knows that we put out a statement several months ago about both the attacks on the judiciary as well as on the media.

He knows of the interventions that were made at the Commonwealth ministerial action group in London a number of weeks ago. He knows of the concerns that are being expressed at that level. If he thinks that is stonewalling then we will need to have a little discussion about exactly what that means.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what I mean is quite simple. Will he stand today and confirm that he will temporarily stop aid to Zimbabwe until democracy and rule of law are reinstated there? Will he do that? That is the question.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that any CIDA assistance to Zimbabwe goes

directly to assist individual people, not to the government of Zimbabwe.

If the hon. member thinks that we should increase the hardship being faced by many people in that poor country, we do not agree with him.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the World Bank is urging the international community to increase its aid to fight poverty in the world, Canada is constantly reducing the percentage of its GDP that is allocated to international assistance.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Is it not time to invest in the fight against world poverty, instead of investing in a new arms race?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech, we indicated our intention to increase our contribution to help poor countries. We are already doing a lot through CIDA's participation and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister talked about increasing Canadian aid by 7%.

This is totally inadequate, given that Canadian aid would in fact only increase from 0.25% to 0.27% of its GDP. At that rate, it will take Canada 35 years to achieve its objective of 0.7%.

Will Canada finally increase its international assistance by, among other things, supporting the project of Mexico's president to create a solidarity fund of the Americas?

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is committed to helping developing countries, and domestic development is the reason why our economy is so strong.

When it comes to supporting the development of other countries, we are involved and we are continually increasing the budgets spent abroad.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Natural Resources dismissed the plight of the laid off workers at Chalk River.

Will the Prime Minister fulfil the campaign promise by funding the Canadian neutron facility?

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• (1455)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the former member of parliament for that constituency, Mr. Clouthier, was arguing very strenuously for government support for the Chalk River facility, I never heard one peep, not one chirp, not one jot or scintilla of advice from the Reform Party or the Alliance Party in favour of that project. I welcome its newfound interest in the last three weeks.

Ms. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Natural Resources had read his mail, he would have seen the letters on this issue. Obviously a deal in principle with a government which has no principles is no deal.

The technology to be developed by the Canadian neutron facility holds the solution to tomorrow's energy crisis, the science for innovative new materials and research for medical breakthroughs. Why is cabinet holding up funding for the Canadian neutron facility when there is no political resistance?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is in the process of considering a number of major science initiatives across the country.

They are not initiatives that are scribbled down on the back of an envelope or that are paid for with a dollar or two out of petty cash. These are major projects. They need to fit within the entire innovation agenda of the Government of Canada. They cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and the government is determined to make the right decisions based on sound science, due diligence and fiscal responsibility.

* * *

BILL C-15

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am asking this question because my constituents in Yukon have an interest in the wording of Bill C-15. Canadians agree that cruelty to animals should be prohibited in society. While we must not put at risk the current legal practices of fishing and hunting, we must stop the worst cases of cruelty and abuse.

Could the Minister of Justice reassure Canadians that the wording of Bill C-15 will be clear and precise enough to target the true abuse of animals?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's desire to bring clarity to this important point, one of considerable concern to a great many Canadians.

I want to underscore for the House that the animal cruelty provisions in Bill C-15 in no way outlaw current lawful practices such as farming, sport fishing or hunting. The proposed law targets those who wilfully abuse or harm animals.

These provisions are part of the government's ongoing efforts to modernize the criminal code for the 21st century and to reflect the values of Canadians.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, funding the Canadian neutron facility will not happen without a champion at the cabinet table. Clearly the Minister of Natural Resources is not up to the task.

Will the Minister of Industry commit today in his role as overseer of the National Research Council to champion the Canadian neutron facility?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facilities at Chalk River perform a number of important functions in the Canadian innovation system. They are obviously important in terms of Canada's strong reputation in the field of nuclear science. They perform functions in relation to other dimensions of science that are also important.

Those facilities are in need of refurbishment and renewal for the future. We have been considering the various options that are available to us to accomplish that important objective for the future. We will make a decision in due course based upon sound science and fiscal responsibility.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, each day this decision is delayed endangers our position as world leaders in materials research and drives away the top scientists who are capable of doing this research.

Years ago the Minister of Industry championed the tiny turbot. This facility is a lot bigger and a lot more important than a fish. Will he commit today to championing this facility and getting cabinet approval by next week?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the hon. gentleman's demeaning of the Canadian fishery. Nor would I agree with the obvious attempt embedded in his question to pit one part of the country against another part of the country, one type of science against another type of science.

• (1500)

Canada is determined to be one of the most innovative nations on the face of the earth. We have indicated that we intend to double over this coming decade our investment in research and develop-

ment. Canada will be among the leading nations on the face of the earth in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and we will make the appropriate decisions.

* * *

[Translation]

CHEESE PRODUCTION

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade said last week that the issue of permits to import cheese over and above negotiated quotas was justified by demand or by a lack.

However, the volume of domestic cheese production easily meets demand without the need to import.

How does the minister explain the government's permitting the importation of cheese as a residue or in sticks, when local producers are struggling with surpluses and the industry will have to assume the loss of thousands of jobs?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I answered this question last week. We can return to it.

All discussions in connection with this decision involved the industry. They are often at the request of certain consumers needing specific products. We look very carefully at these requests, because, obviously, we are very concerned about the interests of our own cheese producers.

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[English]

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

In my riding of Cambridge and in other parts of Canada rental vacancy rates are at an all time low. What is being done to help provide more affordable rental housing for Canadians, particularly low income Canadians?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, in the Speech from the Throne we committed to stimulate construction of affordable rental housing.

My officials have been talking with the officials in the provinces. In the next few weeks I will be discussing this with my counterparts in the provinces. We hope very soon to have a joint federal-provincial program of affordable rental housing so that Canadians can take advantage of such a program.

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[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I spoke to the government House leader, who told me that there was no mechanism for tabling documents, other than through a minister. I pointed out that a document could be tabled if there were unanimous consent.

For the fourth time, at the express request of the Deputy Prime Minister, I would like to table the lease between the Auberge Grand-Mère and the Grand-Mère golf club, if, naturally, I obtain the unanimous consent of this House.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, so all members understand, the Deputy Prime Minister asked the member to make his document public.

To my knowledge and that of others, especially those who prepare *Hansard*, he never said it should be tabled in this House. And the answer is no.

The Speaker: Obviously, there is no unanimous consent on this point.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take a few moments to explain the government's latest move forward in meeting our commitments in the Speech from the Throne.

• (1505)

In the Speech from the Throne, the government pledged to tackle the most pressing problems facing aboriginal people. We made a firm commitment to support first nations initiatives, and that means strengthening their communities.

Less than 90 days later, we are making a significant step toward meeting that commitment. As I announced at Siksika on Monday,

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we are moving forward with first nations on the governance initiative. The first phase has begun already, the consultation phase.

In my visits to more than 100 first nations communities over the past year, people have told me repeatedly what they consider are their top priorities to strengthen how their communities are run. The people had a lot to say. They talked about women's rights, they talked about voting rights and they talked about practices that connect band members to their own governments.

I have also heard that if we are going to make this work, band governments and even other first nations agencies have to be strengthened. First nations needs stronger tools to govern. They need clear legal powers and they need stability and long term sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I wanted to speak to the House for a few moments this afternoon is that it is just as important for the House to understand what this initiative will not contain.

Let me be clear. It is not to alter the inherent right to self-government. It is not to affect the federal government's treaty relationship with first nations nor first nations treaty rights. It will not address band status and membership entitlements or aboriginal rights and title. Nor will the powers of first nations in relation to lands and resources be the focus of attention. Finally, it is not a replacement for the Indian Act.

We will continue our work, as we have in the past, in each of these areas. This initiative is about addressing the governance issues facing first nations communities, issues the 130 year old Indian Act did not envision.

This initiative will build an interim step toward self-government. It will provide the authority for first nations to have control over their day to day administration and management.

As we move toward self-government, the question we all must ask ourselves is this: will the status quo be acceptable until self-government for all first nations is achieved? I suggest the answer to that question is no.

How do we build that interim step? I can tell the House what I have been told by first nations. We do it in consultation with first nations. Parliament will provide the vehicle for change, but first nations citizens will provide the content.

In the coming months the government will consult with first nations like never before. Within the next few weeks we will begin holding community level consultations across the country to assess the scope, options and interests to be dealt with in the legislation. These consultations will take place during the spring and summer of this year, with the active participation of representatives from first nations and aboriginal organizations, from the leadership and

the communities. Results from these consultations will lead into the proposed legislation.

As we also have other innovative new ways to consult more thoroughly with first nations people and their leadership, I want to spend a couple of minutes talking about them, because these tools are part of a unique and different process that the department and the minister would like to use to consult with first nations.

For the first time we will extensively use videos, TV and print media to raise awareness of what is being proposed. We have set up a 1-800 line with the Bella Bella call centre at the Heiltsuk First Nation in British Columbia to hear what individual band members have to say.

However, I am most excited about communicating through our website. For the first time people will be able to access information on the web, write their comments via e-mail or chat with first nations members from across the country to exchange ideas and put forward suggestions.

• (1510)

The government will consult with first nations to consider changes to the Indian Act, which has not been changed significantly since 1867. I hope that my opposition colleagues will not take issue with this change to one of Canada's oldest pieces of legislation, which they may be attached to. There may be a temptation to focus on the obstacles and challenges, but I would warn the opposition that is not the point.

Too often some of the opposition in the House has focused the blame on the failures of a few instead of looking for inspiration to the successes found among many first nations. This consultation process will look for what works and build on those successes. I hope the opposition will change its approach and credit those successes.

With this initiative I hope to strip away the powers of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as they relate to the day to day governance of first nations and put them where they belong, in the hands of first nations, in an interim step to self-government.

I would hope also that the opposition will not confuse this initiative with its motion on financial accountability. This initiative is about listening to first nations people, councils and chiefs who will provide best practices on governance systems. It is not about a few examples of the mistakes made in the past. It is about people, not politics, and it is about hearing the views of first nations people, not telling them about the opinions, informed or otherwise, of politicians.

This is not about weakening first nations, as the Alliance would have us do. Instead, this is about strengthening first nations, about building strong, vibrant and successful first nations leaders and communities for the generations which follow us.

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I hope I will get the support of the House to improve the lives of first nations people as we enter into this consultation.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in reply to the statement from the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I do so on behalf of my Canadian Alliance colleagues and as the chairman of the leader's advisory committee on Indian and Northern Affairs.

My role in that position is to listen to band members, ranchers, the tourism industry, businesses and other Canadians affected by this act. I would be pleased to share my findings with the minister.

The Canadian Alliance has long advocated for and on behalf of aboriginal people, the people who make up the bands themselves, the people who are all too often living in squalid conditions, with poor or limited health care. They suffer from exceptionally high rates of diabetes, alcohol and drug abuse, infant mortality, fetal alcohol syndrome and high rates of suicide, particularly among their youth.

The Canadian Alliance upholds the principle of accountability, fiscal and electoral accountability. The privilege of being elected to a position of leadership means that we will accurately reflect the needs of all of constituents, not just those who agree with us. The privilege of being elected to a position of leadership means that we must use and distribute funds and resources wisely among all of those who need them. The privilege of being elected to a position of leadership means that we must bear the burden of making hard but fair decisions.

The Canadian Alliance has long stated that the Indian Act does not work. The act is repressive and has long been in need of a major overhaul.

I am pleased to hear that the minister has acted accordingly and is willing to make serious changes to the way in which our aboriginal people are governed. His announcement early this week regarding the first nations governance act and his comments today are a welcome first step.

The Canadian Alliance supports the consultation process announced in this proposed bill. I do, however, wish to comment that the consultation process must be taken seriously. It must be transparent and real. It must truly listen to the people, not just the aboriginal leadership. It is easy to consult with organized groups such as the AFN and chiefs. It is not easy to truly listen to the rank and file members. The Canadian Alliance will ensure that those voices and concerns, both native and non-native, are heard and listened to during this process.

• (1515)

While the proposed bill refers to governments, there is much debate over the term self-government. Parliamentarians, together with all the people of Canada, must ensure that everyone knows what self-government means.

I urge the minister and departmental officials to listen carefully to provincial and municipal governments throughout the process. These levels of government will, as the minister has indicated, be engaged at the appropriate level. The term self-government can be interpreted in a variety of ways and requires clarification.

In my home province of B.C., the majority of land claims are still pending. As the settlement process moves along it is imperative that all stakeholders play an active role in the process as we move toward native self-governance. Furthermore, we must together ensure that the proper human, logistical and financial resources are available to aboriginal people as they move toward self-government.

One of our past failings has been to quickly pass responsibility to native bands without the proper analysis and without assisting them through the transition period to ensure they do not fall between the cracks. Taking responsibility for a service such as health care is important. However if the resources are not in place to manage it then a disservice is done to the people who need the health care. We must proceed down this path cautiously but with the aim of effecting real change.

The minister has heard correctly from aboriginal people and the Canadian Alliance that the status quo is not acceptable. The system is not working. If it were, aboriginal people would not be facing the dire conditions seen on so many reserves today. The status quo is not acceptable, but I would caution the minister not to rush the process. Broad based consultation is appropriate and right. I ask the minister to find ways to ensure that all aboriginal people can provide feedback. Chat rooms are a viable method, but let us remember that many aboriginal people do not have access to computers. The consultation process must gather information from all stakeholders using a wide variety of methods.

Contrary to what the minister would have Canadians believe, the Canadian Alliance is about strengthening all people, including aboriginal people. Unfortunately the Indian Act and the government have done a good job of eroding the strength of most Canadians. We are not here to create division. We must instead work to create harmony and better understanding among all people.

The Canadian Alliance cautiously looks forward to the first phase of the government's act. I urge all aboriginal people to ensure that the minister hears their voice. This is their opportunity to take control of their own future.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to discuss the important announcement by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In principle, the Bloc Québécois supports any measure aimed at modernizing the archaic political system that has been imposed for over 100 years on aboriginal communities by the federal government.

The minister's initiative announced today is laudable, but one wonders about the government's real intentions. We must deplore, among other things, the quick and expeditious shelving of the voluminous report of the Erasmus-Dussault commission. That was a serious mistake and the Bloc Québécois has always been very sensitive to the implementation of the commission's recommendations.

We also deplore the fact that, since 1999, the minister has not kept his promises on the reform of the Indian Act, including the sensitive issue of the matrimonial regime of women on reserves. Aboriginal women do not all enjoy the same rights. Those living off reserve enjoy the right to a fair splitting of the conjugal assets when their marriage fails. Unfortunately, that is not the case for women living on reserves.

The minister's initiative and his reassuring words must not have the effect of putting off indefinitely what first nations have been seeking for so long, such as the inherent right to self-government, aboriginal and treaty rights, and management powers over, among other things, land and natural resources.

The consultation process proposed by the minister also raises many major issues.

• (1520)

This strikes me as a desire to reinvent the wheel. Why launch this consultation process when it is scarcely five years since the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples tabled its report? This, hon. members will recall, was a commission that did a very thorough job and cost the Canadian taxpayer close to \$50 million.

If the minister took the trouble to read that report with care, he would certainly find it to be a major source of inspiration, and time, energy and money would be saved. Also, there are many questions, and nebulous questions at that.

How can the aboriginal right to vote be addressed properly if the vital matter of the inherent right to self-government is not touched upon at all?

How will this consultation process impact upon the negotiations currently under way? Do they need to be suspended in order to avoid any type of interference? How long will this famous interim

step, as the minister called it, last? Is the minister really assured of the support of the first nations for the consultation process?

It seems to me that the conclusions the minister wishes to reach consist in imposing the federal government's vision on the aboriginal people, as it has tended to do for a century, and on the provinces, as it has for several decades.

Finally, by transferring its powers relating to day to day administration to the first nations, is the central government not seeking to quietly dump onto those same first nations its fiduciary obligation, without providing them with the necessary resources indispensable to their viability, and particularly to their prosperity?

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister coming before the House today to explain the government's latest initiative to improve relations with first nations people specifically as it pertains to governance.

I think I speak for most Canadians when I say we were heartened and encouraged that the Speech from the Throne made reference to issues facing aboriginal people. In doing so it signalled a growing recognition that the current relationship between the government and first nations people is not sustainable. It must be revisited, reworked and renewed, and hopefully without delay.

The Indian Act can best be described as 130 years of social tragedy. Canada's treatment of aboriginal people is its greatest shame. Actions to date in dealing with aboriginal people have had the effect, either by action or omission, of creating a permanent underclass in our society. No government to date has had the courage or the conviction to take pro-active steps to aggressively reverse this monumental injustice.

At the beginning of a new century there is cautious optimism that we are within reach of a breakthrough in our relationship with aboriginal people. In that sense we are living in historic times.

One of my proudest moments as a member of parliament was having the opportunity to rise in support of the historic Nisga'a treaty. Well-meaning people throughout Canada celebrated with the Nisga'a as they took the courageous steps necessary to realize their inherent right to self-governance. In the House of Commons only the Canadian Alliance voted against the Nisga'a right to self-governance.

Now is the time to begin putting in place the necessary legislative framework to enable all first nations communities to exercise their right to self-determination and to achieve the dignity, pride and self-worth that results when oppressed people fight for and achieve that basic freedom.

I agree with the minister that the current Indian Act is outdated and obsolete. It was created for a different era, an era that never contemplated there would come a time when aboriginal people

would fight for and win recognition of their inherent right to self-governance.

It is with cautious optimism that we receive the minister's information today. We recognize the need for careful and meaningful consultation prior to such a fundamental departure from the status quo. We accept that there is a need to build consensus. We appreciate what seems to be a sincere effort to consult far and wide by whatever technology is available.

However, we caution the minister that bold reforms often breed apprehension and mistrust.

• (1525)

Some aboriginal leaders have already indicated that they will boycott the process. Some say there might be a hidden agenda. Others express frustration that they have been consulted to death. Many point out that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was the most comprehensive and exhaustive consultation in recent history. Yet six years later its five volumes sit on shelves. They say the progress report "Gathering Strength" should have been named gathering dust because that has been the sum total of its experience.

The aboriginal leadership does not agree on everything but it is unanimous in one regard. It is united in calling for the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Over the course of five years and \$50 million positions were developed, presented, recorded and drafted into meaningful recommendations. However, rather than implement the recommendations, we are about to embark on yet another round of comprehensive consultations.

The government wants the initiative to be seen as an interim step toward self-government. It hopes it will ultimately provide first nations some authority and control over their day to day administration. It also hopes broad consultations will lead to a sharing of practices and that communities with strong administrative skills are encouraged to provide guidance and leadership to those with weaker skills.

Built into this aspect of the initiative is the recognition that most first nations communities already manage their affairs in a professional manner. It is hoped that they will share their experience with other communities and ultimately develop national standards of excellence.

I agree with the minister that all too often the official opposition has focused on the failures of a few rather than the successes of the vast majority. The Canadian Alliance Party has been intellectually dishonest in pointing to isolated incidents of financial mismanagement and arguing that all aboriginal leadership is corrupt or incompetent. I resent that position. Its continual attacks are nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to undermine aboriginal self-governance which it clearly opposes vigorously.

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I am encouraged to hear the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development say it is his intention to strip away his power over the day to day governance of first nations and put it back where it belongs: in the hands of first nations. I view that as an interim step toward self-government.

If the minister's announcement moves us one step closer to self-governance and self-determination for aboriginal people then he can count on the support of the NDP caucus.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, no public policy issues facing the government and the people of Canada are more complex than those concerning first nations people.

The Progressive Conservative Party endorsed the inherent right to self-government of Canada's first nations when drafting the 1992 Charlottetown accord. It was a Conservative government that established the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and gave it a broad mandate to study and report on all issues affecting the lives of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Progress on all such issues has been slow. The Nisga'a land settlement was only recently approved after having taken years to negotiate.

There is no one size fits all solution to the problems facing Canada's first nations. Self-government as set out in the Charlottetown accord and implemented by the Nisga'a agreement is only one of many possible forms of self-government.

No matter which structure is desired, however, governments must move in that direction. It is only through self-government that first nations people can begin to recover the dignity and power taken from them since the early settlement of Canada.

Many other issues face aboriginal people as well. These include determining a sound economic basis for first nations to grow, flourish and benefit from being a part of the country. The legal and cultural role of first nations women needs to be addressed especially in the movement to self-government.

• (1530)

Among the most pressing concerns to be addressed are the complex issues facing first nations youth and first nations individuals living in cities without land base. More than half the first nations population of Canada is under the age of 25 and living in cities. Most often they are experiencing poverty and functioning alone, without direction. Without significant steps being taken by governments in partnership with the first nations, these young people will become a generation lost to Canada and their own people.

Our party feels that the minister needs to look no further than at the royal commission created by the former Progressive Conservative government for ideas and changes made to the Indian Act. It has been mentioned on a number of occasions by previous speakers

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that it took years and millions of dollars to put the royal commission together. I have seen the volumes. There are recommendations in there that could have been implemented yesterday or could be implemented now or in the very near future without having to go through a make work project that the minister seems to be embracing.

The PC Party believes that the ineffective paternalistic and colonial approaches of the Indian Act must give way to greater self-reliance and self-esteem through effective education, economic development, social justice and local control. It must also lead eventually to the elimination of both the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development as well as the Indian Act, which would lead to self-government.

The PC Party does not support the establishment of a third level of government. Instead self-government is best achieved within the current system of our government. The current government with this minister could make major progress, but it seems to be choosing what on the surface may be a delay tactic. Progress delayed is progress denied.

On the surface this initiative has the appearance of a make work project from a government that seems to be void of ideas. It has the opportunity to look at the royal commission and to implement some of those ideas now. However the process that the minister has chosen looks like another stalling tactic. I hope it is not.

I hope the minister could convince me and the first nations people that he wishes to consult. I hope the process in place now will come to fruition and will not be another report sitting on a shelf gathering dust. The policy issue is far too important, not only to the first nations but to the people of Canada.

I wish the minister good luck and Godspeed. I also wish he will be able to implement some of the things he is putting forward to his government and to the House in the not too distant future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages.

This report has to do with the broadcasting and the availability of the debates and proceedings of parliament in both official languages.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank members from both chambers on the committee. They did their work quickly but well. I

also wish to thank our staff, including the clerks, and particularly the one who is leaving us.

I would like to mention that the committee's report takes note of the CRTC's upcoming examination of the need to broadcast parliamentary proceedings in both official languages and encourages this initiative.

We also thank the Speaker of the House for appearing before us. We encourage him to try to dovetail the contracts which must be renegotiated and perhaps renewed with the expiry of the public affairs cable channel licence, which the CRTC must or could renew.

This is an undertaking of the committee and a call from the committee. We would like a response from the government to ensure that all Canadians, wherever they live, have access to the broadcasts of the debates of parliament in both official languages.

* * *

• (1535)

[*English*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-341, an act to amend the Access to Information Act (Cabinet confidences).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Delta—South Richmond for seconding my bill to amend the cabinet confidences section of the Access to Information Act.

Last week Treasury Board kept secret 33 full pages of documents and an additional 57 partial pages, using the excuse of cabinet confidences. All the documents pertain to a treasury board firearms oversight committee that had been reviewing the huge cost overruns and bureaucratic bungling of the gun registry.

The Department of Justice has used the same cabinet secrecy excuse repeatedly to hide 172 pages of gun registry budget documents, an entire 115 page document on the economic cost of the gun registry, and 61 pages on how user fees would cover the entire cost of the gun registry program.

In 1996 the information commissioner published a report entitled "Access to Information Act and Cabinet Confidences, A Discussion of New Approaches".

My private member's bill would implement the information commissioner's recommendations, and that is very important. The information commissioner was kind enough to review an earlier version of my bill and his recommendations have been included in this draft. The bill should reduce some of the complaints of government secrecy which the information commissioner says have more than doubled in the last year.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from citizens of the Peterborough area who are very interested in the work being done in Canada to develop a bioartificial kidney.

● (1540)

This is a device which would help people with end stage kidney disease. People hope that it would finally replace transplants and kidney dialysis as the only means of treatment for people with kidney problems.

They call upon parliament to work and support the development of the bioartificial kidney. I would like to point out that the petition was developed by Ken Sharp, a citizen in my riding.

VIA RAIL

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens in the Peterborough area who would like to see a VIA commuter service between Toronto and Peterborough re-established.

This was a service which was present up until about 10 years ago when it was taken away. These citizens believe that the re-establishment of the service would be good for the environment. It would reduce greenhouse emissions, accidents and costs to maintain highways. It would also strengthen Peterborough as a business, educational and tourist centre.

They call upon parliament to authorize the recommencement of a VIA commuter service between Toronto and Peterborough. I would add that the petition has support in five federal ridings.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition related to kidney disease. It is from citizens who want to see kidney research improved in Canada.

They call upon parliament to encourage the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to explicitly include kidney research as one of the institutes in its system. That institute would be called the institute of kidney and urinary tract diseases.

CANADA POST

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the first petition I have to present today is from rural mail couriers. Their complaint, which is a legitimate one, is that they lack collective bargaining rights where other workers, people who are doing a similar job, have those rights.

They wish that parliament would repeal or amend subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act which prohibits them from having collective bargaining rights.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition that I have is one with over 1,000 signatures. These residents are concerned about the disbanding of the coast guard dive team by the minister and the resulting death of Paul Sandhu last February 18.

They maintain that more lives could be lost if the dive team is not reinstated. They strongly request and urge the minister to reinstate that dive team.

VIOLENCE

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is one which was organized by a constituent of mine, Mr. Grant Campbell. This time I am presenting almost 400 signatures.

The signators are calling upon parliament to enact immediate changes to the criminal code to implement the necessary measures for the protection of Canada's children from exploitive marketing of violence on the Internet and interactive games.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition signed by 130 citizens, mostly from the Ottawa area but a few from other provinces as well.

They draw to the attention of the House the intolerable human rights situation in the southern Sudan. They pray that the House and parliament make representations to the Sudanese government on behalf of human rights in that country.

They pray that parliament amend the Special Economic Measures Act so that the Canadian government can initiate a policy that would be reflective of the need for human rights in that country, particularly with regard to Christians in the southern Sudan.

POISON CONTROL

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present my first petition on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

The petition is signed by 370 concerned citizens regarding a topic that is particularly near and dear to my seatmate, the member for Lakeland. These citizens are calling on the government to amend the regulations to allow the sale of concentrated strychnine for use in the control of the Richardson's ground squirrel.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have 14 petitions signed by residents of the province of Saskatchewan who are very concerned about the

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availability of liquid strychnine for the control of the Richardson's ground squirrel.

• (1545)

Before 1992 it was available in concentrated form. Since 1992 Health Canada has restricted this sale to a pre-mixed form with the concentration of 0.4%. That has had the resulting effect of this particular ground squirrel destroying crops and hay land causing severe damage. It is very costly to farmers in lost productivity, equipment repairs and injury to livestock.

They are petitioning parliament to amend the relevant regulations so as to permit the sale of concentrated liquid strychnine to registered farmers until such time as an effective alternative can be found.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following three questions will be answered today: Nos. 22, 26 and 27.

[Text]

Question No. 22—Mr. Peter Goldring:

Can the government provide precise and workable definitions of the terms "affordable housing", "poverty" and "homeless"?

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Definitions of terms such as these depend upon the context in which they are used. See also *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, 6th Edition*, Citation 428 (ff), which reads:

(ff) seek information set forth in documents equally accessible to the questioner, as Statutes, published reports, etc.

Question No. 26—Mr. Ted White:

With respect to the government's immigration targets and with reference to the document entitled "Not Just Numbers, A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration", could the government indicate: (a) why an annual immigration target of 1% of Canada's population was chosen and what research material supports the selection of that percentage instead of a higher or lower percentage; (b) what research the government has drawn upon in determining the proportion of immigration which should be entrepreneurial class, family reunification class or other class; (c) what research the government has conducted or referred to in assessing the impact on Canada's medical system and social programs from the existing and proposed levels of family reunification class immigration; (d) what research the government has conducted to determine whether the economic contribution to Canada from immigration has been rising or falling over the past 30 years, and whether such a rise or fall in economic contribution is a result of the changes in target levels for specific class of immigrants; and (e) why the government no longer considers it an important requirement that prospective immigrants be proficient in one of Canada's official languages, and what studies it has drawn upon to conclude that relaxation of the

language requirement will not cause serious social stresses and problems for new entrants?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, is recognized as a leader in the area of policy research and for having advanced information relative to many other countries undertaking immigration policy research. This volume of work is available for review, as is extensive additional information relevant to many of the issues raised in your written request, on CIC's strategic research and review website located at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/srr>.

With respect to the government's immigration targets:

(a) Immigration provides numerous benefits to Canada including a larger domestic market of consumers, an increased supply of skilled workers and inflows of financial and human capital. As well, immigration continues to be an increasingly important component of population growth and for addressing the shrinking labour force.

Assuming fertility rates remain at present levels, continued immigration is the only means of forestalling an eventual decline in the population and resultant decline in the labour force. A study by McDonald and Kippen entitled "Ageing: The Social and Demographic Dimensions", presented at the Association of the Americas 2000 annual meeting in Los Angeles, March 23-25, 2000, confirms that the future labour supply of Canada is migration dependent.

With respect to Canada's aging population, the recent United Nations report, "Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Population?", concludes that population rejuvenation requires comparatively high levels of migration. Likewise, only higher levels of immigration will address the issues of population and labour force growth over the long term.

In light of the benefits of immigration, and in particular the positive influences it can have on the demographic problems facing the country, the Government of Canada has created a vision and a strategy for the long term growth and sustainability of the nation. Immigration targets of approximately 1% of the population are fundamental underpinnings of this vision for the future of a prosperous Canada.

In support of this vision, Citizenship and Immigration Canada is in the process of developing a multiyear planning process that strengthens the educated setting of annual levels targets by constantly assessing the needs of Canada, its provinces, cities, citizens and newcomers alike. The process will be informed not only through research but also through consultations with partners, including the provinces, and analysis of domestic and global trends. It will constantly weigh the benefits and costs of immigration, allowing for conscientious planning and managed progress toward the vision of a sustained and prosperous Canada through

increased immigration levels. As flexibility is fundamental to multiyear planning, the process will continue to be refined and expanded in the years to come in order to meet the demands raised by rapid changes in the global and domestic environments.

(b) Each category of immigrant brings unique benefits to Canada. A good balance for the nation is one that optimizes the benefits of both economic immigrants and family class immigrants. Economic immigrants support trade, industry and the economic growth of the country. Family class immigrants help build strong families, one of the foundations on which this nation and its communities is built.

The proportions of the economic and family class categories continue to be monitored by the department in consultation with provincial and territorial partners to ensure Canada's best interests are served. While the current balance benefits Canada in many ways, the best balance of immigrants for the country may change as shifts in demographics and economics occur. Canada, like many other countries, is undergoing changes at an increasingly rapid rate.

Due to competition for immigrants in the global marketplace and shifts in the movement of people, the number of applications received in the various categories and the final balance of landings are not entirely within the control of CIC. Therefore the department must monitor what is happening with respect to this balance and respond accordingly to position itself to attract the right mix of immigrants that will help build strong families and a strong economy. Through the multiyear planning process, ongoing analysis to ascertain the optimal balance of economic and family class immigrants and strategies to achieve this balance continue to be developed.

(c) In 2000 there were 60,426 immigrants landed under the family class. The proposed target range for 2001 family class landings is 57,000 to 61,000. The proposed target range for 2002, which is subject to change with the tabling of the 2002-03 immigration plan, is 59,800 to 63,700. Assuming the middle of these ranges were to be met, the changes in family class landings would amount to -2.4% and 2.2% respectively. The impact on Canada's medical system and social programs from these marginally different proposed levels is not expected to be of significance.

(d) Numerous studies have been undertaken to assess the economic benefits to Canada through the economic contributions of immigrants. However, experts argue that while an understanding of these contributions is important, the issue is extremely complex and difficult to measure reliably for the whole of the immigrant movement, let alone by individual immigrant categories. Much of this research activity is summarized and presented on the website I have mentioned.

The most well developed research in relation to immigrants and economics is in the area of the economic performance of immi-

grants themselves. By and large, immigrants are found to do well. Additional information on research initiatives in this area can be accessed at the Metropolis project's website at <http://canada.metro-polis.net>. This site also includes relevant links to other immigration policy research initiatives and organizations that may be of interest.

(e) Language requirements for immigrants are presently being strengthened, not relaxed, through immigration policy and proposed legislation and regulations. Research indicates that proficiency in one of Canada's official languages is key to successful integration for immigrants. As such, the government considers it of primary importance that prospective immigrants be able to speak one of Canada's official languages and is proposing both measuring this proficiency more precisely and giving increased weight to this component of a prospective immigrant's application.

Question No. 27—**Mr. Peter MacKay:**

With regard to the creation of a national weapons enforcement support team, NWEST: (a) will NWEST only support local law enforcement in anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling efforts, or will there be occasions where NWEST will act as the lead law enforcement unit while enforcing firearms related laws; (b) what will be the projected cost for the setting up and enactment of NWEST; (c) why was this funding not given to the RCMP so that our national police force could form a special unit similar to NWEST; (d) will the commencement of NWEST's operations result in the diminishment of Canada's existing law enforcement community; (e) have the new members of NWEST been sent to the United States to be trained for the NWEST by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, BATF, and if so; (i) how many people were sent for training; (ii) what are the backgrounds of the people who were trained; and (iii) what was the cost involved for the training and the travel?

Mr. John Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): (a) NWEST will provide training to local law enforcement in all jurisdictions. It will work in a support role with local law enforcement to assist in anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling efforts. The team will also help the police community in dealing with issues of violence with firearms. NWEST will not take a lead law enforcement role in enforcing firearms related laws.

(b) Consultations are known currently underway with the policing community across Canada and once these consultations are completed and the results known, an overall budget for NWEST will be established.

(c) As a result of consultations that took place over a two year period, the overwhelming recommendation from the policing community was to establish the unit initially with those directly responsible for the administration of the Canadian firearms program. Discussions with the RCMP are ongoing. NWEST provides training support to all police agencies across Canada. The RCMP provides lead investigative services and lead investigative support services for all police services.

(d) NWEST will actually augment and provide expertise and training to local law enforcement officials in all jurisdictions. NWEST will support frontline police agencies in the gathering of

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evidence in order to assist them in successfully prosecuting persons involved in the illegal movement and criminal use of firearms.

(e) No member of NWEST has been sent to the United States to be trained by the BATF. The purpose of NWEST is to support frontline police agencies in the gathering of evidence in order to assist them in successfully prosecuting persons involved in the illegal movement and criminal use of firearms.

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Lee: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motions for the Production of Papers Nos. P-1 and P-2, in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt are acceptable to the government and the documents are tabled immediately.

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documentation related to the Canada Research Chairs and, in particular, information concerning the number of Chairs that will be awarded to each of the following agencies: Medical Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documentation related to the Canada Research Chairs initiatives, and in particular, information related to the division of funds to be awarded to the various granting councils involved.

(Motions agreed to)

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-20.

That an order of the House do issue for a copy of any letters since April 1, 2001, from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and/or the Clerk of the Privy Council to ministers and/or Deputy ministers concerning answers to questions in the House of Commons.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a minister of the crown, I would ask that this Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-20 be transferred for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

(Transferred for debate)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I wish to inform the House that because of ministerial statements, government orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA NATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS ACT

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.) moved that Bill C-10, an act respecting the national marine conservation areas of Canada, be read the second time and sent to a committee.

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for over 100 years, Canadians and their governments have built up a network of national parks of world renown. This parliament now has the opportunity to prepare the way for the establishment of a network of national marine conservation areas.

Accordingly, future generations of Canadians will be able to appreciate the diversity of our magnificent marine environments and benefit from them as they already do in the case of the exceptional natural spaces of our parks.

The long term objective we are promoting is to have each of the 29 marine regions in Canada represented in the national network of marine conservation areas. We will similarly establish a national park in each of the 39 natural land regions in Canada.

Each of the marine conservation areas, like each national park, should illustrate the region it represents exceptionally.

• (1550)

There are some who believe that national marine conservation areas will be just watery national parks. That is not so.

In the national parks, the first priority is preservation of ecological integrity where park zoning and visitor use are concerned. In other words, parks are administered so as to keep them basically unchanged by human activity.

However, marine conservation areas are designed to be models of sustainable use. They are administered so as to balance protection and use. That is why we need legislation that is specifically adapted to the national marine conservation areas.

I will take advantage of this opportunity to provide a brief overview of the legislation, indicating how it is designed to manage protected areas in our complex marine environment.

[English]

The bill establishes the legal and regulatory framework for creating and managing national marine conservation areas. It does not by itself create any specific area. Instead, it provides the mechanism for formally establishing national marine conservation areas under the act.

A national marine conservation area is formally established when its land description is added to a schedule of the act. This brings those lands under the formal protection of the legislation.

As in a recently proclaimed Canada National Parks Act, Bill C-10 sets out an order in council process for the establishment in law of national marine conservation areas.

While the order in council process will speed up the scheduling of new areas, I want to assure the House that the supremacy of parliament remains. The bill requiring the proposals to establish new national marine conservation areas must be tabled in both Houses and referred to the appropriate standing committees for their consideration. Should either House reject the establishment of the new areas, the order in council would not proceed.

I would like to stress however, that the order in council process would not be used for any proposal to remove lands from a national marine conservation area. Like national parks, these areas are established in perpetuity and thus the bill requires an act of parliament to reduce the size of any existing site.

As is the case for our national parks, Bill C-10 requires federal ownership of all lands to be included in a national marine conservation area, both above and below the water. This ensures that the Minister of Canadian Heritage will have administration and control of these areas.

If a province owns all or part of the seabed in an area where Parks Canada proposes to establish a national marine conservation area, the province would have to agree to the use of those lands for a marine conservation area and a federal-provincial agreement would be required to transfer ownership to the federal government.

Again, without such an agreement the proposed national marine conservation area cannot proceed, and for greater certainty, this requirement is specified in the legislation.

In marine areas where there is contested federal-provincial jurisdiction, I would like to assure the House that the federal government has no intention of acting unilaterally. There will always be consultations with the province concerned with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory resolution.

I would now like to address the role of consultation. There is a very clear requirement for public consultation in the establishment of any national marine conservation area, with particular emphasis given to affected coastal communities. The nature of these consultations is set out in Parks Canada policies. The steps required by

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these policies can take years to complete. The national marine conservation area feasibility studies, which have already been launched by Parks Canada, illustrate that this policy is already in action.

I wish to emphasize again, if there is no public support for the creation of a national marine conservation area in a given location, then the proposal would not be brought forward to parliament. Parks Canada will look to another area with which to represent the marine region.

When the government decides to take the final step and formally establish a national marine conservation area, parliament will have an opportunity to examine the proposal in detail and satisfy itself that there is indeed community support.

• (1555)

Bill C-10 also calls for active stakeholder participation in the formulation, review and implementation of management plans. Again, the legislation provides for accountability to parliament through the tabling of management plans for each marine conservation area. In addition, the minister must table a report in parliament every two years on the state of national marine conservation areas and on progress toward completion of the system.

Coastal communities need certainty before an area is established. Therefore, when a new proposal comes before parliament, along with the report on the consultations held and any agreements reached with the provinces and other departments, there will also be an interim management plan. Management advisory committees will be created for each marine conservation area to ensure that consultation with local stakeholders continues on an ongoing basis.

The management plans for each area must be reviewed at least every five years. Thus the government will take a learn by doing approach for every national marine conservation area. Ongoing consultations within each marine conservation area will allow Parks Canada staff to learn from local people, drawing on the traditional ecological knowledge of coastal communities and also aboriginal peoples.

Parks Canada has taken a partnership approach in the management of the program and this is clearly reflected in the bill. Other ministers have statutory responsibilities that will affect the management of national marine conservation areas. Bill C-10 has been carefully drafted to take that fact into account.

I would also like to address how Bill C-10 reflects the government's commitment to working with aboriginal peoples. The legislation includes provisions to establish reserves for national marine conservation areas. These are established when an area or a portion of an area is subject to a claim by aboriginal peoples that has been accepted for negotiation by the Government of Canada as a comprehensive land claim. Reserves are managed as if they were

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national marine conservation areas, but without prejudice to the settlement of the claim.

A non-derogation clause has been added regarding aboriginal and treaty rights. No provisions of the act will derogate the right guaranteed to aboriginal people under the constitution. There is also a specific requirement in the legislation to consult with aboriginal organizations and bodies established under land claim agreements.

Finally, the legislation explicitly recognizes traditional aboriginal ecological knowledge in carrying out research and monitoring studies in national marine conservation areas.

Certain activities are indeed prohibited throughout all national marine conservation areas. The most important of these prohibitions concerns non-renewable resources, specifically mineral, oil and gas. Marine conservation areas are managed for sustainable use and by definition extraction of non-renewable resources is not sustainable.

Other activities would also be regulated through zoning. I would like to emphasize to the House the importance of zoning as a powerful and flexible tool for managing use within a marine conservation area.

In each national marine conservation area there will be multiple use zones where ecologically sustainable uses are encouraged, including fishing. There will also be zones where special protection is afforded. For example, critical spawning grounds, cultural sites, whale calving areas and scientific research sites would be protection zones where resource use is not permitted.

Each marine conservation area will contain these two types of zones. At the same time enough flexibility is left in the bill to ensure that each area can have a zoning plan that is appropriate to its individual situation. Parks Canada will identify the location of protection zones and surrounding multiple use zones for each proposed marine conservation area during the feasibility study for that area in full consultation again with local stakeholders.

Federal legislation, such as the Fisheries Act and the Canada Shipping Act, is already being used to manage activities in the marine environment. These statutes were not intended to cover the special requirements of national marine conservation areas. Thus, Bill C-10 includes a number of regulation making authorities which would be used to fill in the gaps in these other statutes.

• (1600)

For example, the bill includes authorities to make regulations for the protection of cultural resources, for visitor safety, for the

establishment of zones and the control of activities within those zones, and finally, for the control of overflights by aircraft that pose a threat to wildlife.

The bill also provides checks and balances on the substance of the regulations that may be made under the act. Specifically, any regulations that impact on the jurisdictions of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or the Minister of Transport must be made on the recommendation of both the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the affected minister.

The proposed legislation also includes penalties for offences against the Canada national marine conservation areas act or its regulations, which would be exactly the same as those that are in fact under part II of the Oceans Act. Fines of up to \$500,000 may be levied for offences under the act.

I would like to reiterate that Bill C-10 is framework legislation. It provides the tools needed to create national marine conservation areas and to manage each one in a way that is appropriate to its unique characteristics.

I believe that we have indeed struck an appropriate balance between protection and sustainable use. Very few activities are completely prohibited, but tools are available to regulate activities to ensure that the structure and function of each area's ecosystems are not compromised.

We have an obligation to consult affected communities during feasibility studies, in the management planning process, and in preparing the applicable regulations.

Each area will be unique, unique in its characteristics and also uniquely managed. A national marine conservation area in Georgian Bay will be distinct from one in the Beaufort Sea or in the Strait of Georgia or in the Bay of Fundy.

Canada needs this legislation so that outstanding examples of our country's natural and cultural marine heritage can be provided with long term protection and so that all Canadians can learn more about and experience this shared heritage.

Ms. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak as the official opposition critic for Canadian heritage on this bill, Bill C-10, an act respecting the national marine conservation areas of Canada, at second reading.

What we have before us today is the third attempt to pass this legislation. This bill was Bill C-48, then Bill C-8 in the last parliament, and now returns as Bill C-10 in this parliament. What does this tell us about the commitment of the government to this legislation? It tells us that the commitment is not very great and it

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is very evident why. Even after three tries this legislation remains seriously flawed.

First, let us not be fooled by the language that was originally used to introduce this legislation. I certainly would not disagree with a proposal that would require marine conservation areas to be established for the protection and conservation of “representative marine areas of Canadian significance” and would be “for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada and the world”.

However, upon closer inspection the bill does far more than the government is prepared to admit.

The first area of concern I wish to draw attention to is one involving the consultation process and where these 29 representative marine conservation areas are to be established. As with the first two bills, in this current bill the schedule is blank.

What is the government afraid of? The government is afraid that the same thing will happen as what occurred in the Bonavista and Notre Dame Bays area in Newfoundland, when political pressure from the local Liberal member, and I suspect from the current industry minister and former premier, stopped a marine conservation area from going forward.

I am not criticizing the former member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception for representing his constituents and their well founded fears that unemployment and economic hardship would follow the good intentions of a federal bureaucrat over 2,000 kilometres away in a comfy office, drawing a salary of \$100,000 a year.

• (1605)

What about those ridings that have upheld the democratic process and elected a member of the loyal opposition or, worse, have an elected or weak or too compliant member of the government?

We have real fears when we read the literature from the minister’s department that talks about replacing the checks, balances and safeguards of parliament for, in the words of her department, the “simple, cost-effective procedure” of order in council to establish or enlarge marine conservation areas. Previous debates have pointed out this very serious flaw and yet here it is a third time and still this flaw remains.

I pay tribute to my colleague, the member for Dauphin—Swan River, for his input when this bill was Bill C-48. He very clearly pointed out the Henry VIII clauses in the bill. I encourage recently elected members of the House to read the hon. member’s speech. Henry VIII believed in the divine right to rule and was always looking for ways to sidestep parliament and its ultimate authority as an elected body. It seems some things never change.

The current process, where the act has to be opened up and amended when a new national park is contemplated or changes to an existing park are considered, may not be as efficient as the government would like but it is consistent with our democratic heritage.

As the government is now beginning to realize, democracy can be messy. It is this style of legislation, the Bill C-10s, that will span more Quebec City types of demonstrations. As this government seeks new and creative ways to exclude people from the democratic process, unfortunately we will all pay the price with a fractured nation. Separatism feeds on these sorts of government dictates. If the minister were truly interested in freedom of speech, she would not be proposing government by order in council legislation.

The people of Canada have much to fear from the consultation process of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The process is so flawed that not only does it ignore the advice of the people, it will not follow the advice of its own studies. Nowhere is this more evident today than in the example of Parks Canada and its reaction to a health and safety issue regarding park wardens.

The minister should know that there have been three separate reports since 1993 that have identified unsafe working conditions for park wardens, particularly with the significant increase in fines for poaching in our national parks. Park wardens are being put at greater and greater risk in the performance of their duties.

It took a ruling from the HRDC labour program inspector to force the department to respond. Did the department and the minister do the right thing and accept the recommendations of three separate reports, recommendations, I might add, that are supported by the Public Service Alliance of Canada and the Animal Alliance of Canada? No.

The minister chose to ignore the best advice given and is blundering forward with an ill conceived and costly measure that makes no sense at all. It is very clear that the minister has a very poor record when it comes to taking good advice.

The only reason we in the official opposition can see for the government to ignore its own advice would be because of some hidden agenda. The reported plan to replace park wardens with RCMP officers, with a detachment in every national park in Canada, is absolutely sinister. What better way for a federal government to enforce unpopular laws, laws that the provincial governments want no part of, than to do it with its own police force?

• (1610)

As the federal government enacts more unpopular laws on an unwilling rural population, how convenient that the federal police officers are there for the Liberal government to call upon.

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This labour dispute that Parks Canada is having with its park wardens will impact upon this legislation in a very significant manner. Clauses 18 to 23 of Bill C-10, the enforcement section of the act, in the current labour dispute means the act would not be enforced. It is one thing to require RCMP officers on land to go after poachers. Has the minister, in her \$37 million request to the treasury board for the money to replace park wardens with RCMP officers, also put in a request for boats?

This is beginning to sound like the gun registry boondoggle, where an \$85 million cost has skyrocketed to \$600 million and counting. The people of the city of Pembroke in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke are currently in the process of raising the money locally to buy a CAT scanner, thanks to the federal government's two tier health care policy. That \$637 million would save a lot of lives in the community of Pembroke and a lot in other parts of rural Canada.

I and members of the official opposition are very concerned about the consultative process, based on the concerns expressed to our members over the bias of this government against rural Canadians.

While I understand that the letter from the Mayor of Kitimat was made available to the members on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage when this legislation was called Bill C-48, I would like to quote from his letter as I believe it to be a fair reflection of the thoughts and feelings of rural Canadians:

Sadly, urban Canadians and senior levels of government seldom grasp the values associated with rural life, whether it be fishing, farming or forestry. All too often, regulation and legislation occurs that impacts rural Canada and rural Canadians significantly, while having little or no impact on urban life and, therefore, is supported wholeheartedly by the non-rural vote. In the best case scenario governments end up conceding ignorance. At other times a blatant disregard for rural Canadians occurs and is only rectified once social or economic crisis occurs.

It continues:

As a misunderstood rural population, we often wish the same commitment and daily practice toward our environment would be evident in urban centres. Often it appears that those who push for environmental and conservation laws do not enact the same values with their own regions. . . We understand our rural and remote populations are small, however. . . we chose to live in rural locations. At best, it is our hope that Canada be governed based on assessed needs and values of all Canadians. . . Further, we hope that persistent inaccuracies and ignorance of rural and remote lifestyles can be overcome.

The letter is quite a bit longer. However, I hope the essence of what the mayor was trying to convey about the legislation is apparent. The majority of Canadians, especially those of us in rural Canada, do not trust the federal bureaucracy to represent our interests fairly.

Even when we get good people who as public servants are trying to do the best job possible, they are overruled by their political masters, as is the case with the park wardens. Too often our interests have been sacrificed to political expediency.

There are too many votes for the Liberals in the city of Toronto to require it to deal with its own garbage. It is so much easier to dump it in someone else's backyard, in this case the backyard of the people in the riding of Timiskaming—Cochrane, near the pretty town of Kirkland Lake. Better to lose one seat than to jeopardize that big urban vote, and this government wonders why rural people should fear Ottawa when cynical calculations such as this are made by a troika of political manipulators. Actions speak louder than words. Where was the Minister of the Environment? For a government that is constantly looking for ways to intrude into areas of provincial jurisdiction, it suddenly became remarkably silent on the issue of Toronto's garbage.

• (1615)

I am optimistic that maybe this time, the third time the legislation has come forward, the government might surprise Canadians and address some of these concerns. For this I look beyond the minister and her cabinet cohorts to her caucus colleagues, in particular those MPs who represent rural constituencies.

Those Ontario MPs whose ridings border the Great Lakes should be very concerned about how the legislation will adversely impact farmers, fishing enthusiasts, resort operators and other small business people who are the backbone of our nation. They should not be fooled by the soothing words of the minister and her bureaucrats when they tell them not to worry, be happy.

How about the farmer who sprays his or her crops with herbicide? Once the marine parks act is in place the regulators will move into the watersheds. The legislation will finish off those farmers who have not already been pushed out of business by foreign subsidies.

The people of Newfoundland got off lucky when the marine conservation area in their backyard was stopped. Will others be so lucky when the legislation is passed? It was lucky for them when they raised their objections that it was not yet law. Do rural constituents favour letting the bill drop the way it was the first two times?

It is ironic that the minister's own riding borders Lake Ontario. It has been pointed out previously that her own legislation could be used to shut down her constituents' largest employer. Cootes Paradise is certainly a unique waterfront, so unique in fact that several years ago the answer to the pollution in Hamilton harbour was to pave the bay. I am very surprised that the minister is proceeding with the legislation that has the real possibility of doing great harm to her constituents.

By the department of heritage's own admission there is already enough federal and provincial legislation in place to protect and conserve heritage resources. Federal-provincial agreements are in place for marine conservation areas in Ontario and British Columbia.

Currently federal legislation is in place for the Saguenay region of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec. The federal legislation for St. Lawrence park was accompanied by complementary provincial legislation. Obviously the Quebec government saw the threat of federal intrusion and reacted accordingly. Why is there a need for the legislation other than the usual power grab by the Liberals?

It is no secret that the Liberal government is being pressured by NAFTA and the United States to allow bulk water sales. The trial balloon floated by the member for Toronto—Danforth before the summit of the Americas was no coincidence. Some Canadians are concerned that Bill C-10 is a Trojan horse for bulk water sales.

The legislation clearly impacts on provincial jurisdiction and would give the Liberal government the wedge it needs to start negotiations for bulk water export from the Great Lakes to the United States. These people are concerned that the government operates on the basis of multiple hidden agendas, except this agenda for water sales is being exposed for what it is.

What a coincidence that at the same time as Bill C-10 shows up on the parliamentary agenda a sister bill, Bill C-6, shows up. Surprise, surprise, it is all about licences for those people who want to engage in bulk water exports.

Perhaps it should be the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is identified as the sponsor of the bill. The legislation is a clear encroachment into an area of provincial jurisdiction. Once the bill is in place, the minister has arranged for any changes to be by order in council and thus avoid public debate in the House of Commons and in the media.

The province of Ontario is on record as opposing bulk water exports from the Great Lakes, and the federal government is currently unable to act without provincial agreement.

• (1620)

The legislation is conceived in such a way as to avoid that scrutiny. I challenge the federal government to accept amendments to the legislation that would expressly prohibit the bulk export of water from the Great Lakes and a clearer definition of sustainable use in national marine conservation areas.

The decision about whether Canada should or should not allow for the bulk export of water should be done in open and in public. The Toronto *Star*, as the in house organ of the Liberal Party, is opposed to bulk water sales. We know the government is deathly afraid of doing anything to disturb that Toronto vote and recriminations that would be heaped upon it by the *Star* in any debate regarding water.

The government is government by stealth. Unlike the Liberals we in the official opposition want open debate regarding any issue

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that impacts the public. Barring that and other changes we in the official opposition intend to propose, we are willing to tell the government to let the bill drop once again until, and only until, the concerns of all Canadians are met.

It is clear that the third time out the government is timid about Bill C-10 in public. I have had the privilege of meeting some parliamentarians on the government side who feel the same way the rest of us do who represent rural constituencies and must share the same fears I have expressed about this type of legislation.

The legislation, even if it were needed, is too flawed to go forth in its current form. We in the Canadian Alliance affirm the role of the federal government in the preservation of Canada's natural and historic heritage such as national parks.

We also affirm the right of Canada as a sovereign nation to govern itself in a way that benefits all its people. We do not recognize the inevitable loss of sovereignty every time the Prime Minister goes off and makes a commitment before an international body, in this case the IUCN World Conservation Congress in October 1996, without first consulting the people who will be most severely affected by such an agreement.

More important, we require the input of parliament before the people of Canada are put on the hook for something they may be very unwilling to support. The pretext for the legislation was that it was an international agreement. I do not believe the framers of that agreement at the UN intended the Government of Canada to use it in any other way to erode democracy in Canada.

This is not an issue for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. This is legislation, albeit in a greatly changed form, that more properly should be in the name of the Minister of the Environment. This point was made previously in debate on Bill C-48 and Bill C-8. The point needs to be emphasized here again: the issues before us and our international commitments concerning the environment should remain with that ministry.

On behalf of the Canadian Alliance I would like to be able to support legislation to create national marine conservation areas. However as the legislation is presented it is not justified in its current form.

I would now like to respond to those individuals who might be tempted to say that we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater because there are some worthwhile aspects of the bill that we surely can support. To those individuals I say there is nothing in the bill the government could not accomplish if it would just sit down and take the time to talk to the provinces, which in turn would require the federal government to talk to those communities that would be affected by the creation of a marine park. As proposed, the shortcut the bill is all about is not acceptable.

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In conclusion, I call upon the minister to send the bill back to the drawing board. Maybe the fourth time out the government can get it right.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): 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, Employment; the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, National Defence.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I ask for the consent of the House to split my time with the hon. member for Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, before dealing with today's issue, namely marine areas, I would like to point out that the members who are wearing a carnation today are doing so to mark the tough battle that is fought by people suffering from multiple sclerosis, a disease that primarily hits young people, including my daughter.

The bill before us today was introduced in the House by the Liberal government for the third time, after dying on the order paper during each of the two sessions of the last parliament, as Bill C-48 and Bill C-8 respectively.

This government, which is short on ideas, is coming back with the same bill, except for one thing: it has a different number. As for the rest, it is all the same as before. One would have thought that after listening to a large number of witnesses in committee during the last parliament, after hearing the concerns of parliamentarians in this House and after seeking a new mandate from the public, the Minister of Canadian Heritage would have changed her approach.

I would have thought the minister would have gone back to the drawing board to come up with a bill that was a bit more sensitive to the concerns raised by witnesses before the committee and by members in the House. Nothing was done. We are therefore very disappointed.

By introducing a bill which is a carbon copy of the previous version, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and her government have once again ignored anyone who did not share their views. That is why the bill is no more acceptable today than it was earlier.

The purpose of Bill C-10, an act respecting the national marine conservation areas of Canada, is to provide a legal framework for the establishment of 28 marine conservation areas, representative of each of the Canadian ecosystems. The Saguenay—St. Lawrence

Marine Park is the 29th marine conservation area. It will not be governed by this legislation since it already has its own legislation.

It is also important to note that this bill follows a commitment made by the present Prime Minister at the 1996 convention of the World Conservation Union, held in Montreal. On this occasion, as in 1994, the World Conservation Union, which represents 74 governments, 105 government agencies and more than 700 NGOs, passed resolutions calling on all coastal nations to put marine conservation measures in place quickly.

First, I wish to say that the Bloc Québécois has always been in favour of measures to protect our environment. I remind those listening that the Bloc Québécois supported the government when it introduced its legislation to create the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park.

Why is the Bloc Québécois opposed to this bill? Despite the fact that we support the establishment of environmental protection measures, the Bloc Québécois opposes it because, instead of focusing on working together, as it did in the case of the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park or phase III of the St. Lawrence action plan, the federal government is introducing marine conservation areas with no regard for Quebec's jurisdiction over its territory and environment.

Heritage Canada is planning to introduce a new structure, marine conservation areas, which will duplicate the marine protection zones of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and the protected marine areas of Environment Canada.

Heritage Canada wants to have marine conservation areas, while it has shown itself incapable of protecting the ecosystems in existing national parks.

• (1630)

One of the conditions essential to the establishment of a marine conservation area is federal ownership of the land where the area is to be established. Moreover, clause 5(2) of the bill provides that the minister cannot establish a marine conservation area, unless, and I quote:

(a) the Governor in Council is satisfied that Her Majesty in right of Canada has clear title to or an unencumbered right of ownership in the lands to be included in the marine conservation area, other than such lands situated within the exclusive economic zone of Canada;

There is a fairly significant legal problem here, because subsection 92(5) of the Constitution Act, 1867, recognizes that the management and sale of crown land are matters of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. There is therefore no federal title in this context.

Furthermore, Quebec legislation on crown lands, passed by the Quebec national assembly, applies to all crown lands in Quebec, including the beds of waterways and lakes and the bed of the St. Lawrence river, estuary and gulf, which belong to Quebec by sovereign right.

In addition, this legislation provides that Quebec cannot transfer its lands to the federal government. The only thing it can do is to authorize the federal government to use them only in connection with matters under federal jurisdiction.

According to the notes provided us by the Minister of Canadian Heritage with regard to the bill before us, marine conservation areas are planned for the St. Lawrence, the St. Lawrence estuary and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. These are three areas in which the ocean floor is under Quebec's jurisdiction.

This almost sick propensity for the federal government to interfere where it has no business being is quite simply unacceptable. Fortunately, the Bloc Québécois is here to remind it of this, and to condemn its actions.

This approach is even more incomprehensible because co-operative mechanisms already exist to protect ecosystems in the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park, and in the St. Lawrence River under the agreement entitled "St. Lawrence action plan, phase III" which was signed by all federal departments and Quebec departments concerned.

There are two examples that should be followed: the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park and phase III of the St. Lawrence action plan.

In 1977, the governments of Quebec and Canada passed identical acts to create the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park. This resulted in the creation of Canada's first marine conservation area.

One of the main features of that legislation is that the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park is the first marine park to be created jointly by the federal and Quebec governments, without any transfer of territory. The two governments will continue to fulfil their respective responsibilities.

This park includes only marine areas. Its boundaries may be changed only through an agreement between the two governments, provided there is joint public consultation in that regard.

This ought to have served as a model for the federal government in the creation of other marine conservation areas, but no.

Another model that the Minister of Canadian Heritage could have followed is phase III of the St. Lawrence action plan. That phase, which was announced on June 8, 1998, represented a total investment of \$230 million that was shared equally by both levels of government.

Why does the heritage minister not follow these two successful initiatives and why is she now claiming exclusive ownership of the seabed to set up marine conservation areas, when partnerships in the area of the environment have so far been successful?

We wonder about the true intentions of the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Will the federal government respect Quebec's constitu-

tional territorial rights in that regard, or will it again ignore it to create marine areas where it believes such areas are necessary?

The environment is a shared jurisdiction. Let us never forget that, under the Constitution Act, 1867, the governments of Canada and Quebec share responsibility for the environment.

• (1635)

Under section 92(1)(a) of the Constitution Act, 1867, Quebec passed an act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife that specifies, in section 2, the role to be played by the Quebec minister of the environment and wildlife. It is the following:

The Minister of the Environment and Fauna ensures the conservation and development of wildlife and wildlife habitats.

Under Quebec's legislation, the minister also has the authority to appoint conservation officers.

By refusing to use the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park Act as a model and by making title to the territory an essential condition for the establishment of marine conservation areas, the federal government would be able to establish marine conservation areas on submerged lands to which it claims to have title and thus bypass Quebec's environmental jurisdictions.

This is why it is important to be on the lookout and to reject any form of regulation or action which would undermine the national assembly of Quebec in this regard.

The Bloc Québécois will not let the federal government have its way on this issue nor let it fulfil its insatiable desire to trivialize our institutions, our rights and our laws, just as it is not giving in on social policy in the young offenders legislation saga.

Respect for the integrity of Quebec's territory alone justifies the fight the Bloc Québécois is waging against this bill, but there are other reasons we must oppose it.

The federal government intends to create marine conservation areas under the responsibility of Heritage Canada, so there is a lot of overlap within the federal government. On the one hand, there is Heritage Canada and, on the other, there are marine protection areas under the responsibility of Fisheries and Oceans and marine wildlife areas under the responsibility of Environment Canada. A lot of people are involved here.

One question immediately comes to mind. What are Heritage Canada's reasons for establishing marine conservation areas? They can be found in the preamble to this bill.

It is establishing marine conservation areas "to protect natural, self-regulating marine ecosystems for the maintenance of biological diversity"; second, "to establish a representative system of marine conservation areas"; third, "to ensure that Canada contributes to international efforts for the establishment of a worldwide network of representative marine areas"; fourth, "to provide opportunities for the people of Canada and of the world to appreciate Canada's natural and cultural marine heritage"; and,

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fifth, “to provide opportunities within marine conservation areas for the ecologically sustainable use of marine resources for the lasting benefit of coastal communities”.

As for Fisheries and Oceans Canada, it proposed the establishment of marine protected areas. However, in a discussion paper released by Fisheries and Oceans in January 1997 and entitled “An Approach to the Establishment and Management of Marine Protected Areas under the Oceans Act”, the purpose of marine conservation areas is also described.

In both cases, we are told that local people will have a significant involvement in the establishment of marine protected areas. I wonder how many information or organization meetings local people will be invited to in order to satisfy its bureaucracy.

Finally, Environment Canada is proposing, so as not to be left behind, to establish marine and wildlife reserves, expanding the notion of the national wildlife sanctuary beyond the territorial sea to the 200 mile limit within the exclusive economic zone under the Canadian Oceans Act.

These areas are also subject to the Canadian Wildlife Act, but require a different set of regulations, as the Fisheries and Oceans Canada discussion paper states on page 49. It is quite the pandemonium from what I can see.

At the hearings in February 1999, almost all coastal groups who appeared before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to speak out against this bill emphasized their lack of understanding of the federal government’s position.

They argued that the Canadian heritage initiative would duplicate what is already being done by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and create a great deal of confusion.

I will read from some of the testimony given. According to Patrick McGuinness, vice-president of the Fisheries Council of Canada:

If the challenge for Canadian industry in the milieu of globalization is to be streamlined and efficient, we should be able to demand government structures that are also focused and streamlined. Regardless of the merits of MCAs, of this initiative, the manner in which it is brought forward will lead to confusion, duplication and conflicts in its implementation

● (1640)

Quoting from another witness, Marc Kielley, executive director, Newfoundland Aquaculture Industry Association:

To empower the Minister of Canadian Heritage for the MCA initiative effectively undermines the authority and mandate of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans as provided for under the provisions of the Oceans Act. This should not be permitted to occur.

Here is another excerpt, from the testimony by John Melindy, project co-ordinator, NMCA feasibility study advisory committee:

Now, through the Oceans Act, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is empowered to declare marine protected areas to conserve species under threat. In view of this fact, we are mystified as to why Canadian Heritage is attempting to run a parallel conservation initiative under a separate piece of legislation.

Why, then, call witnesses and then not pay any attention to their concerns? Why not look into the areas we were directed to by the various witnesses?

One thing is clear. The government would have been better advised to have a single department oversee the protection of ecosystems and the departments concerned conclude a framework agreement delegating their responsibilities to the one chosen to be accountable in this matter, but the Minister of Canadian Heritage refuses to listen to reason.

A number of witnesses emphasized the duplications within the bill, but that is not all. Is there even more confusion in this bill? If you answer yes, you hit the jackpot.

As unbelievable as it may seem, the bill provides that each federal department will retain its own jurisdiction over the marine conservation areas.

However, when the Department of Canadian Heritage deems it appropriate, it may, in co-operation with the department concerned, adopt regulations regarding a marine conservation area that differ from the existing provisions.

Although this might seem normal in other circumstances, the difficulties can only increase when Heritage Canada regulations are enforced in marine protected areas, marine wildlife reserves and marine conservation areas, each with their own regulations.

We have another good reason for opposing this bill: Heritage Canada is incapable of protecting the ecosystems in existing national parks.

In 1996, the Auditor General of Canada published chapter 31 on the management of national parks by Parks Canada. In this chapter, the auditor general made some, to say the least, embarrassing observations, some of which follow:

Monitoring the ecological condition of the ecosystems in national parks is a high priority, according to Parks Canada policies and guidelines. However, in many national parks, the ecological conditions are not monitored on a regular, continuing basis.

On average, the management plans for the 18 national parks were 12 years old, when they should have been reviewed every five

years. The park management plans provide strategic direction for the protection of park ecosystems.

The auditor general added:

Delays in preparing management plans and ecosystem conservation plans reduce Parks Canada's ability to preserve the ecological integrity of national parks.

They cannot do their own homework regarding the follow up on national parks. How will they be able to do it for marine areas? The auditor general went even further when he said:

We are concerned that Parks Canada's ability to preserve ecological integrity in national parks and ensure sustainable park use will be seriously challenged.

Before duplicating what is basically being done elsewhere, including with marine wildlife reserves by Fisheries and Oceans, would it not be logical for the Minister of Canadian Heritage to ensure that national parks ecosystems are protected for future generations, as stated in the National Parks Act?

This bill is a means that the Liberal government wants to have to impose its centralizing vision.

This is a government that is anxious to intrude in provincial jurisdictions. With this bill, we are seeing the exact opposite of the "flexible federalism" that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs boasts about.

Thank goodness the Bloc Québécois is there to condemn what the federal government is planning on doing, namely to duplicate and totally lack any consistency.

• (1645)

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-10, an act respecting the national—they have now become national—marine conservation areas of Canada. They were only marine conservation areas before. Now they have become national marine conservation areas. It is a huge change that occurred between the 36th and the 37th parliaments.

For the benefit of the people who are watching us, I would like to remind the House that, in the first session of the 36th parliament, the government introduced Bill C-48, which dealt with this issue but left out the word national and just talked about marine conservation areas.

The bill died on the order paper, because the Prime Minister decided to prorogue the House and start a new session.

There was a new throne speech, in which the Prime Minister told us that his government had realized that it was time to put an end to federal-provincial overlap. That was quite a major announcement. We looked forward to see how it would come about. It was a disaster.

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Soon after, Bill C-8 was introduced. It came earlier in the session, as we can tell from the number it was given. It was introduced at the beginning of the second session of the 36th parliament.

During the first session, the bill had gone through first and second reading. Witnesses had appeared before the committee, a report had been tabled in the House and recommendations had been made. At the time, we thought that Bill C-8 would include improvements since the government had taken its time and had let public officials, lawyers, parliamentarians and witnesses spend time on it. We thought "All this money will not go to waste; the government will improve Bill C-8".

No such luck. Bill C-8 was a carbon copy of Bill C-48. The bill went through first reading, second reading, and was referred to a committee, which heard witnesses and reported back to the House and made recommendations.

My former colleague, the hon. member for Portneuf who made the wise decision of going back to teaching, would be very disappointed to see Bill C-10, because after spending so much time on Bill C-8, he would feel that it was a waste of his time.

However, in all fairness to the government, I must say that Bill C-10 does include a few changes.

Some changes were made in the preamble. For example, the French version of the old bill provided that marine areas had to be "représentatives et protégées", whereas in the new bill, they must be "protégées et représentatives". It goes without saying that this change, which is found in the preamble, adds a lot to the bill.

The government also seeks to "recognize that the marine environment is fundamental to the social, cultural and economic well-being of people living in coastal communities". If the marine environment is essential to the development of coastal communities, from a social, cultural and economic point of view, why should we have marine areas where people will have to pay, as is the case with every national park? We have beautiful national parks, but we must pay to visit them.

The idea was to protect ecosystems. The idea was to make sure that future generations would see the splendours of this vast country, but those who do not have money can no longer see this natural beauty, because they have to pay to do so.

• (1650)

One has to see how the government behaves. I will use an example with which I am very familiar. I see my colleague from Charlevoix. We both live in a coastal area, an area where there are problems in the lumber industry. What is being done to help our loggers? Nothing.

We have a lot of problems with fishers. What is being done? Sure, there are all kinds of problems. Quotas are being given to

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other provinces, but the government is even unable to honour Quebec's historic fishing quotas. We are demanding our fair share, but it is being denied. Quotas are being given to people who never had any before, when the policy has always been to honour Quebec's historic quotas.

We have problems with loggers, with fishers, with seasonal workers. We were promised a reform of the employment insurance plan, which is not forthcoming. How do you think our coastal communities will react when the government tries to take their lands to create national marine conservation areas? I think we will be able to occupy our lands to fight expropriation. We will take action in due course.

This government's arrogant attitude in forging ties with the communities will not serve it well when it tries to take their marine property, ignoring all social, cultural and economic considerations. A marine area will not put food on the table for people in our ridings.

There is something else. The government wants to promote an understanding of the marine environment and provide opportunities for research and monitoring. If being ridiculous were fatal, the people in the government over there would all have been dead long ago.

I am going to return to some of the statements referred to by my colleague, which I find extremely important.

In the 1996 report of the auditor general, chapter 31, on the management of national parks by Parks Canada, the auditor general makes the following statement "In the six national parks we reviewed, Parks Canada's biophysical information was out-of-date or incomplete except for La Mauricie".

It seems that everything is fine in La Mauricie National Park. Curiously it is in the Prime Minister's riding. In five national parks out of six that were studied, there were problems with biophysical information. What are we going to do to promote knowledge of the marine environment and encourage research and monitoring activities? How can the minister do so when the parks have been in existence for some time and are incapable of doing this at present?

The text continues "Monitoring the ecological condition of the ecosystems in national parks is a high priority, according to Parks Canada policies and guidelines. However, in many national parks—he looked at six—the ecological conditions are not monitored on a regular, continuing basis." What will be done in the marine parks if this is not even being done in the major parks?

The text also states that management plans for 18 national parks were an average of 12 years old, even though they ought to be reviewed every five years. A fine business: the plans are to be reviewed every five years, but 18 parks had an outdated plan. This is the best that can be said in order to be elegant.

The plans set out strategic guidelines to protect the parks ecosystems. If the plan is out of date after five years, what state can the ecosystems of the park be in when the business plan is 12 years out of date? That makes no sense.

The auditor general added "Delays in preparing management plans and ecosystem conservation plans reduce Parks Canada's ability to preserve the ecological integrity of national parks".

● (1655)

The auditor general's findings on the state of our national parks were pitiful. He said that in almost the majority of the parks visited there was no link between business plans and management plans. That is pretty terrific.

I wonder why officials are asked to do them if there is no link between the two. The auditor general also expressed concern about the fact that, in some instances, park management plans focus mainly on economic and social factors and little on ecological factors. This is what they are setting up in the parks to protect the ecosystems, and this is the department's last concern. The least of Parks Canada's concerns is looking after ecological factors, the very reason for its existence.

When the government says it is going to do this in marine areas, how can we be expected to believe what is written in black and white? The government's intent, its political desire, is not worth even the cost of the paper these things are written on.

The auditor general is also concerned about the impact of the marketing plan on the preservation of ecosystems. Thanks to its marketing strategy, Parks Canada expects to draw an increasing number of Canadians and foreign visitors, who will stay longer. This is about making more money, not protecting our ecosystems. This strategy should increase visits in off seasons.

We are concerned that Parks Canada's ability to preserve ecological integrity in national parks and ensure sustainable park use will be seriously challenged.

We want the legislation to be updated through Bill C-10, which includes good intentions, but already the government is not capable of doing what it is supposed to do with the parks, and I am not at all convinced that it will be able to do it with marine areas.

Another change is the provision to involve federal and provincial ministers and agencies, affected aboriginal organizations and coastal communities and other persons and bodies, including bodies established under land claims agreements, in the effort to establish and maintain the representative system of marine conservation areas.

Again, I see a good intention. However, when we look at how the government proceeded with the consultations on its own bill, we cannot give any credibility to that process.

When the original bill, Bill C-48 was introduced, we told the government “Show us the results of the consultations that took place”. We talked about these consultations in committee. Officials came to meet us and said that consultations were held and that this or that came out. However, when we wanted to get the real results of the consultation process, we had to apply under the Access to Information Act.

You know what happens when you make an access to information request, Mr. Speaker, because you were once an opposition member. What it boils down to is that we have access to nothing, because what we receive are eight and a half by eleven sheets, usually with so many lines blacked out that it is impossible to read the text.

When I was young, we did exercises where we filled in the blanks. It would seem that access to information officials have retained memories of this experience and are supplying us with all sorts of blanks by blacking out the important bits that would allow us to understand the text. Since the text is full of blanks, it takes quite a bit of imagination to be able to make any sense of it.

Consultation produced absolutely nothing. We received 300 sheets of paper. Only 73 of them resembled a sort of little reply coupon, which was attached to the consultation document. Even then, we were unable to see the real results of the consultation.

• (1700)

When the department tells us that the purpose of its bill is to respond to the concerns of those consulted, I say that that is false. There is no evidence of this in the bill. In any case, we are unable to obtain the evidence. When someone is unable to prove what he is telling me when questioned, it is because there is no proof.

If there were, we would be handed the results of a real consultation, without a fuss, and told “Here are the questions we asked, here are the answers we received, and here is what we did with those answers”. Instead, we are kept in the dark and told “Yes, we consulted”.

It is very important to be increasingly more democratic in this country. The government just had 34 heads of state sign a declaration to the effect that democracy is the most important value. The government should apply democracy here, in our own country, before asking others to do it.

The bill also expands on this. This is an addition to the bill. After all, I can be fair. Clause 2(2) reads as follows:

For greater certainty, nothing in this Act shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from the protection provided for existing aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada by the recognition and affirmation of those rights in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

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This was added in response to a request that they made or a concern they had expressed. I can see that the government responded positively to that concern, and this is a good thing.

Clause 2(3) provides the following:

The establishment of a marine conservation area within the exclusive economic zone of Canada does not constitute a claim to any rights, jurisdiction or duties beyond those set out in section 14 of the Oceans Act.

Earlier, my colleague pointed out the interesting points in this bill. When the government decided to end the overlap in federal-provincial jurisdictions, it forgot to look at itself.

The government will find itself with all sorts of marine areas. We will no longer know how to distinguish among them, what to call them, or who is responsible for what. I assume that at some point, if something happens, everyone will pass the buck and people will be left asking what is happening and who is responsible for what.

The Department of Canadian Heritage wants to create national marine conservation areas. Under the Oceans Act, Fisheries and Oceans Canada may create marine protection zones.

Frankly, how can one tell the difference between a marine protection zone and a national marine conservation area? The government is playing with words, with concepts, trying to take over as much territory as possible.

Under the Canadian Wildlife Act, the federal government, through Environment Canada, can create national wildlife areas and marine wildlife areas. Under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, it can create migratory bird sanctuaries.

I am thinking about the beautiful area I come from and about my colleague in whose riding the beautiful Saguenay—St. Laurence park is located. The government might want to create not far from there a national marine conservation area, a marine protection zone or a national wildlife area because they might be useful to have in this area of the country. This would bring in more tourism, since this seems to be the goal. Moreover, a marine wildlife area could be created there, as well as a migratory bird sanctuary.

That would mean five things in the same spot because it is a beautiful area and the federal government will say “It is so beautiful, we are taking it over”.

• (1705)

The government always finds a way to get into trouble. I hope that this session will quickly be prorogued, so that this bill will die on the order paper, because the government did not do its homework on this bill.

It has already been considered twice. We will have to ask witnesses to come back, once again. The government will probably say “So many witnesses were brought before the committee that

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there is nothing more to add". On the contrary, they would say "You did not understand a thing about what we said before".

The bill must be overhauled. It must take into consideration what the public wants. I see that my time is running out, so I will conclude.

I hope the government members have been listening carefully and have realized that the time has come to follow up on things that make sense. I really rely on the member opposite.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our party to indicate that, with some significant reservations, we intend to support the bill at second reading stage.

However, as happened in the last House, after committee and the refusal on the part of the government to make the necessary amendments to make the bill more meaningful, if we do not get those amendments then we will be opposing it at third reading.

By way of background, I will reflect on the need for the legislation. Canada is behind the times on having this type of legislation. We have this huge, magnificent country, surrounded on three sides by water. Unlike a number of our other allies, we do not have this type of legislation to protect our marine areas. Specifically, the United States has had legislation since, I believe, the mid-seventies. Australia and New Zealand both have had legislation for some period of time which goes a long way to protect their marine environment by creating these types of parks or conservation areas.

With regard to the environmental issues that confront us, Canada has been slow in preparing and advancing this type of legislation. It is high time that we have it. The proposed bill that is before the House today and which will eventually go to committee would empower the government to move into this area.

I want to take a moment to mention some of the areas that environmental groups in particular, and local communities, including, in some cases, provincial governments, first nations, individual local municipal governments and environmental groups, have been working on. There is a good number of these around the country and they are becoming very frustrated with the lack of involvement by the federal government in providing assistance to develop and protect these marine areas.

My friend from Nova Scotia raised the issue earlier this week or at the end of last week of the gully that is off Nova Scotia. It is a gully that is larger than the Grand Canyon but it is underwater and it is at serious risk. The oil and gas leases, which are not being exploited at this time, would create very serious damage and/or

danger to the marine life and the ecosystem if they were to proceed.

• (1710)

A great deal of work has been done on a very large park that is being proposed called Gwaii Hanaas off the coast of British Columbia on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Some of the briefing background I have indicates that environmental groups worked very hard and for a great length of time on the particular marine park. They have done it in co-operation with and with a great deal of assistance from the oil industry that has oil and gas leases in the area.

To its credit, the industry has given up its right to those leases. Everything is ready for the area to be designated. I believe all the work was completed by 1997. They have now been waiting for over four years for the designation. Obviously it will still be some time before we get the legislation through.

There is an area in the north off Baffin Island where a significant amount of background work has been done to prepare the area to be designated and hence protected.

There has been work done in Lake Superior, in the northern part of my home province, to designate an underwater park, which would enhance some of the other work done by the provincial government to preserve underwater parks for the enjoyment of the population. All these projects are at significant risk, so the importance of moving ahead cannot be overstated.

The NDP will be supporting the legislation. Hopefully it can be moved to committee where there will be amendments to strengthen it. The importance of the legislation is that it rounds out other legislation, to which we have had some reference today by other speakers.

Certainly the Fisheries Act provides some mechanism for the government to protect marine species and ecosystems, but it is not enough. We have the terrestrial land in the form of the work Parks Canada does in its empowering legislation, but this legislation fills a gap in the jurisprudence required to cover off the need to protect these areas. I emphasize it is our responsibility to act as good stewards of the marine territory in a country the size of Canada. The legislation is lacking in that regard.

I would like to cover some of the strengths and weaknesses in the specific legislation. There is provision in the bill to provide for public consultation. That would require consultation specifically with the provinces and the first nation communities involved.

We have some serious reservations. We heard concern expressed by the previous speaker from the Bloc on whether the consultation process was broad enough, extensive enough and meaningful enough to satisfy the provinces and the first nation communities.

We share that concern. In fact we feel it does not go far enough in that the bill needs to be amended and strengthened in that regard.

I will deal specifically with a number of other issues now. One is with regard to the lack of prohibition in the legislation in terms of bottom trawling. It would be very detrimental to the ecosystem in the canyon off Nova Scotia. It is deep water trawling. It would be very damaging to fish species if it were a permitted use of that area. The legislation does not deal with that, and we will seek an amendment to prohibit such commercial activity in designated marine parks.

• (1715)

We have a similar concern with regard to dredging and the impact it has on fauna, currents and the general ecosystem. The legislation does not prohibit dredging, deep sea or otherwise, in marine parks. We will seek to change that.

The bill is also lacking in the whole area of aquaculture. The royal society's report on genetically modified organisms warned in very strong language that genetically modified fish must absolutely not be allowed into the general fish population. The bill does nothing to address that concern. It is a serious issue because we know of instances around the world where whole fish stocks have been wiped out. One can only imagine the impact on our marine parks if genetically modified species escaped and ran wild. The bill must be amended to address that issue.

We are concerned that the bill does not make ecological integrity the primary consideration when drafting management plans. The bill's emphasis on ecosystem management is reasonably strong. It applies the precautionary principle and I applaud it in that regard. It may be the first piece of legislation in Canada to do so. That is the good part of it.

Again, however, the bill does not recognize that ecological integrity must be the primary consideration. It is a glaring omission, and the preamble and other sections must be amended accordingly.

We have other concerns which our colleagues in the Bloc have expressed. The Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park is a model for co-operation among all three levels of government. The arrangement is not perfect but it has worked reasonably well. It is a model that should be incorporated into Bill C-10 and we will be pressing for that when it goes to committee.

• (1720)

A final point with regard to the bill is that it does not take into account terrestrial sources of pollution or other impacts that terrestrial activity could have on marine parks.

That has implications at the national, provincial and international levels. Activities may be carried on in the United States, for instance, that have a negative impact on marine parks in Canada. The legislation does not contemplate that but it should.

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It will often be land based pollution that impacts on marine parks. There are all sorts of examples where this has occurred. Forestry and farming in British Columbia have affected coastal rivers and streams and led to problems with salmon stocks. The bill does not take into account that risk or the need to deal with it.

Those are all the points I will make. We will be supporting the bill at second reading with the reservations already mentioned. We hope the government will adopt the amendments. They would make the legislation more meaningful and help it achieve its aim of preserving marine parks for the Canadian population and for global use.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That if a recorded division is requested Thursday, May 3, on a motion to refer Bill C-23 to committee before second reading pursuant to Standing Order 73(1), it shall be deemed deferred until the end of government orders on Tuesday, May 8.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): 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)

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CANADA NATIONAL MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, an act respecting the national marine conservation areas of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Windsor—St. Clair for a very enjoyable speech. I certainly learned a lot, as I am sure all of us did, about what is good and bad in the bill.

It was interesting and kind of shocking to learn more about what is not in the bill than what is in it. The hon. member itemized some things he thought were glaringly absent. One was the bill's complete silence on aquaculture, a booming new industry which is regulated but is nonetheless a source of apprehension.

I wonder if the hon. member would expand a little on the growing industry of aquaculture and how it could affect the ecological integrity of marine parks.

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Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, there have been several instances where fish that were modified, either through breeding or genetic means, have escaped from pens into the general environment. I believe there have been three such instances around the globe. In each instance the modified fish have been more aggressive and more capable of dominating the ecosystem than naturally occurring species. The modified fish tend to reproduce very quickly and are aggressive toward other species. The end result is that they wipe out other species. This has occurred.

• (1725)

Imagine what would happen if a modified species got into a marine park. Destroying or damaging part of an ecosystem has a cumulative impact on the rest of the ecosystem. More than just one species of fish would be affected. A cumulative effect could spread through the ecological chain and devastate the entire park. This is a glaring omission in the bill that must be addressed.

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comments. I hope we can continue to work with his party and get its support at final reading.

The member expressed concerns about consultations with provinces and aboriginal peoples. We assure Canadians and all members in the House that without a federal-provincial agreement we will not proceed. The Saguenay—St. Lawrence is a special exception because the sea bed is clearly within provincial jurisdiction. Of Canada's 29 designated marine conservation areas 11 have uncontested federal title.

Does the member not see the benefit of the federal government having clear title? We will not proceed unless everyone is in accord. A non-derogation clause has been included in the legislation with respect to aboriginal rights. Does the member not see the benefit of uniformity? Does he not feel it would ensure accountability and preserve something for all Canadians in the years to come? Does the hon. member not see the benefit of proceeding only where we have clear title?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, five first nations communities addressed the environment committee over the last two days. They expressed grave concern that they had not been consulted about the species at risk legislation. To focus only on federal title is simplistic and ignores the reality of where these marine parks are. Fishing goes on in a number of these parks, by both first nations and commercial fishermen, which impacts on provincial economies. That must be taken into account.

There must be consultation. Oil and gas leases need to be negotiated with private owners. There is interest at the provincial government level in those areas. Given the size of marine parks, the importance of preserving them and their importance to the adjoining land mass, it is impossible not to consult with provincial governments and first nations.

• (1730)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would also like to come back to some of the things that are not in the bill, which were itemized in the original speech by the member for Windsor—St. Clair. He had quite a list of things that he thought would have to go into the bill through amendment and I hope the government will be amenable to those changes.

He mentioned that the bill is completely silent on the issue of deep water bottom trawling. This is a practice that is heavily criticized by environmentalists wherever it occurs. Surely in a marine park or in a marine preserve, we are going to have to take active steps with strong language in this bill to preclude that from ever happening. The same goes with dredging.

Could the hon. member perhaps outline what sort of amendment he would contemplate to ensure that neither of these practices are tolerated in a marine park?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I want to deal with dredging first. One of the first cases I was involved in as a lawyer involved the dredging of sand off Point Pelee National Park, just near my riding. I remember fighting that case along with a half a dozen other lawyers and law students representing various groups. Fishers were involved and local cottagers were being impacted by the dredging.

I always have a particular interest whenever we talk about dredging because I have a very real sense and knowledge of the impact it can have on the ecosystem, and that was relatively modest dredging.

The importance I want to raise about dredging is that I am aware, especially in my province, that we are becoming more and more in need of aggregate. We are losing some of our traditional sources because of the environmental movement and conservation of terrestrial lands. There is more and more pressure to look to the oceans for dredging. There is some risk coming further down the road and that is a potential problem for us. That is a bit of a personal concern for me.

On trawling, I do not think there is any environmental group that is not opposed. The answer to it is that it would have to be banned. There is just no way deep sea trawling should be permitted in a marine park. It is devastating to a fish stock. Literally it goes in and wipes it out. It is a reflection of the quality of the technology we have at this time of just how effective deep sea trawling is, but it literally goes in and wipes out all species of fish in the area. The ships are so large, the nets are so powerful, the technology is so developed, it just simply would have to be banned. It could not be allowed.

If we are going to allow it, we might as well forget about designating the marine park.

Government Orders

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, I also want to express concerns about the bill, perhaps not the same concerns expressed by my colleague on the right, who is probably not on my right but on my left.

However we have a number of concerns. In order to get them on the record clearly, it will be necessary to read and comment directly on pertinent parts of the bill. Before I do I want to mention a couple of things that my hon. colleague referred to.

He talked about dredging and dragging. I agree to the extent that there are areas which can be damaged by boat practices. However I would hope that if we are going to establish a marine conservation area we are certainly not going to do it in areas where fishers try to make a living through procedures that would include dragging. That would drive a nail into the coffin right off the bat.

• (1735)

In relation to dredging, when one lives in the marine environment, one realizes that there is a constant flow of material due to waves and sometimes river mouth action. Many of the harbours in which fishermen live and constantly fish occasionally start to fill up with silt, sand and the beach moving back and forward because of tide action or river action. The only way that these people can get into their own home ports and the wharves where they tie up their boats is to occasionally have that area dredged so that they do not go aground on the material that consistently moves.

Again, I hope this will be taken into consideration before any marine conservation area is designated. I do not think I can give the government that much credit to think that it would be that far-reaching in its looking ahead process. Consequently, I would be concerned about these two processes.

However, the purpose of the bill as outlined, says that the proposed legislation requires that national marine conservation areas be established for two reasons: first, for the protection and conservation of representative marine areas, and second, for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada and the world.

It is pretty hard to argue against either one of those because they are both laudable ideals. However, if we follow through on the process, the question we have to ask is in order to achieve what the bill wants to do, who is going to be rewarded and who is going to suffer because of the way the suggested conservation areas will be implemented?

We have been provided with basically a map of Canada. On this list are national marine conservation areas, the natural regions. There are 29 natural regions. Collectively they take in practically every inch of coastland around Canada. We have the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Arctic Ocean, the Great Lakes and also the Bay of

Fundy as part of the Atlantic Ocean. If all these areas are considered, it means there are intentions to perhaps set up sample national marine conservation areas in every nook and cranny of the Canadian marine environment. Again, that may not be an impractical or impossible thing to do provided it is done properly and with full consultation and involvement of all agencies, particularly the people who live in these areas.

I will throw out a word that we have used fairly often when talking about the fishery and the word adjacency. The prime concern of the government should be the people in the adjacent areas. The government should consult with those people to make sure that they fully understand what is proposed and that they are in full agreement with it before any such marine conservation area is established.

I have major concerns with perhaps not what is in the legislation but how it could be interpreted and the omissions. An area that bothers me is where it says that "subject to section 7 for the purpose of establishing or enlarging" a reserve, et cetera, that within Canada, the Government of Canada may by order in council amend the schedule. That is if we wanted to increase the size of the reserve. Then it goes on to say in another subsection:

Except as provided by subsection (2), no amendment may be made by the Governor in Council to Schedule 2 for the purpose of removing any portion of a reserve.

• (1740)

What that says to me, and maybe I will be educated otherwise, is that the government can at its own whim change, enlarge or add to the reserve at any time by order in council but it cannot take away. If for some reason the people in the affected area, whether it be for fishing rights, exploratory rights or whatever, had good reason to reduce the size of the reserve, it could not be done by order in council.

Another clause that bothers me states:

The Minister is responsible for the administration, management and control of marine conservation areas in relation to matters not assigned by law to any other Minister of the Crown.

The minister referred to is the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

I would think that in selective marine environments the prime minister would be the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. By prime minister, I mean the minister in charge and not the Prime Minister. However, if we are to expect either the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans or the Minister of Canadian Heritage to be responsible for the management and enforcement of these zones, I have major concerns with that.

Let me just mention a few areas where these people are already involved. Let me talk about the management of the fisheries and the protection of the people who procure the fishery.

Government Orders

We have talked about the coast guard. Just a while ago in this honourable House, I expressed concerns about cutbacks in the coast guard. Instead of being there to solidly look after the concerns and the needs of the people who ply the oceans around the coasts of our country, particularly Atlantic Canada, instead of enhancing the infrastructure that is needed to ensure safety and also to ensure proper environment and harvesting standards, the coast guard, under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, is being cut back.

The department is taking boats out of the fleet, cutting the helicopter fleet in half and automating 11 lighthouses. More lighthouses were automated in the past. Now 11 more are being automated, taking the manned operation away and using strict automation in lighthouses that are located in unique and barren areas of the province of Newfoundland.

In this case of the remote areas, boats plying the area and fishermen fishing from the surrounding communities rely strictly on the lighthouse, the lighthouse keeper and his or her family to provide the type of information, assurance and safety precautions that they want as they venture to sea. They rely on the lighthouse operation more so than they do on the weatherman, or the coast guard or anybody else.

I can list dozens of examples where the lighthouse and the lighthouse keeper and family members prevented wrecks from occurring, prevented other types of marine disasters, effected rescues, helped people who had been wrecked by keeping them at the lighthouse location until they could be picked up, et cetera. I can go on and on. There are numerous daily occasions when they relate to marine travellers, particularly fishermen, the weather conditions, ice conditions and ice flows, which have stranded many people fishing in rural areas, and other concerns that these people would have.

● (1745)

Lighthouses are also a major part of our culture and heritage. Many of them have been designated national historical sites. What are we doing? We are downplaying them to save money. We do not seem to concern ourselves with saving lives. We are more concerned with saving money.

Are those the types of protective services that we would see in relation to marine conservation areas? Would we be creating all of them as if the coastline of Canada were something that we could put in a front room and monitor from our chesterfield? It is not that easy. Canada is a big and wild country. To dream is tremendous but to dream the impossible dream is something else. This is perhaps what the minister is doing. He does not know what he is getting into.

I will give a couple of other examples. What about fisheries management generally? Fisheries would now get involved in

managing marine conservation areas. It cannot even manage its present job. If there ever were a completely and more poorly managed industry it is the fishery in every respect. We are asking for trouble if we add anything to the duties of the minister.

Let me zero in on the Minister of Canadian Heritage and talk about wildlife protection. The first people the committee should talk to are the wildlife enforcement officers, as they used to be called. They do not know what to be called now because they have a mixture of wildlife and forestry officials who have been given the same duties. They now look after our forests and wildlife. They do not have a clue what they are doing or what they are being ordered to do.

The problem is the extremely poor management of our parks and wildlife areas. With the legislation today, we would create a whole new environment by bringing in people to manage in a marine environment. Perhaps we should talk to the park wardens who have expressed concern about how well the department understands their duties and responsibilities and how well they are supported by the department.

The track record of the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is not one that we would like to use as an example of how to properly manage marine conservation areas. They do not seem to give the necessary assurance to people in the conservation areas, particularly the people in rural parts of Canada and Atlantic Canada where the fishery is so important. They are telling them not to worry about the marine conservation areas as they will not affect them. The legislation says otherwise.

There are a number of other issues. I talked about the minister's administrative capabilities. Subclause 9(1) of the bill says:

The minister shall, within five years after a marine conservation area is established, in consultation with relevant federal and provincial ministers and agencies and affected coastal communities, aboriginal organizations and bodies established under land claims agreements, and with any other persons and bodies that the Minister considers appropriate, prepare a management plan for the marine conservation area including provision for ecosystem protection, human use and zoning, which shall be tabled in each House of Parliament.

It would be done in consultation with everyone who should be consulted, but the operable words are "five years after the establishment".

● (1750)

I do not know whether that makes sense to anybody else but it certainly does not make any sense to me. My hon. colleague says it is a postdated cheque, which is exactly what it is. Subclause 9(2) states:

The Minister shall review the management plan of a marine conservation area at least every five years—

What it is saying is that if a mistake is made we should not worry because every five years the minister would review it.

—and any amendments to the plan shall be tabled with the plan in each House of Parliament.

Government Orders

Who decides what changes and amendments would be made? Subclause 9(4) states:

Provisions of a management plan respecting fishing, aquaculture, fisheries management, marine navigation and marine safety are subject to agreement between the Minister and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The people who would decide how the affected people in the rural communities would live through all this are the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

With the examples that I gave earlier, I do not think too many fisherpersons in Port de Grave, St. Barbe or St. Mary's are wondering tonight when those ministers will go there and establish a marine conservation area.

As we know, attempts were made to establish a marine conservation area in Newfoundland a few years ago but the people and the agencies involved were not convinced that it would be a good thing for them.

We have absolutely no problem with the word conservation. If we had been conscious of conservation years ago we would have been better off today, and Newfoundland certainly would have been a lot better off.

We have no problems with management. In fact, we wish the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans would manage the fishery much better than he does. Let me give an example. People watching CPAC tonight may be thinking that the government probably would not interfere. When the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans walks into the House, snaps his fingers and gives quotas for shrimp, crab or anything else—and I am thinking particularly of last year's shrimp—to anybody without any consultation with the players involved, what does it say about the government?

If the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, along with the Minister of Canadian Heritage who is responsible for the management of our parks and wildlife, are the two people who would secure our heritage, our culture, our fisheries and our marine environment, then I am extremely concerned.

The bill goes on to state a number of other things of concern to individuals, especially in marine environments. Clause 13 states:

No person shall explore for or exploit hydrocarbons, minerals, aggregates or any other inorganic matter within a marine conservation area.

I have no problem with the marine conservation areas being established beforehand with an agreement, but in many of our coastal environments we are only now beginning to understand the potential that we have.

It is too bad that my time is up because there are still a number of issues that I would like to talk about, but perhaps on another day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for St. John's West for his speech, because I think he did well in stating the problem of achieving the balance between conservation and economic activity in the surrounding areas. I think he probably knows what he is talking about, because he was talking about his own area.

• (1755)

I just wanted to say briefly that the Saguenay—St. Lawrence Marine Park that was created in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is indeed a world class tourist attraction, but it has its problems. Now that the park will be established, it is important that the government allocate adequate resources.

Earlier the member talked about coastal surveillance, about the monitoring of fish species and all marine species. The need to ensure a balance is also true for this type of environment.

Based on his speech, could the member tell us the major elements that he thinks are problematic in this bill?

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. I agree with members of the Canadian Alliance who suggested earlier that the bill as it exists should be dropped. It should be sent back to the drawing board for proper consultation.

We have to be very conscious about marine conservation and our heritage. I have no problem with that. We also have to remember that the money generated in the country that pays for everything else that we need to do and the money that pays our social costs comes from the development of our resources.

We must do that in harmony with the environment. We cannot do it despite it. Half the bill talks about enforcement, offences and punishment rather than the real issues. Let us get back to the drawing board and let us do it right.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed a bill, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

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[English]

It being 5.57 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]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance) moved that Bill C-272, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (child adoption expenses), be read the second time and referred to committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, as I understand the process, it being deemed a non-votable bill I have 15 minutes at the outset of the debate tonight and then a 5 minute wrap-up at the end.

I will start by thanking my hon. colleague from Calgary Southwest for seconding my bill tonight. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-272, an act to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to child adoption expenses.

Unfortunately one of the sad realities of the Income Tax Act, aside from the fact that it has become a tool of oppression in the country and should be reformed, is the fact that the act in its present form does not contain any provisions relating to child adoption expenses.

I have presented the bill in an attempt to correct this injustice and with the hope of making the Income Tax Act more equitable to all parents, in this case to those who have adopted a child.

Adoptive parents have unique challenges when they adopt children, all of which are not experienced by families that are fortunate enough to conceive their own children. These challenges and the expenses associated with them arise from the arduous steeplechase that has become the adoption process in our country.

Those who are involved in the administration of the adoption process would likely argue that the process exists for the protection of the children and is necessary to ensure that children are placed in the best possible homes. I cannot disagree. I concur with that wholeheartedly.

- (1800)

I would argue that we have a duty to ensure that all children are placed with responsible and caring adults who will raise them in a loving family environment. While I agree that we need to conduct evaluations and studies to ensure that the adoptive parents are

suitable, I do not agree with placing the financial burden for this process solely on the backs of the adoptive parents.

With the addition of each new adoption requirement or assessment, we increase the overall cost of the adoption and, as a consequence, decrease the number of families who can seriously consider adoption. These requirements have compounded in recent years to the point where, in the case of a private or international adoption, couples may face costs in the thousands of dollars for legal fees, travel expenses, home studies and a number of other assessments.

Some of the letters I have received in recent months say that these expenses can exceed \$20,000. The magnitude of such upfront costs often results in discouraging couples from even thinking of adoption.

As a government and as a society we should be searching for ways to reward those couples who make the courageous decision to adopt a child. That is the inspiration behind Bill C-272.

The bill would amend the Income Tax Act to allow adoptive parents to deduct expenses arising from the adoption of a child, subject to a maximum of \$7,000. The deduction is on a per child basis and the expenses must have been incurred in that taxation year or in the previous two years.

The introduction of the bill follows consultation with a number of adoption agencies as well as individuals who have personally adopted children. Statistics Canada's national longitudinal survey of children and youth has clearly shown us, in empirical terms, that an environment where there is a mother and a father is an environment in which children thrive.

In essence the bill is very straightforward but we all know from experience that nothing relating to the Income Tax Act is ever straightforward, especially if any Canadian might actually derive some benefit from it. For the amendment to have any success it must therefore follow the format of all other approved deductions and clearly set out who may benefit and to what extent. The bill was drafted to do exactly that.

For the benefit of those who are following the broadcast of the debate tonight, I would like to take a moment to highlight the exact provisions of the bill. First, the bill would apply to Canadian and international adoption expenses. Second, the maximum deductions, as I have already said, per eligible child shall not exceed \$7,000. Third, it defines a child as any person under the age of 17.

As with all income tax deductions, the claim for the deduction must be substantiated by filing the following with the minister: receipts issued by the payee and containing the appropriate reference information and, second, a Canadian adoption order or a recognition order with respect to a foreign adoption.

Acceptable adoption expenses under the legislation would include: legal fees; home study or psychological study expenses;

expenses related to the child's immigration to Canada; travel expenses related to the adoption of the child; and agency fees. Expenses that would not be eligible are any expenses incurred during the adoption in contravention of any law and any expenses incurred in carrying out any surrogate parenting arrangement.

When one considers how well structured the bill is, one can appreciate how I felt so confident when I submitted the bill to the private members committee for consideration. The bill met all of the criteria to make the bill votable. In addition, since its introduction I have been receiving letters of support, which continue today, from all across the country. The letters of support were from parents who have adopted, from couples who are wading through the adoption process and from the adoption agencies themselves.

I would like to read to the hon. members present each of these letters so that they could appreciate the impact the legislation would have on future Canadian families, but in the interests of time, I have selected but a few of the responses received which I feel reflect the sentiments of all of those I received.

The first letter states:

I am writing in support of the adoption tax credit. My husband and myself are in the process of an adoption from Vietnam. The fees are over \$21,000. Both of us work in social services and needless to say, do not have a sufficient collective income to support such a process. We are doing our best to provide a home for an orphaned child and would greatly appreciate the support of a tax credit to increase the feasibility of this endeavour.

● (1805)

The second letter states:

My husband and I recently adopted from Russia a 9 month old little girl and the overall costs were \$40,000 so any amount of a deduction would certainly go a long way to encourage others to adopt since there are so many children that need homes and we are trying to increase immigration and what better way than this. Thank you for introducing this bill.

The third letter states:

My husband and I adopted a little boy from Russia 1.5 years ago and have recently noticed in our local paper an article on the needs in a Russian Orphanage and how we here in Canada can be more aware of the needs to adopt. I think more people would help these children who are in desperate need if the government would be more encouraging to those who wish to adopt. Thank you for introducing this bill. The need is definitely there.

The fourth letter states:

My husband and I after 7 years of trying to have our own family are embarking on international adoption. This will take an additional 2 or 3 years because of the substantial cost involved. A tax deduction would shave a year off the start of our family.

The fifth letter states:

Adoption, for some people, is the only way that they can achieve their dream of creating a family. Adoption, however, is also a very costly way. The passage of a bill,

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such as the one you are proposing, would assist couples like ourselves in making our dream come true. We wish you much success in establishing this bill as law.

The sixth letter states:

My wife and I are presently adopting a child in Ontario and we are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the seemingly endless expenses. We know that other families who adopt privately must be facing considerably larger costs than us, so we wish to offer you our support for this excellent piece of legislation that you are presenting.

The seventh letter states:

Many Canadians would like to be able to adopt from overseas, but due to the prohibitive cost (up to \$20,000 to \$30,000), many are unable to consider this option. Child poverty is a huge problem of immense proportions around the world. Adoption is one way Canadians can make a direct personal contribution by giving a child from a poorer country a head start within a Canadian home, while enriching their own lives with the blessing of a child. Canadians have a reputation for being humanitarians. . . your bill is one very practical, inexpensive way the Canadian Government can make this a possibility for more Canadian families.

The eighth letter states:

As a parent who had adopted a child in 1999 I understand the financial burden that is endured by the expense of the adoption process. Our son's adoption was a very simple and straightforward adoption; local, Canadian, birth parents (and their families) in agreement and supportive, and no legal, medical or procedural problems, but still the final cost of the adoption was \$9,400 by the time the adoption was finalized by a judge. In B.C. the fee schedule for adoption has risen since we adopted our son. It has now gone up by approximately \$3,000, therefore I am expecting that the adoption of a second child will cost approximately \$13,000 in adoption agency fees, legal fees, court costs, medical exams, background checks and government form processing. I cannot speak for all adopting parents, but I know that we will have to borrow the money to finance the adoption of a second child. I have talked to a couple through our adoption experience that could not afford the expense of adoption and therefore will not have a family.

I could go on indefinitely but I think I have made the point. Better yet, in writing to me the people themselves have made the point.

This was a soundly drafted bill aimed at benefiting children and adoptive parents and it had national support. Who would not have felt confident? I certainly did and perhaps that was my mistake. Members can imagine my disappointment when I learned that the private members' business subcommittee did not share my confidence in the bill and it was not deemed votable.

For the benefit of those watching the broadcast tonight, they should understand how the process works for all private members of all five parties on both sides of the House. First there has to be an idea. In this case it was tax deductions for adoption expenses. Members get help from legal counsel at the House of Commons to draft the bill. It is then introduced in the House. After that the member has to be lucky enough to have his or her name drawn in a lottery. There are 300 members and 15 bills are drawn so the odds are not that great. When it is drawn the member has to go before an all party subcommittee and try to persuade the members to make the item votable. Up to 5 of the 15 can be made votable.

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• (1810)

There are a lot of hurdles, no matter well intentioned the bill, no matter how great the cause. Unfortunately this bill did not make that hurdle to become votable so that all members could vote on it. Hopefully it would have gone to the finance committee to at some time in the future become law.

We are only a few months into this session and this is the second time that I have tried to bring forward legislation to benefit families in this country. This is the second time the private members committee has voted not to make my bill votable.

There is a growing concern, on the part of all members. I am appreciative of the fact that the government House leader struck a committee to look at changes that might include making votable all private members' bills fortunate enough to be drawn. I certainly support that and I hope we go on with it.

I would also like to say tonight, not just in regard to the two bills of mine that we have debated, that I speak for myself and other members who have had their bills drawn but not made votable. If we do make a change in this parliament, I hope we will make it soon and make it retroactive so that every bill that was drawn in this parliament would go to a vote, including this legislation.

It is well past time that instead of making adoption a very difficult alternative we provide encouragement to families who have the desire to adopt children.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the private member's bill proposed by the member for Prince George—Peace River proposes to allow taxpayers to deduct expenses related to the adoption of a child, to a maximum of \$7,000.

Let me first explain that a basic principle of our income tax system is that tax relief is not generally provided for personal expenses such as adoption costs.

The government is aware that parents adopting a child incur relatively high costs, but these and other personal expenses do not qualify for tax assistance because they are incurred at an individual's discretion in widely varying amounts and types depending on the individual's tastes, lifestyle and economic status.

[Translation]

In fact, the better a taxpayer's socioeconomic situation, the more likely he is to incur greater and more varied personal expenses. If these expenses were deductible, a fraction of the personal expenses incurred by certain taxpayers would be paid for by all taxpayers.

[English]

Where tax relief is provided for personal expenses, it applies either to expenses incurred to earn income, such as child care

expenses, union dues and moving expenses incurred to take employment at a new location, or to largely non-discretionary expenses such as above average medical expenses.

Let us take the example of child care expenses. As hon. members know, eligible child care expenses are deductible in computing income. The purpose of the child care expense deduction is to recognize that taxpayers who need to incur child care expenses to earn employment or business income, to attend a recognized educational institution or to take an eligible vocational training course have a lower ability to pay taxes than taxpayers with the same income who do not need to incur such expenses.

[Translation]

Up to \$7,000 annually can be deducted for expenses incurred for the care of a child under the age of seven, and \$4,000 for a child between the ages of seven and fifteen. The ceiling for children who qualify for the disability deduction is \$10,000.

[English]

Because it would be very difficult to separate the personal and non-discretionary elements of the costs associated to children, tax assistance is provided to families with children through a predetermined benefit rather than through tax credits or deductions for specific expenses.

• (1815)

The government provides considerable financial support to families with children through the Canada child tax benefit, the CCTB. More specifically, the Canada child tax benefit has two components: the base benefit for low and middle income families and a national child benefit supplement for low income families.

As of July 1, 2001, families will receive up to \$1,117 per child under the base benefit. In addition, supplements of \$221 for each child under the age of seven where no child care expenses are claimed and of \$78 for the third and each subsequent child are added to the base benefit.

The maximum national child benefit supplement as of July 2001 will be \$1,255 for the first child, \$1,055 for the second and \$980 for the third and each subsequent child. Therefore, the maximum Canada child tax benefit will be \$2,372 for the first child, \$2,172 for the second child and \$2,097 for each subsequent child.

Our government has proven that it is committed to investing in the future of our children. In fact, even before the budget was balanced the government committed \$850 million to the Canada child tax benefit to start building the NCB in 1997. In the 1998 budget, the federal government enriched the national child benefit by an additional \$850 million. The design of this enrichment was set out in the 1999 budget, which also proposed an additional investment of \$300 million to extend benefit enhancements to modest and middle income families. The 2000 budget and the 2000

economic statement and budget update enriched benefits by an additional \$2.6 billion.

As a result of these actions, maximum Canada child tax benefits will rise to more than \$2,500 for the first child by the year 2004. By 2004 this will bring the federal government's commitment to the Canada child tax benefit to \$9 billion per year.

[*Translation*]

As members know, improvements to the CCTB were an important part of the general tax cuts for individuals proposed in the 2000 budget and in the economic statement and budget update for 2000.

[*English*]

Families will also benefit from the following measures: the reduction in tax rates for all income levels; the elimination of the deficit reduction surtax; the increases in the amount they can earn tax free and the amounts at which higher tax rates apply; the restoration of the full indexation of the personal income tax system, which will protect families against automatic tax increases and the erosion of benefits, including the Canada child tax benefit, caused by inflation.

In total the 2000 budget and the 2000 economic statement and budget update will provide \$100 billion in cumulative tax relief for Canadians by the year 2004-05.

I would like to emphasize that these cuts were especially beneficial to families with children. By the year 2004-05 these measures will translate into a 27% reduction in the tax burden for families with children, compared to 21% on average for all taxpayers.

[*Translation*]

Before concluding, I would like to add that measures were announced in the 2000 budget to improve the parental leave provisions under the EI plan.

The budget proposed to increase the number of weeks of parental leave from 10 to 35. It also proposed changes to make benefits more flexible and accessible. These improved benefits are also available to parents who adopt a child effective December 31, 2000.

• (1820)

[*English*]

In conclusion, the government recognizes that parents should receive financial assistance to help ensure that their children's needs are met. I believe I have clearly demonstrated that the government places a very high priority on investing in children and is providing the assistance they need.

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However, it would not be appropriate to ask taxpayers at large to subsidize adoption expenses through the tax system because of the largely discretionary nature of these personal expenses.

For these reasons I would ask hon. members not to support the bill.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure today that I rise to speak on Bill C-272, a private member's bill from my colleague from Prince George—Peace River.

The bill addresses a very important issue and a very personal issue, that of adoption, and the inordinately high costs associated with it for Canadian families and parents who choose to adopt children. A tax deduction of up to \$7,000 for expenses would go a long way in helping Canadians to deal with costs that can run as high as or even greater than \$20,000 per child in the adoption process.

Clearly in an egalitarian society and a society where we speak of the importance of equality of opportunity, the choice for families to adopt children should not be available only to the rich. Effectively under the current system the only people who can make this decision are higher income individuals or those Canadians who can make the tremendous financial sacrifice to make this important choice.

It is not just a choice on behalf of their own families, on behalf of these couples. There is a societal benefit to augmenting the ability of Canadian families and parents to adopt children. Society benefits by children living in supportive environments, whether they be their biological families or adoptive families. It should not make a difference.

The comments of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, which obviously represent the views of the government, clearly miss the point being made in this bill by the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River. The fact is that all society would benefit if we were to somehow ease the lives of families that choose to adopt children, in this case through financial means through the tax system.

Ironically the Liberals have no difficulty in using the tax system for all kinds of Pavlovian policies to encourage one sort of behaviour and to discourage another kind of behaviour.

Typically I am opposed to measures that complicate the tax code further in order to encourage one type of behaviour or discourage another. However, I believe that in this case the fundamental benefit to society outweighs the negative of complicating the tax code a little bit to implement this measure.

We in our party are supportive of this measure. It is terribly unfortunate that this has not been deemed votable. If Liberal members opposite had the opportunity to vote individually on this

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measure, I think we would find that there would be a strong level of support among private members opposite for this forward thinking and important piece of legislation.

It is unfortunate, as the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River said earlier, that this piece of legislation was not deemed votable. In fact the process by which private member's legislation in the House becomes votable or non-votable is Byzantine and circuitous and certainly not constructive or encouraging to private members who are trying to make a difference.

• (1825)

We should be encouraging private members' business as a legitimate vehicle through which members of the House can express not only the views of their constituents but also the types of forward thinking public policy measures that can change the lives of Canadians.

It is unfortunate that the government has not been more open to the rights of private members in this regard. As parliamentary reform gains some steam we are still optimistic we will see some significant changes in the future. One of those very important changes is to make mechanisms available to private members to present legislation and have it deemed votable without having to jump through the hoops and go through the current discouraging process in that it does not provide private members with the ability to have their legislation deemed votable.

I think the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River mentioned that this was his second piece of legislation recently that was not deemed votable. That is discouraging for private members who are trying to advance important issues and policies.

In closing, we are supportive of the legislation. We wish we could express our support quantitatively through a vote. However we have once again been denied that opportunity through the government's closed door process. It is not an open door process.

Mr. Roy Cullen: It is an all party committee.

Mr. Scott Brison: The hon. member opposite just said that it is an all party committee. All of our committees are all party, but the fact is that one party has the majority on those committees. Quite frequently it is difficult, if not impossible, for an opposition member to effect change in the committee process. It is unfortunate that case exists. It discourages forward thinking members of parliament who sit on the opposition benches. It discourages principled decisions from having an impact on the future of Canada.

If we are to see some changes in our ability to effect change and to make a difference in the lives of Canadians, it has to start through significant parliamentary reform and not just through tinkering.

We are supportive of the legislation and hope to see it come back in the future to a parliament that respects the views of private members enough to ensure that this type of legislation comes to the House in a votable form. That would enable every member of the House, whether on the government side or on the opposition benches, to vote on issues of importance. I know there is a significant level of support for this initiative on the government benches that will not be quantified by a vote. That is highly unfortunate.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to speak to Bill C-272, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (child adoption expenses).

The purpose of this bill is to allow a taxpayer a deduction for expenses of up to \$7,000 related to the adoption of a child when computing his or her income for a taxation year.

I remind the House that my colleague from the Bloc, the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, introduced a bill almost identical to this one in 1998.

Another bill, Bill C-289, was introduced in September 2000 by the same Alliance member, but it died on the order paper when the election was called.

It is therefore a bill my party the Bloc Québécois and I support.

As we know, adoption is a provincial responsibility. However, the lack of participation on the part of the federal government creates a grey area for adoptive parents.

• (1830)

Indeed, why would the federal government, which has no qualms about interfering in many areas under provincial jurisdiction, not intervene efficiently in the area of adoption?

A federal tax deduction would not only be a welcome incentive for adoptive parents, but would also make the tax system fairer.

Biological parents are covered under the health insurance plan for prenatal and postnatal care whereas adoptive parents must pay out of their own pocket the full cost of an adoption.

It is odd that the costs of in vitro fertilization are deductible when the costs of adopting a child are not. This is neither fair nor wise on the part of the federal government.

The Quebec government estimates that an international adoption costs the adoptive parents an average of \$20,000. Children of the World, one of the largest Canadian adoption agencies, estimates the

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cost of adopting a child in China at \$17,000 per couple. These figures include expenses in Quebec and in China.

The bill should allow taxpayers to deduct from their income the child adoption expenses, not by an amount not exceeding \$7,000, but by double that amount.

The federal government should recognize, as Quebec does, the important social contribution of adoptive parents to our society. It has been observed that half of Canadian adoptions are to Quebec families. This is in part due to the fact that Quebec's family policy is far more progressive than that of the federal government.

Adoptive parents face special expenses, particularly in the case of private and international adoptions. I know whereof I speak. Thirty-two years ago, my wife and I adopted a child.

Many couples who want to adopt a child think about it twice because of all the expenses it entails, which is where this bill comes in.

For almost nine years now, Quebec has undergone a change quite unique in the western world. Every year, between 700 and 800 children from all over the world finally find in Quebec a family to adopt them. It obviously would have made adoption easier if the adoptive parents had been able to deduct from their income, at the federal level, the child adoption expenses.

We cannot talk about adoption without talking about family. In Quebec, we are proud to have an integrated and comprehensive family policy. This policy includes among other things a tax credit for adoption expenses, family allowance benefits and the development of educational services and day care for young children, what is commonly known as the \$5 a day day care. Quebec is also developing a parental insurance program based on the needs of families in Quebec.

In short, it is obvious that the federal government is 20 years behind in this area. By quickly passing this bill, it would at least be taking a step in the right direction.

In closing, I deplore the fact that this bill is not votable.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-272, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, which deals with child adoption expenses.

Every once in a while a bill comes up in the House that grabs someone's attention. Bill C-272 provides fairness and equity in circumstances where there is perhaps great need. I applaud the hon. member in the Alliance for bringing forward this private member's bill.

• (1835)

The purpose of the enactment of the bill is to allow taxpayers a deduction that does not exceed \$7,000 for expenses related to the adoption of a child. The bill says that a limit of \$7,000 can be used as a deduction when they compute their income tax returns for the tax year.

We have already heard this afternoon that a great number of the adoptions taking place in Canada at this time cost far in excess of \$7,000. The cost of adoptions from overseas, adoptions from Haiti, adoptions from China and adoptions from Vietnam can exceed \$20,000. The bill says that a cap of \$7,000 could be used as a deduction, not all the expenses but a certain percentage of them, so that young people in some instances could afford to have a family.

Expenses must have been incurred in the taxation year or in the previous two years. A great deal of the expenses incurred in adoption are over many years. Young couples sometimes wait seven, eight, nine or ten years to adopt.

Adoption expenses mean any expense incurred on account of adopting a child. Many individuals who go overseas have a huge output of dollars so that they can stay in a country for a set period of time. Another part of the bill says that it applies to both children adopted within this country and those from without.

I want to relate to the House the emotional turmoil, the feelings of young people when they realize that perhaps they will be unable to raise a family. It puts a huge emotional burden on them. It is an emotional roller coaster in locating a baby for adoption. In many situations finally approved for adoption, the birth mother changes her mind. Then again the couple is thrown into a turbulent, emotional scene. All this emotional stress is compounded by the financial burden, particularly for those in lower income brackets.

I should like to explain a bit about the situation my wife and I found ourselves in. In 1986 we were married. We decided before we got married that we would like to have four children. After three or four years of trying to have a baby and going through all the tests to check out medical reasons why we could not, we applied for adoption when it was obvious we would be unable to conceive.

We were told at that time that it would be a seven year wait. We left that province and moved back to Alberta and applied for the adoption process there. We went through the open adoption route and within a year or two our names had been chosen as prospective adoptive parents.

I remember with great clarity the thrill we had when all of a sudden the phone call came that told us a birth mother had chosen us to raise the child she was still carrying. The birth mother showed a great deal of love in saying she realized that her child needed to be put into a home with parents who could look after her.

Private Members' Business

The cost was close to \$7,000. We were young. We were both right out of school. I had been working for some time and we were able to come up with the \$7,000. When I came into the network of the adoption agency I met all those other young people who were waiting. I met young people who were 21 or 22 years old who had been slaving away. When they were hit with the fact that it would be \$7,000, they realized they had very little chance of ever having a family. I saw young people break down when they were told that the costs could be \$5,000, \$6,000, \$7,000 or \$10,000. I saw wives weep in realization that they would never be able to raise a family.

● (1840)

I have friends who have stood beside us and said how they rejoice in the fact that we were able to adopt not just one but two children, because financially they would never be able to afford it.

The tax deduction will not perhaps change all of that, but it does give a little more hope to those wanting to raise a family. I applaud again the hon. member for bringing the bill forward.

On our first adoption we adopted a beautiful little girl straight from the hospital, Kristen Nicole. She is now eight, going on nine years old. On our second adoption it was a very similar situation. The list was long. The list was huge. The people who were applying for adoptions were begging for children. Many were being turned away because of the financial restraints. Many people were hurting.

I think back to the time of the adoptions and I remember being with my wife when one of our friends made the announcement that they were pregnant. I remember the evenings where my wife would literally cry on the pillow all night, and I would feel like it as well, because we did not think we would ever be able to have a family.

The second adoption was another gift of God and one that we are very thankful for. I am particularly concerned, as I have already mentioned, for those who cannot have children and who realize that they will never be able to afford adoption.

Adoption, as we have already spoken about, is under provincial jurisdiction. There are a number of other things that perhaps the federal government could do. I should research it a little more, but at the time that we adopted the adoptive mother was not allowed as much maternity leave.

We were all of a sudden going to have a baby. If we would have conceived the child ourselves she would have been able to have three months longer of maternity leave than what an adoptive mother was allowed. That amount of time is another area the federal government could look at because that extra time is needed to bond.

This is a good bill. I wish the Liberal government would have made it votable. It could have shown that it has a commitment to families and a commitment to doing what is right.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that some other hon. members did not elect to participate in the debate tonight. I do not want to sound too condemning of my colleagues in other parties or perhaps even my own. What we see unfortunately is indicative of the need for the process to change, as I indicated earlier.

I have not crunched the numbers to see the statistics, but I sense there is a lower and lower priority on private members' legislation in this place. Members on both sides, be they government backbenchers or members of the other four parties, are disconnecting from the process because they do not see often enough that all their hard work getting a bill ready to be presented in the Chamber is worthwhile. It just seems hopeless. I think tonight is a reflection of that in that there are not more members here to speak to such an important issue.

It is not just that I think it is an important issue because it happens to be my bill, but it is an important issue because it affects the lives and futures of thousands upon thousands of Canadians.

It is a sad moment. Hon. members are increasingly non-participatory in formulating private members' legislation to begin with and non-participatory in the debate as well. When they see that a piece of legislation has been deemed non-votable anyway, what is the point?

● (1845)

It is only going to receive the one hour, as in the case of Bill C-272 today, and then it is dropped. Obviously from the remarks of the parliamentary secretary there is not even a willingness on the government's part to look at this particular issue with an open mind.

In my brief closing comments I will say that I at least appreciate the fact that other members participated in the debate tonight, and I thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments. I do not agree with them.

I certainly appreciate the fact that the parliamentary secretary got all dressed up in a tux tonight just to come and talk to this bill. I am sure adoptive parents, who have incurred these huge costs and who are perhaps sitting at home in blue jeans with the knees out of them watching the debate tonight, can appreciate the fact that he got up and completely shot down the whole idea that they deserved perhaps a small tax deduction.

The parliamentary secretary said something along the lines that tax relief was not generally allowed for personal costs because these types of expenses were incurred according to an individual's choice. As we laid out, and as my colleague from Crowfoot spoke so well about his personal experience, this is not a matter of choice. In many cases this is the only choice for a couple who cannot conceive a child of their own. It is not a matter of choice. There is no choice.

Adjournment Debate

I would argue that the government should consider looking at something like this. If it does not like the exact way the bill is drafted and the \$7,000 cap or whatever, it should at least look at the possibility of doing something about this and the costs that are being incurred. It should realize that in many cases the state would have to incur a huge cost anyway. A child who was not adopted, because there were not sufficient numbers of people out there who could afford it, would have to be raised by the state, the taxpayers.

I thank the member for Etobicoke North for his support. I thank the member for Kings—Hants and my colleague from Crowfoot for his personal story. My cousin went through all the hoops and expenses of adoption. They adopted two wonderful children, who are both teenagers now. They are very grateful for the opportunity to have provided those two children with a loving family environment and for all the joy they have brought and continue to bring to Dale's and Darlene's lives.

I think all of us know someone, maybe a relative, a friend or a friend of a friend, who has gone through this. This is one piece of legislation and one debate tonight that we can personally relate to. It is a shame that the all party committee, like all committees in this place that are controlled by Liberals because they have the majority, did not deem this votable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as 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.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Speaker, I rise to follow up on my question on Thursday, February 15, regarding a bizarre hiring practice that the federal government has, whereby many jobs in the Ottawa area are only available and open to people in Ontario and Quebec. It is offensive that people in my riding in Nova Scotia or other ridings in Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, New Brunswick or other provinces cannot even apply for jobs with the federal government, the national government. The government is discriminating against people by virtue of where they live.

• (1850)

I would like to quote a couple of examples. There is a job advertised in Ottawa for a paralegal in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. It pays \$38,000 a year. Who can apply? Only those who live in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. I find it incredible that people in Nova Scotia, British Columbia or New Brunswick cannot apply for these jobs.

Another example is a secretary in Ontario in the Department of Industry. It pays up to \$35,000 a year. Who can apply? Only those people who live in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. The Government of Canada will not even hire Canadians unless they live in a very small area.

Since I brought this up in the House, I received a copy of a letter which the Alberta minister of international and intergovernmental affairs sent to the government. It said:

We...have had discussions with the federal government about eliminating the discriminatory process used by the Public Service Commission of Canada (PSC). Alberta believes the PSC practices are contrary to the Operating Principles and the Labour Mobility Chapter in the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT).

I have a copy of another letter, this one addressed to the Prime Minister from the premier of the province of Nova Scotia. He said:

I fail to see any justification for the restriction of applications for positions in the National Capital Region which have a national impact.

Nova Scotia constituents or residents cannot even apply.

He went on to say:

May I point out that Article 706 of the Agreement on Internal Trade specifically forbids any Party to "require a worker of any other Party to be resident in its territory as a condition of...access to employment opportunities."

Governments are...committed to ensure, by July 1, 2001, full compliance with these mobility provisions—

This goes on and on. The hiring practice has to stop because the Government of Canada needs input from the east coast. It needs input from the west coast. It needs input from the north. If the Government of Canada in Ottawa just focuses on Quebec and Ontario from which to draw all its employees, we will not have a proper government nor will we reflect the needs of New Brunswick, Alberta and British Columbia.

I ask the minister to clarify this position, to rectify it now and tell the people in the other provinces outside of Ontario and Quebec that all jobs in the Government of Canada in Ottawa will be open to all people in the nation.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester for his intervention in this area. I can understand to some extent his frustration.

The Public Service of Canada is indeed one of our greatest assets and the government strives very hard to ensure that the public service in reflects the diversity of the country. I can assure the

Adjournment Debate

member that there are employees across the country who are resident in his province, in my province, in British Columbia and in the Northwest Territories. The reality is the public service does reflect residency across the country.

He talked very specifically about the mobility provisions. I believe the President of the Treasury Board answered his question to some extent when he first raised it back on February 15.

However the other issue that is important is the cost to the public service in providing employment applications across the country. It is the policy of the public service to only impose this restriction on certain types of job classifications. I know for a fact that today we are trying to acquire a new auditor general and that is a skill set that goes across the country and is irrelevant as to residency. It is based to some extent on the skill set.

The thought process that is in the Public Service Employment Act is basically to provide for the Public Service Commission to restrict the hiring practices for one main reason. That is to restrict the number of applicants. Clearly, if the jobs were advertised across the country in certain designated fields, the feeling is that there would be a significant number of applicants and that the public service would have to process those applications. That would be a significant cost to the government. In other words, it is conceptually possible that they would have 30,000 or 40,000 applications for one job and the cost of processing and responding to those applications would be substantial.

• (1855)

I will quickly mention the charter provisions. The Public Employment Act has borne the scrutiny of the justice department. It conforms with our charter requirements.

I thank the member for his intervention on this and I look forward to his ideas on how we could change this in the future.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I am on my feet regarding a question that I put to the Minister of National Defence regarding the sale of 40 helicopters and 8 Challenger jets by a company called Lancaster Aviation Inc. based in Milton, Ontario.

Something is patently wrong with that deal. I have suggested to the minister that the crown has lost a lot of money on the deal. In fact, it sold 8 Challenger jets for \$30 million Canadian and the market value on those jets was somewhere in the order of \$50 million U.S.

I have asked the minister how Lancaster Aviation got the contract because it was a sole source contract. Nobody else was

invited to bid on the contract. Lancaster Aviation Inc. was awarded a contract in 1997 to sell spare parts. The contract was then altered and a special amendment was put through without tender to allow them to sell Bell helicopters and Challenger jets. The results of both these sales have brought in about \$70 million Canadian.

I also put a question to the minister in the form of a question on the order paper. I asked him what commission Lancaster Aviation Inc. received on this deal. However, the government will not answer. What is it trying to hide?

The truth is that the Lancaster deal will make Shawinigate look second rate. We will blow the lid off this deal because it is a behind the scenes sort of a deal cooked up between the government and Lancaster Aviation Inc., and we want to know for what purpose.

We can always sense when the government is trying to hide something. I put those questions on the floor of the House of Commons one year ago and the government has failed to answer them. I believe Canadians have a right to know what their government is doing and who it is doing business with.

How could one company be given the sole contract to sell Challenger aircraft and Bell helicopters without going through a tendering process? Why should that be allowed to happen? We want to know why the government has yet to come up with the answers.

How much did Lancaster Aviation Inc. get paid to sell this surplus material? We are talking about millions of dollars. Was there a commission of \$1 million, \$2 million, \$5 million or \$10 million? Nobody knows. Why will the minister not stand up and tell us what went on to allow a deal like this to happen?

We have had those questions out there for one solid year. We will continue asking those questions until the minister stands up in the House and tells us clearly what happened. I believe Canadian taxpayers have a right to know how the Government of Canada is disposing of surplus materials, if indeed they are surplus.

In the aviation advertisement that I read, placed in an aviation magazine by Lancaster Aviation Inc., the eight jets it sold out of the ten it had for sale were classified as being in superior condition and well maintained. Everyone in the aviation industry will tell us that those jets, per unit, are worth somewhere between \$5 million and \$6 million a piece. Lancaster Aviation Inc. sold them for exactly half of what their worth would be on the open market. Why would the Minister of National Defence allow that to happen?

• (1900)

Why would the minister of public works allow that to happen, for example reported kickback schemes within public works and defence? Is that the case? Madam Speaker, in your limited role as

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Speaker, I ask you to force the minister to answer those questions. The Canadian public has a right to know.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government is committed to obtaining fair market value for surplus government assets in a manner that respects taxpayer dollars and the laws of our nation.

Treasury Board disposal policy calls for the utilization of private sector disposal specialists when it is cost effective to do so. To this end, in June 1997 a competitive contract was awarded to Lancaster Aviation Inc. for surplus aerospace assets disposal. Lancaster's bid met the mandatory experience, resource and financial requirements, and it submitted the lowest responsive bid. It won the contract fair and square.

The government held this competition because it wanted a centre of expertise capable of marketing and selling a wide range of surplus DND aviation assets. It was always intended that the surplus aerospace assets disposal contract include the disposal of surplus aviation assets such as aircraft.

The contract specifically included, under the provisions of special project sales, unique project sales which may include high dollar value items. It was under this provision that surplus Challengers were reported to Lancaster Aviation, the winner of the surplus aerospace disposal contract, as available for sale.

The sale of this surplus equipment was completed to the letter of Canadian law and with the interests of Canadian taxpayers in mind, meeting both treasury board and Canadian export control regulations.

In accordance with the surplus aerospace assets disposal contract, commission rates were negotiated for the disposal of the surplus Challenger fleet. The commission paid to Lancaster Aviation for its marketing efforts was reasonable. This was the sole manner by which Lancaster was compensated for its services.

The government received fair market value for the Challenger aircraft. The eight aircraft were sold as a lot for a selling price of \$30 million U.S. to DDH Aviation of Fort Worth, Texas. The sale price reflected the fact that the Challengers were not certified for civilian use and would require modifications to make them suitable for civilian use.

The government has conducted the sales of the Challenger aircraft in accordance with treasury board and Canadian export regulations. Furthermore, the commissions paid to Lancaster Aviation for its marketing efforts were reasonable and the sale price represented good value to the crown.

If the member opposite has information to the contrary I invite him to table it in the House. Otherwise I fear he is wasting the time of the House, much like the leader of his party, trying to find a scandal where none exists.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.03 p.m.)

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