



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 4, 1996

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 4, 1996

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

The Speaker: Every so often we have an opportunity to hear some truly magnificent Canadian voices. We are going to add our voices to theirs. I have asked the St. Michael's Boys Choir to lead us in our national anthem. I know that an hon. member should have led us today, but perhaps next week he will lead us. If the choir is ready, I invite them to lead us in our national anthem.

[Editor's Note: Whereupon the national anthem was sung.]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Stan Dromisky (Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House of a fantastic international development project being undertaken by Lakehead University in Thunder Bay.

Lakehead, the lead university in the project, in partnership with Tribhuvan University in Nepal and the University of Guelph, received \$746,000 from CIDA to undertake a conservation and community outreach project in Nepal.

Among other objectives, the project aims to upgrade the qualifications and skills of Nepal's forestry professors, elementary and secondary school teachers and practising foresters and resource managers. Ultimately the goal is to improve current land use practices and management.

• (1405)

This project is an excellent example of how CIDA and Canada are helping the world to improve its environment and its quality of life.

[Translation]

ANTONIO GREDIAGA KIEFF

Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the renowned artist Antonio Grediaga Kieff recently very kindly gave the town of Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville one of his sculptures.

This modern work entitled "Totem '85 with Spirals and Triangles" is the first piece of outdoor art to be set up around the town. The sculpture, which is bronze and valued at \$160,000 on the international art market, measures 5 metres high and weighs a little over a tonne.

Mr. Kieff's sculptures may be found in major art collections around the world. Two former American Presidents, Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, are proud owners of his works. The people of Saint-Bruno will have the privilege of admiring a work by one of their own, who is, moreover, world renowned.

I would like to thank him for his generosity and congratulate him on his work.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for two years I lived on an Indian reserve at Wollaston Lake, Saskatchewan serving as the principal of the local school. I saw the damage done by the paternalistic aboriginal policies of past Liberal and Conservative governments.

I am deeply disappointed that the Liberals are so quick to dismiss the equality alternative for aboriginal people. One national newspaper concluded that the recommendations of the royal commission would lead to "separation, both political and economic". I agree.

We should replace the Indian Act with the equality for Indians act. We should give grassroots Indian people real choices about their future. Give them the option of the system of local government they want to live in. Give them the option of owning their own land or having it held communally. Give them the option of receiving their treaty benefits directly. Give them the option of negotiating a personal compensation package in exchange for treaty entitlements.

S. O. 31

For the past 130 years, individual aboriginal people have been denied the opportunity to see how well true equality works.

* * *

CREDIT CARD INTEREST RATES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we watch Liberal backbenchers led by the hon. member for Fundy—Royal foam about credit card interest rates as if only the banks need to be challenged on this issue instead of the Liberal government, those of us who have served in previous Parliaments feel like we have seen this movie before.

In almost every Parliament, government backbenchers grandstand about credit card interest rates but are unwilling to criticize their own government on the issue, even when as is the case presently, the government is actively defending and repeating the banks' position.

New Democrat MPs were glad to sign the letter challenging the banks but we warn Canadians not to be distracted by such all-party strategies from the fact that it is the Liberal Party that runs the country. It is the Liberal Party that is refusing to act. It is the Liberal Party that could act if it wanted to. Liberal backbenchers who evade this painful truth give no credit to the political process.

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[*Translation*]

JOB CREATION

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a fine example of co-operation by the federal and provincial governments and the private sector in creating jobs.

Motor Coach's recent inauguration of its luxury coach production line christened "La Renaissance" has created 114 jobs in my riding, with the possibility of another 150. The new prestigious coach to be manufactured there represents the greatest research and development project yet launched by Motor Coach.

The project received \$5.1 million in western economic diversification funds. It will have a profound and sustained economic impact.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL NICKEL COMPANY OF CANADA

Mrs. Jean Payne (St. John's West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, International Nickel Company announced the establishment of a smelter and refinery in Argentina, Newfoundland located in my riding of St. John's West. The proposed operations will

create hundreds of jobs and is expected to inject millions of dollars into the local economy over the long run.

I want to applaud the efforts of the Argentina/Long Harbour Partnership for their part in presenting the region's viability and promoting the area as the most suitable site. I would also like to point out that the economic and environmental feasibility of the area were central to INCO's decision.

As the member of Parliament for Argentina, any project which creates work and jobs for my constituents is welcome but a project of this scale is of immeasurable importance. It is a very positive economic sign for the people of St. John's West and I am delighted to share this news with the House.

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• (1410)

ST. MICHAEL'S CHOIR SCHOOL

Mr. Bill Graham (Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the visit to the House of Commons of the world famous St. Michael's Choir School.

The school, situated in Rosedale riding in Toronto, was founded in 1937 by Monsignor Ronan to provide a choir for the liturgical services of St. Michael's Cathedral. Since its modest beginning the school has grown to 374 students, some of whom are with us today. It is now recognized as the most famous choir school in Canada.

The enthusiasm and joy of the choir school performers, which we were privileged to share in this House today, bring great pleasure to their audiences and speak clearly of the commitment to excellence that is the St. Michael's Choir School tradition.

Each year the choir goes on two tours which take the boys across North America and Europe. This spring the choir will return to Europe with a two week tour of Italy.

Mr. Speaker, having heard them sing in the House, I am sure you will agree with me that Canada could not ask for better ambassadors than the fine young men of St. Michael's Choir School.

[*Translation*]

We wish them good luck and bon voyage.

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REPORTER FRANÇOIS POULIOT

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec and the Fondation du cercle des femmes journalistes awarded François Pouliot the Prix Judith-Jasmin in the short feature category.

I will remind you that this prize is given every year to a newspaper or television journalist based on the quality of investigation, the originality of the information and the relevancy of the topic.

S. O. 31

François Pouliot conducted a very thorough investigation that eventually led him to American businessman Paul Morgan, who was involved in the cotton deal for which Tran Trieu Quan was unjustly sentenced to 20 years of forced labour in Vietnam.

I too want to recognize François Pouliot's outstanding job, as well as the tenacity and rigour he has shown in unearthing the important details of this sad story, which has already cost Canadian citizen Tran Trieu Quan two years of freedom.

* * *

[*English*]**FISHERIES**

Mr. John Duncan (North Island—Powell River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on November 14 Judge Campbell of the federal court in Vancouver ruled against the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in a question of jurisdiction and fairness in allocating halibut licences.

The written decisions confirm in this case what many west coasters believe to be widespread, that DFO pursues a senior bureaucracy driven agenda under the cloak of consultation and does not care how many people it hurts in the process.

This week there is a gill net mail-in ballot for fishermen holding north coast licences with a deadline to reach Vancouver by this Friday. This mailed ballot still has not reached many outlying area gill netters. These fishermen are concerned about losing their vote as part of another bureaucracy manipulated design.

I call on the minister to do two things today: one, extend the deadline on this vote; and two, ensure that faxed responses are allowed.

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[*Translation*]**ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the federal government takes steps to reduce its annual deficit and low interest rates reflect the confidence of investors in its ability to put its fiscal house in order, Quebec regions, and Brome—Missisquoi is but one example, must seize the opportunity to put together manpower, capital and programs to get the economy moving again.

In that spirit of co-operation and collaboration, we are pleased to welcome to Ottawa today the mayors and municipal councillors of Brome—Missisquoi. Our discussions will focus on small business, exports and tourism.

[*English*]

Speaking about co-operation, let me talk about the harmony that exists between the two communities—English 20 per cent and

French 80 per cent—in my beautiful riding. Let me say how great are our people from Lake Champlain to Brome Lake to Lake Memphremagog.

[*Translation*]

I join with all my constituents in wishing everyone political peace and true economic growth in 1997 and in wishing you, Mr. Speaker, a very happy New Year.

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 2, the Canadian government contributed \$150,000 to the Secrétariat à la mise en marché pour la Gaspésie et les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. The role of this organization is to develop new export markets and to provide various technical assistance services to the region's small and medium size businesses.

The contribution made by the Quebec section of the Federal Office of Regional Development reflects the Canadian government's intention to give priority to community activities. Our government is encouraging people from the Gaspé Peninsula and the islands to take charge, so as to ensure lasting prosperity in the context of a better economy.

● (1415)

The Canadian government's contribution comes from the regular budget of the program designed to help small and medium size businesses. This is a concrete way for our government to contribute to regional development all across Canada.

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REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following the tour organized by our caucus last summer in the Gaspé and Lower St. Lawrence region, I am pleased to announce to the House that Revenue Canada has finally accepted the arguments of the stakeholders in the customs office matter.

Indeed, the Minister of National Revenue just decided that the customs office located in Rivière-du-Loup would remain open and be manned on a full-time basis by a customs inspector. The Rivière-du-Loup office will become the processing centre for claims coming from the whole region.

Raising Revenue Canada's profile in that region is great news for economic stakeholders.

While still complying with the need to cut costs, Revenue Canada has just demonstrated that it is sensitive to people's needs.

*Oral Questions***MAGDALEN ISLANDS FERRY**

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems the government is not very concerned about the safety of people travelling to and from the Magdalen Islands.

A study commissioned by Transport Canada estimates the cost of repairs needed to the *Lucy Maud Montgomery* at \$12 million and points out that there is a danger of major incidents that could lead to loss of life if nothing is done.

In ignoring the conclusions of a study ordered by his own department, the Minister of Transport is showing a lack of responsibility. As for the member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine who said that there would be consultations on this issue, no more has been heard from him.

Another consequence of the federal government's stalling is that hundreds of jobs at MIL Davie have disappeared, and this is not the only example of its inertia. It is imperative that the Minister of Transport reach an agreement with CTMA representatives in order to find a safe and lasting solution.

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[English]

BARLEY PLEBISCITE

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Vegreville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, at the annual meeting of the Alberta Wheat Pool in Calgary, Michael Bury, an Alberta Wheat Pool delegate, asked the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food a question about the upcoming plebiscite on barley marketing. He wanted to know what percentage turnout and what percentage of the vote would be required to carry the plebiscite. The minister responded that he would decide after the vote what turnout would be required and what percentage of the vote would carry the plebiscite. Mr. Bury's comment was: "Sounds really democratic", but I do not think he really meant it.

A person who believes in democracy would set the rules before the vote, but not this government. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will not announce whether the plebiscite will be binding or what percentage of voters will be required in order to carry the barley plebiscite.

Would we not all like to be able to pick our 649 numbers after the draw?

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all recall that 14 young and talented women's lives were snuffed out, gunned down at École Polytechnique in Montreal seven years ago. This Friday we observe the anniversary of the tragedy of their

deaths on December 6, 1989 as Canada's national day of remembrance and action on violence against women.

This reminds us of how important it is to work together and respect each other as equals, with the goal of building an inclusive society where there is zero tolerance for violence against women.

[Translation]

The world has finally lifted the curtain surrounding violence against women, and in this regard Canada has played a leading role nationally and internationally.

[English]

Let us not forget the pain and the incredible loss of this senseless massacre. I call on all Canadians to mobilize together for action against violence.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to address comments made by the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam and her attack on Status of Women Canada.

The member said that Canadians do not want more spending on what she called status of women's extreme agenda. This extreme agenda includes: working hard to stop violence against women; working hard on women's health issues, especially breast cancer; working hard to recognize the value of women's work in the home and outside, in the fields of engineering, space technology, medicine, law, and even politics.

Status of women and this government make a difference. This difference was recognized by the UN conference in Beijing when Canada won the international award for the country that has done the most for the status of women.

I am proud of Status of Women Canada, but I am ashamed of the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1420)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, perhaps our colleagues sense that a storm is brewing. Let us hope so, as it is not long until the holiday season. If there is one person who is stirring up a storm at this moment, it is the Minister

Oral Questions

of Human Resources Development. Yesterday, in fact, this minister told my colleague from Mercier that the transition period in the new employment insurance program had started in January. He said:

It is time the hon. member for Mercier realized that the reason why some provisions of the act were implemented on July 1 while others will take effect January 1 is precisely to give people time to adjust to the reform.

Now, there is a little problem; it would be hard to have something in application since January 1, when the act was passed in June. The minister has a problem. In the spirit of fair play, however, I will give him the chance to correct himself today. Yesterday he told us that there would be changes to the regulations, which he described as minor, in order to effect the transition between the old and the new systems.

Can the Minister of Human Resources Development confirm that these minor changes to which he referred include a hypothesis that, effective January 5 and for the application of the new system, weeks worked prior to December 1996 are all deemed to have been 35 hours in length for the purposes of eligibility for the new system? Can the minister tell us whether or not this measure exists?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I said yesterday on the employment insurance reform is that, for several months, our government has been working very hard to inform Canadians so that they may adjust to the new system.

We have run a national advertising campaign for Canadians since this past July 1. We have set up a 1-800 line so that Canadians can get information on the conditions of this employment insurance reform. We have printed a leaflet announcing passage of the legislation, which was mailed out to all recipients in July. We have, therefore, fully done our duty in informing people about the new system to start this coming January.

What we want is for Canadians who work part time to be covered, starting January 1, from the first hour worked, because we see this as a reform of considerable interest to a great number of Canadians.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have a big problem here in the House, and the minister has a really big one. The minister tells us that the government is doing its best to inform Canadians. Could the minister start by informing the House, since he is being asked questions.

I will ask him very, very precisely what we want to know. I cannot speak to him directly. I will do it through yourself, Mr. Speaker; however, I would like him to listen in order to understand the question. Can the minister tell us whether he is, or is not, in the process at this time of examining the hypothesis of a transition which would consider all hours worked during 1996 as 35-hour weeks? Is he, or is he not? That is the only thing we want to know.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not my habit to comment on each and every hypothesis which could have been presented to me on what the Leader of the Opposition tells us.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is a system which represents the bread and butter of a good many Canadian families starting in January.

• (1425)

Huge numbers of people are in danger of being excluded from the system by the transition rules, which would appear to require 35-hour weeks. Huge numbers of people will no longer have access to the employment insurance plan. They would qualify under the old system, they would qualify under the new one, but they would not qualify under the transition rules.

First, is the minister aware of this and, second, will he take this into account when making a decision?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would the opposition be opposed to a system which, in Quebec alone, will enable 73 per cent of employment insurance contributors working for under 35 hours a week at the present time to be eligible? Is he aware that 127,000 Quebec part time workers will, in future, be covered for the first time? Does the opposition not accept a system which will enable 500,000 more Canadians to be covered by the employment insurance system, including 270,000 women? That is what the new system starting up January 1 will be like.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Human Resources Development.

Either the minister does not understand, although there are enough officials in his department to explain the matter to him, or he does not want to understand, which is unfortunate for the Canadians and Quebecers who depend on his judgment. I will try two simple questions.

Does the minister realize that if there are no transitional measures to transform weeks under the old system into hours under the new system, in other words, one week of work equals 35 hours, a young person who worked 26 20-hour weeks in 1996 will not be entitled to employment insurance on January 5, if he loses his job? Does the minister realize that without transitional measures, this young person will go on welfare?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the opposition in fine fettle, despite its lack of programs, especially constructive programs. We will try to do better than the opposition, which is

Oral Questions

simply there to obstruct but has nothing to do, obviously, because it will never have to run this country.

What Quebecers want and what all Canadians want is an employment insurance system. A—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Pettigrew: Mr. Speaker, I would like to finish explaining to the opposition that we have five active employment insurance measures aimed at helping people adjust to the new labour market. The transitional measure happens to be one of these five active measures.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on January 5, a pregnant woman goes on maternity leave and reports to a human resources centre after having worked 30 20-hour weeks. According to the legislation in effect in 1996, she qualifies for special so-called pregnancy benefits. Without transitional measures, on January 5, this woman will not be entitled to her pregnancy benefits. The minister can hardly say this is unimportant, that these are minor measures. This is important to the life of the average person. Does the minister realize that?

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I realize, first of all, is that a woman in Sydney, Nova Scotia who works 14 hours a week in a department store does not have insurable employment at the present time. Under the new employment insurance system, she will be entitled to benefits after 30 weeks.

A father in East Montreal who has three jobs, each of which takes up 14 hours a week, adding up to 42 hours, does not have insurable employment at the present time.

This system wants to encourage people to work and will insure them starting with the first hour worked.

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[English]

CANADIAN AIRLINES

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the Canadian Airlines crisis, the Reform Party has called on the government to intercede to ensure the democratic rights of the union workers of Canadian Airlines. The government has responded by saying that the rules do not permit it to do that. I would point out that those rules are made here.

My question is for the Minister of Labour. Is the Minister of Labour now ready to intercede and set in place rules that would

permit those workers to resolve this issue and to ensure that other people caught in this situation in the future do not have to go through the same pain and anguish that Canadian's unionized employees have been going through?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Labour and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on numerous occasions during the last few days, I have urged all parties involved to go to the negotiating table with the Canadian alliance and find a negotiated solution.

Unfortunately, we are at an impasse and 16,000 jobs are at stake. That is why I directed the Canada Labour Relations Board to organize a vote for the employees of Canadian Airlines who are members of the Canadian automobile workers union. I directed the board according to the authority given to me under article 17 of the Canadian Labour Code.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the government has seen fit to end this problem. I hope that in the future, if these kinds of problems come up, that collectively we will act quicker to save that same pain and anguish.

There is still more to this. I have a question I would like to direct to the Minister of Finance. The package that the federal government has provided to Canadian does help. I am pleased to see that something is there, but it is based on the fuel tax. That fuel tax is twice as high in Canada as it is for the American competitors that all Canadian airlines must compete against under open skies.

Will the government reconsider the method by which it is helping and go instead to a straight reduction of fuel taxes so that it applies to all airlines? In that way we do not solve the problems of Canadian and transfer them on to someone else.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the taxation of any entity, one has to take a look at the full range of taxes: payroll taxes, corporate taxes, excise taxes and anything else. The taxes levied on Canadian transporters are quite competitive and do not in any way inhibit their situation.

Furthermore, on international routes, the federal government does not impose undue taxation. What the hon. member might want to do is to take a look at the level of provincial taxation.

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay West—Revelstoke, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we are looking at provincial taxation. However, I was sent here to represent people at the federal level and not slough it off to the provincial governments.

I would point out that the Minister of Finance certainly started out very correctly when he gave a long list of the taxes that the government levies against companies like Canadian Airlines.

• (1435)

Rather than tell us what we already know, that Canadian pays a lot of taxes in a lot of categories, will the minister re-examine the

Oral Questions

tax on aviation fuel and go for an across the board reduction in the name of fairness to all Canadian aviation?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two questions here. One is the question of fuel taxes and taxes generally which has been answered by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

However, it is important for us to remember, including the hon. member whom I commend for his interest in this issue, that Canadian Airlines is not yet in a position where it is assured of success. Ten organizations, five of them unions, three of them governments and two companies are on side. We trust that a vote of the members of the auto workers union who are employed by Canadian Airlines will have a positive result. Of course we are not sure. We do not know how they will vote.

I would remind all members of the House that this company has had five weeks of uncertainty. It has had five weeks of problems, ranging from creditors on the one side to bookings on the other. If Canadian is to survive it needs the co-operation of all parties to move forward with the restructuring proposal to turn from a company which had chronic losses that totalled over \$1.3 billion to one in the black which makes money.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources is refusing to admit that there will be transition measures in the implementation of the new employment insurance program. He refuses to admit it. He is also refusing to respond regarding very the specific cases put to him by my colleague for Mercier. The Minister of Human Resources Development is like a barrel organ: you can request any tune you like, but, when you turn the crank, the tune is always the same.

To continue with his example of the woman in Sydney, I would ask the Minister of Human Resources Development to explain how this person will manage to qualify for employment insurance, when no employer recorded the number of hours worked in 1996?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was explaining that we have a new system where we are trying to break with the old methods. Can the opposition not accept the fact that we are really trying to adapt to a new labour market and that, necessarily, the new system is much fairer and more equitable in our opinion, because it will insure people from the first hour, from January 1, 1997.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Leader of the Opposition, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us take this calmly and explain matters to the new minister. In the example he himself gave us a few minutes ago, the minister said that the woman would now be eligible for employ-

ment insurance on the basis of the hours she worked. We know that her hours have to be indicated in order for the Canada employment centre to process her application.

In 1996, no employer was equipped to count the hours employees worked. The application was based on the number of weeks worked. How will they know this woman worked 720 hours? There is no way of knowing.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those who are covered by employment insurance in 1996 will continue to be covered and will not lose their coverage as of December 31, 1996. I think this is important.

On the other hand, we can also inform. The opposition claims I am not familiar with the system. I can tell you that the woman in Sydney working 14 hours in a department store will be insured after 30 weeks.

• (1440)

The young father of a family in Montreal East, whom I mentioned earlier, holds three jobs and works 14 hours a week at each and is not insured. He will be, after the 11th week. The system is much more suited to things as they are at the moment and is far and away more interesting than the old system the opposition clings to in its retrograde reveries.

* * *

[English]

KREVER INQUIRY

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in August 1984 health department officials sounded alarm bells about the dangers of AIDS and legislation was drafted to protect the blood supply. The Turner government and the Mulroney government which followed ignored those warnings and simply shelved the legislation.

The Krever inquiry and the victims of tainted blood want to get to truth. I ask the Prime Minister, who was deputy prime minister in August 1984, will he release all the documents and the draft legislation from 1984 to Justice Krever, yes or no?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister has replied to that question many times in the House of Commons. We were very unhappy with the situation that existed at that time. There is an inquiry which we hope will be able to report soon. Then improvements can be made to the legislation so the same mistakes will not be repeated.

As far as the cabinet documents are concerned, according to the law of the land there is a limit. I did not pass this law. The law is there and we will respect the law. I am very surprised that the member is asking us not to respect the law.

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The minister at the time, Madam Bégin, said that she is willing to testify. I do not know why the release of cabinet documents, if they exist, will help. I think the judge has all the things he needs to make a report and help us ensure the problems do not recur.

Miss Deborah Grey (Beaver River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is hiding behind excuses. First of all, the Canada Evidence Act is discretionary. He could choose to change that and release those documents if he wanted to. It is as simple as that.

Second, when he talks about Monique Bégin, she has already said, and documents were uncovered yesterday, that the Deputy Prime Minister was incorrect in that. She said that she had refused frankly to testify. So those excuses simply do not wash.

Justice Krever wants the documents and tainted blood victims want answers. That is all there is to it. That is all those people want. It is up to the Prime Minister now to decide whether he will release those documents or continue to hide behind those flimsy excuses.

Will the Prime Minister release the documents or will he continue to hide the truth. Just like John Turner in 1984, you have a choice, sir.

The Speaker: Colleagues, you will address yourselves to me, please, in all the questions. I will permit the Right Hon. Prime Minister to answer if he so chooses.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Turner was the prime minister for three months and Parliament was not in session at that time. After that it was Mr. Mulroney. I am not here to protect anybody in that.

There is a law of the land that protects cabinet documents. All the documents the law authorized us to give to the judge were given to the judge. We hope he will be able to report and make the recommendations needed so we can improve the situation.

The Minister of Health in collaboration with his provincial colleagues already moved on the problem even before the judge made his report.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development is treating us to fine rhetoric and outlining interesting concepts. But what we want is an answer to some simple and specific questions. Let me put this one to him as if I were a constituent visiting him at his riding office.

A young worker loses his job on December 31, 1996, having worked 26 fifteen-hour weeks. The minister must know, at least I

hope he does, that this young man is eligible for employment insurance. Right? His neighbour loses his job on January 5, after working 26 fifteen-hour weeks.

• (1445)

I would like the minister to tell us whether or not this person will be eligible for employment insurance. This is not too complicated: Will six days make a difference in the way these two employees of the same company will be treated, yes or no? That question is clear enough, I hope.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the interest shown by the opposition today. This is indeed a system I want to draw attention to.

What this worker will get when he meets with his employment officer at the HRD centre—I wish to acknowledge the excellent job these people are doing in all our ridings—is someone who will have enough common sense and skill under the regulations we are developing to be able to assess the number of hours of work accumulated in the past year.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this officer will certainly have more sense than this minister, I have no doubt about that, because the minister is unable to answer a question in this place.

He would not be fit to do the job of a government employee, who, I am sure, will be able to answer questions, provided that the minister has given him clear instructions, which does not seem to be the case. Either no instructions were given, or the minister is not aware of them.

I would like to put another question to the minister, since I did not get an answer to the first one. If a person who juggles three jobs, three 16-hour jobs, as mentioned by the minister, has to quit one of them, because working 48 hours a week at three jobs is not easy, is it not true that this person will be disqualified for quitting his or her job? Yes or no? I ask him to answer me as a government employee would, not as a Liberal minister.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): There we have it, Mr. Speaker. The opposition has objected to any change to an employment insurance system that is much more interesting. Those people voted against spending \$800 million on active measures to help workers get back to work.

This is a government that adjusts to the modern economy. The opposition party, on the other hand, has rejected every effort to reform the system, when we were trying to include the part time workers the people opposite are referring to. That is what the opposition is capable of.

Oral Questions

[English]

KREVER INQUIRY

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1984 the current Prime Minister was the deputy prime minister. New regulations were placed on the cabinet table and somebody in that government said “no way”.

The tainted blood tragedy could have been prevented by those regulations.

The Prime Minister says he has nothing to hide. All we ask is that he put those documents on the table so he can prove that he has nothing to hide, because the law gives him discretion.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the law is clear. We do not have the right under the law to make public cabinet documents produced under previous prime ministers. The law is very clear on that.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Evidence Act clearly gives discretion to the Prime Minister. It does not preclude those documents being released at all.

In fact, Krever tried to get Monique Bégin to testify at the inquiry. Her lawyer said “no way”. Let us get that excuse out of the way as well. Now the Prime Minister, as we look for open disclosure, is saying “no way”.

Will the Prime Minister make the right decision this time and release those documents of truth to Krever?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already replied to that question.

* * *

• (1450)

[Translation]

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. I hope to have more luck than my colleagues in getting an answer from the minister.

In its report tabled in October, the Liberal task force on people with disabilities recommended that the federal government continue to financially support national organizations for people with disabilities. In its report, the group said that the federal government’s commitment in that respect should include, but not be limited to, core funding totalling \$5 million per year.

Can the minister tell us if this recommendation means that the financing of all organizations promoting the rights of people with disabilities will be restored to pre-1994 levels?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before answering the opposition member’s question, I should first congratulate the hon. member for Fredericton—York—Sunbury, and all the members of his task force whose exceptional work contributed to a greater understanding of people with disabilities.

I must tell you that the Minister of National Revenue, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice and myself were impressed by the quality of their work. The recommendation regarding the financing of organizations for people with disabilities was taken under consideration and we will follow up on it at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Maurice Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. I have never seen such a bad performance in the House before. The minister can congratulate his colleagues, he can tell me to get lost, but when it comes to people with disabilities, we expect action from the government, not just lip service.

Let the minister wait. I am not through with my question. In any case, we are in no hurry, because we will not get an answer. Will the minister admit that his inaction amounts to shelving the report of his Liberal colleagues and confirms his contempt for the needs of people with disabilities?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, comments by the opposition accusing us of showing contempt for people with disabilities are totally uncalled for. The reason people have so little respect for politicians is because we do not debate issues more intelligently. I am sorry, but this sanctimonious tone by people who do not even have an agenda is totally uncalled for.

What I can tell you is that I was very proud, last week, when the ministerial council on Canada’s social union, which is co-chaired by Minister Stockwell Day, representing the provinces, and myself, made the plight of people with disabilities a top priority. We are looking at the reality faced by these people, because Canada needs their full commitment.

* * *

[English]

BELGRADE

Mrs. Beryl Gaffney (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Against all democratic principles, the Serbian government has refused to honour the local elections that recently took place in Belgrade and other cities. Citizens have taken to the streets to demonstrate to show their outrage over abuse of authority.

Oral Questions

Could the secretary tell me what our government is doing to defend the rights of citizens of the federal republic of Yugoslavia in order that they may enjoy free and democratic elections?

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is deeply concerned that Belgrade has chosen to ignore accepted international norms for conducting democratic elections.

Today in London at the peace implementation conference for Bosnia, where Serbian leaders were present, the Minister of Foreign Affairs voiced Canada's concern that opposition candidates in Serbia have been deprived of their rightful places on local councils.

• (1455)

He also drew attention to the closure by the council of the federal republic of Yugoslavia of independent radio stations, an affront to democratic principles.

In Belgrade Canada's ambassadors conveyed to the government of the federal republic of Yugoslavia our serious concerns. Are you listening?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): They urged authorities to exercise constraint in dealing with peaceful demonstrations. Canada will continue to follow with great care developments in Serbia. We have made it clear to the government of the federal republic of Yugoslavia that its failure to respect the democratic process and ensure full media freedom could have an impact on the pace and content—

The Speaker: Wonderful Wednesday.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, after three years of waiting farmers now see the agriculture minister's totally inadequate blueprint for changes to the Canadian Wheat Board.

Farmers wanted a more accountable, flexible and transparent wheat board, one they could govern and call their own. Instead, the minister is proposing a powerless, partially elected board where the minister calls the shots.

Ontario wheat boards have had their own farmers direct the boards for many years and, believe it or not, have been able to manage their own affairs.

Why does the minister show such blatant disregard and lack of respect for Canadian farmers by not proposing that they run their own wheat board?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the legislation that we have put before the House of Commons does in fact provide for a more account-

able, more flexible, more transparent Canadian Wheat Board, to use the language of the hon. gentleman.

It does call for a majority of the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board to be elected by farmers across western Canada and of course the board itself will be accountable to that new board of directors including a producer elected majority.

The fundamental difference between this government and that party is that party has an agenda with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board that would utterly destroy the institution and this government will defend it.

Mr. Elwin Hermanson (Kindersley—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the minister has read his own bill.

The primary reason to reform the wheat board was to allow farmers to actually manage the board that they pay for. Instead, the minister wishes to retain his tight leash on the board by handing out the key management positions himself. He will appoint the chairman of the board. He will appoint the CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board. Can the minister not see that farmers want a board that is accountable to them and not to him?

Why does the minister feel that a farmer elected board of directors is incapable of choosing its own chairman and selecting and hiring its own CEO?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fundamental point is that the direction and control of the Canadian Wheat Board will be placed in the hands of a board of directors, the majority of which will be producer elected across western Canada. The hon. gentleman fundamentally misunderstands corporate governance.

* * *

[Translation]

DISABLED PERSONS

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the revenue minister.

For a number of months now, the disabled have run up against the inflexibility of Revenue Canada officials in the application of the disability tax credit and a number of other tax measures affecting them. The official opposition voted in favour of a Liberal motion that should serve as a guide to the government if it truly wishes to respect the disabled.

Given the obvious and urgent need to review all tax measures that affect the disabled, what recommendations will the minister make to her colleague, the Minister of Finance, in order to resolve this unacceptable situation?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to the disability tax credit. As I have mentioned several times in the House, my department is

Oral Questions

working proactively and co-operatively with people who have made applications for that particular credit. The advice and direction has been given to our tax centres across the country to deal in a humane and compassionate way with individuals who have had complexities and difficulties with the department on this particular tax credit. But we apply the law as it stands right now.

• (1500)

As my hon. colleague, the Minister of Human Resources Development, mentioned just a few moments ago, he along with the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice and myself will be responding to a very good and thorough report presented to us by members of our caucus with specific focus on ways to improve those programs that we have to help Canadians with disabilities to participate actively and as full citizens in our country.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in a recent decision a federal court judge found that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans manipulated a consultative process in establishing halibut quota in B.C. He also stated that a DFO official's unwillingness to face the obvious meaning of his own words caused the judge to doubt the reliability of the evidence offered in defence of the minister's, DFO's and his own position. The judge found that DFO rigged the vote to get the result it wanted. He said that rules were simply broken because it was necessary to do so to reach the planned objective.

Does the minister condone the actions of his officials and, if not, what is he going to do about it?

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and this House know that this is a court ruling and I am not going to comment on that.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a recent media release the Reform critic for the status of women said that the women she talks to despise the notion of equality used by the status of women, that the Department of the Status of Women is forcing society to change in ways that most Canadians would not choose for themselves.

Could the secretary of state tell the House how status of women is helping Canada become a better society for all Canadians?

Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only that but the critic also said that she did not think women needed special programs.

This is a country in which 90 per cent of families headed by women are poor. This is a country in which one woman is shot every six days.

The hon. member does not even understand the status of women in this country. Canada is a country that believes in removing the barriers to every individual so they achieve their potential and be able to be independent contributors to society.

This is what status of women does. It is a pity that Reform Party members do not even understand that fundamental value.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Louise Comeau on behalf of people everywhere who are concerned about the future of the planet pointed out that Canada is not going to meet its international commitments on climate change. It appears that federal and provincial ministers will do nothing to rectify this deplorable situation when they meet on December 12.

Will the Minister of the Environment reaffirm his personal commitment today and tell the House and the people of Canada that on December 12 he will acknowledge that Canada is not doing enough and that he will talk about concrete measures which will actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions to ensure Canada meets its international obligations by the year 2005?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for his question. It was the federal government at the recent CCME meeting of federal-provincial ministers of the environment that put climate change on the agenda in preparation for the meeting that my colleague, the natural resources minister, and I will attend.

We have been very clear and transparent with the Canadian public that we made international commitments in 1992, as did the international community, and it is time that the international community meets its obligations.

We have also said that Canada, together with most of the world, is falling behind in meeting those obligations. It is imperative that the federal government, together with the provincial government ministers of the environment and energy try to do everything in their power to come up with new initiatives to improve the voluntary program so we can, together with the world, meet our obligations together with industry and the NGO community.

Routine Proceedings

• (1505)

[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency, Carme Sala Sansa, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport for the Principality of Andorra.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER**QUESTION PERIOD**

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the question asked by the member for Nepean and the response by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in question period today.

I would also like to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to Standing Order 37(1) which states:

Questions on matters of urgency may, at the time specified in Standing Order 30(5), be addressed orally to Ministers of the Crown, provided however that, if in the opinion of the Speaker a question is not urgent, he or she may direct that it be placed on the Order Paper.

The Order Paper allows, immediately following question period, for the tabling of documents and statements by ministers.

It was quite obvious from the question posed and the response by the parliamentary secretary that this was a pre-planned and orchestrated question and answer to get the information out on the floor of the House of Commons. I do not think that it was a matter of urgency if it was orchestrated and pre-planned, as it obviously was.

Since we are now moving into Routine Proceedings, that would allow the government to table that particular document. I think this type of information should be tabled at the appropriate time and question period is not the appropriate time.

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I would submit that is not a point of order. If the member wishes to have a better read of what was offered by the parliamentary secretary he could read *Hansard* tomorrow. It will be there word for word verbatim.

The Deputy Speaker: Urgency is something in the eye of the beholder. The “blues” will be available and as there has been a change in Speaker I will ask that the “blues” be referred to His Honour the Speaker who was here earlier during question period.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Paul Zed (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 three petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSE COMMITTEES**INDUSTRY**

Mr. David Walker (Winnipeg North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Industry has the honour to present its third report.

[English]

In accordance with its order of reference on Tuesday, October 29, 1996, your committee has considered Bill C-57, an act to amend the Bell Canada Act, and has agreed to report it without amendment. A copy of the relevant minutes to the proceedings relating to this bill, issue No. 3, which includes the report, is tabled.

* * *

• (1510)

PEDOPHILE REGISTER ACT

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-359, an act to establish a national register of pedophiles and to provide legislative authority for the administration of the Canadian Police Information Centre by the RCMP.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to present this private member’s bill. It is in keeping with the activity I have been undertaking over these past long months to ensure that the protection of our children becomes a priority of the government.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-360, an act to amend the Criminal Code (chemical neutralization of pedophiles).

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill follows in accordance with my ongoing work in the whole area of child protection and is seen to be a treatment process for those who are deemed to be pedophiles in our community and a great threat to our children.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

PETITIONS

NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, from residents of the constituency of The Battlefords—Meadow Lake.

The petition notes that 38 per cent of the national highway system in Canada is substandard, that the national highway policy study identified job creation, economic development, national unity, saving lives and avoiding industry, lower congestion, lower vehicular operating costs and better international competitiveness as benefits of the proposed national highway program.

Therefore, the petitioners call on Parliament to urge the federal government to join with provincial governments to make the national highway system upgrading possible.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt to present a petition.

The petition contains thousands of signatures from my riding, from Canadians who are concerned about rising violent crime among young offenders.

Therefore, the petitioners pray and request that Parliament change the Young Offenders Act to reflect the concerns of citizens of Canada by lowering the age limit, transferring those accused of crimes of violence to adult court and publishing the identity of violent criminal offenders.

NATIONAL CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from 41 constituents of Peace River.

The petitioners call on Parliament to create a national child care program based on the principles of accessibility, affordability, high quality, comprehensiveness and accountability for funding use.

PEDOPHILE REGISTRY

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from constituents in Newfoundland who concur with me that we need to establish a pedophile registry to better protect our children and to better protect the citizens and parents of this country in so doing.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Ringma (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of 140 citizens who are concerned that all levels of government should demonstrate their support of education and literacy by eliminating sales tax on reading materials.

The petitioners ask Parliament to zero rate books, magazines and newspapers under the GST.

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table petitions signed by the constituents of Lambton—Middlesex and surrounding areas, which have been duly certified by the clerk of petitions, pursuant to Standing Order 36.

• (1515)

The petitioners request that the House of Commons enact legislation or amend existing legislation to define marriage as the voluntary union for life of one woman and one man to each other to the exclusion of all others.

TAXATION

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition from people in western Canada who are opposed to applying the GST to reading materials.

The petitioners point out that education and literacy are critical to the development of Canada and this tax on reading material handicaps that development. They urge all levels of government to demonstrate their support for education and literacy by eliminating the sales tax on reading materials, including the new procedures under the so-called harmonization of the GST with provincial sales tax.

SABLE ISLAND GAS PIPELINE

Mr. Randy White (Fraser Valley West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition from residents throughout Nova Scotia.

The petitioners state that in June 1996 the Prime Minister of Canada announced he would work toward diverting the Sable Island gas pipeline to Quebec City; that it is unacceptable for the Prime Minister to decide the destination of Nova Scotia natural gas without consulting Nova Scotians; and that Nova Scotians assert their right to control the destination of Sable Island gas and demand that the federal government cease tampering in this issue.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to recognize the right of Nova Scotians to control the destination of Sable Island natural gas.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS COMPENSATION FUND

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first one comes from Burnaby, B.C.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that our police and firefighters place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they serve the emergency needs of all Canadians. They also state that in many cases the families of officers who lost their lives in the line of duty are left without sufficient means to meet their obligations.

The petitioners therefore pray and call upon Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund to receive gifts and bequests for the benefit of the families of police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society.

The petitioners therefore pray and call upon Parliament to pursue initiatives to assist families who choose to provide care in the home for preschool children, the chronically ill, the aged or the disabled.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the final petition I wish to present comes from Sydney, Nova Scotia.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems or impair one's ability and specifically that fetal alcohol syndrome or other alcohol related birth defects are 100 per cent preventable by avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

The petitioners therefore pray and call upon Parliament to enact legislation to require health warning labels to be placed on the containers of all alcoholic beverages to caution expectant mothers and others of the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

PROFITS FROM CRIME

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first one is with regard to criminals profiting from crime and is signed by many petitioners from in and around my riding. They ask that Parliament enact Bill C-205 introduced by the hon. member for Scarborough West at the earliest opportunity so as to provide in Canadian law that no criminal profits from committing a crime.

TAXATION

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from many constituents from in and around my riding

who believe that the application of the 7 per cent GST to reading materials is unfair and wrong. They urge all levels of government to demonstrate their commitment to education and literacy by eliminating the sales tax on reading materials.

The petitioners ask Parliament to zero rate books, magazines and newspapers under the GST. They also ask Parliament and provincial governments to zero rate reading materials under the proposed harmonized sales tax and that the Prime Minister carry out his party's repeated and unequivocal promise to remove the federal sales tax from books, magazines and newspapers.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. Q-81 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 81—**Mr. Bergeron:**

In connection with the move of the Atomic Energy of Canada offices from Montreal to Ontario, could the Department of Natural Resources indicate how many direct and indirect jobs will be lost in Quebec?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of National Resources, Lib.): Regarding Atomic Energy Canada Limited, AECL, except for seven individuals who have accepted transfers to another AECL location, there have been no direct jobs lost in Quebec as a consequence of AECL's June 1996 announcement to reorganize its workforce throughout the company to achieve increased cost efficiencies and effectiveness. AECL is not aware of any indirect effect of these seven transfers.

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Paul Zed (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

The House resumed, from December 2, 1996, consideration of the motion:

WHEREAS section 43 of the Constitution Act, 1982 provides that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada may be made by proclamation issued by the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada where so authorized by resolutions of the Senate and House of Commons and of the legislative assembly of each province to which the amendment applies;

NOW THEREFORE the House of Commons resolves that an amendment to the Constitution of Canada be authorized to be made by proclamation issued by His Excellency the Governor General under the Great Seal of Canada in accordance with the schedule hereto.

SCHEDULE

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

1. Term 17 of the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada set out in the Schedule to the Newfoundland Act is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

“17. In lieu of section ninety-three of the Constitution Act 1867, the following shall apply in respect of the Province of Newfoundland:

In and for the Province of Newfoundland, the Legislature shall have exclusive authority to make laws in relation to education but

(a) except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c), schools established, maintained and operated with public funds shall be denominational schools, and any class of persons having rights under this Term as it read on January 1, 1995 shall continue to have the right to provide for religious education, activities and observances for the children of that class in those schools, and the group of classes that formed one integrated school system by agreement in 1969 may exercise the same rights under this Term as a single class of persons;

(b) subject to provincial legislation that is uniformly applicable to all schools specifying conditions for the establishment or continued operation of schools,

(i) any class of persons referred to in paragraph (a) shall have the right to have a publicly funded denominational school established, maintained and operated especially for that class, and

(ii) the Legislature may approve the establishment, maintenance and operation of a publicly funded school, whether denominational or non-denominational;

(c) where a school is established, maintained and operated pursuant to subparagraph (b) (i), the class of persons referred to in that subparagraph shall continue to have the right to provide for religious education, activities and observances and to direct the teaching of aspects of curriculum affecting religious beliefs, student admission policy and the assignment and dismissal of teachers in that school;

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(d) all schools referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) shall receive their share of public funds in accordance with scales determined on a non-discriminatory basis from time to time by the Legislature; and

(e) if the classes of persons having rights under this Term so desire, they shall have the right to elect in total not less than two thirds of the members of a school board, and any class so desiring shall have the right to elect the portion of that total that is proportionate to the population of that class in the area under the board's jurisdiction.”

Citation

2. This Amendment may be cited as the Constitution Amendment, year of proclamation (Newfoundland Act).

and of the amendment.

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this complex and difficult issue.

● (1520)

It is an issue that is complex and difficult for Newfoundlanders and for Canadians, but less so for Quebecers. That having been said, I can understand that members across the way, who are particularly concerned by the effect that a vote in the House of Commons could have on the recognition of the rights of minorities, of native peoples, in the Constitution, may be thrown into disarray by the House's approval of the amendment proposed by the Province of Newfoundland.

This needs to be acknowledged, and the Senate has given us an opportunity to take another look at this issue. I would note in passing that it is unacceptable for an unelected Chamber to be permitted to do what it has done, and the Bloc has made this point on a number of occasions.

But, back to the main item. The opportunity we have been given to take another look at this issue allows us to bring out a number of facts: the fact that the Newfoundland referendum was not won by a large majority, quite the contrary, allowing us to say that the groups affected—and I am not calling them minorities—in this case, the various denominations, gave their approval. It is clearly a decision by Newfoundlanders regarding the organization of their schools, irrespective of the original provisions of the Constitution.

Some people may have language concerns, but we know that for most the primary issue is denomination. You know that this is an extremely sensitive issue in Quebec, and that the Constitution of 1867 provided guarantees, which at the time were supposed to be guarantees for anglophones in Quebec and francophones in Ontario, and later in other provinces. But back then, as denomination and language were largely, not exclusively, but largely linked, the guarantees given denominations were largely language guarantees.

Today, urged on by a large percentage of the public, by extremely urgent constraints, the Government of Quebec wants to reorga-

Government Orders

nize the entire school system on the basis of language, rather than denomination. But it is prevented from doing so by section 93.

• (1525)

Obviously, Quebecers who would like to change their school system and thus change the guarantees given in the Constitution to religious denominations are extremely interested in this vote, this referendum that was held in Newfoundland and in the amendment requested by the Government of Newfoundland.

It is important to realize that the rights affected here are not those of an internationally recognized minority. These are guarantees given to religious denominations for which the province is, in the end, responsible.

When this measure became before the House, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of the motion because it recognizes the right of the people of Newfoundland to organize their schools as they see fit, and also the fact that the people of Newfoundland would give religious denominations the guarantees they felt were required by law.

In Quebec—and I say this quite frankly—using section 93 is more complicated because to do so we would have to accept the Constitution of 1982 which was imposed on us, and when I say us, I mean the people of Quebec and the National Assembly. This Constitution of 1982 is considered internationally as a denial of the fundamental right of the people of Quebec.

Although the Constitution of 1982 that was imposed on us by force does not apply with any legitimacy, we nevertheless refer to the possibility of using section 93 as a way to deal with this urgent matter of reorganizing our school system.

I would like to explain how urgent the problem is. You probably know that about 90 per cent of immigrants who settle in Montreal and become Canadian citizens in Quebec still remain largely in Montreal and the surrounding area. This means that the proportion of francophones has gone down steadily and that, since the guarantees provided under the Constitution prohibited us from organizing school boards along language lines, we have this absurd situation where the children of immigrants are required under Bill 101—which became Bill 86—to study in French. That is the only thing left of the bill.

However, many children do so in Protestant and therefore anglophone school boards, although they have French classes. However, in these French classes—and I have heard many comments from teachers and parents who send their children there—it is clear they are not part of a francophone whole but of an English-language organization that provides classroom teaching in French.

• (1530)

It is public knowledge that when these young people graduate from high school and are no longer under the obligation to study in

French, most of them end up in one of the anglophone CEGEPs. So this is a problem for all of Quebec, but it is mainly concentrated in the Montreal region.

The Montreal region has to live with the problem of the permanency of these guarantees which actually no longer guarantee anything at all as far as the Protestant religion is concerned. Since there are so many denominations, there is a tendency to teach religion outside of school, while the schools will teach ethics, but they will still have a so-called religious, anglophone organization.

On the French side, there are parents in Montreal who want their children to go to Catholic schools, although as we saw recently in a survey, the majority is not in favour, so certain distinctions must be made.

The important question is to find out whether the Montreal component of Quebec society will be able to integrate the children of immigrants and of new citizens of Quebec, which is vital to maintaining, if not improving, the position of the French language in Quebec.

Accordingly, and I would like to come back to the nuances I mentioned, parents clearly want their children to continue to be educated in religious history and in religion in school. They do not want their children to remain ignorant about the existence of religion, authority, the Bible and the Gospel. On the other hand, they are very aware that, if schools are to teach religion, there will have to be schools for all the denominations that make up the religious mosaic of Montreal.

This issue is therefore both complex and delicate. For Quebecers, and especially those in Montreal, it means that, if the Constitution as it stands is not changed, it will be impossible, for all intents and purposes, to reorganize the schools so as to promote integration.

There was an attempt by the previous government to have the Supreme Court interpret a bill that did not pass, through a change to section 93. The result was ludicrous, because it split up school systems by maintaining the religious elements and tacking on French or English elements to them. The resulting fragmentation would be extremely expensive, but would not serve the fundamental needs I mentioned earlier.

• (1535)

As a Quebecer, I can easily understand what the people of Newfoundland want, especially since they worked so hard for something that was imposed on Quebec, namely the patriation of the Constitution.

For the rest of Canada, for francophones outside Quebec, whose assimilation, which is on the rise and alarmingly so in some cases, seems a tragedy, the fact that the House of Commons can, by a majority vote, change what was guaranteed by the Constitution—

not to the minority but to certain groups—seems to pose a serious danger.

Would this House vote for the elimination of the constitutional provisions that protect francophones in one western province or another?

I know that, whether they speak French or English, my colleagues opposite who are concerned about this strongly oppose this measure and I can understand why.

The result of this alarming assimilation rate in some parts of the country is that the rights of the francophone minority in Canada are being and will continue to be trampled. In this respect, the vote on this motion has set a precedent, not because it concerns religious guarantees but because it concerns guarantees entrenched in the Constitution. I can understand my hon. colleagues when they say that a line may have been crossed.

We fought with all our energy for francophones outside Quebec. Our history—and there is no doubt about this in my mind—is the reason why the Official Languages Act exists. As a historian by training, I have no hesitation in saying that the Official Languages Act would never have seen the light of day, had it not been for the tumultuous language debates that took place in Quebec during the sixties.

Had these debates not taken place, Prime Minister Trudeau would never have had any reason to impose on the whole country an act which a large number of Canadians did not want. This act was passed because people believed it would settle the Quebec issue. They were bitterly disappointed when they realized that this was not what Quebec wanted. What Quebec wants is to eventually have all the powers. It does not want an official languages act imposed from coast to coast.

So this is an important vote. It was an important vote the first time and it is an important vote today.

I believe that the existence in a mostly French speaking, sovereign Quebec of an English speaking minority would also help protect the French speaking minority in Canada.

• (1540)

Again, for the time being, I understand the hesitations of the members opposite. I understand them because, in spite of the very disappointing and shallow comments made by the heritage minister, life for francophones outside Quebec is not easy. These people have to perform daily heroics, as I have frequently seen during trips to the western provinces, Ontario and, occasionally, Acadia.

Daily heroism is not conducive, among other things, to maintaining the enthusiasm of young people. We know that assimilation is rampant and almost a normal phenomenon when these young

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people marry English speaking persons. It must be noted that the assimilation rate in Ontario is 38 per cent, and rises to 76 per cent the further west you go. The situation is getting worse, not better, and is a cause for serious concern.

It will not be by refusing to pass the amendment sought by Newfoundland, which is facing an educational and denominational organization that is very difficult and complex for a small province, or by preventing Newfoundland from resolving this problem that the growing assimilation in western Canada will be halted. I think this issue will be, not resolved, for it is too late for that, but at least affected by energetic measures that we have yet to see, which will focus attention on the problem and slow down the rate of assimilation.

One thing I would like to point out, and this still falls within the area we are talking about, is how many functionally or totally illiterate francophones there are outside Quebec, and how rare and inaccessible the measures are to help them learn to read in their own language. My point is that, in order to protect the future, we need to take active, energetic steps, rather than stand in Newfoundland's way.

Mr. François Langlois (Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the debate triggered by Resolution No. 12 in this House on term 17 of the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada has, as the hon. member for Mercier said in her speech, brought to light all the misgivings we may have concerning constitutional change, particularly when it appears that a category of persons protected under the Constitution will find its rights diminished, if not done away with altogether, without its consent.

• (1545)

The question before us is not a partisan one, but a matter of analyzing the protection of categories of persons.

I do not wish to interfere in the matter of the administration of Newfoundland's schools, but I can still analyze the situation. Obviously, their school system is a complicated one. To all intents and purposes, term 17 gives the legislator of the province of Newfoundland, what is, after all, a limited power over education in that it cannot legislate unless the various religious denominations are respected. Strange situations occur, like having six different school buses picking up children of six different religious denominations in one small locality, because these denominations must be given equal treatment. Perhaps, in 1996, this needs reviewing.

A position definitely needs to be taken, when all is said and done. The more the debate progressed—and I have listened attentively, either in my office or in this House, to my hon. colleagues who have spoken on this—the more it struck me that it was not all that obvious that, in the September 5, 1995 referendum, each and every religious denomination constitutionally protected by term 17

Government Orders

of the Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada had given consent.

I cannot state the contrary, either, that every religious denomination refused to consent. In some parts of Newfoundland, people voted massively against the Newfoundland government's proposal, while in others they voted massively in favour. The vote was very divided, and the final vote was also very divided. So much so that basically, it is up to those who are primarily concerned to pass a final judgement on this issue. The Newfoundland government, rightly or wrongly, thought that on the basis of a referendum held on September 5, 1995, it had a mandate to pass a constitutional resolution to amend term 17 and ask the governor in council to refer the same question to this House, which is what happened.

History will have to realize we did not initiate these proceedings, that the Newfoundland legislature acted first, and that the Government of Newfoundland drew its conclusions from the outcome of the referendum. I respect its decision although I have quite a few questions.

It will be up to the voters of Newfoundland, if the government or the legislature did not act wisely, to pass judgment on their elected representatives who adopted the constitutional resolution before the House today.

The situation that will be created by the vote in this House is not irreversible, in that a new legislature in Newfoundland, with different concerns, may request a constitutional amendment to revert to the previous legal position.

In that respect, we are not doing anything irreparable. It would not be like amending the Canadian Constitution to say that from now, bills and court rulings will be in English only. That would be irreversible. So there is still a certain amount of flexibility here.

In the end, although we are extremely reticent, because this is a mine field and we might be accused of having created a precedent today, in the end perhaps we can, by stretching our tolerance to the limit, accept the resolution before the House.

However, this precedent should not be used to attack the rights of Franco-Ontarians or the rights of francophones in Manitoba or anywhere else, but especially in those two provinces where they enjoy constitutional protection, as in the province of New Brunswick, which subsequently protected its francophone minorities.

The question is of course a sensitive one where Quebec is concerned, as the hon. member for Mercier said earlier.

• (1550)

We know that in Quebec we have provisions governing schools and minority rights, which are now out of date. The only way to get around this would be perhaps to have section 93 of the Constitu-

tion amended, while ensuring that those protected under this section are in agreement. There are ways to do so and these ways have already been used in other circumstances.

I also understand the reticence of the Government of Quebec to apply under the amending formula of 1982, which it and all political parties in Quebec never recognized. I can understand its reticence in not joyously rushing, with honour and enthusiasm, to pass a resolution to call on this House to pass one as well to amend section 93, which would make things so much simpler in Quebec, as the hon. member for Mercier pointed out earlier, by enabling us to update our system of education.

However, the Government of Quebec has not acted in order to show how touchy constitutional change is with respect to minorities, because a fairly strong consensus is emerging in Quebec. There is of course the 1982 padlock, which is more of a yoke than a padlock, obliging us to live with this situation.

Those like me who were raised in a rural municipality of Quebec, where, two or three times a year, a collection was taken up in school for the survival of French—the hon. member for Mercier must remember that—get a little nervous when there is talk of taking rights away from classes of persons protected by the Constitution.

That is why, as this debate draws to a close, I am telling you that, because of this uncertainty and in spite of all the misgivings I have, in the end, I could probably vote in favour of the proposal before us, while at the same time expressing the wish that the provisions contained in the Constitution that protect minority rights not be changed without first obtaining the consent of the minorities concerned.

Mrs. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to say that the hon. member's speech reflects how sensitive this issue, which appeals to people's principles, really is.

The whole debate, at least on our side, has led us to the conclusion that, in spite of some reservations, there are enough guarantees for the French speaking minority which, again, is not the one affected, and we can understand and accept why Government of Newfoundland made this request, to which the federal government has acceded.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more that five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 194)

YEAS

Members

Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Bhaduria
Blaikie	Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Cummins
Duhamel	Epp
Hanrahan	Hayes
Kerpan	Lincoln
McTeague	Nunziata
Steckle—15	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Alcock
Anawak	Arseneault
Assadourian	Asselin
Barnes	Béclair
Bélangier	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Bethel	Blondin-Andrew
Bodnar	Boudria
Bridgman	Brien
Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)	Brushett
Bryden	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Campbell	Cannis
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chatters
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clancy
Cohen	Collins
Copps	Cowling
Crête	Culbert
Cullen	Dalphondu-Guiral
de Savoye	Debien
Deshais	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Duceppe	Dumas
Duncan	Dupuy
Easter	Fillion
Finestone	Finlay
Fliis	Fontana
Forseth	Fry
Gaffney	Gagliano
Gagnon (Québec)	Gerrard
Gilmour	Godin
Goodale	Gouk
Graham	Grey (Beaver River)
Grose	Grubel
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)
Harper (Churchill)	Harper (Simcoe Centre)
Hart	Hermanson
Hickey	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hubbard
Irwin	Jackson

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Jacob	Johnston
Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Lalonde	Landry
Lastewka	Laurin
Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)	Lebel
LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)	Leblanc (Longueuil)
Lefebvre	Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)
Leroux (Shefford)	Loubier
MacAulay	MacDonald
MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marchand	Marchi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Mayfield	McGuire
McKinnon	McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)
McWhinney	Ménard
Mercier	Meredith
Mifflin	Mitchell
Morrison	Murphy
Murray	Nault
Nunez	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Paré	Patry
Payne	Peters
Peterson	Pettigrew
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Proud	Ramsay
Reed	Regan
Richardson	Rideout
Ringma	Ringuette-Maltais
Robichaud	Robillard
Rocheleau	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)
Scott (Skeena)	Shepherd
Sheridan	Silye
Simmons	Skoke
Solberg	Speaker
Speller	St. Denis
Stewart (Northumberland)	Stinson
Strahl	Szabo
Taylor	Terrana
Thalheimer	Thompson
Torsney	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Tremblay (Rosemont)	Ur
Vanclief	Venne
Walker	Wells
Whelan	White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)
Williams	Wood
Young	Zed—186

PAIRED MEMBERS

Allmand	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Canuel
Caron	Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crawford
Daviault	Dubé
Eggleton	Gauthier
Kirkby	Langlois
Lee	Massé
Pomerleau	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)

● (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I declare the amendment lost.

[English]

The next question is on the main motion.

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

(Division No. 195)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Alcock
Anawak	Arseneault
Assadourian	Asselin
Barnes	Bélair
Bélangier	Bélisle
Bellehumeur	Bergeron
Bernier (Gaspé)	Bernier (Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead)
Blondin-Andrew	Bodnar
Boudria	Bridgman
Brien	Brown (Calgary Southeast/Sud-Est)
Brushett	Bryden
Byrne	Caccia
Campbell	Cannis
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chatters
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clancy
Cohen	Copps
Cowling	Crête
Culbert	Cullen
Dalphonde-Guiral	de Savoye
Debien	Deshaias
Dhaliwal	Dion
Discepola	Duceppe
Dumas	Dupuy
Easter	Fillion
Finestone	Finlay
Flis	Fontana
Forseth	Fry
Gaffney	Gagliano
Gagnon (Québec)	Gerrard
Gilmour	Godin
Goodale	Gouk
Graham	Grey (Beaver River)
Grubel	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Harper (Calgary West/Ouest)	Harper (Churchill)
Harper (Simcoe Centre)	Hart
Hermanson	Hickey
Hill (MacLeod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hubbard	Irwin
Jacob	Johnston
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lalonde
Landry	Lastewka
Laurin	Lavigne (Beauharnois—Salaberry)
Lebel	LeBlanc (Cape/Cap-Breton Highlands—Canso)
Leblanc (Longueuil)	Lefebvre
Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe)	Leroux (Shefford)
Loubier	MacAulay
MacDonald	MacLellan (Cape/Cap-Breton—The Sydneys)
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marchand
Marchi	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Mayfield
McGuire	McKinnon
McLellan (Edmonton Northwest/Nord-Ouest)	Ménard
Mercier	Meredith
Mifflin	Mitchell
Morrison	Murphy
Murray	Nault
Nunez	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Paré	Patry
Payne	Peters
Peterson	Pettigrew
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Essex—Kent)
Proud	Ramsay
Reed	Regan
Richardson	Rideout
Ringma	Ringuette-Maltais
Robichaud	Robillard
Rocheleau	Sauvageau
Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury)	Scott (Skeena)
Shepherd	Sheridan
Silye	Simmons
Solberg	Speaker
Speller	St. Denis

Stewart (Northumberland)
Taylor
Thalheimer
Torsney
Tremblay (Rosemont)
Venne
Wells
White (Fraser Valley West/Ouest)
Young

Strahl
Terrana
Thompson
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Vanclief
Walker
Whelan
Williams
Zed—172

NAYS

Members

Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing)	Baker
Bellemare	Bethel
Bevilacqua	Bhaduria
Blaikie	Bonin
Brown (Oakville—Milton)	Calder
Collins	Comuzzi
Cummins	Duhamel
Duncan	Epp
Grose	Hanrahan
Hayes	Hopkins
Iftody	Jackson
Jordan	Kerpan
Keyes	Lincoln
McCormick	McTeague
Nunziata	O'Brien (London—Middlesex)
Peric	Schmidt
Skoke	Steckle
Stinson	Szabo
Telegdi	Ur
Valeri	Volpe
Wappel	Wood—42

PAIRED MEMBERS

Allmand	Augustine
Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre/Sud-Centre)	Canuel
Caron	Chan
Chrétien (Frontenac)	Crawford
Daviault	Dubé
Eggleton	Gauthier
Kirkby	Langlois
Lee	Massé
Pomerleau	Tremblay (Rimouski—Témiscouata)

● (1650)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to.)

[English]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Elgin—Norfolk—Endangered species.

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed from December 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-70, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the Income Tax Act, the Debt Servicing and Reduction Account Act and related acts, be

read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): When debate was interrupted, the hon. member for Wild Rose had the floor. I should advise the hon. member that he has nine minutes remaining in his time.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when I was speaking yesterday evening I was talking about the loss of jobs that the harmonization plan is going to create.

• (1655)

If the finance minister needs evidence that this policy will kill jobs, all he has to do is read the study from Ontario. It stated: "Harmonization would remove \$3 billion from the Ontario economy, and kill jobs and economic growth". That is why Ontario did not agree to harmonization. It knew this policy will kill jobs, jobs, jobs and not create them.

In order to kill jobs, jobs, jobs in the Atlantic region, the Liberals will kill jobs, jobs, jobs in Ontario, Alberta and B.C. The Liberals will remove over \$300 million each from the Ontario, Alberta and B.C. economies to bribe the Atlantic premiers into signing on to harmonization.

Have the Liberals no understanding of economics? Do the Liberals not know that if Canadians feel insecure in their jobs they will not spend and purchase more than absolutely necessary? This failure to create retail sales will kill jobs, reduce federal income and force higher expenditures from federal tax dollars to finance unemployment insurance and social services. All this adds up to a bad deal.

The Liberals will cost taxpayers more, create fewer jobs, stifle government revenues just so they can claim to have fulfilled a broken promise from their Liberal dead book.

Since the Liberal policy will lower sales, end jobs and give companies leaner profits, the self-fulfilling prophecy of less retail sales will be reinforced.

Again the Liberal understanding of economics is suspect. An increase in subsidy money acts as an increase in regional money supply, increasing inflation. The bribe money of a \$1 billion is a regional subsidy that will further harm regional job creation through inflation. The Liberals have stated many times that inflation is a job killer, yet they will increase regional inflation, killing more jobs, just to keep this Liberal dead book promise.

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce said that harmonization will increase new house prices by 5.5 per cent. Consequently that is going to lead, according to many experts, to much higher property tax within the area, this in an area that has difficult economic problems because of past government policies.

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The Liberals will do anything, regardless of the effect on Canadians, to try to prove that they have integrity, even though all Canadians know, thanks to the Liberal dead book, their integrity is very, very low.

The finance minister will argue his harmonization policy to falsely fulfil a Liberal promise will not kill jobs. I would like to ask the finance minister if this is so, why is Greenberg stores closing five stores even before harmonization takes place? Greenberg has run a cost benefit analysis. It knows this policy will reduce profits and have acted accordingly. What cost benefit analysis has the finance minister conducted and will he release this information to Canadians? I think not because it is obvious he had done none.

When the harmonization policy takes effect it will increase the cost of doing business to Atlantic province retailers. This much is already confirmed and known by the studies done in the provinces agreeing to harmonization.

This will simply drive consumers near New England states to cross the line, purchase their goods where taxes are lower and add further problems to our current balance of payments. If the Liberals would only wake up and listen to Reform policies and try to implement something that would be far reaching from sea to sea, involving each and every province, then Reform would gladly have a look at their proposal. But they do things in a piecemeal fashion and cause all sorts of problems, pitting one province against another. It causes nothing but grief. It is no wonder that we are having difficulty in this land, trying to bring unity and understanding.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the hon. member's comments I wonder if he is aware that when we harmonize two taxes that what happens is there are adjustments. That means some commodities go up and other commodities go down.

• (1700)

The Reform member talked about those things which are going up. He did not talk about the reality that in all of those provinces at different rates, 5 per cent in Newfoundland, 4 per cent in Nova Scotia and 4 per cent in New Brunswick, the total quantum of taxes being collected by government has been reduced. The reality is that money is being added to the pockets of consumers. The bottom line is there will be more disposable income for consumers which will create jobs. The whole philosophy that the member used, that it will kill jobs, is erroneous.

The member talked about the Greenberg company. Its representatives have indicated that many of the Greenberg stores in the maritimes were marginal. They were losing money. They are talking about closing some of them. However, the bottom line is they were going to go out of business anyway. It has nothing to do

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with the implementation of tax, but hon. members opposite want to use that as some kind of analysis.

The member did not talk about the positive things. One of the positive things is one collection authority. Right now each individual province has an administration to collect the retail sales tax and the federal government has an administration to collect tax. Why can the Reform Party not see that it makes sense to have only one administration collecting those taxes? Why can Reform members not see the great economic benefit that will be extended to the maritime provinces because they will not have to incur those costs?

Yesterday I talked to a fellow accountant in St. Anthony, Newfoundland. He said it was one of the best things he has ever seen happen in the province. The province of Newfoundland will save millions and millions of dollars. That money will go back into an economy which as we know is very weak. That is a positive benefit of this legislation.

Right now, small and medium size businesses, the job creators in this country, have to fill out forms for the retail sales tax and forms for the GST. There is not one of those small businesses that would not say that just having one form will be a tremendous improvement. Why is it that the Reform Party cannot see that?

Then there is the business about pitting one province against another. We have three provinces now, which is three more than we had a year ago. A couple of years from now we will have twice as many as that again, including my province.

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to answer a question that was a speech but I will try.

It is ridiculous for any member of this House to say: "What are you talking about? This is something which Canadians want. After all, we got three provinces this year and two or three years down the road we will get a couple more and another five years down the road we might get one more". What kind of a planning strategy is that?

What about offering a package to all the provinces and give them a chance to study the issue and respond? No, not from the dictators that we have in this place. It is better just to throw it out there and say: "This is a good deal. If you do not believe it, just ask us and we will tell you".

The Ontario studies have said it would cost that province \$3 billion. Ontario is not interested. I am surprised the member who is from Ontario would not take that into account. He should talk to a number of people in his own riding. Obviously a number of people in Ontario are extremely opposed to this.

And the Liberals say that things are going to be cheaper overall. Add up the things which a family with an average income has to buy, like children's clothing, heating oil and other necessities. All

of a sudden they will have to pay more for those items. Those families do not buy luxuries by any means; they try to make ends meet. I am talking about the bulk of the people, the people who pack their lunch, put their head down and go to work every day. They have a terrible time trying to make ends meet because of the taxes they have to pay. If the member does not believe that, he should ask anybody who is out there working how well they are making out.

To me this whole thing is a sham. It is a cover-up for a dead book error. The Liberals were going to scrap and kill the GST. They made big, brave statements in the campaign, but when push came to shove they did what we see today. It means nothing. If the Liberals want to make a proposal to the country as a whole, if they want to take Canada into consideration for the good of all Canadians, then they should show us something that does that and they should stop piecemealing around.

• (1705)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand there is only a little time so I will ask the member a very direct question. The member and his party have stated that they are opposed to the harmonization of the taxes. They keep pushing about killing, abolishing and scrapping. Is the Reform Party proposing that the current GST simply be eliminated totally?

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious what we have said from the very beginning. Let us have a responsible government, let us balance the books, let us stop spending more than what we have. Get the balancing effect into place, then start giving some people a break in taxes and maybe the GST would be an excellent place to start.

The Liberals are bringing in a harmonization plan that only affects a small number of Canadians in three provinces. It does not address the real issue all across the land. Other provinces are saying no to the plan and some are saying that they do not think so. What kind of decision making is that? Let us get this act together.

It is time the Liberal government started consulting Canada instead of its caucus.

Mr. Harold Culbert (Carleton—Charlotte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's presentation and to the subsequent questions and comments which came forward. I wonder if the hon. member is aware of three relevant points to this debate.

One point relates to small business. I have talked to a number of small business people in Atlantic Canada. They have said that with the harmonization they will have one set of records to keep, one cheque to issue, one auditor to review their books and accounts. This will replace the current two sets of books, one for provincial sales tax and one for GST, two cheques to issue, and two auditors coming in from time to time to review their accounting systems.

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They have said this is a tremendous cost saving to them in the operation of their businesses.

Second, in my home province the current provincial sales tax is 11 per cent and the GST is 7 per cent. Is the hon. member aware that currently there is 7 per cent and 11 per cent on top of that 7 per cent on purchases of such items as automobiles, refrigerators, stoves, paper towels, Kleenex, bathroom tissue, paper supplies, all the normal things that we use day in and day out? To harmonize that into one system with a single 15 per cent tax is a savings. There is no question about it.

According to the GST listing there are other products that will go on. For some of those a credit system will come forward but overall there will be a tremendous savings for the consumer and the business person. This proposal is supported by the majority of people in Atlantic Canada.

• (1710)

Mr. Thompson: Madam Speaker, it is questionable how much support there is when I see petitions bearing 16,000 signatures of people who live in these provinces and object to the harmonization plan. I find it unusually strange that there has been some careful analysis done by some companies which were going to open new stores in 1997 but decided not to because of what was happening, that it was not good for business.

There has been a very careful analysis regarding retail sales. Many retailers have come to the conclusion that retail sales would be way down. We all know that whenever retail sales are lost there is a good chance of job losses and the overall effect is not good.

I think a very careful analysis has been done by both sides, not just on the cost savings because of the harmonization but also the increase in other problems that may arise. It has all been carefully done by those who have the expertise to do so.

I would ask the hon. member to remember that statements are coming from people who have a great concern about this, people such as those at the Retail Council of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): I am sorry, but the hon. member's time has expired.

Mr. Thompson: I thought if I was asked a question, I would have time to give the answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue on debate.

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to speak about improvements to Canada's federal goods and services tax. There are over 130 improvements and the government is introducing them to simplify the GST and to increase its fairness. These

changes do go a considerable way toward replacing the GST as we know it with a better system.

The GST as we know has been a source of much controversy. There is nothing as topical as something everyone dislikes and no one likes taxes. That is not surprising.

It was not long ago in this country that nobody paid taxes because there were none. At the turn of this century there were no national income, corporate or sales taxes for anyone to pay, rich or poor. Believe it or not, in 1900 Ottawa got most of its revenues from customs duties. I suspect that this could be the reason our political ancestors promoted Canada as a great trading nation.

But we live in a different time and in many ways a much different country, a country cited as one of the finest in the world in which to live. One of the distinguishing features that makes this country of ours the envy of others is the priority we place on quality of life. We are known the world over for social programs we have devised to ensure a decent quality of life for everyone.

Taxes unfortunately are the duties and dues that we pay for the privilege of membership in this country and this society. The taxes we pay ensure a common richness. And let us face it, the GST is a tax that brings in \$18 billion a year, or 13 per cent of the total federal revenues. Without a tax like it, our social programs would be in jeopardy, our debt problems would be deadly, and our national advantage as an international economy would be at risk.

Having said all this, I want to say also that the government has been correct to criticize the GST as it was. In so doing, we were responding to what Canadians told us. Canadians told us that the GST was poorly conceived. They told us it was an outrageous example of overlap and duplication that came out of bureaucracies. They told us that the GST was cumbersome and that in particular it cost small business too much time, too much energy and too much money.

The legislation being introduced now both simplifies and clarifies the application of the GST and also streamlines the administration. In doing this it introduces a greater fairness in the system and lays the foundation for a national harmonized sales tax. Taken together, the measures that we see in the bill represent a major step toward replacing the GST as we have known it. They respond to what Canadians have been telling us.

In looking at alternatives to the GST, the all-party finance committee of the House went to Canadians for advice. It listened to nearly 500 witnesses and read more than 700 briefs from consumers, professionals, businesses and individuals. What did the Canadian people tell us?

Canadians told us to do what is sensible. They told us to fix the problems that were there. They told us not to run off and create some other new or strange scheme to adjust to, to do the same job as the GST and risk the same complexities. They said: "We need the \$18 billion, we understand that. The thing is in place now so fix the problems and get rid of the irritants. Fix the duplication and create sales tax harmonization. Fix the headaches that we have by

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clarifying the rules and making it simpler and fairer". This is precisely what this legislation starts doing. In so doing, it shows what can be accomplished by simply responding to what Canadians have told us to do.

• (1715)

Our other colleagues in the House will speak to the issue of sales tax harmonization which is in the legislation respecting three of the maritime provinces. Today I do want to comment more on the measures that address the headaches that affect all Canadians in this legislation and which are also being dealt with at the same time.

In developing the changes, many of which are technical and sector specific, this government went straight to many of the groups, organizations, sector leaders and professional associations affected by the tax. We told them we had the tax and asked them what we could do with it to make their life somewhat easier. We wanted to know what we could do to fix their problems with this legislation.

What we heard in response resulted in this legislation with about 130 different changes affecting multiple sectors of our society. The package introduces measures to simplify the operation of the tax for many businesses and non-profit organizations. It introduces measures that make compliance easier and clarify confusing aspects of the tax. It also introduces measures to improve the fairness of the tax both for the consumers and for businesses.

I wish to elaborate on a few points. First, well over one-third of these proposed modifications are aimed specifically at simplification. These include streamlining the tax treatment of charities and non-profit organizations. They include a simplified calculation of employee and shareholder benefits for Canadian businesses. Businesses can now make a one step tax calculation using the same information they use for their income tax purposes. The modifications include measures which simplify transactions related to used or second hand goods, which have become a significant part of the economic activity in this country.

The package also includes proposals to clarify the application of the tax and, in particular, to ease the burden of compliance for small businesses. These changes were done to ensure that there is more precision in the application of the GST and that it does not complicate administration unnecessarily.

They clarify certain educational services such as those provided and what we are now defining as public colleges and vocational schools as well as universities. They involve streamlining the administration of tourist rebates, something that is very important

in this country as an industry, and extend the eligibility to these rebates to non-resident businesses.

There is also the much needed clarification of the GST in areas relating to financial services, to trusts and estates and changes to existing partnership rules.

Finally, this package of measures restructures the GST to make it fairer for all Canadians. This is accomplished by ensuring competitive equity among businesses and applying the tax equally to all consumers. A variety of modifications restores the international competitiveness of Canadian service providers, equalizes the tax treatment of health care services and introduces a fairer application of the GST to housing rebates.

The themes are simplification, clarification and greater fairness. These have all been the guiding principles in developing these changes. Many of these measures being proposed are technical and strategically aimed to deal with specific problems in certain sectors.

In the amount of time I have here today it would be impossible for me to review each adequately or in sufficient detail. I know all the members have access to that material. Consequently, I would like to draw the attention of the House to some general examples of the improvements which are in this legislation.

I should first remind the House and its various members of the invaluable contribution being made to the well-being of our Canadian society by Canadians and Canada's charitable organizations. However, when the GST was established the rules were developed to address the activities of the largest charities. Many smaller charities have found these rules to be too onerous for their use. Yet combined together these small charities, precisely the smaller charities, do much of the charitable work in the country.

• (1720)

This legislation proposes new and simpler rules for all charities but, in addition, new rules were specifically designed for smaller charities which will simplify compliance for the GST for the smaller charitable group. As a result of these changes significantly fewer charities, about 10,000 fewer to be exact, will have to register for the GST at all. For those that do remain registered, 10 to 12 per cent of all charities, the rules will be simpler, particularly for fundraising activities, for filing returns and for claiming rebates. I think that is very important and very positive. This will help our charity sector increase the range of its activities in a time that fiscal restraint is forcing many to become more dependent on the network of goodwill that exists among our volunteers and our community based organizations.

Further, a number of changes are proposed to make the federal sales tax system fairer in its application in the health care sector. We all know especially with our aging population how important

the health care sector is to Canadian society and how much more important it will be in the future.

There will be changes to the treatment of services provided by health care practitioners who are not medical doctors or dentists. A greater degree of fairness is being introduced to exempt from GST the services these practitioners provide. For example, the list of exempt health care practitioners will be extended to include dietitians who meet the criteria for health care professionals in five provinces. As a result, using that example, dietitians will be able to provide their services exempt from federal sales tax to individuals, health care facilities and public sector bodies starting January 1, 1997.

An added advantage of this measure is that it increases professional regulation of health care practitioners who are requesting an exemption. This makes their services more financially accessible to the public.

A number of changes are also proposed to extend or clarify the zero rating provisions as they apply to certain medical devices and associated services. For example, the zero rating of hospital beds will be extended to purchases by all health care facilities, including long term health care facilities. Currently the sale of hospital beds is zero rated only when purchased by a hospital or by an individual with a written order from a medical practitioner. I think we can see that there are positive elements in the legislation.

The zero rating of the cost of modifying a car, for instance, to meet the needs of an individual using a wheel chair will also be expanded. Orthopaedic devices will be zero rated when they are made to order for an individual or when they are supplied under prescription.

These are sensible changes which are being introduced at an appropriate time, as I said before, when the needs of an aging population are increasing. I do not think there would be any argument in this House that these are beneficial to certain segments of Canadian society.

I go to another sector, the municipal sector. We used to have various complications concerning the GST, for instance, garbage collection. These will be alleviated under this new legislation. The collection of garbage will now be exempt from GST when it is provided by a municipality or by a government.

Similarly, services to remove snow, ice and water, maintain water distribution, sewage or drainage systems or repair and maintain roads and streets and sidewalks, these all will now be exempt from GST when they are supplied by the municipality. This government proposes also that the collection of recyclable materials be included in the exempt provision for the collection of garbage. That is important when we are trying to help our environment in this country. These efforts, simplification and

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clarification in the application of GST, will have a beneficial effect for the environment and for different levels of government, namely the municipal level.

There is another sector this provision has a beneficial effect on, the agricultural sector. Here again the list of zero rated supplies is being expanded to include automated and computerized feeding systems, specified mulchers, crop shredders, transportable conveyers and elevators, and certain wagons and trailers.

• (1725)

It is always important when we develop legislation that we treat all the sectors across this country, whether it is industrial, agriculture, municipal levels of governments or health care sectors, that there is something that is going to help a number of the organizations in this land.

There are changes to the existing rules for the benefit of builders of subsidized residential complexes to ensure that they also have equitable treatment for themselves as builders, together with non-subsidized housing.

There is a broader range of goods and services relating to international transportation which can and will also be zero rated, as will services provided by purchasing representatives to non-resident businesses.

These things are technical. I do not think they are the most exciting but I know to the people who are concerned with this legislation they are important changes. They will have a benefit in areas where people were complaining to us before. I know the members of the finance committee heard these complaints, and this legislation is the response.

There are many other proposed changes to the tax treatment of international transactions that will improve the administrative efficiency and the competitive advantages of Canadian businesses. I could go on with more examples but these changes address the inequities, the complexities and the unnecessary obstructions that have made the GST so unpalatable to Canadian citizens, Canadian businesses and different levels of governments.

They bring needed simplicity, clarity and fairness where issues sometimes were cloudy. In making these changes, this government has responded in large measure to not what a government wanted, or the government side of this House wanted, but what Canadians told us were problems.

In addressing these technical amendments to the GST, we are not talking only about the harmonized provinces. We are talking about across Canada. It is a response to the irritants in a system of a badly designed tax and we are trying to improve it. This is not a perfect world. There is no legislation that is perfection that I have ever seen in this House any former House or probably any future House. But we are moving forward with improvements.

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That is what legislation does. That is our job as responsible people trying to administer fair taxes, simpler taxes and equitable taxes in a country.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mrs. Barnes: It is incredible to listen to people heckling while one is trying to complete a speech but that is part of standing up and debating in this House.

We have to understand that this bill accomplishes a major step in replacing the GST as it was. In my opinion it is moving toward a better system. I would like this country at some point in time to be a fully harmonized system but life is not perfect, we as members of this House are certainly far from perfect, and other legislatures are far from perfect also.

What we do is make improvement and gradually things move in the right direction and maybe one day we will have the perfect solution for people who think there are perfect solutions. Right now we are working toward improvements.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): I will allow a very short question and a very short answer. There is one minute left in this debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a very brief question, and I hope the answer will be equally brief.

I listened to my colleague, the member for London West, speak of her pride in being associated with such a bill. I would like to ask her what about this bill she is proud of. First of all, it is costing Canadians \$1 billion in political compensation for a political agreement, when Quebec had already gone ahead with harmonization at no cost to the federal government.

Second, how can she be proud of her government, when the promise that it made—and that was part of the reason it won the election—was to scrap the GST, not to conceal it in the price, not to conclude harmonization agreements with the maritimes at a cost of \$1 billion?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

[*English*]

Mrs. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is that I am very proud of my government because it responds to the needs of Canadians. It has travelled across the country and has listened to people. If the hon. member had listened to my speech, many examples were given to him. There are 130 exact examples in this legislation which he can read. Constituents in all ridings, I do not care in which province, will benefit from this legislation.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The House resumed from October 10 consideration of the motion; and of the amendment

Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, along with many of my colleagues in this House I have been lobbied by firefighters from right across the country with respect to the need for a Canadian Operation Respond test site.

Therefore, it is my privilege to rise in the House, on behalf of the Minister of Transport, to announce the government's support for the private member's initiative undertaken by the hon. member for Burnaby—Kingsway. The Government of Canada agrees with the principle that, wherever it is reasonable to do so, full support should be provided to firefighters as well as to other emergency response personnel. M-241 has this goal in mind and, for that reason, we support it.

I should, however, clarify some of the terms used in the motion. Let me begin with the title "Operation Respond". In the early 1990s the International Association of Firefighters in both Canada and the United States proposed that a system be established to provide firefighters with immediate information on contents of trucks and railway vehicles.

The essential elements were: first, each means of transport intended to carry dangerous goods must be assigned a unique identification number.

Second, on loading dangerous goods the operator of the means of transport report to a central computer the identification number and details of a load. On delivery, the operator would report a second time to have the entry deleted.

Third, computers, similar to those used by police forces for direct access from their vehicles to centrally located computer files be provided to fire department vehicles so that at the scene of a transportation accident the firefighters could access the central databank to find out what was carried in the involved means of transport.

A study conducted in 1993 by the U.S. National Research Council, under the guidelines of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, concluded that the generation and handling of the data needed to give effect to such a system for all dangerous good shipments was too expensive to justify the implementation. However, it was noted that some companies, notably railways, already had the necessary data in computerized form.

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The decision was taken in the U.S. to support the development and use of software which could access such existing data. The organization established to do this is Operation Respond Institute Inc.

Since Operation Respond began in 1992 its software has been established in 40 locations. Companies whose data can be accessed using the software currently comprise two trucking companies and 16 railway companies.

Operation Respond is a program established through contractual agreements between Operation Respond Institute Inc. and data providers such as railway companies and between Operation Respond Institute Inc. and data users such as fire departments.

We agree that Operation Respond, as operated in the United States, be demonstrated right here in Canada.

• (1735)

With respect to the statement that the Minister of Transport should move rapidly to establish a Canadian test site, there are no regulatory roadblocks or initiatives required in order for Operation Respond to operate in Canada as it operates in the United States. It would appear from the motion that what is wanted is a champion to promote the initiative.

I can advise that the Minister of Transport will act in this role for the establishment of a demonstration site. To promote the establishment of the demonstration site, the Minister of Transport will request CN and CP to participate in the program. They will be asked to make available their data on the contents of railway cars in the manner required by Operation Respond software.

Further, the Minister of Transport will assist financially in the establishment of Operation Respond software in a Canadian location which includes installation and training. In selecting the Canadian test site referred to in the motion, we considered past accidents in communities which have significant rail and highway traffic. I can advise the House that an informal agreement has been reached between the Burnaby Fire Department and Transport Canada to establish the Canadian demonstration site in Burnaby, B.C.

Although Burnaby, B.C. has not had frequent accidents, it has had a higher rate than similar communities. I am sure the member for Burnaby—Kingsway would agree that a Burnaby test site would be highly appropriate. The Minister of Transport supports the establishment of a Canadian demonstration site for Operation Respond. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to support the private member's Motion No. 241.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on Motion No. 241, a motion which the Reform Party supports. It was put forward by the member for Burnaby—Kingsway.

The motion deals with the protection of firefighters and other emergency health personnel who are often confronted with dangerous situations. In particular, this motion deals with hazardous materials.

The situation that exists currently is that in the event of an accident, firefighters can get their information from CANUTEC. Unfortunately, it takes about eight to ten minutes for this information to be available. This is valuable time that can be used to save firefighters, the surrounding public and the communities where the hazardous situation has arisen.

What the member for Burnaby—Kingsway proposes is that we have a test site for a rapid response situation where information can be determined on site within a minute. All a firefighter would have to do to get information on a vehicle or train that has crashed is put it into a computer system. The computer will then be able to tell them immediately what hazardous materials are actually sitting in the train or truck. The availability of this information will save lives.

The condition of support of this motion is that it does not cost more money and that it does prove to be a more efficient way of protecting firefighters and other emergency health care personnel. The good thing we have right now is that the software is already available because it is being used in the United States. The Americans are prepared to give that to us free of charge.

Firemen also have laptops and modems available to them. Therefore, it is not going to cost more money. Indeed, it will be interesting to see what the outcome will be of the emergency response situation.

Firefighters all over the country have been doing a lot of work in pursuing this idea and, in particular, Ed Pakos, the president of the Victoria Fire-Fighters Society and firefighters on Vancouver Island. The motion is supported by the International Firefighters Association, the Canadian Police Association, the United Transport Union and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs.

I would also like to speak on an ancillary topic which is very much related to this issue and involves the protection of firefighters and other emergency personnel. This is something that firefighters have been pushing forward for a long time. It involves the disclosure of the health of individuals if the emergency personnel are confronted with body fluids.

• (1740)

For example, in the case of a car accident, the firefighters, police officers and medical personnel attend to the victims on the site. Glass can be present. Body fluids are around. When emergency personnel come into contact with those body fluids they run the risk of acquiring some potentially lethal diseases such as AIDS through HIV transmission or hepatitis B or C.

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The government ought to put forward a bill that will ensure that good Samaritans and emergency health care personnel have a right to this information, a right to know whether the people they are helping are carrying a deadly disease. The government voted against this, much to my shock and disgust, when members of the Reform Party put forward some very strong and persuasive ideas on how we can protect the health of all emergency personnel.

This idea has the support of firefighters, police associations and medical personnel across the country. It seems absolutely unfair that when good Samaritans and emergency personnel respond to an emergency and come in contact with body fluids, they must have the right for their safety and the safety of their families to know the health status of the individuals in need.

The government believes that good Samaritans do not have the right to this information. It believes that protecting the individual who is sick is more important than protecting the individuals who help them. This is not a situation where the rights of sick people are abrogated. This simply makes good common sense.

When Motion No. 241 was put forward, when firefighters came to us with suggestions about the motion, they also suggested ideas for legislation that could be used by them to get information on the sick or injured people they may be dealing with and whose body fluids they may come in contact with.

Unfortunately, we have not seen any motion to that effect put in the House. I believe it is essential for protection of all individuals involved in emergency health care procedures to have the right to know the health status of individuals they are dealing with when they are exposed to the body fluids of these people. As I said before, these body fluids can pose a significant and sometimes fatal risk to the good Samaritans and health care personnel.

The Reform Party supports Motion No. 241, on the condition that it does not cost the taxpayers any more money and that it will improve the current situation. We hope that it will because we believe that the protection of these hard working firefighters, police officers and other emergency response teams who are confronted by these hazardous situations must be protected. They are courageous and honourable people who protect all of us and we in turn must do the same to protect them.

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak in favour of Motion No. 241. I would like to thank the member for Burnaby—Kingsway for bringing this to our attention today.

As I have talked about this issue with a lot of firefighters and I have learned a lot about firefighting. The reality is that firefighting is not exclusively about fighting fires. It seems that less than 50 per

cent of the time is spent in conventional firefighting and the balance in attending accidents.

The motion is on the movement of hazardous materials and as our society seems to be getting more and more sophisticated, it seems to be happening more and more often.

About a year ago January I was in British Columbia. I took the train through the Rocky Mountains and I probably passed close to the member's riding. I discovered that there had been a tremendous number of derailments out there. It must be very difficult for firefighters who arrive at the scene not to know what the contents of those cars are or exactly how to deal with them.

● (1745)

In an era of technology and software development it appears very appropriate that we develop Operation Respond, which already exists in the United States. As some other members have said, it is very easy to clone that system in Canada.

The minister has been very supportive in requesting that our two major railways participate in that plan. That minister is willing to provide funds toward the purchase of the software and the training of those people who will be engaged in the test site in Burnaby.

It is not just about the contents of these carriers. There is also the issue of training personnel in the evacuation of communities based on what sort of hazardous material is on these carriers.

I would like to thank the Oshawa firefighters, the Clarington fire department, the Scugog fire department, which is a volunteer fire department, and also the one in Oxbridge that brought this matter to my attention.

We talked about this time and time again. I have sent many letters to the minister and so forth. I am very happy that the government and the member for Burnaby—Kingsway have been able to come to an agreement. It shows how a government can work with the opposition. All parties in the House can work together to come to very sensible conclusions and to develop good legislation for the protection of our people.

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to private member's Motion No. 241, brought forward by my NDP colleague from Burnaby—Kingsway. He has worked very hard on this important motion to bring it to our attention for which I congratulate him.

Motion No. 241 deals with a subject matter that I also have been supporting and have done a lot of work on over the years. That is why I want to say a few words today. It is important to note that another one of our colleagues from the New Democratic Party, the member for Winnipeg Transcona, has worked very hard on this

issue. We all thank the parliamentary secretary and the minister for responding in the way they have.

The motion essentially deals with the establishment of a Canadian test site for Operation Respond, a computerized database of hazardous materials that would improve safety for firefighters and help save lives and property.

There is no question in my mind that this is a critical motion which every member of this House should support. At the same time the Minister of Transport should be as we speak preparing to establish this test site. As the parliamentary secretary indicated a few minutes ago, I believe that is what he is doing. I am very pleased to hear that tonight and I recognize the support the government has given to this motion.

This is an issue that is most important to Canada's firefighters. It was first brought to my attention by Saskatchewan firefighters during one of their lobby days on Parliament Hill. The firefighters annual lobby effort is one of the most effective I have been subject to in my eight years in Parliament. I congratulate the firefighters on that.

I also want to congratulate Doug Coupar who was the Canadian director of the International Association of Firefighters. His efforts were instrumental in the success of this lobby. During that lobby they told me that firefighters dealing with incidents involving hazardous materials need to know precisely what chemicals are present and how to handle them. The faster they can obtain this information the more effectively they can protect their own safety and that of the community around them.

The situation today is not adequate. Operation Respond, on the other hand, is a system that gives firefighters firsthand access to information that they need by use of a laptop computer and a modem installed in their emergency vehicles. They simply enter a number which has been assigned to each load travelling on the rails or highways into that laptop and within one minute they can know exactly what materials are onboard that vehicle which may have been involved in an accident. They will know what safety precautions to take and how to contain the incident they have encountered more effectively.

• (1750)

Compare that to the 10 minutes to several hours that it sometimes takes under the existing system. The sources of the information for Operation Respond are databases kept by the carriers. The system is applicable to all forms of transportation in its ideal usages, trains, trucks, ships and aircraft. I hope we will be able to find a way to ensure that this happens. Operation Respond makes a tremendous amount of sense.

In May of this year I wrote a letter to the Minister of Transport. I stated: "I have recently met with Canadian firefighters who are

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interested in securing a Canadian test site for a program they refer to as Operation Respond. I know you are familiar with the proposal and I think you were supportive of the concept prior to your appointment as Minister of Transport.

"The concept of identifying hazardous materials in transit is a very important one because the most dangerous aspect of firefighting is responding to incidents involving hazardous materials. Firefighters in Canada are especially hampered, they say, by a lack of information available at such incidents, especially within the critical first minutes upon arrival at the scene.

"Firefighters in Canada are urging you to make Operation Respond's Canadian test site a priority of your government by committing staff and resources to the project immediately. I am writing today to say that I agree with the firefighters' request and I trust that you will make this commitment without delay".

That was the letter I sent to the minister after the Saskatchewan firefighters along with their colleagues from across Canada visited me here in Ottawa.

In June the minister responded to my letter. A major part of his response to me was that the CANUTEC system, the system in place today, seemed to be working just fine but there was always room for improvement. The minister said there were Canadians currently in the United States monitoring the Operation Respond system and he suggested that perhaps this fall there might be recommendations coming forward to change the way the Canadian system operated.

I am very pleased to see today that perhaps the experience in the United States has had an effect here in Canada and it is as a direct result of the firefighters lobby and their request that these matters take place.

In light of how important this issue is and in light of how supportive of change the firefighters are, I think it is time that we in Canada took action.

The motion in front of us today gives every parliamentarian in Canada a chance to confer with the minister, the cabinet and the department and say that firefighters know what they are talking about. By voting in support of this motion today we may actually be doing something that will one day prevent a serious human accident and perhaps even save a life.

I was proud to support the call of firefighters in May and I am proud to support this motion today.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Motion No. 241 which states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Minister of Transport should proceed rapidly to establish a Canadian test site for Operation Respond, a computerized database of hazardous materials, that would improve safety for firefighters and help save lives and property.

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The previous member mentioned and I would like to repeat that the International Association of Firefighters has done an excellent job of making its case to members of Parliament on all sides of the House. It has provided exceptional information. It has made its arguments clearly and it has asked us to consider its request for this test site.

We are often approached by many groups that would like to see certain initiatives or changes made in legislation. If they all followed the model that the International Association of Firefighters followed, we would achieve many more constructive amendments to legislation if that model were followed.

I want to also commend Doug Coupar, who was the then director of the IAFF. I also had an opportunity to deal with Mr. Elliot Hastings who has been carrying on on its behalf.

• (1755)

There was some concern in the first hour of debate some weeks ago that there was a position being formed. I can assure all members and certainly firefighters that the points raised even in the initial debate had been carried back to the minister.

I know the hon. member for Hamilton West, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, listened carefully and advocated on behalf of this motion because it was the right thing to do. Who else would now better what they can do than the firefighters themselves?

I understand as a result of the advocacy of members on all sides of this House that there is an intent today to have this debate close a little early. That would allow us to have a vote today and not in one, two or three months from now. I believe now, as a result of the work of all the people, including the firefighters, that the case has been made very clear and the very right thing to do is pass this motion and get on with it.

I would like to make one final announcement that the firefighters and the police officers of Canada will be pleased about. Yesterday there was another draw in the private member's process and a motion that I had submitted has been drawn for consideration by the House. That motion is another of the recommendations of the IAFF. It is to establish the public safety officers compensation fund which would establish a fund to receive gifts and bequests for the benefit of families of officers and firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty. That will be coming before this place when we return after the Christmas break.

On behalf of all members I want to thank the IAFF for the excellent job it did to make its case convincingly and to earn the respect and the support of members of Parliament.

Ms. Margaret Bridgman (Surrey North, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have followed this debate rather closely and I would like to add a couple of words that I have not heard arise in the debate yet.

Firefighters in Surrey have brought to my attention that their main problem was the time element, the time element of getting to the scene, identifying what they were dealing with and taking the appropriate response.

The second point I have not heard in debate and one I would like to put on the record for consideration when this is activated is the nature of the elements they are dealing with. On occasion there is the transporting of more than one particular hazardous chemical. The second one may not be hazardous in itself but when these mix they are dealing with a totally different kind of response than they would if they were dealing with one on its own.

That was stressed very clearly to me by the firefighters that sometimes that entails a second call, a wait and this kind of thing. I would like to bring that to the attention of those who would be addressing this situation in the future to certainly keep that in mind, that this operation or program would certainly cut down that time element and address that issue.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): I declare the amendment carried.

(Amendment agreed to.)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): The next question is on the main motion as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion as amended?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): I declare the motion as amended carried.

(Motion agreed to.)

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Milliken): I would ask the consent of the House to suspend the sitting of the House a few moments so that we can move on to adjournment proceedings.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 6 p.m.)

Adjournment Debate

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 6.03 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Norfolk, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

Bill C-65, the Canadian Endangered Species Protection Act, is the first federal piece of legislation dealing with listing protection and recovery of a variety of endangered species to fall within federal legislative jurisdiction. It covers migratory birds, fish and marine mammals, species that cross international boundaries and all species found on federal lands or within Canadian coastal waters.

The bill prohibits the killing, harming, harassing, capture, taking or possession of an endangered or threatened species as defined in the bill, as well as the destruction of residences of individual members of such species, including their dens or nests. It creates several means of enforcing its provisions, including citizens' rights to take civil actions in some circumstances and penalties for breach of the offence provision such as fines of up to one million dollars.

• (1805)

The bill is intended to put the federal government in a leadership position in a national endangered species regime that will involve the provinces in a number of key areas. Four provinces already have endangered species legislation in place but may have to update it to meet the obligations which the governments have all agreed in principle to meet under the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk signed at Charlottetown on October 2, 1996.

In the accord the provinces and the federal government have agreed to establish complementary legislation and programs to provide for effective protection of species at risk throughout Canada, including the provision of protection for habitat of threatened or endangered species. Also agreed was their participation in the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council which would be established under Bill C-65.

The bill reflects many years of hard work by environmental groups and other stakeholders who have advocated the adoption of

federal legislation to protect endangered species as part of an approach to conserving biological diversity within Canada. Witnesses representing the agricultural community have made an important contribution to the debate.

There are currently 275 species of wildlife included in the COSEWIC list, which is an organization that identifies species which are endangered or threatened. Ten of these 275 species are extinct and 11 are extirpated, which means they no longer live in the wild.

For a number of years opinion polls have shown that Canadians have expressed a consistently high level of concern about endangered species. It is widely seen as an area in which the federal government should exercise a strong leadership role.

The majority of species at risk are in trouble because of threats to their habitat by human activity. Biological diversity, sometimes called biodiversity, means the variety of life in an area, and the area could be as small as a decaying log or as large as the entire country. It includes the variety of species and ecosystems on Earth, and the genetic differences of organisms, communities and populations.

There are many reasons to preserve biodiversity, including its intrinsic value, the rate at which it is disappearing, its value as a source of scientific knowledge and aesthetic pleasure, human dependence on it for food, medicines and other products, its contribution to moderating climate, soil conservation and pest and disease control, and our lack of knowledge about the biodiversity that exists in Canada and the consequences of failing to preserve it.

Canada was the first industrialized country to ratify the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity signed at the 1992 earth summit in Rio de Janeiro. The convention entered into force in December 1993.

The bill deals with critical habitat, a concept that is key to the American Endangered Species Act. The habitat aspect of the bill is limited by the bill's primary focus on the residence of a creature in a number of key areas, in that a residence is a much smaller area than a creature's habitat and preservation of the residence alone would often be insufficient to ensure the survival of an individual let alone a species.

I ask the parliamentary secretary, what are the stumbling blocks to providing more comprehensive protection for habitat and should the bill be amended in this respect?

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his concern and for his question. He has been a very active member on the environment committee.

The original proposal for the endangered species legislation covered only 4 per cent of Canada's land mass. The new legislation, Bill C-65, extends this 4 per cent coverage to 60 per cent. While the legislation does not extend the coverage to 100 per cent,

Adjournment Debate

from sea to sea to sea, it is important to note that the legislation is part of a larger framework.

In October 1996 the federal Minister of the Environment and the provincial ministers responsible for wildlife protection agreed in principle to a national accord to protect species at risk. Under this accord the provinces and territories are co-operating with the federal government to ensure that complementary legislation and programs are put into place.

The member asked if there are stumbling blocks to comprehensive habitat protection. I would prefer to think of these as challenges and opportunities.

Endangered species protection in Canada is dependent on the co-operation of different levels of government, of the public, the private and non-governmental sectors, of groups, organizations and individuals.

Over 90 per cent of Canadians want endangered species legislation. Canadians from all walks of life want species to be preserved and to be protected. They are our most important allies. Some Canadians may have concerns about how the implementation of the

endangered species legislation will affect them. It is important to remind the House of the fantastic contribution that ranchers, farmers and other private land owners have made to protect endangered species.

The burrowing owl program in Alberta is one fine example. My mother-in-law in southern Ontario supports habitat protection for migratory birds. She lives on the edge of 100 acres of a heritage wetland along the shore of Lake St. Clair.

Yes, we have challenges but we also have opportunities and partnerships that have been long established. The Canadian people want endangered species legislation and the Canadian people will help us preserve and protect species at risk.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Ringuette-Maltais): A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

The House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.)

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