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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 21, 2002

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 21, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

BERTHIER—MONTCALM

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Michel Bellehumeur, member for the electoral district of Berthier—Montcalm, by resignation effective May 18, 2002.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed today my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 19 petitions.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

NATIONAL DEBT

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting a petition signed by 24,804 residents of many communities in Quebec, who are asking the Government of Canada to take the measures required to pay off the national debt, which is the main cause of the tax burden and of the great poverty of peoples.

[*English*]

CHILD LABOUR

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise to present a petition with many thousands of signatures from all across Canada. It is presented to us by Kim

Plewes who is director of the Oakville chapter of Kids Can Free the Children.

The petitioners point out that the problem of child labour is a great concern and it is getting worse. Some 250 million children worldwide are child labourers. Approximately 80,000 children enter into the workforce daily and every one of these children who is forced into child labour is emotionally, verbally, physically, psychologically, intellectually and spiritually affected.

These petitioners call upon parliament to take action to ensure the enforcement of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, particularly articles 28, 32 and 34, and article 182 of the ILO convention, at home and around the world.

• (1010)

CANADA POST

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition. The petitioners from the Peterborough area point out that exposure to mould and asbestos is a proven cause of disease. They indicate that the Canada Post facility in Peterborough, Ontario has a continuing problem with mould and asbestos and that Canada Post is failing to undertake the necessary repairs.

These Canada Post employees call upon parliament to encourage Canada Post to take all necessary action to ensure that its employees are not exposed to mould and asbestos.

[*Translation*]

RURAL ROUTE MAIL COURIERS

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that you will be pleased to hear that I will act today as the spokesman of 29 people who are calling for the abolition, pure and simple, of section 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

At present, Canada Post is paying its rural route mail couriers truly indecent wages that are reminiscent of the 19th century.

I rise on behalf of these 29 petitioners, who are calling for the abolition of this provision that is so offensive to workers.

[*English*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 and table two petitions on behalf of constituents in Nova Scotia dealing with the denial of a redfish quota to the town of Canso and the subsequent adverse impact that it would have on the community of Canso and surrounding area.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition contains names from individuals in Larry's River, Boylston, Guysborough County as well as Mulgrave, and the second petition is from Port Hawkesbury.

The petitioners call upon the government to act immediately to ensure that the minister of fisheries knows the impact this would have on their communities and that he focus his attention on measures that would restore economic vigour to the community of Canso and surrounding area. We hope that the minister of fisheries would heed the cry of constituents in his home province of Nova Scotia and deal with this issue forthwith.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141 and 142.

[Text]

Question No. 133—**Right Hon. Joe Clark:**

Can the government advise if it is conducting overflights in the region of the G-8 meeting in Kananaskis and Calgary, and if so: (a) which department or agency is conducting the overflights; (b) how many overflights have taken place since August 2001; (c) what is the purpose of the overflights; and (d) what is the cost of the flights that have already taken place and those proposed in the future?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): I am informed by National Defence as follows:

(a)The Canadian forces have conducted several overflights of the Kananaskis area in preparation for the G-8 meeting. (b)Between August 2001 and 20 April 2002 Canadian forces CH-146 Griffon helicopters conducted 16 such flights, some of which have involved more than one aircraft. (c)These flights were conducted to gain an appreciation of the terrain and its challenges. (d)The cost of these flights is estimated at \$36,000. While it is likely that one or more additional overflights will be required before the G-8 meeting, it is not possible at this time to determine their precise number or cost.

I am informed by the Solicitor General as follows: The RCMP has conducted overflights in the region of the G-8 meeting in Kananaskis and Calgary. Since August 2001 the RCMP conducted five overflights for the purpose of taking low level photographs of the Kananaskis area over a three day period. The RCMP has also contracted a local firm to take high level photography on one occasion. The RCMP is unable to determine the total costs of flights at this time. Future photography overflights are planned for security purposes.

Question No. 134—**Right Hon. Joe Clark:**

Will the security arrangements at the G-8 meeting in Kananaskis respect the recommendations contained in the report of Justice Ted Hughes, namely that "ultimate responsibility must rest exclusively with the RCMP", and if so, have clear terms of agreement been developed regarding the provision of and responsibility for the delivery of security services?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Through the reinstatement of the position of federal security coordinator, FSC, the RCMP has already addressed the need for

clear terms of agreement with the executive arm of the government. The FSC serves as a liaison between government representatives and the RCMP members tasked with the planning, implementation and delivery of security measures at major events such as the G-8.

The RCMP policies applicable to major events such as the G-8 meeting have been amended to reflect the five principles put forward by Mr. Hughes. When planning security for a major event the following principles will apply:

a) When the RCMP are performing law enforcement functions, i. e., investigations, arrest and prosecution, they are entirely independent of the federal government and answerable only to the law.

b) When the RCMP are performing their other functions, they are not entirely independent but are accountable to the federal government through the Solicitor General of Canada or such other branch of government as Parliament may authorize.

c) In all situations, the RCMP are accountable to the law and the courts. Even when performing functions that are subject to government direction, officers are required by the RCMP Act to respect and uphold the law at all times.

d) Primary responsibility for establishing security requirements at major events rests with the RCMP. Their conduct will violate the charter if they give inadequate weight to charter rights.

e) An RCMP member acts inappropriately if he or she submits to government direction that is contrary to law. Not even the Solicitor General may direct the RCMP to unjustifiably infringe charter rights, as such direction would be unlawful.

Question No. 135—**Right Hon. Joe Clark:**

Can the government advise as of March 18, 2002, what is the estimated overall cost of security for: (a) the G-8 site at Kananaskis; and (b) G-8 related activities in Calgary?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): The government is committed to ensuring that the summit is a success and is working very closely with its partners in the Government of Alberta, the city of Calgary and in the municipalities surrounding the Kananaskis area to ensure a safe and secure environment for G-8 leaders, invited guests, social activists and the local population. To this end the RCMP, in partnership with the Calgary police service and other local emergency response agencies, are planning for all potential eventualities in the most cost-effective manner possible.

In light of recent events around the world and assessments carried out by the RCMP and CSIS, the federal government designated the G-8 summit was eligible for financial assistance to cover extraordinary security-related expenses of the host province and some of the municipalities surrounding Kananaskis.

As preparations are ongoing, the overall costs for security provided by the RCMP, the city of Calgary and others will not be known until the completion of the summit.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 136—Right Hon. Joe Clark:**

Can the government advise if the Joint Task Force Two (JTF2) is or will be tasked for security measures at the G-8 meeting, and if so: (a) how many officers are expected to be deployed to the G-8 meeting; (b) who will be responsible for determining JTF2's role; (c) who will JTF2 report to; and (d) will there be written reports about JTF2's activities available to the Canadian public?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): The Government of Canada will make certain that the G-8 summit in Kananaskis will benefit from all of the security resources necessary to ensure the safety of participants and the success of the meetings.

For security reasons it is not the policy of the Government of Canada to disclose the specific activities and locations of Joint Task Force 2. The release of such information would hinder the ability of the Government of Canada to respond to incidents at any time, including potentially during the G-8 summit.

Question No. 137—Mr. André Bachand:

As of March 18, 2002, are the Canadian Institutes of Health Research funding embryonic stem cell research or do they have applications for grants and if so: (a) what is the nature of these grant applications; (b) who are the principal investigators; (c) what is the amount of the grants; (d) what are the institutions within which they work; and (e) are there institutional and corporate or other private sector partnerships involved in the grant applications?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): As of March 18, 2002 CIHR had confirmed two research projects that had the stated goal of involving human embryonic stem cells. Additionally, one other project that aims to use human embryonic stem cells has been deemed fundable, but as per CIHR's new guidelines, no money will flow to this project until reviewed by an oversight committee.

CIHR has committed that no new funding will flow to human embryonic stem cell research until April 1, 2003.

These grants aim to achieve such goals as the development of novel therapies for such diseases as sickle cell anemia and improving the chances of successful transplantations for Type I diabetics.

The location of the principal investigators and the grant amounts are:

1. Hospital for Sick Children \$80,432
2. Sunnybrook and Women's Health College \$38,500
3. University of Western Ontario \$248,998 pending

Funding for these projects does not involve the corporate or private sector.

Question No. 138—Mr. André Bachand:

Can any of the stem cell research involving human embryos be accomplished using stem cells from other sources and if so: (a) have these sources been exhausted in each case; and (b) which fertility clinics in Canada or abroad will provide the human embryos to be used for human embryonic stem cell research for the grant proposals currently being funded or considered for funding?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Whether non-embryonic stem cells could be used to achieve the same therapeutic capacity as embryonic stem cells in these research projects is the subject of scientific discussion. As such, it is impossible to suggest that alternative sources have been exhausted in any of the research projects.

The sources of the cells for these projects are the ES International of Australia for the Hospital for Sick Children, and the WiCell—Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation for Sunnybrook and Women's Health College.

Question No. 139—Mr. Bill Casey:

With respect to the recent car accident, involving a diplomat from the Japanese embassy, on March 23, 2002, at 1:30 a.m.: (a) were charges laid against the diplomat and if so, what were the charges; (b) were other people involved in the accident and if so, were charges laid against anyone else who may have been involved; (c) what was the diplomat's full name and position at the Japanese embassy; and (d) how did the "zero tolerance policy" implemented last year affect this situation and the treatment of the Japanese diplomat following the accident?

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): (a) Yes. The department was informed by the police that the diplomat was charged with dangerous driving, operating a motor vehicle while impaired, and failure to provide a breath sample, pursuant to sections 249(1), 253 and 254 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

(b) No other people were involved in the accident and the incident did not involve injury or death.

(c) Given privacy considerations, the department does not disclose the names and position of foreign representatives involved in alleged incidents of crime. The department is however aware that in respect to this particular case, numerous reports in the media cited a particular name.

(d) The policy of zero tolerance was vigorously applied in this case, as the department did not interfere with the decision of the police to proceed with the prosecution of the diplomat and the laying of criminal charges. Once the diplomat was criminally charged, the department requested that the mission involved waive immunity in order that the matter be adjudicated in a Canadian court. The mission concerned subsequently denied such waiver. Consistent with the impaired driving policy, the mission agreed to suspend the licence of the individual. Since then, this diplomat has left Canada.

Question No. 141—Mr. Loyola Hearn:

Concerning the overfishing by Estonian vessels and the closure of Canadian ports: (a) what diplomatic representations have been made by Canadian officials in Estonia since January 1, 2001; (b) how many have been at the ambassadorial level; and (c) what are the dates and nature of each intervention?

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Answers to the three components of the question are as follows. During the time period in question there have also been contacts between Canadian and Estonian fisheries officials. However, as requested, this response sets out diplomatic contacts in Estonia.

On September 26, 2001 the Canadian embassy contacted Estonian fisheries authorities for an exchange of views on multiple agenda items for the September annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO. Note that the NAFO meeting was later postponed in the wake of September 11 events.

On January 15, 2002 the Canadian embassy contacted Estonian fisheries authorities to convey Canadian priorities for the NAFO special meeting scheduled for the end of January.

Government Orders

On March 6, 2002 Canada's ambassador to Estonia called on Estonian interlocutors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equivalent to a Canadian assistant deputy minister, to present Canadian information indicating serious overfishing by Estonia of 3L shrimp and underline that Canadian port closures were likely if activities were not rectified in short order.

On March 14, 2002 Canada's ambassador to Estonia called on Estonian interlocutors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equivalent to assistant deputy minister level, to receive Estonian response to the demarche of March 6. Estonians provided more detailed information on the activities of their fleets.

On April 5, 2002 the Canadian embassy received a phone call from Estonian interlocutors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equivalent to Canadian assistant deputy minister level, proposing that an Estonian delegation travel to Canada to discuss Estonian 3L fishing activities.

On April 9, 2002 the Canadian embassy contacted interlocutors in the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide courtesy advance notice of pending announcement of Canadian port closures to Estonian fishing vessels.

Question No. 142—Mr. Loyola Hearn:

Concerning the overfishing by Faroe Island vessels and the closure of Canadian ports: (a) what diplomatic representations have been made by Canadian officials in Denmark since January 1, 2001; (b) how many have been at the ambassadorial level; and (c) what are the dates and nature of each intervention?

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Answers to the three components of the question are as follows. During the time period in question there have been a number of contacts between Canadian and Danish and Faroese fisheries officials. However, as requested, this response sets out diplomatic contacts in Denmark with Danish, Faroese and Greenlandic interlocutors.

On August 10, 2001 in preparation for the annual meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO, in September, the Canadian embassy forwarded a list of Canadian priorities on various agenda items to Danish and Faroese officials.

On January 18, 2002 Canadian embassy officials called on Danish interlocutors and the Greenlandic official that serves as head of the Danish delegation to NAFO, roughly equivalent to Canadian director general level, for an exchange of views on agenda items for the NAFO special meeting at the end of January.

On March 14, 2002 the Canadian assistant deputy minister for Europe and Canadian chargé raised Faroese activities in the NAFO regulatory area with Danish and Faroese interlocutors, approximately equivalent to Canadian assistant deputy minister level.

On March 21, 2002 the Canadian chargé contacted Danish, Faroese and Greenlandic officials, all roughly equivalent to Canadian director general level, to provide courtesy advance notice of pending closures of Canadian ports to Faroese fishing vessels. Note that as no Canadian ambassador was accredited to Denmark at this time, the chargé was the most senior official at the embassy.

On April 16, 2002 in response to public comments by Faroese fisheries authorities that Faroese fishing vessels had not been active

in NAFO division 3L since January 2002, Canadian embassy officials called on Danish interlocutors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, roughly equivalent to Canadian director general level, to provide details on observed activities of Faroese fishing vessels in 3L since January 2002.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 132 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 132—**Mr. Leon Benoit:**

With respect to a trip to Mexico taken in January 2002 by the Minister of National Defence: (a) what was the complete itinerary of the trip; (b) what are the names and status of the individuals with whom he met; (c) what are the names and status of the individuals who accompanied the Minister; and (d) what are the details of the means of travel and accommodation for the Minister?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved that Bill C-56, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak about this very important legislation.

Bill C-56, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, is important because it would provide a legislative framework to protect the health and safety of Canadians and their offspring. It would, at the same time, offer new hope for infertile people, as well as those suffering from illness and disease.

It is important because it will fill a void. At present, Canada has no law to prohibit or regulate activities relating to assisted human reproduction. And it is equally important, because these issues are not easy ones. Nor should they be, as they go to the very heart of our values as a society, with regard to the way we build our families.

Government Orders

In the time available to me today, I intend to remind hon. members of the content of this legislation, and its impact on individuals, families and Canadian society.

• (1015)

[English]

I would like to express my appreciation to my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Health for their thorough review of an earlier draft of this legislation. Their comprehensive consultations assured Canadians that we have, in fact, made every effort to find an appropriate way to legislate these complex issues.

I also wish to thank the individuals, groups and organizations who have shared their views on the bill and the issues involved. When the royal commission on new reproductive technologies began consulting with Canadians in 1989, it became clear that there was a myriad of strongly held opinions on assisted human reproduction and related research. Ever since then people have been articulating their thoughts on the science and the ethics of these issues. For that reason, we believe that we have developed a bill that is balanced and ethical, one that would put us in step with other industrialized nations.

The bill before us today speaks to one of the most fundamental human desires, having a family. The truth is that approximately one in eight Canadian couples faces the challenges of infertility. Bill C-56 seeks to provide a measure of comfort and protection through various means.

There is another overarching purpose to this legislation. It is to make clear to Canadians and to the world our position on this complicated and fast changing issue. This legislation would clearly prohibit the cloning of human life. We will not let people profit from the creation of a baby or favour one type of child over another just because we have the technical capacity to do so.

The legislation opens with a statutory declaration, six principles that would guide the interpretation of the proposed law. These principles assert that: the health and well-being of children born through AHR techniques must be paramount; human health, safety and dignity in the use of assisted human reproductive techniques and related research much be protected; AHR technologies affect all Canadians but women most particularly; the principle of free and informed consent is fundamental to the application of AHR technologies; there should be no trade in the reproductive capacity of women or men, or any commercial exploitation of children or adults involved in AHR; and human individuality and diversity as well as the integrity of the human genome must be safeguarded.

These statements of principle describe the values that Canadians believe should support any legislative initiative of this nature. They represent the touchstone that guides the regulations and underpins the prohibitions that are contained in this legislation.

I would like to speak about these prohibitions, those practices that would become illegal under this legislation. These are activities that Canadians simply will not countenance because they offend our shared values and the fundamental principles of the statutory declaration.

Several of these prohibitions deal with what we refer to as the inappropriate use of reproductive technologies. For example, Bill C-56 would outlaw the creation of human clones whether for purposes of reproduction or research. Under Bill C-56 the DNA of an embryo could not be changed if that change were to be transmitted to future generations.

Another key prohibition relates to sex selection practices. These technologies would not be permitted except for health purposes, for example, to screen for serious medical conditions that are carried on a sex chromosome and are more likely to occur in one gender than the other. However, couples could not request that a child be designed to meet their personal preferences.

The commercialization of reproduction is another category of prohibitions.

• (1020)

Canadians feel strongly that human life is a gift. It cannot be bought and sold or treated like a consumer commodity. Canadians do not want people to engage in activities that create human life for profit. Thus, Bill C-56 would prohibit commercial surrogacy which pays a woman to carry a baby to term for someone else.

Canadians do not want a situation in which women can rent out their wombs, nor do they want women to be exploited because of their reproductive capacity. The legislation would not allow children to be the result of a profit making transaction. Again, because the legislation is about helping Canadians build their families, it would not stand in the way of altruistic surrogacy arrangements.

Women who act as a surrogate, say, for a sister, may be reimbursed for reasonable expenditures. Similarly, people could donate eggs, sperm and, as I mentioned before, embryos, but these eggs, sperm and embryos are not marketable. No financial gain must be attached to these activities.

A third class of prohibitions relates to unacceptable scientific activities. For instance, it is internationally accepted that researchers will not work on an embryo beyond the 14th day of its development, nor could researchers engage in any activity that would serve to mix human and non-human reproductive material for purposes of reproduction. There are several activities in this area, including transplanting non-human reproductive material or an embryo into a human and creating an animal-human hybrid. Canadians believe this kind of research is unacceptable.

In addition to prohibitions, Bill C-56 also outlines the regulations under which assisted human reproduction activities can take place. In fact it establishes the first ever regulatory regime for Canadian fertility clinics. Until now these facilities have operated without enforceable rules or supervision. Under the legislation there would be rules on informed consent as well as information in general. Couples who turn to in vitro fertilization or other AHR procedures need reliable information about the technology, the treatment and the chances for success.

Government Orders

Children born of donated reproductive material also have information needs. Currently these needs are not necessarily met. It is left up to the clinics to decide what information, if any, will be provided. Bill C-56 would change this. These children would be entitled to know the medical history of their biological parents. This is vital information if an inherited disease develops.

I would like to make it clear that there will be no anonymous donors. All donors will have to provide their names to clinics before they can donate. However the release of donor names would require the donor's consent. This approach is similar to that used by the provinces and territories for adopted children.

Another one of the regulatory objectives of Bill C-56 is to ensure that promising research involving in vitro human embryos, which are no longer needed for purposes of reproduction, is conducted in a manner consistent with Canadian values.

As a society we have a compelling interest in permitting this research but we will not pursue research that does not respect human life and health, as well as the integrity of our human genetic make-up for generations to come. That is why Bill C-56 calls for the careful regulation of research involving embryos.

Still, our consultations revealed that Canadians believe that there is great merit in other types of research in the field of AHR. For instance, our society has a profound interest in encouraging scientists to investigate the causes of infertility and miscarriages in the hopes of some day finding a solution to these problems.

Similarly, we would favour research into the causes of other medical problems that affect many Canadians, conditions like cancer, juvenile diabetes and spinal cord injuries, as well as degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

• (1025)

Nobody is promising a miracle cure for these devastating ailments but there are optimistic signals emerging from stem cell research projects being conducted around the world.

As we know, embryonic stem cell research is not without controversy. Stem cells are the immature precursors of cells that will eventually mature into specialized tissue such as a heart, muscles, a brain or a spinal cord.

While embryonic stem cells are felt to be the most promising at this time, research is needed to better understand the potential of adult stem cells. There is no doubt that Canadian researchers will be making an important contribution to knowledge about all types of stem cells.

That is another reason why Bill C-56 is so important. It would establish the regulations under which embryonic stem cell research may be performed. These regulations would ensure that the work is conducted in an ethically appropriate manner consistent with society's values.

For example, the regulations would require researchers working with embryonic stem cells to obtain a licence from the regulatory authority for each of their research proposals. They would also need to obtain approval from a reputable ethics board for any project

proposal and demonstrate that no other source would be adequate for their needs.

The only acceptable source of embryos would be from fully informed couples. It would be up to the couple to choose whether their unused embryos would be discarded or donated either for research or to other infertile Canadians.

All these AHR activities would be overseen by a new regulatory body, the assisted human reproduction agency of Canada or AHRAC. This body or agency would monitor and enforce the act, including the prohibitions and the regulations. It would also grant or refuse licences for the performance of regulated activities such as in vitro fertilization. Reporting to parliament through the Minister of Health, the agency would be governed by a board of directors representing Canadians from all walks of life, including lay people and experts.

I am suggesting today that Bill C-56 is about balance. It is a way to respect profound and legitimate differences of opinion while serving the broadest interests of Canadians. We have listened to Canadians. For more than a decade we have consulted with groups and individuals, the provinces and the territories, and countless professional organizations and associations representing the widest possible cross section of Canadian views. These consultations will continue as the legislation makes its way through the House and the Senate.

Hon. members recognize that there is no current legislation in the area of assisted human reproduction. We have no law that prohibits human cloning. We need to fill this void. All parties have called on the government to take decisive action. It is my hope that the legislation will receive speedy passage through the parliamentary process. Once the legislation is in place I will be reporting to parliament on its progress every year. Parliament would have an opportunity to review the entire law after three years.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Canadians have told us that they welcome federal legislation in this area. The last years were spent working with Canadians, who took the time to ponder these difficult issues, to come to an understanding of what they mean, and how we feel about them, to discuss them and to find a consensus.

[*English*]

We have spent many years working with Canadians. They have spent much time considering these difficult issues. They have spent much time coming to an understanding of what these issues are about, what they mean and how we feel about them. What we need to do now in the House is to further discuss these issues and hopefully find a consensus among ourselves to move this important legislative work forward.

The legislation gives us a way to move forward as a thoughtful, caring and principled society. We are confident that we have found a balanced, reasoned and principled approach to these very complex social issues.

Government Orders

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to rise and speak to this important legislation. Bill C-56 touches on matters of life and death and on the desires of parents to conceive children and to build families. It offers hope to thousands of Canadians who are looking for cures to diseases which they suffer each day.

The subjects addressed in the bill are ethically complex and highly controversial. I do not claim to have all the answers but the decisions we make today will have a profound effect on thousands of Canadians for generations to come.

The bill has the potential for great good but can also do enormous harm. While we do not have all the answers, we are still called upon to choose, but on what basis do we choose?

I want to state my belief that every Canadian, young and old, has been endowed with an intrinsic value by their creator. Human life is special and I am in favour of protecting and preserving human life at all stages, from conception to natural death.

Scientists largely agree with the technical moment of when life begins. All indications are that life begins at conception. For example, our personal DNA structures will remain unchanged from conception to death. There is no logical stopping point after conception where we can say that life begins.

There is overwhelming agreement on this question. The main disagreement in the bill will not lie between those who believe that embryos are human life and those who do not. Disagreement will come between those who believe that every embryo must be protected and those who believe that the medical benefits and scientific research outweigh its value. Our natural tendency will be to accuse one side of ignoring human suffering and the other side of devaluing human life.

However I am convinced that both groups have good intentions. I will not question people's motives in this debate. I appreciate the desire to protect life and to alleviate human suffering. I simply believe that there is a way to accomplish both. We can protect life and cure disease by investing in the proven and growing promises of adult stem cells.

For that reason, the official opposition is calling for a three year prohibition on embryonic stem cell research to postpone the question while we allow research on adult stem cells to mature to its full potential.

While I regret that the government has chosen to follow the uncharted path of embryonic stem cell research, a path that leads in a direction other than that of human health, I also am hopeful that the government, the research community and the minister will be sensitive to the legitimate concerns of members on both sides of the House.

I would remind the House that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Genome Canada have already instituted a one year moratorium on funding of research on human embryos. A prohibition extended for another two years would dovetail nicely with the three year review already mandated in the bill.

Given the great moral sensitivity of the decision, I believe the government ought to allow the conscience of every individual member of parliament to be freely heard. This means that there should be a free vote on every stage of the bill.

As members know, the bill is a child of the royal commission on new reproductive technologies which reported back in 1993. It has been a long gestation, taking nine years instead of nine months. The draft legislation was submitted to the health committee just over a year ago and the committee presented its recommendations last December.

We are pleased that the government has finally tabled legislation. We want the bill to pass with appropriate amendments as quickly as possible. It must not die on the order paper. I call for a commitment from the minister and the government to pass the legislation prior to any prorogation of the House.

The opposition supports aspects of the bill. We support an agency to regulate the sector. We support the bill's prohibitions: the banning of human and therapeutic cloning; chimeras; animal-human hybrids; sex selection; germ-line alterations; buying and selling of human embryos and commercial surrogacy. We are also pleased that the government has used the strength of the criminal code to ensure that these are respected.

● (1035)

I wish to speak briefly about one of the most important prohibitions, human cloning. I do not need to convince any of my colleagues that human reproductive cloning represents a profound disregard for human dignity and individuality.

In all the months of committee hearings, involving over 100 witnesses, I cannot recall a single witness that spoke in favour of human reproductive cloning. Yet science fiction is quickly becoming science fact. Last summer a number of groups held press conferences declaring their intentions to clone humans. One group has a strong Canadian link. If it is experimenting in Canada today currently no law could stop it.

When speaking last May at the World Health Organization assembly in Geneva, the former minister of health declared Canada's support for the resolution condemning reproductive cloning. He called for an international convention to prevent human cloning.

We wholeheartedly support those expressions. That is why this legislation, properly amended, needs to be quickly passed.

I would also like to talk about the research cloning or so-called therapeutic cloning. While this bill bans the practice, I was troubled with the comments made in the media by the minister two weeks ago when she said that though the government was not considering therapeutic cloning "at this time" she would not rule it out in the future. "This area is changing so quickly. You can't box yourself in", she said.

Members understand the slippery slope we are on. Sometimes we need to draw boundaries. The minister should have taken to mind the words of her predecessor who said to the committee "just because we can do something does not mean that we must, or even that we should".

Government Orders

On the day that Bill C-56 was tabled in the House of Commons, a group of Canadian scientists and ethicists published an article in the *Globe and Mail* calling for therapeutic cloning. They resorted to euphemism in describing it, referring to it as nuclear transfer.

Let us not be fooled; reproductive and therapeutic cloning begin with the same process. Therapeutic cloning for research purposes represents the commodification and the objectification of human life.

Recently President Bush denounced all forms of human cloning. "Life is a creation, not a commodity," he said. A cloned embryo for research purposes could end up being used for reproductive purposes. Research or therapeutic cloning should remain a prohibited activity.

We are also concerned about other prohibitions. We find in the bill that the prohibition on the creation of human embryos does not apply to instruction on assisted reproductive procedures. It seems to me absurd to closely regulate the creation of embryos for research but not for instruction.

The idea that embryos can be created and destroyed at will for teaching purposes and fertility clinics runs directly contrary to their intrinsic value. It even appears that no permission would be required from a donor in this case.

This clause also stands against the intent of the bill itself, which is to make the use of embryos a controlled activity.

We are also concerned about the subtle pressures fertility clinics may experience to create more embryos than are necessary to have some left over for research. A clause should be added that requires licensees to limit the creation of embryos to numbers necessary to complete the reproductive procedures intended by the donors.

Another loophole is hybrids. While the creation of hybrids is prohibited, they will be allowed if not for the purpose of reproduction. Hybrids kept in a petri dish are still partly human and partly animal and this matter concerns us.

If as the government asserts it merely wishes to protect those who must test the viability of human gametes in fertility clinics, then this very limited use ought to be specified.

The health committee also heard compelling testimony recommending great caution in the regulation of surrogacy. We support the banning of commercial surrogacy and we share the committee's concern that the reimbursement for so-called allowable expenses could be abused by inflating expenses. The committee took these concerns seriously, recommending limits on the expenses for which reimbursements would be made.

However we will be calling for tighter language in the reimbursement provisions to ensure that compensation for expenses does not become a de facto commercial transaction.

• (1040)

In relation to controlled activities, I first wish to address a recommendation made by the royal commission on reproductive technologies that did not make it into the bill. It relates to the provisions of fetal tissue for research.

Three years ago we read in the press about an active commercial trade of fetal tissue in the United States, where body parts were regularly bought and sold in a quasi-legal market which Canadians found this to be highly distasteful. We want to ensure that this sort of thing does not happen in Canada. We understand that research into fetal tissue has gone on since the 1930s in Canada and that there is legitimate research that needs to be done. However, in keeping with the dignity and respect due to the human body, we ought to ensure that fetal tissue does not become a commodity that is bought and sold as it is in the United States.

The royal commission found gaps in the provincial laws that touch this issue. The commission stated there was "a lack of uniformity across Canada in provisions governing commerce in human tissue and body parts". Accordingly the royal commission made the recommendation "That the provisions of human fetal tissue for use in research, or for any purpose not related to the medical care of the woman herself, be subject to compulsory licensing" by the federal agency.

We feel that it would be natural and appropriate for the use of fetal tissue to be added to the controlled activities to be regulated by the Assisted Human Reproductive Agency of Canada.

I turn now to the contentious subject of research on human embryos. I understand that the government has the power to push this legislation through and that it will support the principles of experimentation with human embryos.

We have called already for a three year hiatus on embryonic research in accordance with our minority report. It is also our intention to ask parliament to narrow the grounds for research on human embryos in keeping with the dignity and respect due to human life. In this regard the minister ignored a careful recommendation of the health committee.

The majority report of the health committee recommended that research on embryos not be permitted "unless the applicant clearly demonstrates that no other category of biological material could be used". I would note that clause 40 in the new bill simply states that research on human embryos can take place if the new agency satisfies itself that it is necessary for the purpose of the proposed research.

This especially troubles us when we see that clause 32 allows vast power to be delegated to any single member of the board of the agency. One person could make that decision.

First, the opposition feels that the definition of the word "necessary" should be placed in law, not left to the discretion of the agency. As it is there are no clear criteria for defining the circumstances under which experiments on the human embryo will be allowed. At the very least the wording of the majority report of the health committee should be used, requiring the applicant to demonstrate that no other category of biological material can be used for the purpose of the proposed research.

Government Orders

Second, the opposition asks that the purpose of any research on human embryos be placed in this clause. The purpose of research on embryos must be clearly restricted to deriving medical therapies that will assist in healing the human body. Otherwise research might one day encompass such activities as testing the safety and efficacy of drugs or cosmetics. This does not treat the embryo with the respect and dignity the government claims to recognize.

Third, the bill specifies that the consent of just one donor to a human embryo is required in order to use it for an experiment. The bill leaves it to the regulations to define the word "donor". The language is important and I would remind the House that there are two donors to every human embryo: a man and a woman. Both donors, or as I would prefer to call them, parents, should be required to give written consent for the use of a human embryo, not just one. Both parents should have the right to give or withhold consent for the use of a human embryo.

Bill C-56, which governs experiments, should not itself become yet another experiment of political correctness. In this respect I would like more information about the impact of the statutory declaration of the bill, stating that women are more affected than men by the application of reproductive technologies.

• (1045)

If the effect of this clause might be to grant special legal rights on the basis of gender concerning such issues as an exclusive right of permission over the disposition of embryos, I will oppose it.

Though embryonic stem cell research has garnered much interest by the press, the scientists, health organizations and politicians, there are a number of concerns with the practice that are often overlooked.

Stem cells derived from embryos implanted in recipients are foreign tissue and thus subject to immune rejection, possibly requiring years of costly anti-rejection drug therapy. In a recently published study, embryonic stem cells injected into rodents grew brain tumours in 20% of the cases. A researcher said "I don't think this will be a treatment in humans for quite some time". In fact there have as yet been no successful therapeutic applications for embryonic stem cells. There have in fact been problems.

On the other hand, adult stem cell research holds great promise. Research, using adult stem cells, is making important breakthroughs. Adult stem cells are easily accessible. They are not subject to tissue rejection and they pose minimal ethical concerns. Adult stem cells are now being used to treat Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and spinal injuries. We should focus our energies and our scarce resources on research that is making a difference now.

The standing committee said:

—in the past year, there have been tremendous gains in adult stem research in humans. We also heard that, after many years of embryo stem cell research with animal models, the results have not provided the expected advances. Therefore, we want to encourage research funding in the area of adult stem cells.

Unaccountably, in its own research guidelines, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research only had this to say about adult stem cell research: "Research using adult stem cells would also be eligible for funding under specific conditions".

It appears that far from emphasizing research in adult stem cells, the CIHR is limiting research funding for them. This raises important questions, not only about the lack of attention the agency pays to the standing committee but about the wisdom of focusing on embryonic stem cell research. Such a preoccupation might actually hinder the work going on with adult stem cells.

Advances in the field of adult stem cell research are recent and numerous. Events are unfolding around the world at an incredible pace. Here are four examples of what has happened just in the last 60 days.

Last week, May 15, the *Journal of Clinical Investigations* published the findings of researchers at the University of Minnesota who discovered that adult bone marrow cells can differentiate into liver cells. This suggests that patients with genetic diseases of the liver may benefit from therapies derived from adult stem cells.

Canada is at the forefront of this research. The May 1 issue of the prestigious journal of the American Society of Hematology featured the findings of a Montreal based company which has developed a treatment called "photodynamic cell therapy", using adult stem cells to help fight the body's natural rejection of bone marrow transplants from incompatible donors. It has been described as a "magic bullet" in the treatment of rejection.

On April 8 this same company announced that the adult neural stem cells taken from a patient's own central nervous system have been successfully used in treating Parkinson's disease patients, reducing the symptoms by more than 80% over a one year period without the use of medication.

On April 2 in Vancouver a team at the University of British Columbia announced that it had been able to supercharge adult blood stem cells with a gene that allowed them to rapidly reproduce. They were able to heal mice with depleted blood systems. Some day adult stem cells could replace bone marrow transplants in humans.

Who knows what will happen in the next 60 days? We need to reinforce these gains with more research funding for adult stem cell research and allow more time for its potential to be realized.

I want to address for a moment the patenting of human life. In January 2002 it came to light that the human genes were regularly patented by Canada's Canadian Intellectual Property Office, contrary to the understanding of the Standing Committee on Health. We place patents on things to protect a financial interest. Patenting parts of the human body makes the human body into a commodity with a commercial value, contrary to the intention of the bill.

Government Orders

●(1050)

Existing patents might not even be enforceable. Patents are placed on things that are new and useful and show inventive ingenuity. Genes are not new. They exist in every human cell. Patenting of genes implies greater costs to the health care system. If people were able to corner the commercial market on medical therapies involving human genes they would be able to charge whatever the market would bear.

The European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, an independent body set up by EU policy makers, said the unmodified stem cell should not be patented. It said patenting may be considered a form of commercialization of the human body.

The Standing Committee on Health was absolutely clear. Its report stated:

Given the importance that the Committee attaches to the respect of human dignity and integrity, we urge that patents be denied in relation to human material... Therefore, the Committee recommends that: The Patent Act be amended to prohibit patenting of humans as well as any human materials.

The Patent Act should be modified in this act to ban patents on the human body.

I will address the issue of limitations on donors of sperm and ova. Under Bill C-56 there would be no limit to the number of donations a person could make. A donor could make multiple donations and have dozens or even hundreds of children directly related to him or her. This could cause relational chaos in society. It could also represent a health risk. A person may be unhealthy in ways we could not detect and pass along genetic defects to hundreds of others.

The Standing Committee on Health recommended limits on the number of donations from the same donor and the number of babies born through the same donor. The government has ignored this in Bill C-56. However it is too important to ignore. A clause must be added to the bill to mandate that the agency set such limits.

I will move to an important topic: the right of the child to know his or her heritage. The bill's preamble states that:

—the health and well-being of children born through the application of these technologies must be given priority in all decisions respecting their use—

We in our party agree, but apparently the government does not. Bill C-56 would give complete anonymity to donors of sperm and ova, leaving the children born as a result with no information about their parents. The bill should give priority to children who deserve to know their heritage. Although the agency created by Bill C-56 would retain all identifying information about the donors, the bill would not allow the agency to give it to children conceived using reproductive technologies.

Reproduction should take place within the context of human relationships, not divorced from them. Children have the right to know where they came from. That is why anonymous donors of sperm and ova should not be allowed. This principle of the bill is directly contrary to the recommendation of the Standing Committee on Health which states:

We believe that only donors who consent to have identifying information released to offspring should be accepted. We feel that, where there is a conflict between the privacy rights of a donor and the rights of a resulting child to know its heritage, the rights of the child should prevail...We want to end the current system of anonymous donation.

The textbook *Bioethics in Canada* states:

One's genetic history links one to a network of persons. Grandparents, great-grandparents, and the collateral relationships of uncles, aunts, cousins, are integral strands in the pattern of human connections essential to one's sense of personal identity. One may experience a very shallow sense of identity, if one's social identity rests upon no identifiable underlying grid or network of connections to one's genetic ancestors and relations.

We need to feel the pain of adopted children who want but are not allowed to discover their origins. Their pain would be multiplied thousands of times over if Bill C-56 passed unamended. We can easily prevent that from happening.

●(1055)

Today the criminal code calls children born of unmarried parents bastards. Even though children have nothing to do with their origins they can be marked for life for something their parents did. We may be stigmatizing an entirely new social class of people who have no known linkage. This would be cruel for children who are artificially conceived.

An identified donor is a responsible donor. If all donors were willing to identify, people would donate for the right reasons. Unfortunately, one important motivation for anonymous donations is money. One might think donors would stop giving if they could not be anonymous. However the experience of other countries and jurisdictions shows that there would still be donors if they had to be identified. A sperm bank in California found that half of all donors were willing to be identified. An earlier study in New Zealand found that nearly all donors were willing to meet with future offspring.

The government claims that the policy of anonymous donation is like adoption where parents who give up their children are able to remain anonymous. This is untrue. Donations of sperm and ova are intentional, with an opportunity to identify before the donation is made. The decision to put a child up for adoption is made after an unintentional pregnancy is already in progress. The two cases are entirely different.

New Zealand has a policy to accept only identified donations. Sweden made anonymous donations illegal in 1985. The state of Victoria in Australia has also made them illegal. Austria and the Netherlands are planning to implement such laws by the end of the year. Sperm and ova donors have plenty of time to consider their choice carefully before they go ahead. Bill C-56 is unacceptable in this regard.

I will comment on the structure of the Assisted Human Reproductive Agency of Canada. As we have heard in committee, for the agency to be effective it is essential that it gain the trust of the industry and all Canadians. The opposition will attempt to win trust for the agency by ensuring it is strong, independent and transparent.

Government Orders

I will address the agency's mandate. The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies adopted as its central principle an ethic of care based on the first principle of medicine that one should do no harm. The commission said:

The concept...goes beyond simply avoiding actions that might cause harm, to taking steps to prevent harm and create conditions in which harm is less likely to occur—

The Minister of Health told the standing committee:

There must be a higher notion than science alone...that can guide scientific research and endeavour. Simply because we can do something does not mean that we should do it.

The standing committee recommended a careful approach when any assisted reproductive technique raises threats of harm to human health. The committee said:

—the interests of researchers and physicians are supported to the extent that they do not compromise the interests of the children and adults.

The opposition in its minority report added a wise principle:

—where there is a conflict between ethical acceptability and scientific possibility, the ethically acceptable course of action shall prevail.

The interests of people come before the interests of research. The ethic that one should do no harm should be part of the legislative mandate of the agency or be included in the statutory declaration at the beginning of the bill.

We have a number of structural concerns about the agency. It would not report not to parliament but only to the minister. It should be an independent agency. Unbelievably, clause 25 would allow the minister to give any policy direction he or she liked to the agency and the agency would have to follow it without question. The clause would also ensure such direction remained secret. If there were an independent agency answerable to parliament such political direction would be much more difficult.

● (1100)

The powers of delegation and inspection under the bill would be considerable. We want to take a careful look at them. Members of the board should have a fixed, twice renewable term of three years to ensure the minister cannot simply get rid of non-compliant board members or keep members forever. This was recommended in the report of the health committee.

The chair of the agency should be appointed for a five year rather than a three year period so that his or her appointment surpasses the electoral cycle. This would minimize political pressures on the agency. The performance of the agency should be evaluated by the auditor general rather than the agency itself, and the review should be made public. The licensing process of new fertility clinics should be transparent and public.

Bill C-56 would allow for the creation of advisory panels. We in our party believe key stakeholders should be given statutory standing. These include: users of and children born of assisted reproductive technologies; people with disabilities; scientific and medical communities; the faith communities and professional ethicists; private providers and research firms; taxpayers and their representatives; and provincial and territorial governments.

I will speak to the records that would be kept by the agency. I was surprised to find that no reporting would be required under the bill.

At the very least an annual report to parliament must be mandated. The report should summarize the activities of the agency including the number and type of donors, the number of embryos created and destroyed, those who undergo assisted reproductive procedures and persons conceived as a result, and research projects undertaken including projects using human embryos.

A new clause in the bill should specify that all embryos produced and destroyed by licensees be mandated on the registry of the agency. In recognition of the respect and dignity due to the human body, no human embryo should be created or destroyed anonymously and forgotten. Each should be identified. For this purpose a naming convention should be used rather than a numbering system. It could use what I would call an embryonic name or a standard formulaic combination of both donors' names.

In private life I worked in animal husbandry. In the artificial insemination of cattle every sperm or ovum, let alone every embryo, carries both the number and the name along with a record of the genetic line of the sample. How could we do less for living human embryos? It would be unfortunate to allow the creation and destruction of anonymous human embryos. Recognizing them by name would help us to remember their origins and why they were created or destroyed. It would underscore their value.

We need to address the topic of federal-provincial relationships. As we know, reproductive technologies fall broadly under provincial jurisdiction. While the law allows provinces to name one observer to the board of the agency, the observer is not a voting member. The provinces should be able to name a non-government designate who automatically becomes a voting board member.

The government did not implement all the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health regarding equivalency agreements with the provinces. Specifically the recommendations on parliamentary accountability, public consultation and information, and reporting requirements should become part of this session.

We have concerns about the equivalency agreement. A province might want to operate a more conservative program than the federal government. Under Bill C-56, for example, unless a province was willing to allow experimentation on human embryos no equivalency agreement could be possible. The federal government must not impose its views on the provinces in this regard.

Government Orders

The regulatory process envisioned in Bill C-56 is flawed. The regulations laid before parliament ought always to be referred to the Standing Committee on Health as the committee report recommends. Wording should be added requiring the minister to consider any report of the standing committee pursuant to the regulations laid before parliament. Regulations should not be made until the standing committee has reported on them, thus eliminating the 60 day limit placed on the standing committee to scrutinize legislation. Finally, a three year review process should be made a permanent feature of the act rather than a one time review.

We have other questions about the legislation and other amendments to make, which we will deal with in committee.

• (1105)

In closing, I want to address a significant omission in the preamble of the bill. The very first declaration of parliament is the protection and promotion of human health, safety, dignity and rights, and of course I am in accord with these objectives. However, there is one vital word missing. The purpose of the bill is to regulate technologies and assist Canadians to procreate. The protection and promotion of human life is an overarching concern of the bill. The missing word is "life".

Human life is cheap in many countries of the world. I want Canada to be different. The preamble of the bill must reflect its overarching purpose. I would therefore request that the government include the protection and promotion of human life in its statutory declaration. I look forward to the input of my colleagues on both sides of the House, I look forward to the amendments and I look forward to all members voting freely on this issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on Bill C-56. I am very much aware that the debate on Bill C-56 occupies a very special place among all the debates we shall have in this House. It is a bill unlike any other. This bill invites us to reflect on the human condition, on the definition of life. As well, of course, there is the whole matter of genetics.

We know that this bill is rather like the child of a planned pregnancy. Since at least the early 1980s, we have known how important it is to have legislative provisions to respond to these couples. We learned from the witnesses who came before us in committee that one person in eight experiences infertility problems at some point in his or her life.

Bringing Bill C-56 into the world was perhaps a painful process, but it was a wanted child. I can only hope that its sponsor will be able to meet our expectations.

Not only did we work very hard in committee, but we did so in a non-partisan manner as well. I believe the parliamentary secretary will agree with me that all members of the committee have given the best of themselves to it. We wanted to provide parliament with a significant report, a consensual one, a report that would enable the government to set out a certain number of principles.

Let us start at the beginning. Why must the issue of new reproductive technologies be addressed? We should perhaps explain

to those who are listening to us that this bill consists of four separate elements.

First of all, there is a preamble, in which six main principles are defined. I shall be coming back to these. Then there are a number of prohibited activities: cloning, ectogenesis, payment for surrogacy, sex selection, in short a number of prohibited activities, which I shall also go into in greater detail. There is also the matter of the agency, the governmental structure that will issue licences and enforce the regulations. Finally, there is the matter of inspection.

Let us begin at the beginning. This bill is about a situation unprecedented in the history of humankind. For the first time ever, it will be possible to procreate without having sexual relations. With the new reproductive technologies, the conventional scenario whereby a man and a woman must have sexual relations in order to have children has changed.

Not only will there be a divorce and a disconnect between sexuality and procreation, but it will also be possible for a child to be the product of two parents who do not know each other and who have never met. From the point of view of ontology and the human condition, these are important facts in understanding why we want the new reproductive technologies sector to be legislated and what kind of legislation we want.

It is also important to bear in mind—and I will come back to this—that we recommended in committee that it not be possible, or that it not be authorized, to donate sperm or an ovum, that it not be possible to donate gametes without agreeing to reveal one's identity. I am sorry that the government did not go for this recommendation. I will come back to this.

We are facing a very important new reality: one person in eight has infertility problems. The bill sets out guidelines for dealing with the problem of infertility.

• (1110)

The problem of infertility can be solved by adopting—this is not covered in the bill—and also by using donors and sperm banks and, of course, by using donated gametes.

The bill attempts to uphold a certain number of values that are fairly essential and around which there is consensus. What is interesting is that each of the prohibitions contained in the bill corresponds to a value that parliamentarians will find easy to defend.

Allow me to provide some examples. Cloning for reproductive purposes is prohibited. Why has the debate over cloning received so much attention and why has it had such an impact on Canadian society? This is due to the fact that, obviously, we may have the technological means and we know how to clone.

We have the conviction that every human being is unique. Each human being, based on his or her values, weaknesses, strengths, unique traits, has a special place in the human community. We would not accept having two people who are exactly the same in every way and having science used to give two people the exact same genetic makeup. This is not acceptable based on the philosophy, based on the human ideal that every person is unique. Therefore, human cloning is officially prohibited.

Government Orders

Of course, there may be certain situations where we might think that cloning for therapeutic purposes should be permissible. For example, cloning an arm or organ tissue of a healthy person. However, the bill prohibits all forms of cloning and we believe that this is best for now.

There are other activities that are prohibited, those carried out for eugenics in an attempt to create an ideal human. In fact, altering the germinal cells in order to produce made to order babies is prohibited. With modern technology, it is now possible, at a certain stage in development, to create children with blue eyes, or girls with a particular hair colour. It is also possible to choose genetic characteristics so that, at birth, we would know not only whether or not the child is a boy or a girl, but we could also determine the major genetic characteristics of the unborn child.

Some people were in favour of this, thinking that it would also enable us to eliminate certain genes that are more lethal and that could carry degenerative diseases. The government chose not to go this way and said "No, it will not be possible to tinker with germ cells. It will not be possible to have made to order children. It will not be possible to determine the broad genetic traits of unborn children, always in the name of the principle of the equality of individuals".

For example, it would be possible today to choose the sex of one's child. Some couples may decide to have a girl rather than a boy. Thanks to reproductive selection techniques, it would be possible today to engage in such practices. However, since the principle of the equality of individuals has been enshrined in the charters and in the various documents dealing with human rights, the bill forbids such practices, which I think is very wise.

Of course, maintaining an embryo outside the uterus for more than 14 days is also forbidden. This is an internationally recognized standard. Why more than 14 days? I see the member for Joliette, who always seems to want to know more, and I say to him that an embryo cannot be maintained outside the uterus beyond the 14th day, because that is when gestation begins and the nervous system starts to appear. It is believed that this is really the first stage of human life. So this is another prohibition on which there is a rather wide consensus.

Needless to say, it is also forbidden to create hybrids that would come from both animal and human genetic material. Hybrids of any form are forbidden, and it is not very difficult to understand why.

• (1115)

It is also prohibited—and I will get back to this—to provide and give gametes that will produce an embryo that would be used exclusively for research. It is important to understand this distinction.

The law maker believes that genetic material must primarily be used for procreation purposes. When a person gives sperm or an ovum, it must primarily be used to create an embryo and, ultimately, a child.

However, if a person goes to a fertility clinic and undergoes a cycle of ovarian stimulation, a number of ova may be generated through this technique. It will be possible for that person, with his or her free and enlightened consent given without any coercion, to give

an ovum for research purposes. However, the basis and the premise that must be respected under all circumstances is that it is not possible to use and create an embryo exclusively for research purposes. Why? Because gametes, that is the sperm and ovum, must primarily be used to create an embryo that will eventually become a human being.

Since I alluded to research, I think it is important to make a number of distinctions regarding stem cells. The debate on stem cells is an important one, because in its first few days of existence, the embryo has some 200 of those stem cells. What is peculiar about these stem cells is that, at this point, their role has yet to be determined. These cells may become any organ, member and tissue of the human body. Because of this, they have huge potential in terms of regeneration and mobility. These stem cells are viable and they are important in the first few days of the embryo. Some researchers would like to use them to help people who are suffering from serious degenerative diseases and who may need these stem cells.

For stem cells to be used, an embryo must be destroyed. And since embryos have to be destroyed, it raises ethical issues. There has been an ongoing debate in Canada on which the Supreme Court of Canada made a ruling in 1988. The question is: At what point should an embryo be considered a human being? Is an embryo a human being? Is a fetus a human being? If one believes that an embryo is a human being from the moment of conception, then the destruction of embryos raises criminal, ethical and moral issues.

The regime set out in this bill will function by exception, meaning that the minister will issue licences. A researcher will be allowed to use stem cells only if he is issued a licence and if he can prove that no other genetic material will do. The system will function by exception.

Let me also point out that in committee, as those who have followed the work of the committee will know, witnesses representing major organizations have made very emotional pleas. We heard, for instance, from members of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, the Multiple Sclerosis Association, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Cerebral Palsy Association. The spokespersons for these organizations told us "Without research on stem cells, medical breakthroughs that would help improve the quality of life of the people we represent will be virtually impossible".

So, this raises questions. While some may respect life and the right to live from the moment of conception, others are committed to improving the quality of life.

• (1120)

If research on stem cells may improve the lot of a child with cerebral palsy or an adult with muscular dystrophy, if it may lead to greater autonomy for people, should it be totally banned? This is the kind of debate the bill is all about.

Government Orders

For now, the government has chosen a system that functions by exception. Research on stem cells will be possible only by ministerial permit and once it has been proven that available genetic material, human tissues and the conditions under which research can be done do not permit the desired research to be conducted.

We were presented an argument worth keeping in mind. Representatives from the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation appeared before the committee. They told us that in the 1950s—this was not several thousand years ago, but a mere half a century ago—the government was very reluctant to authorize research on recombinant DNA. It involved moral values and genetics. There were a lot of restrictions, barriers, debates and controversy surrounding this kind of research.

We were told that if it were not for research on recombinant DNA, sophisticated techniques in the area of insulin could never have been developed, for instance. We all know how much insulin has improved the living conditions of people with diabetes.

There are pros and cons. When the time comes to vote at third reading, each one of us will have to weigh the moral arguments we believe in. For my part, I will readily say that, even though it is not for me, a simple backbencher, to decide, I will have no qualms asking the leader of my party, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, to allow a free vote. Obviously, in a bill of this kind there are moral and ethical issues involved.

It is not clear cut. Members who believe that life starts at conception have extremely pertinent, rigorous, well founded arguments to defend their point of view.

The Conference of Bishops and other witnesses came before us and asked us to respect the right to life from the time of conception. On the other hand, those who believe that we must also concern ourselves with making progress in the area of medical research have equally valid arguments.

I have an identical twin brother who has cerebral palsy. When my mother gave birth to us, in the early 1960s, the medical reality was quite different from what it is now. We were premature babies, born during the seventh month of pregnancy. My twin brother came first. My mother experienced a lack of oxygen so my brother now has cerebral palsy. This disease means that dead cells cannot be replaced. Dead neurons and cells are gone forever.

What if, in a few years, research on stem cells made it possible to revitalize tissues and change the fate of those people with cerebral palsy, would we want to preclude that altogether? Should we not keep in mind that, in science, what is prohibited today may not be in the future? I believe we should keep that in mind when we vote at third reading stage.

Back to the prohibited activities. Naturally, it is also prohibited to transplant a sperm, ovum, embryo or fetus of a non-human life form into a human being. The use of any human reproductive material for commercial purposes is also prohibited. We would certainly not want to live in a society where it would be possible to buy or sell gametes or ova as if they were mere commodities on the market. Nobody would want to live in such a society.

The committee members were also faced with an issue of a very high ethical nature, that of surrogate mothers. For the time being, the Civil Code of Québec, for example, only prohibits paying for the services of surrogate mothers.

• (1125)

It is illegal to pay a woman to act as a surrogate. Furthermore, the law clearly recognizes the perfect appropriateness of the role of parent, which is recognized with all its privileges and obligations, to the fact of giving birth to a child.

A child can be entrusted to somebody else's care or can be raised by someone else. Another person can take care of that child, provide for his education and take all the actions that go with parental authority. However, neither the civil code nor the common law recognize that the mother is not the person having given birth to the child. These principles are maintained in the bill.

Thus, the main restrictions provided for in the bill are based on principles which are universally acknowledged and about which there is a consensus. I congratulate the government for being on the right track. The committee has also done a very good job.

I would now like to talk about the preamble. In the bill, the preamble has an interpretative role; it does not have a coercitive value like the other clauses of the bill. However, I believe it helps to understand what the bill is about.

The draft bill contained a statement. The committee wanted the bill to contain very clear principles to guide the courts of justice in challenges and in their decisions.

These principles are about health, security and the dignity of any human being. These are inalienable rights which are acknowledged in all the major conventions. It is also about health and the concern for the well-being of children. As a matter of fact, the well-being of children was central in all the work we did in committee. To us, this was a fundamental concern.

The bill also states that women more than men are affected by assisted human reproduction technologies. Of course, this does not mean that the debate has nothing to do with men, but we understand that it affects women more than men.

Furthermore, we wanted free and informed consent for all decisions regarding donation of gametes, giving birth to children and using assisted human reproduction technologies.

In its report, the committee went further than what is included in the bill. It believed that medically assisted reproduction technologies should not be used without counselling being made available. We recommended mandatory counselling.

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The government chose to ignore this recommendation for fear of constitutional problems. A legislative solution was difficult to find because counselling is under provincial jurisdiction. I can understand that the government would fear a court challenge under the charter of rights and freedoms, a challenge it stood to lose.

As for the fifth principle, understandably, all forms of trade in gametes are deemed deeply repugnant to human beings, just as all forms of female exploitation are.

The last principle we wanted to include in the preamble was the preservation and protection of human individuality and diversity. This covers the preamble and the main prohibitions.

I will now deal with another extremely important part of the bill, the whole issue of regulations. I was on the Standing Committee on Health when it considered the issue of tobacco labelling. The federal government set out on a campaign to curb tobacco use, which was a wise decision.

● (1130)

There are fewer and fewer smokers in Canada, but some very specific groups are smoking more. For instance, girls smoke more than men.

The hon. member for Chambly, a man who is not lacking in will power, and who does not have many faults, has one small one: he is a smoker. The combined pressure of all his caucus colleagues might reduce his smoking somewhat, but this is a matter of individual freedom, so the member for Chambly will carry on as before. He will quit when he is ready to. I believe, however, that he would be in far better shape if he quit his three pack a day habit. There is, however, no way we are going to pressure him. The hon. member for Chambly is going to carry on as he wishes, but the will power he has always expressed leads me to be extremely optimistic for the future outcome.

The connection I wanted to make with the tobacco labelling issue is that there was mandatory tabling in the House for the regulations on this. For certain bills, regulations are more important than the legislation itself. This is true. Why are the regulations important where assisted human reproduction is concerned? Because this is what will set out the conditions under which gametes are to be stored, how things will be managed in practical terms, the operational reality of fertility clinics. All this will be governed by the regulations, as well the entire matter of handling donated material.

In this connection, I would like to point one thing out to the minister and the departmental staff listening to us, who took the bus with me this morning. We had a quick and very friendly discussion. My reading of clause 65 of the bill was that there was no firm obligation for the government to bring the regulations before the House first, and then refer them to the Standing Committee on Health so that there could be an informed examination, with a report to the House, in order for the regulations to be processed with all desired transparency.

Let us look at sub clause 65.(1):

(1) The Governor in Council may make regulations for carrying into effect the purposes and provisions of this Act and, in particular, may make regulations

(a) defining "donor", in relation to an in vitro embryo;

The member for Chambly will correct me if I am wrong, but when a bill says "the governor in council may", it does not have the same coercive value as "the governor in council shall". I would have liked subsection 65. (1) to contain an unequivocal requirement in the form of the word shall. The Bloc Quebecois will also be putting forward an amendment in committee to this effect.

I am sure that all members of the House will join with me in thanking the member for Drummond. She was very clear-sighted. In 1997, she introduced a private member's bill in an attempt to use the means at her disposal as an MP to cover this legal void. This was quite something.

Let us look at the history. After hearing from 40,000 witnesses, the Baird commission tabled a report, in 1993, if I am not mistaken. The government took nearly ten years to act upon it. The Baird commission began its work in 1989. The report was tabled in 1993. The commission's work cost \$28 million.

I will take 30 seconds to remind the House of this saga. The Baird commission included a group of dissidents. I would mention that one of the top experts on this subject is the wife of the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. Back then, there was a genuine desire to make sure that the privy council would let the Baird commission do its work without political interference. An application was even made to the federal court to ensure that the Baird commission would be granted all the independence due such a commission of inquiry.

● (1135)

The Baird commission cost \$28 million. It heard 40,000 witnesses. The report was tabled in 1993 and it took close to a decade—since we are now in 2002—for the government to take action.

The hon. member for Drummond put pressure on the government. She asked questions every day, because there was a danger. That danger was the following: if a public or private laboratory in Canada had engaged in cloning or other practices prohibited under the bill, how could we have upheld the fundamental principles that we have been talking about since 10 o'clock this morning, considering that there was no legislation?

Again, I am sure that all hon. members will want to join me in thanking the member for Drummond, who has been a pioneer in this regard, who took initiatives and who followed this issue very closely.

I have a minor disappointment with the bill. Overall, it is well drafted and our committee worked well and benefited greatly from the expertise provided by witnesses. However, the government erred in one aspect.

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Indeed, in our report entitled “Assisted Human Reproduction: Building Families”, we made a recommendation—I believe it is recommendation No. 19, if I am not mistaken—to the effect that it should not be possible to give gametes, that is ova or sperm, without accepting the fact that the offspring may want to establish a link with the donor and get to know his or her biological parent.

The committee heard from many witnesses who were born following the use of technologies such as the one that we are discussing this morning. These people gave us their views on identity, psychogenesis and all the things that allow a person to become a well-adjusted human being, a productive citizen involved in the community in which he or she grew up. These people urged us to ensure that this would not be optional.

Right now, a donor can say that he or she will later give his or her authorization to be traced. However, this is not compulsory. What is compulsory is that a register be maintained so that, as regards medical history—for example if a donor offspring needs to know the donor's blood type—it will be possible to obtain this type of information.

I would have liked to see this be made mandatory and the bill specify that if one consents to be a sperm or an ova donor, one has to accept that the child that will be born from that process will be authorized to openly trace the donor and could one day contact the donor.

I understand that two main concerns prevented the government from yielding to this argument. The government was afraid that if disclosure was made mandatory, the number of donations would fall.

I do not think that this argument is justified. In countries where disclosure was made mandatory, there was indeed a reduction in the number of donations in the first months or the first year, but after a while, thanks to a good publicity campaign, the situation returned to normal.

As for the agency that is being created by the bill, the minister and the agency share the responsibility to promote these technologies and increase public awareness. The government could have shown a little more courage and have implemented the committee's first recommendation.

The first argument was that by making disclosure mandatory, the number of donations would fall dramatically, and the government was concerned about this.

The second argument was that this was not necessarily a good thing for the family. However, if the donors remain anonymous, does this not contribute to stigmatizing infertility?

• (1140)

Is it good for us, as a society, to maintain this culture of secrecy linked with anonymity? Are people who are infertile not subject to prejudice? By surrounding the whole process of gamete donation with secrecy, with a sort of occultism, is the government not helping to maintain the culture of secrecy that surrounds sterility, which is not good? Sterility should be treated as a condition that has nothing to do with people's will. It should not be subject to any taboos. It should not be dealt with by exclusion. A sterile woman should not

feel any less a woman, nor should a sterile man feel any less a man. A culture of secrecy does not help us achieve this goal.

Another concern we have is the creation of the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada. We are happy that this agency will be separate from the Department of Health. The committee believed it was important, even though the minister was required to table an annual report and be ultimately responsible for the enforcement of the act, to make the agency distinct from Health Canada. The government followed our recommendation.

However, we are concerned about the fact that the agency will be comprised of 13 individuals. There will be a representative of the federal government, yet in our report we recommended there be no representative of the federal government. If my interpretation of the bill is right, the provinces will also have a representative. As far as we are concerned, this is insufficient.

In her speech, the minister noted that Canadians wanted legislation on medically assisted human reproduction. This is no doubt true, but we have to realize that the whole issue of fertility clinics, and the medical procedures involved in reproductive technologies, on both ends of the process, come under provincial jurisdiction. The federal government has invaded the area of reproductive technologies through the criminal code. Because there are criminal offences involved, the federal government is avoiding any constitutional challenges to its jurisdiction when it comes to medically assisted reproductive technologies.

We will certainly move amendments to ensure that the provinces are more adequately represented. We will also propose amendments to ensure that the provinces are involved in the drafting as well as in the implementation of the regulations. We know that the only way to meet that objective is for the regulations to be tabled in the House of Commons and then referred to a parliamentary committee, as is the case of the Tobacco Act.

Since I am running out of time, I will use these last minutes to summarize. What we have here is a good bill. The Bloc Québécois will support its speedy adoption. We think that it is important to fill the legal void that exists. We will move three amendments, including one concerning the regulations and one concerning mandatory disclosure of sperm donations. I will add that we may move another amendment. In the preamble, we will ensure that access to technologies related to assisted human reproduction is not subject to any form of discrimination, whether it is based on sexual orientation or on marital status.

We have been told that it is very difficult for single women to have access to these technologies. We think that, under both the Canadian and the Quebec charter, there should be no discrimination in this regard.

That concludes what I wanted to say about this bill on behalf of my party.

• (1145)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Colleagues, as of the next member to speak, the speakers will be subjected to a 10 minute question and comment period.

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Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with a mixture of relief and apprehension that I stand today to join the debate on Bill C-56, an act respecting assisted human reproduction. As others have mentioned, this is truly a day that many of us have been waiting for since the royal commission on assisted human reproductive technology, in a 1993 report, recommended urgent federal government action to regulate this burgeoning new area. It is a day we have been awaiting since the government let its first effort, Bill C-47, die on the order paper with its 1997 election call, and here we are today, five years after parliament saw that piece of government legislation on this area that is of vital concern to women, to families and to many people in our society who are dependent on the discoveries and developments occurring daily in this area.

We listened very carefully to the health minister's speech as she introduced the bill and it is certainly clear that she has been more than generous in her self-congratulatory words in introducing the bill. New Democrats, who for years have been calling on the government to introduce legislation to give women access to safe, non-commercial reproductive health services, should be forgiven if we are reluctant to join in what is at best a celebration of Liberal indifference or at worst the latest chapter in the government's history of neglect. After all, we are far from having an act in place. Indeed, Canada is the last major industrialized country in the world without legislation in this area.

Reproductive technology is not a static field of science, far from it. While the government has been inactive on this legislative file for all these years, the nature or the bio-nature of reproductive technology has been changing rapidly. Let us go through some of those developments. Dolly the sheep and animal cloning are not new news. An Italian doctor claims to be well on the way to producing a cloned human being. The term "designer babies" is now in common usage as parents begin selecting the biological traits of their children. Internet sites compete in the trade of celebrity reproductive materials while countless others profit from those Canadians who are more than willing to buy access to any healthy eggs or sperm that might assist in their drive to have children. Gender selection has become topical, with all sorts of new rationales being put forward in its defence.

As well, we have witnessed the development of human stem cell research. Eugenics has assumed increased acceptability as scientific capabilities have expanded even though we have had no public debate. So too the patenting of higher life forms, including human genetic material, has become part of our daily lives without public discussion or input. The list goes on.

One can see why we are relieved that finally, as New Democrats have been urging for years, the government has deigned to bring this piece of legislation before parliament. Our initial relief, though, was rather short-lived as we became familiar with the bill's contents or lack of contents. I now want to focus on some of our apprehensions, and they are considerable.

I begin by registering our disappointment that the government has chosen in several instances to override the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health set out in its "Building Families" report of last December.

• (1150)

It was a rare moment in the life of this parliament, moments which are few and far between. Committee members from all political parties took the government's request to review its draft proposal on assisted reproductive technologies very seriously. We devoted months of committee time to studying submissions and hearing witnesses from the full spectrum of views on this whole area, and a very controversial topic it is.

Instead of shying away from contentious areas we debated them and in many cases reached sustainable positions that we offered in our report. We presented the government with 36 recommendations in the main report as well as additional recommendations in the NDP's minority report.

In what is quickly becoming the norm for the government, it has chosen yet again in Bill C-56 to override several of the committee's recommendations with no consultation or explanation to the committee. We have seen over and over again parliamentary committees that run the danger of becoming mere window dressings for the government's legislative agenda instead of the dynamic honing tools to enhance legislation as it proceeds through parliament. Many of us in the House feel that this results in legislation that is less reflective of the will of Canadians and which will be less effective in the long run as a result.

I also have serious concerns with the government's decision to offload many policy issues, some of them very contentious, like stem cell research, to the regulations or to the soon to be created assisted human reproductive agency.

Canadians elected us to the House to deal with tough issues. They elected us to be accountable for how we deal with them, not to pass them on to an unelected, unaccountable organization or group of officials to determine. That is a concern and we will continue to raise our opposition to the off loading of responsibility in fundamental areas of policy that should be decided by this place, by members of parliament elected to do just that.

I will turn now to the substance of the legislation we have before us. The primary consideration for all of us in dealing with the bill or dealing with any legislation governing reproduction must surely be the health and well-being of women. That is a matter which should be self-evident yet it is a matter that has to be said.

After the bill was introduced I was in a debate with members of the other parties. The health critic for the Alliance Party actually said that the bill was not a woman's issue. The last time I checked, women were responsible for reproduction in our society today. Women are often the guinea pigs for experiments in terms of ways to deal with reproductive problems. It is women who in fact are on the front lines in terms of developments in this area.

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Let us be clear, this is a woman's issue and the bill must at least address the fundamental issues of protecting and ensuring the health and well-being of women. Of course we are talking about families and their need to deal with new technologies in the desire to have children, but let us make sure we do not miss the fundamental issue of women's health and well-being which is so central to the bill and so much a part of the history of the bill.

The federal government should ensure that reproductive technologies are proven to be safe before being permitted, that the risks and benefits of any treatment for women are disclosed fully and that the funds needed to achieve these objectives are made available. The bill we are debating should be the means for accomplishing these ends but it is not.

• (1155)

The most effective way of dealing with the legislation is to ensure that the precautionary principle is entrenched in any bill dealing with assisted reproductive technology. That is why in our minority report New Democrats recommended that the precautionary principle be explicitly set out in legislation as a prerequisite for the approval of all standards and procedures. In its final report, the health committee agreed that a precautionary approach was needed.

Instead of finding the precautionary principle among the governing provisions of the bill, it is nowhere to be found. The precautionary principle, which is really putting safety first, can put a damper on the unfettered pursuit of profitable new products and procedures. The choice not to include the precautionary principle reflects the government's affection for the biotech industry, an industry that has benefited tremendously from being able to establish itself in assisted reproductive technology unencumbered by regulation during these many years without an act.

Bill C-56 is also missing a strong mandate to ensure that the most up to date safety information is available to women through counselling. Back in 1990, the New Democrat women's critic, Dawn Black, called for the inclusion of counselling as part of every reproductive technology program. It was her number one recommendation to the Baird commission.

It was said then and is still said today that the quality of the counselling and information must be high and it must be mandated to be readily available. Women also need information on infertility prevention to help them avoid the intrusive and painful procedures that may be part of an infertility treatment.

In response to the draft bill, the NDP minority report recommended that prevention be a central aspect of any reproductive technology policy and a key part of any new regulatory authority.

However Bill C-56 is soft on prevention. The government has failed to provide the type of proactive prevention mandate that is necessary to make real inroads into reducing the factors that lead to infertility.

One way the government could have addressed this important area and ensured that women's concerns remained a high priority, at least with respect to the make-up of the new agency to be called the assisted human reproductive agency, would have been to require gender parity. To give credit to the health committee that was recognized.

It was assumed that because we were dealing with women's health and with reproduction, with a bill that would have a significant impact on women, that the agency would be made up of at least 50% women. Does that appear anywhere in the draft bill or did we hear any of that in the commentary made by the minister? No. A fundamental issue, which would have made a significant difference for outcomes when the bill is finally implemented and up and running, is missing.

That is not something new to us on this side of the House. We have tried many times to get the government to understand the basic notion of gender parity on all boards and commissions. We thought there was a case to be made when the government established the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Since we are dealing with a new research body that would set the stage for innovative research for years to come one would think it would at least have gender parity. We know that women's health concerns and their interests in research and development are critical and important. The government refused to address that fundamental issue at that time.

We felt that when it came to reproductive technology it would be a given that women would be involved. How could the government not do that? Once again not only has the government decided to ignore this fundamental recommendation but it has backed off its own stated principles and policies around achieving gender parity and ensuring a gender based analysis of all government bills and programs.

The government has chosen to let the chips fall where they may instead of clearly supporting women whose health rides on the agency as the enforcer of the act.

• (1200)

By the same token, the bill does not require the agency to establish any formal mechanism for direct input from experts in the field, from the centres of excellence for women's health or even its own women's health bureau within Health Canada, both of which could contribute substantially to the agency's worth in the interests of women through the work they perform.

While I am on the bill's shortcomings in relation to the agency's board, let me add that there is no protection against conflict of interest to prevent the agency being unduly influenced by the biotechnology industry or private clinics. This is an important omission that we believe must be addressed.

Another issue that is very important to many of us in the House is the bill's unacceptable weakness in terms of focusing on the commercialization potential and developments in this whole area of assisted reproductive technologies. Nowhere is it more apparent than when it comes to addressing the fundamental issue of patenting of life forms, a topic of great concern today as the supreme court begins its deliberations on the patenting of the Harvard mouse.

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We had thought, given the words from the government around stopping the commercialization in this area, that it would at least act in terms of stating its objective to prohibit the patenting of human genetic material. That was part of the health committee's report. It was a consensus position. The health minister did not say a word about that when she introduced Bill C-56. She made no mention of the government's intentions to move quickly and forcefully with respect to patent protection. It is very important because knowledge of the genetic building blocks of life forms part of our common human legacy and the public good. It cannot be forfeited to the private reserve of giant life science and drug corporations.

We have called on the government to amend the Patent Act to prohibit human patenting. As I said, so has the health committee. However the government chose to ignore the consensus and instead has put its emphasis on corporate property rights before our access to health care. It could have stipulated a consequent amendment to the Patent Act had it so desired but it chose not to do so.

The implications of the patenting of life forms for our health care system are already becoming apparent. Women's access to a genetically developed test for breast cancer has been impeded by the patent process. Now the same company is applying for a patent on a prostate cancer gene.

A line is already forming at the patent office to slap patents on the beginnings of the stem cell research that holds such promise for Canadians suffering from debilitating diseases. Instead of bending over backward to respond to the wishes of the biotechnology industry, New Democrats believe that the federal government should be playing a leading role internationally to advocate keeping trade agreements from overriding the health interests of Canadians.

We believe all Canadians should benefit equally from improvements in this area. All Canadians should benefit equally from improvements to infertility treatment. This is far from the case now where public coverage of infertility conditions is practically non-existent and private insurance often excludes fertility drugs or imposes severe limits on reimbursement.

We have called on the federal government to work in conjunction with the provincial and territorial governments to bring reproductive technology within the public non-profit sector. We have offered the model of the Manitoba provincial government that recently and successfully reclaimed a for profit clinic to the public health care system and gives a perfect example to the government about how it can act in the best interests of Canadians according to Canadians' deep desire for a non-profit system to ensure that basic health services are not up for grabs in the marketplace.

There are many more issues of concern that I wanted to raise and I will have a chance to pursue those points in further debates and in questions that follow.

● (1205)

For example, we have to look at the whole issue of genetic testing and the absence in the bill of any reference to people with disabilities. With the potential for eugenics cleansing, we are creating enormous problems for our society today. We are putting a cloud over those who live daily with disabilities. Because of developments in this field and the lack of action from the federal

government, they now feel their lives are worth less. Our society is not enriched as we all assume it to be.

We have before us a bill that has serious gaps in women's health protection. It fails to effectively take on the commercial side of assisted reproductive technologies. It has ignored basic issues such as genetic testing and has overridden health committee recommendations in several areas.

The government has come to us after all this time asking for approval for a very important bill. However it misses several significant policy proposals and has relegated regulations to an agency yet to be defined.

We are left in the frustrating position of being—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre for a very enlightening speech. I should recognize the fact that the hon. member has been an outspoken champion on women's issues for many years.

I made note of two things the member pointed out in her speech, which were shocking to me. First, the women members on the standing committee are still having to fight the age old argument for gender parity. Bill C-56 is without doubt, first and foremost, a women's health issue. Yet in this day and age women like the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre have to stand up and make the argument for gender parity on the board. Could she comment on that?

Second, I would like the member's further remarks on what was most shocking to me and that is Bill C-56 seems to be geared to favour the biotechnology industry. It raises this bizarre spectacle or spectre of patenting and commercialization of life forms, even human life forms. That is absolutely shocking.

The hon. member pointed out that with one simple consequential amendment to the Patent Act we could have precluded the idea that anyone could put a patent on human life forms and market and commercialize them. Could she expand on what consequential amendments might have been made to the Patent Act, if the government were serious about precluding what we view as an absolute horror?

● (1210)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions from my colleague from Winnipeg Centre who has raised two very important issues that were pursued in great detail by the health committee which resulted in recommendations as part of our consensus position. The health critic for the Alliance will recall these very important developments.

One is certainly the acknowledgment that we are dealing first and foremost with a women's health issue. The whole area of assisted human reproduction is about women's health and well-being and the need to address their concerns as members of families.

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One would think that if we are going to offload responsibilities for much of this area, the bare minimum we could do is ensure that women are represented equally on the board for this new assisted human reproduction agency. Surely that would be a fundamental initiative, a first step toward addressing these concerns. That did not happen. I do not know what happened.

I do not know why a simple recommendation supported by all political parties did not make it into the bill or into the minister's statement. I do not know what it takes to convince the government that gender parity should be a goal on every board, in every commission and in every agency of the government, at least when it comes to women's health. That would be self-evident and a given. It is not there. We have some work to do at the committee to try to amend the bill and ensure that that fundamental issue is there.

Second, with respect to commercialization, this is clearly at the centre of the whole debate on assisted human reproduction. If we continue to allow the private marketplace to control and own all new developments in this area, Canadians will not benefit nor will women who are in need of assisted human reproduction. The giant drug companies and bioscience companies will benefit from the profits to be gained from patenting life forms.

There is a very simple way to deal with the issue. We suggested it before. Amend the Patent Act to prohibit patents on life forms. It seems pretty straightforward and, as I said, the health committee actually dealt with this issue. Obviously it is an area where there are considerable ideological differences. It was not easy to reach a consensus but we did.

The report from the health committee on the draft bill for assisted human reproduction recommends that the government take action to prevent patenting on life forms. We know there are dozens of applications pertaining to genetically manipulated human cells at the patent office right now waiting for a decision by the government.

Could the government not see the wisdom of acting now using this opportunity of a bill dealing with assisted human reproduction to address this critical area?

Those are two areas that are fundamental to our concerns about the bill. They must be addressed by the government and pursued at the committee before the bill is brought back for final reading.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I did have another point that I was interested in and I do not think the member had time to expand on it. It is the idea of eugenics cleansing and is a term with which I am not familiar.

Could the member expand on what area of biotechnology and research deals with eugenics cleansing? What are her reservations about that particular issue?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, it is a very important issue that our committee dealt with, but is not really reflected in the bill before us today.

We heard from many advocates for persons with disabilities at the health committee who raised concerns that genetic testing for the purpose of eliminating disabilities was a form of eugenic cleansing that would effectively lead to the biomedical elimination of diversity. Of course there are further concerns that these questions are being

decided, and this goes back to the earlier question, by private corporations beyond public control.

Bill C-56 only makes passing reference to diversity in its principles. There is no mention at all in the bill of disability. There is no mention at all of a clearly defined prohibition around eugenics cleansing. There is no plan laid out in terms of dealing with the broad issue of genetic testing. Without regulation we have serious problems on our hands.

We have already seen prenatal testing taking place without full knowledge of what is or is not treatable. We have routine screening of newborns without parental consent, no prohibition of home genetics tests, demands by employers for genetic testing and life insurance companies demanding genetic test results as a result of customer screening. Even more interesting is the fact that since 1993, 30 gene therapy experiments have been approved without any policy framework or national genetic strategy. Without regulation there are serious safety concerns for persons engaged as subjects in genetic experimentation.

Let me raise one more issue which has to do with a case that we heard about recently in the news. Just two weeks ago an American company paid \$2.2 million to settle charges brought by the United States equal employment opportunity commission for illegally testing its employees DNA for a genetic predisposition to a debilitating physical condition. In Canada we have not taken care to provide such protection. Bill C-56 offers no direction in this regard.

We know this is not an easy issue with which to deal. We know it requires consultation with provincial and territorial governments. However, when we are dealing with long awaited legislation with such an explosion of developments in this field, this matter should be addressed by parliament. It should be referenced in the bill before us today and should be part of a plan of action for the future.

We must ensure that persons with disabilities and their organizations are fully part of the discussions in this area. We must ensure that the diversity of our population, and that means people living with disabilities is respected and reflected in any legislation dealing with genetics and dealing with assisted human reproduction.

● (1215)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a member of the health committee. Could she tell the House a bit about the infertility business and fertility clinics.

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One question I have is on the aspect of payment for gametes or embryos. I am not sure, but maybe the member can help us with this. How can fertility clinics, which are private for profit organizations, connect with researchers and give them frozen embryos for research purposes without money changing hands? I cannot imagine that fertility clinics do this out of the good of their hearts.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, the member identifies a glaring example of the deficiencies of the bill. It is strong on preventing the sale of sperm and eggs in terms of individual donations, but offers no clarification with respect to private infertility clinics that actually end up with these supposed leftover products and put them on the market for sale.

There is no question money is changing hands. There is no question that we are dealing with an active marketplace. There is no question that this area must be addressed by the government in the bill in terms of clear and precise parameters with respect to commercialization and with respect to private infertility clinics.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, when a member rises in debate, tradition has it that we start by saying what a pleasure or honour it is for us to speak on this or that bill. Between you and me, I do not know whether it is a pleasure or an honour, but I think it is a responsibility for parliamentarians to speak to a bill that has been introduced by the government.

That said, Bill C-56 is not much of a government vision and strategy concerning reproductive procedures. It is a bill that has been more than a decade in coming. The minister feels it must be accepted and approved promptly. We want to ensure that it does not drag on, and that here in the House of Commons and in the other place as well, it can be voted on quickly and passed. "It is urgent", she tells us. If that is the case, what did the government do when there was consensus in the past, on banning human cloning for instance? A bill was introduced in this place, sponsored by the hon. member for Drummond. But there was no rush then.

There was a royal commission report back in 1993. Then the first bill was introduced, but abandoned when the 1997 election was called. It must not have been so pressing then. So why is it so pressing now for the minister?

Yes, this is an important bill, and parliament will consider it and vote on it. When a bill such as Bill C-56 is being dealt with, however, there must be an acknowledgment that matters of ethics and morality are involved. Religious issues are either related or become related. This is why we in the Progressive Conservative Party feel this is a good example of a bill that needs to be subject to a free vote in the House. What is going to happen on the government side? We shall see as the bill moves through the various stages in the House of Commons. We are not, however, going to have a fast acceptance of this bill shoved down our throats just because the minister herself is going around boasting about having solved the problem.

There are still a lot of unanswered questions. Several aspects of the bill are incomplete. A number of colleagues have raised some today. I will, of course, be raising similar ones, or new ones.

The minister should also watch her language. We want to maintain a level of decorum in our debates in this place, because some issues are linked to what we believe in. We should not be told to act quickly and allow this or that because embryos are being thrown away in the garbage. The minister should raise the level of her argumentation.

Having said that, I think Bill C-56 can be divided into two or three parts.

The first part deals with what is prohibited. We are obviously talking about human cloning, and everyone agrees that this issue needs to be addressed. Parliament should have passed legislation on human cloning a long time ago. In fact, as I said earlier, it had the opportunity to do so with the bill introduced by the hon. member for Drummond. But the government said "No. We get to decide which bills must be passed. We are the ones who set the legislative agenda".

So, the government rejected that bill and said "We will be introducing our own bill. We are in a rush. Canada is practically the only country in the world that has yet to pass legislation on cloning. Time is of the essence". They had almost ten years to make their move, but now they are in a rush. It may have something to do with the fact that, with Her Majesty coming to Canada in the fall, the House could prorogue. They told us "No, this has to be passed now. It is important".

They are the ones who decide the legislative agenda, when a session begins and ends. It is not us. In any case, the government is rather used to introducing motions to adjourn. It will use its same old tricks to get its bill through. However, this bill must be considered in committee, because there are all kinds of elements missing.

First, as regards the report that the committee submitted to the minister, the recommendations, as my colleague from the NDP was saying, were made to ensure that the board of the new independent agency was made up of 50% women. That appears simple enough to me.

● (1220)

The government or the minister will tell us, "Yes, we will consider this in the regulations governing the agency". It is not parliament that will establish the agency's regulations, but the government and the Minister of Health. Parliament and the committee will have no say in it.

Since we all agree on the first part of the bill, banning human cloning and the creation of hybrids, why is this not in a separate bill? Let us vote on that bill.

The second part of the bill deals with assisted reproduction procedures. It refers to donors, men and women. I think that everyone agrees that we need a legislative framework on reproductive procedures. Governments must provide more support for women in particular, but men too, in order to provide them with the best reproductive procedures to build a family, to have children. I think that everyone agrees on this.

Government Orders

There is one element that I am very happy to see included in the bill, and we were the only ones to support it so strongly: the issue of donor identity. My colleagues wanted the identity of the donor to be known by the parents, or the woman who received the sperm or ovum. We said no. The medical record, yes; but the identity of the donor, no, unless there is consent.

The bill provides for a complete medical record but allows for the donor to remain anonymous, which is very important to us. It is important because, since we do not know what will be in the regulations, could parents, women especially, choose the sperm donor? Could it be because they would like to know ahead of time who the donor will be? We do not know. Will a woman be able to choose the kind of donor she wants? This is the first point.

Second, between you and I, we are a small country and, as I understand the bill, neither ovum nor sperm can be imported or exported. If someone who donated sperm gets married and has children later on, will his spouse be willing to accept it? Will his children be willing to accept they have a brother or a sister biologically related to him and to his family? There are psychological consequences that must be taken into consideration. We are happy that donors' identity will remain confidential, but not their medical record.

We agree with what is being prohibited. Again, one must pay attention. Some activities are prohibited and others are controlled. Let us take for instance surrogate mothers. I am convinced everybody agreed that we should not entice women to become surrogate mothers; this is why payment for surrogacy is prohibited. However, at the same time, the bill says that the agency could grant certain sums of money as compensation.

What is going on? Is the practice prohibited or not? They are saying "We know it is happening, we are not prohibiting it. We do not want to encourage such a practice, but at the same time we are willing to have the government pay for some of the expenses". They are sitting on the fence. When the time comes for members to vote, they will have to ask themselves whether the bill goes far enough in prohibiting surrogacy. Some people would like the practice to be authorized in this country and even to have surrogate mothers receive psychological support and fairly generous financial compensation.

• (1225)

The committee heard that surrogate mothers do what they do primarily out of love and generosity and not for financial gain. An act of love, as we understand it, cannot be formalized in a bill.

I mentioned the famous agency. Everyone is delighted to have an independent agency, far from the political hands of the minister and the government. But there is a little problem with this.

Even if the legislation is reviewed every three years, even if there is a report once a year, the fact remains that how the agency operates is left entirely up to the minister, to the department or to the governor in council, take your pick.

Parliament is left right out of the loop. We are saying that before the regulations are approved and introduced, they should be submitted to a committee of this parliament for analysis and

approval. That is what we are requesting. We will naturally be putting forward an amendment to this effect.

We know that a bill represents the will of the lawmakers, but before that comes the structure or the skeleton. What brings the skeleton to life—the soul, if you like—and determines the course it will take, are the regulations. Often, a bill will consist of just a few clauses, and the regulations will go on for pages.

The position one could take concerning Bill C-56 is so personal that we hope that members will have a chance to examine the regulations in their entirety.

I would also like to look at the question of research in connection with embryonic stem cells. It is clear that the legislation does not address other stem cells. Neither adult stem cells nor stem cells from aborted fetuses are mentioned in the legislation. This is left up to the institutes. We know that research is already being done on stem cells.

But the government does not address the issue of adult stem cells and stem cells from fetuses aborted spontaneously or otherwise. We can understand this. Think of the ethical considerations alone. It does not want to hold a debate on abortion, on when life begins. But like it or not, this is an issue which must be raised in connection with embryos.

The committee's recommendation was as follows, "Why would Canada not become a world leader in adult stem cell research. Embryonic stem cells could be used if it is proved beyond all doubt to the agency and to parliament that there are no other options".

Unfortunately, this is not what appears in the bill. Will it be in the regulations? Only the minister knows.

I have discussed embryonic stem cells research with my colleagues. I have come to the conclusion that if, for a member of parliament, life begins with an embryo, he or she will face difficult ethical, moral and religious issues and questions. The answers are also likely to be difficult to find. So, what do we do with the bill?

Even though we are asking for a free vote, we do agree on a number of aspects. As regards stem cells and embryos, perhaps the government should allow a free vote on the bill. How are we going to count those who are in favour and those who are opposed? Is the bill not at risk of being rejected if the government allows a free vote?

Mr. Speaker, I know that we are not allowed to gamble—it is prohibited under the criminal code—but I would bet anything that if a free vote were held in the House regarding Bill C-56, the bill could well be rejected.

It would be rejected for ethical, moral and other reasons regarding stem cells. This would be unfortunate, because there are provisions in this bill that are essential for the women of this land.

• (1230)

This bill includes essential provisions that meet a need, that fill a regulatory and scientific vacuum. I understand the government. It took close to 10 years to get a bill. We fear that it would be rejected under a free vote. We know how divided government members are on this issue. When the minister introduced her bill, both government and opposition members immediately said that they would oppose the legislation in its current form.

Government Orders

We are saying that we will make the necessary changes in committee. We hope—but we have doubts—that the government will look at all the amendments moved by opposition parties to ensure we end up with a legislative framework that reflects as accurately as possible the consensus that exists in the committee. We also hope to find the same consensus here in the House and, of course, in the other place, once the bill has been passed by this House.

If the minister stubbornly refuses to make legislative changes, it will be interesting to see how members from both sides of the House will vote. A bill as important as Bill C-56 should unite people rather than divide them.

We agree that there is a legal void. We agree that the scientific framework needs to be more clearly defined, but the government must work with elected representatives and must accept amendments.

We understand why the government would refuse certain amendments. Should a series of amendments moved by the opposition be accepted, the bill would no longer be that of the minister or that of the government, it would be that of the House of Commons. Unfortunately, that would go against the kind of partisan politics practised by this government and its way of doing things; it would be too democratic. It is very unfortunate that we should find ourselves in this situation.

Finally, we will take the time to analyze this bill. However, we recognize that there is a sense of urgency with regard to providing a framework and supporting women who deal with fertility clinics.

I have experienced this over the last year with my in-laws. I am mentioning this without their consent. I will not give their names, obviously, but my brother-in-law and his wife went through very difficult times. They invested a lot of money to try to have a child. Unfortunately, they tried twice and failed both times.

There must be some form of psychological follow-up. This issue was raised in the committee report. Of course, this is more of a provincial jurisdiction. In committee, the issue of financial assistance for the parents was raised. It is extremely costly. It is not rare to see couples take out a second mortgage on their home to get an opportunity to have a child. But, again, this is a provincial jurisdiction.

These issues will have to be examined in a manner that is respectful of jurisdictions. I hope that the agency that will have this responsibility will work with the provincial partners that have the mandate of providing the service. I also hope that arrangements can be made to provide financial and psychological assistance to those who need it.

I hope that all members will be able to vote freely on this issue and that all parties on both side of the House will have the opportunity to take part in this most important debate. Between you and me, this debate really deals with life.

• (1235)

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties as well as the member for Fundy—Royal concerning the taking of the division on Motion No. 478 scheduled at the conclusion of private members' business later this day, and I believe that you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on M-478, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Wednesday, May 22 at the end of question period.

The Deputy Speaker: The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Does the House give its consent to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1240)

[English]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-56, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his speech. I know that he is a member on the Standing Committee on Health and that he has worked very hard with the other committee members on their report tabled in the House in December. They came to a very balanced approach to many complex issues.

My first question is quite brief. I have not met an individual, a group or an organization opposed to stem cell research. I wonder if the member can confirm whether he is aware of anyone at all who is opposed to stem cell research.

The second question concerns fertility clinics. In the Toronto *Star* on March 9, Dr. Françoise Baylis, whom I think the member is familiar with, gave an interview in which she said that:

Canada's fertility clinics are probably storing somewhere around 500 embryos in cryogenic deep freeze. Some belong to couples still trying to have children and some are needed for training and testing. Perhaps 250 "surplus" embryos would be available for stem-cell research.

Based on experience, roughly half would survive being thawed. Of these 125 surviving embryos, no more than nine could be expected to progress all the way to generating some sort of stem-cell line. Fewer still [about five] would meet the exacting scientific criteria to qualify for human embryonic stem-cell research.

Government Orders

What that means, according to Dr. Françoise Baylis, a member of the governing council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, is that only 2% of embryos would qualify for or meet the quality control standards or the guidelines required for research. Does the member believe that this technology, which would provide only 2% of those embryos to be destroyed that would be useful, is an acceptable practice?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for his professionalism. One can agree or disagree with certain points of view, but I would like to draw attention to the member's professionalism as far as his question is concerned. He is making sure that the real questions get asked.

As for the first question relating to stem cells, the parliamentary secretary asked me whether I knew of anyone who was opposed to such research. That depends on what we are talking about. I could give a goodly number of them if we are talking about embryonic stem cells. If we are talking about adult cells, I do not know of any. If we are referring to stem cells taken from aborted fetuses, then I could also list a goodly number. So it depends on what kind of research is being done on what kind of stem cells.

However, as I have already stated, I believe that the House is divided as far as embryos are concerned. The issue of aborted or stillborn fetuses has not even been raised. There is no legislative framework on this. So it all depends on the question.

Essentially, everyone agrees that research is part of what makes a society evolve, but we need to know what kind of research is being considered. That is the real question that has to be asked. On this side of the House, I must admit that there is division within my caucus as far as embryonic stem cell research is concerned. That is one of the reasons we want this to be a free vote.

As far as the matter of the number of embryos is concerned, the parliamentary secretary raises an important point. This involves survival of the embryo until such time as the stem cells can be extracted from it for research purposes. He is right. More than that, when a couple goes to a clinic in order to have a child, a percentage of the embryos survive, at the time of insemination for instance.

Some of them do not even make it past the sperm and egg stage, that is they are not embryos. However, as for the percentage of embryos that survive which the parliamentary secretary gives, I would say that yes many are lost. Is the figure 2%? That depends.

Some would answer the parliamentary secretary by saying that it is precisely to avoid having a success rate as low as 2%, 10% or 15%. This is why we must ensure that the number of embryos for research should be increased instead of limited to 2%. These figures may scare some people. Why perform research on embryonic stem cells when the success rate, in terms of quality embryos for research, is only 2%? Others would reply that we need to start by stepping up research so that we can indeed increase this rate.

•(1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech. I could not

help but think of the conflict this puts him in when he deals with embryonic stem cell research and what is actually happening in his own province because of the province of Quebec suggesting that there will be no embryonic stem cell research in the province. If the bill were to pass unamended, which law would supersede the other? Should an equivalency agreement not be reached under this law, would the law of the province of Quebec supersede the bill or not?

I am interested in his comments because I think the people of Quebec understand and discern that they do not want to rob research dollars from adult stem cell research. There is some phenomenal work being done by Dr. Freda Miller of McGill University as well as others who have done some absolutely phenomenal things in the last year. The research coming forward and the advancements being made in adult stem cell research in just these recent couple of months are absolutely phenomenal.

I am wondering if he thinks that is one of the rationales behind the decision made in Quebec. Would he comment on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the situation in Quebec is somewhat different from that of my colleague. I do not believe there is a prohibition. It is a ban. We could come back to this later.

However, my colleague raises a very important point. That is, which legislation has precedence? This is why agreements with the provinces are so important. Which is why the regulatory framework is so important. It will make up the backbone of the bill. A bill rests on its regulations. What we want is for the bill's regulations to be tabled in committee and in parliament for consideration.

With respect to what would happen if a province prohibited stem cell research that was authorized by the federal government, the agency would have to come up with an agreement with the provinces. However, we will probably have to ask ourselves the question. I doubt that a province, when it comes to scientific research, could completely prohibit activities that come under shared jurisdiction. This could be a subject for future debate for constitutional experts. However, when there is shared jurisdiction, if there is no agreement, neither of the two parties may act without the other party agreeing.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I understand that embryonic stem cells have a tendency to create spontaneous tumours. Also, having a different DNA than the patient would, they would be subject to immune rejection and would therefore require lifelong anti-rejection drugs.

I also understand that they need to be injected directly into the affected area and that the extraction, or harvesting as it is called, of the stem cells from the embryo in fact destroys the embryo. I understand on the other hand that adult stem cells have the same DNA because they come from the patients themselves. They do not have the same ethical problems. They in fact simply can be injected into the blood and they occur in virtually every organ in the human body.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could advise the House whether he is aware of any corroboration for the statement which has been used so very often that embryonic stem cells have greater potential than adult stem cells. It does not seem to make sense.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I think the parliamentary secretary should review—if he has not done so—what witnesses before the health committee had to say about embryonic stem cells, adult stem cells and other sources, because there are other sources, as I said earlier. I will not go over that again, because it is a bit gruesome.

There are two schools of thought. Some people find embryonic stem cell research easier. Working with adult stem cells is genetically more complicated. This is the first school of thought. Others say, “No, on the contrary. Depending on what you want to treat, there is no difference.” The committee has decided, and it only makes sense, that we would start with adult stem cells. Everyone in the committee agreed; not the government, but the members of the committee were all in agreement.

As the parliamentary secretary pointed out, if embryonic stem cells are found to be more efficient for research purposes, then the issue will be reviewed.

The committee believes rather strongly that for a number of reasons—scientific, ethical, moral and other reasons—it is better to use adult stem cells. As I mentioned in my speech, Canada has to become a world leader in adult stem cell research. If we realize that embryonic stem cells should be used, we would need good arguments to justify such a decision. That is what the committee recommended. We just have to wait and see if the government will listen.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 27, 2001, Dr. Alan Bernstein, president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, stated that it was not the role of scientists to determine the ethical limits to research or the application of genetic knowledge to the delivery of public health. It is a role for legislatures and the public. I agree 100%.

The issue is for parliament and one that includes science, moral and ethical, and women's health issues. We will deal with so many issues that I do not know how we will be able to adequately cover all of them. The important point is that there is now on the table a piece of legislation which has put a focus on some key issues.

Biomedical research, ethics and morals are subject matters which make most Canadian eyes glaze over. They are dry and difficult subjects. People have been given so much hype and hope about stem cell research that they honestly believe that there are cures and therapies waiting right now. The reality is that we are still doing research on rats and primates. It means that somewhere between two and five years from now there may be human trials and maybe five years after that there may be clinical trials, as well as some therapies.

This will take some time and Canadians should understand that. Earlier in a question I posed to the member I said that I was not

aware of anyone who was opposed to stem cell research. All of the literature talks about stem cell research but if one were disposed to embryonic stem cell research one would use the terms synonymously, to the exclusion of adult stem cells. It is one of the reasons why the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, that spends less than 1% of its budget on adult stem cell research, actually has a bias against it. It wants the embryonic stem cells.

It is clear from its actions of trying to pre-empt parliament by bringing in guidelines before the House could deal with the legislation. It is not a matter of being for or against stem cell research. The real issue is where stem cells come from.

The principle to be remembered is that when the ethically unacceptable and the scientifically possible are in conflict the ethical view must prevail. It is an important ethical principle.

Dr. Françoise Baylis, a member of the governing council of the CIHR in her testimony before the Standing Committee on Health on May 31, 2001, said:

The first thing to recognize in the legislation and in all of your conversations is that embryos are human beings. That is an uncontested biological fact. They are a member of the human species.

Dr. Baylis wrote an article, to which I referred earlier, that was in the *Toronto Star*, on Saturday, March 9. It encapsulates the issue for Canadians and helps them understand how technical, difficult and sensitive the issue will be for parliamentarians. She talked about fertility clinics and said:

Canada's fertility clinics are probably storing somewhere around 500 embryos in cryogenic deep freeze. Some belong to couples still trying to have children and some are needed for training and testing. Perhaps 250 “surplus” embryos would be available for stem-cell research. Based on experience, roughly half would survive being thawed.

We must ask ourselves what kind of person develops a technology or a process that would destroy 50% of human embryos and finds that acceptable for purposes of reproductive technology.

That is a low threshold of success or maybe low threshold of failure. The issue gets right down to surplus embryos and whether they should be thrown in the garbage or as Dr. Bernstein said “flushed down the toilet”. That is a dismissive approach. We are talking about human beings. We are not talking about human caviar for the research feast.

• (1255)

Dr. Baylis further stated that of the 125 embryos that would survive the thawing only nine would be able to produce any kind of stem cell line. Fewer still, perhaps an average of five, would meet the exacting scientific criteria to qualify for human embryonic stem cell research. That means out of 250 embryos that are destroyed for research purposes only five would actually be useful to researchers. Because embryos last between two and four years, scientists are not sure, those surplus embryos would be accumulated over a period of two to four years.

If we have five that are okay now, how many more will we need? If we understand that only 2% of embryos will ever be useful for this we will have to destroy thousands of human embryos to facilitate the research appetite.

Government Orders

Dr. Baylis goes on to say that fertility clinics are already creating the maximum number of embryos required for reproductive success. That is the maximum number. We are already drugging up women to hyperovulate to the maximum. We cannot do any more. I am surprised that we are even allowing them to harvest surplus embryos. It just seems wrong.

Dr. Baylis says that any increases would expose women to an unethical risk. We are drugging them up to the max and anything more would be unethical. It may very well be unethical what we are already doing because of the high risk of drug doses to create extra human embryos specifically for research purposes.

In this article Dr. Baylis predicts that the number of surplus embryos available for stem cell research is likely to fall in the coming years. We want to do this research with embryos and the number of embryos is about to fall. Why is that? It is simply as Dr. Baylis explains because of improved techniques which allow frozen preservation of women's eggs. In other words the technology will improve. Dr. Baylis goes on to say that just as sperm is now we can freeze women's eggs. The good news is that science is already working on perfecting the process to freeze women's eggs or store them safely so that they could be thawed and fertilized only as necessary for the reproductive process of in vitro fertilization.

I challenge science to move on with that important research. There should be no surplus embryos, no unwanted embryos, no discarded embryos, and no embryos being flushed down the toilet or thrown in the garbage. That is so dismissive and unethical.

The fact is that fertility clinics are private for profit companies. I do not understand why they would be involved in a relationship with the bio-research community unless there is a sale of a commodity to someone to do research. Why would the fertility clinics just give them up? They are doing all the work and all the administration. They are processing all these people and should they have them, it is going to cost. I thought the whole principle was no commercialization and no commodification. However, that is not the case.

One of the guidelines of the CIHR states that one must sign off that there will be no commercial transaction, no exchange of money or services or promise to do anything between the donor and the researcher. However the legislation does not comment and does not deal with the commercial aspects of what happens once an embryo is in the hands of a researcher who may perfect a process and then wants to sell it to other researchers. The donors of those gametes and embryos must sign-off that they will get no benefit.

I am convinced that this matter of commercialization and commodification of the human species is really the issue.

● (1300)

I was looking at the testimony of a number of people who came before the health committee and the testimony of Dr. Timothy Caulfield struck my attention. He was very much in favour of embryonic stem cell research. I looked on the web to find out a little bit about this person. I found that Dr. Caulfield had written a book I believe in 1999 which is still highly recommended in the bio circles. The title of the book is *The Commercialization of Genetic Research: Ethical, Legal and Policy Issue*. Watch that issue because it will come up.

Stem cells come from a variety of sources. We know they can come from embryos. We know that embryonic stem cells can cause spontaneous tumours, are subject to immune rejection, require life-long anti-rejection drugs and need to be injected into the affected area which may have other complications.

We also know that adult non-embryonic stem cells come from aborted fetuses, placentas, umbilical cords, umbilical cord blood, amniotic fluid and virtually every organ in the human body.

When the CIHR came up with its guidelines one of the examples it gave was research done by Dr. Freda Miller from McGill university. Through Dr. Miller's research and some tweaking, she found that if she extracted stem cells from human skin she was able to develop heart cells.

The examples given to the health committee time and again showed tremendous potential and progress on adult stem cells and no progress whatsoever on embryonic stem cells with regard to human applications.

I think the myth that embryonic stem cells show greater promise, greater hope and greater potential than adult stem cells is simply a myth.

In a meeting with health officials, I asked the health minister whether she had any examples or any evidence that embryonic stem cells had greater potential or promise than adult stem cells and her answer and the answer from the health officials was no.

Canadians have not been given the facts and parliamentarians must get the facts into the hands of Canadians.

Let me move on to the fertility clinics. I went to the web again and I found a form for the Fertility Centre of the Ottawa Hospital . The form has to be notarized by the family lawyer. I do not know why people would do this after paying thousands of dollars for an in vitro fertilization process. However the form states that if the centre has not kept up to date on the person's address and phone number, or the person has not renewed his or her instructions on an annual basis, or if the person has failed to pay his or her annual charges, the ownership of the embryos reverts to the centre. Now we have the ownership of a human being by someone else. This is absolutely unacceptable and it is unethical.

Going back to Dr. Françoise Baylis, I will tell members what she said about ethical research. She said that ethical review of research involving humans still occurred at the local level while there were well documented problems with lack of adequate training for reviewers, excessive workloads, conflicts of interest and significant inconsistencies in the interpretation and application of the relevant guidelines.

Government Orders

She has indicted the research community for being unethical and using bad practices. Why? It is because we have not had laws or regulations in place passed by parliament.

As we go through this process we will find that bio research is so far advanced and so far ahead of the policy makers that this legislation is barely trying to catch up. It has not even visioned what happens down the road.

If we were to look at what is already being done in other areas and find out what kind of work is going on in Canada, then we would find out just exactly how far they are prepared to go with this.

The health committee report clearly stated that it was disappointed that no information was given to them about what research was going on in Canada today.

• (1305)

That was totally unacceptable, but I know why. It is because Canadians would be shocked and appalled if they knew what was going on in medical research right now. The government has not done the job for Canadians. Health Canada has not done the job for Canadians.

Parliament needs to speed up the process. We need to create good legislation that not only deals with what is happening today but which would also give us the flexibility to take care of what will happen tomorrow.

Dr. Freda Miller had a wonderful adult stem cell process. I have been led to believe that Dr. Miller now has three patents she wants defended but the University of McGill has said no. Where is Dr. Miller? She is gone. She was receiving \$77,000 a year from the CIHR for adult stem cell research but she is no longer with McGill. She has gone to the University of Toronto which has agreed to defend her three patents. I am told that the money involved is \$2 million to \$3 million.

That really smacks of a motivation that is far beyond infertility. It is far beyond the ethical question of when does human life begin. This matter is a juggernaut that is going very quickly and parliament and policy makers are very far behind. We need to get control over this. The decisions and policies regarding research in the future have to be in the purview of parliament. We cannot second those responsibilities to more agencies.

Why is Health Canada not the one to determine whether research is necessary? We do not even have legislation to define necessary but we are going to pass it on to some foreign body consisting of 13 directors who will decide what is necessary.

I am a parliamentarian and it is my responsibility to make policy and laws. It is the responsibility of every one of us in the House to make decisions that guide Canadians. We must consult with our constituents and with all Canadians on the important issues of the day. Why would we second it to another agency? That has to change and we look forward to changing it.

I want to talk about some of the things we should do with regard to the legislation itself. I think there are some areas in which people should understand why it will take some time to deal with this issue.

The identity of donors can only be given on the consent of the donors. I find this unacceptable and I hope the committee will look at it. The law should define the parameters and set an ethical framework. We cannot second that.

The bill does not ban the patenting of human genes. The patent issue is extremely important. We now have the Harvard mouse before the Supreme Court of Canada. We have people who have patents waiting to be processed. They are waiting for the green light. We need to get a handle on the patent process.

Senior health officials said that regulations would be developed to limit the number of eggs produced. If we are only getting 5 out of 250 why would we limit that? Why would we even consider embryonic stem cell research? We need to deal with the existing sperm, eggs and embryos at fertility clinics. There is no way it can be demonstrated that those gametes and embryos met the criteria that the CIHR laid out.

We must look at the privacy concerns. There is no way consent was given for donations prior to the donation being made, which is one of the rules of the CIHR. I do not understand how researchers can get to know those people without the fertility clinics making information available to researchers. How do they do that when it is medical information?

There is the 14 day provision of the tri-council policy statement. That is the whole issue that between zero and 14 days we can do research and after 14 days it is a person and research cannot be done. It is a very important issue. That was not decided by parliament. It was decided by researchers.

We need to deal with a whole host of other issues but I cannot cover it all.

• (1310)

Let me close by saying that no one I know is opposed to stem cell research. The information that has come to parliamentarians so far is that non-embryonic sources have made tremendous progress in treating a whole host of issues, whether it be Parkinson's disease, diabetes or spinal cord injuries. We support medical research to deal with illnesses and cures. Canadians should know that parliamentarians will work very hard to ensure that we use the most ethical approach to medical research possible and only ethical research.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as regards today's important topic, I wonder if my learned colleague opposite could continue to present arguments, as he so aptly began to do. This is my comment.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has been very supportive on these issues. Let me point out that the province of Quebec announced in early January that it had banned outright embryonic stem cell research for ethical reasons.

For that reason I believe it is important to have representatives from Quebec's ministry of health come before our health committee to help us understand the rationalization of their decision. It is a significant decision when 25% of the research population will not perform embryonic stem cell research.

I would also mention that in February the United States secretary of health and human services issued a new regulation which redefined a child as a person under 19 years of age, including the period from conception to birth.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too share the hon. member's shock at some aspects of Bill C-56. The one thing in the hon. member's speech that horrified me was the concept that life forms could be patented and commercialized, and that even human life forms could become a marketable commodity.

The one thing I have learned in listening to other speeches today is that a simple, consequential amendment to the Patent Act would preclude the ability of biotechnology research companies to patent human life forms.

Would the hon. member agree that it would have been a logical step to take, in conjunction with Bill C-56, to make a consequential amendment to the Patent Act to clearly and simply bar forever the idea of patenting life forms?

• (1315)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Our patent laws are out of date with the realities of today.

Last night I read an article which boasted that we could not restrict patenting. The reason was that so much of the research in Canada was privately funded and that it needed a return on investment. It stated that this was big business and big money and that we should not do it. The issue of patent ability will be an enormous issue that the health committee will have to address.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am really intrigued by the comments of the hon. member. Looking back over the last 60 days I am intrigued by some of the research into Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis and the cures that have come forward and that have been talked about.

We have had actual cures. These cures have not just been wishful thinking by embryonic stem cell research. We are actually seeing cures from the adult stem cells. We see a quest for the scientists to go to the embryonic stem cells because there are no cures for Parkinson's disease, MS and other diseases. I feel for the individuals who are plagued with these diseases. I feel that they may be grasping at straws that are not there and are being led down the garden path in a direction they should not be going.

When we take precious dollars from Canadians we should be putting the dollars into where they can be most effective. It absolutely amazes me that when we actually have a cure, we find it printed on the third or fourth page of a one day article. If that had

been an embryonic stem cell research cure it would have been a shot heard around the world. I would like the hon. member to comment on that aspect of it.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Enormous progress has been made this year. Most recently, Dr. Catherine Verfaillie of the University of Minnesota announced on January 25 the discovery that adult stem cells isolated from bone marrow could be converted into cells of heart, muscle, brain, liver or skin, depending on which of the patient's tissues needed repair. This is unbelievable research. Canadians should be encouraged by the fact that there are people out there who are doing ethical research and finding cures and therapies so that all mankind can benefit from them, and it is ethical research.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in the hon. member's views regarding another thing that we believe should be in the act and is not, and that is the whole issue of genetic testing. There are more incidents of employers putting in the mandatory requirement that employees be tested for predispositions to certain medical conditions. There is a fear that this trend could lead to eugenic cleansing, that we would be eliminating diversity, that handicapped children or children born with certain conditions may be tested and done away with by virtue of their uniqueness, if we will. The bill is silent on genetic testing and should deal with the looming spectre of eugenic cleansing, which is a distinct possibility.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, there is no question about it. There are a number of things going on within the research community. As we can understand, if there are no regulations and there is no legislation, researchers are on their own. That itself is problematic and, quite frankly, unacceptable.

However, the member should also know that researchers who want to use these embryos for a variety of reasons are required to make a conflict of interest statement to the prospective donor. If the oversight committee that the CIHR is to set up wants it, they will have to provide copies of contracts and a whole bunch of other things. It is also very concerned about what researchers are doing and who they are connected with.

Let me supply a name: Dr. Bartha-Maria Knoppers. Members can go to that website and find out what people are linked with her. She is the bioethics chair of the international human genome project. She is also with the Université de Montréal. It was very interesting to see how many of the witnesses who came before the health committee when it looked at the draft legislation have co-authored articles and done research with Dr. Knoppers.

• (1320)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me say for the benefit of those who are watching this debate that today we are debating a bill that seeks to regulate aspects of assisted human reproduction. Some people have different names for it, but the bill is about assisted human reproduction.

Government Orders

The bill essentially does three things. One is that it makes certain reproductive processes a criminal offence. Second, the bill attempts to regulate other reproductive processes by requiring a licence. Third, bill creates an agency that would administer and monitor all of this.

With respect to those assisted reproductive processes that would be deemed criminal offences, I would point out that the bill has a very interesting history. First, in 1993 there was a very outstanding commission, the royal commission on new reproductive technologies, which reported in 1993 and suggested that there were certain aspects of assisted reproductive technology that should be outlawed, that should be damned in our country. That was in 1993. In 1996 the government said it would put all of that in a bill, but the bill died on the order paper due to the 1997 election. Here we are in 2002 just introducing a bill that would bring into effect the very strong recommendations of a commission that reported in 1993.

One wonders where the government has been for the last nine years, because here we are today dealing with something that should have been dealt with in 1993. Meanwhile, science has moved on, research has moved on and technology has moved on. As well, commercial investment in these procedures has moved on but the government has sat on its hands. That is a shame. It has been a dereliction of duty. The government should hang its head in shame that it has not dealt with this important issue much more quickly and much more expeditiously.

The procedures that would be criminal offences, finally, are: human cloning; therapeutic cloning, that is, cloning an individual so that certain organs can be harvested; animal-human hybrids or chimeras; sex selection; germ line alteration; buying and selling of embryos; and paid surrogacy.

There is a bunch of loopholes in this list, which some other speakers have mentioned. For example, with respect to the ban on paid surrogacy, the act would allow expenses to be repaid but the expenses are not identified. They are not limited, so presumably the expenses could add up to a nice fat commercial fee for surrogacy. That is not dealt with in the bill. Also, the bill allows certain transgenic procedures. Although it purports to outlaw animal-human hybrids or chimeras, which essentially means the fusing of animal and human material, it does allow transgenic procedures but does not define them.

The government argues that there is a particular test that needs to be allowed by the inclusion of transgenics. If there is a particular test that should be allowed, why not just say so? Why put an undefined term into the bill and allow something that should be outlawed under the ban under animal-human hybrids or chimeras? We do not know. Those are questions we are asking.

With respect to what can be licensed, there could be a licence provided to experiment on human embryos that already have been created through accepted procedures to help infertile couples, where the donor has given written permission. Last time I looked, creating an embryo took two donors, someone to donate the egg and someone to donate sperm, so why the consent of "donor"? If there is only one donor to give consent, which one would it be? We do not know. It does not make sense.

•(1325)

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time on this debate.

The Liberals have a bad habit of this, of bringing in framework legislation and then leaving all the inconvenient details either to the regulations, which nobody ever sees, debates or oversees, or to the courts to define if the issue ever arises. This again is another dereliction of duty and one that does not serve Canadians well.

All parties agreed that unless the applicant clearly demonstrates that no other category of biological material could be used from which to derive healing human therapies, human embryos should not be the subject of experimentation. This was an agreement at the committee and of all parties in the House. Unfortunately the government ignores its own committees and simply does something different. Again Canadians are not served well.

The committee listened to witness after witness and anxiously considered all the pros, cons and nuances of using human embryos for experimentation and research. It then said no, that we should make sure this is a last resort because of the troubling ethical considerations and concerns that many people have. It said that we need to treat human life with dignity and respect, that we need to protect it, and that this should be something we would do only if it were shown to be absolutely necessary. However, there is nothing like that in the bill.

With respect to the agency, it is pretty interesting because essentially the agency reports only to the minister. It is not independent of the minister because the minister can give any policy direction she likes to the agency and it must comply, although the minister's direction that the agency has to comply with will be kept secret. There will be no public disclosure. There will be this closed little arm of the minister dealing with some of the most important issues in our society with no reporting requirements and no oversight. No one will have an idea of what is actually going on. We have to wonder: why the secrecy in such an important area?

There are a number of other issues. Other speakers have touched on them but I will go through some of them as well.

First, children conceived by assisted human reproduction would have no right to know the identity of their biological parents unless those individuals consent. This flies in the face of what we already do, because adopted children have a tremendous right to know about their heritage, their lineage, the place they come from, their roots, so to speak. Why should children conceived by assisted human reproduction not have the same right? It does not make sense. For some reason this is in the bill.

Government Orders

There is also a concern that the draft legislation has already been pre-empted by regulations or rules put out by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. There was complete outrage from members of parliament who had served on the committee, including Liberal members, who said that they had just spent a year studying it. They asked just who those at the institute were to say that the institute would do something on its own. Only after that did the CIHR say that it had these rules but would not give any funding according to those rules. Again the government sat on its hands and allowed this thing to get out of control, leaving some important questions unanswered.

The bill has some flaws. For that reason, I believe that members of the House should think very clearly and carefully before voting for the bill unless it is amended to correct some of the gaping holes in the specifics of the bill, in how it will actually operate and whether it will in fact operate in the best interests of children, parents and the human aspects of our society.

• (1330)

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, could the last speaker elaborate on a bit of a quandary I have? I have read the bill and have reservations because there are better methods of producing the results we are hoping for. One of the things I find most disturbing is that background information would not be given to children produced through this method.

One's origins are important for a number of reasons including health reasons. Could the former critic for health please comment on that?

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, yes, there is more I could say about that. Under Bill C-56 children conceived through assisted human reproduction would have no right to know anything about their biological parents unless the biological parents gave their consent. This flies in the face of what we extend to children who are adopted. Children who are adopted have an almost unfettered right, even without the consent of their biological parents, to be given information about their heritage.

We also have a concept in law which is used in all divorce and custody cases: the best interests of the child. Strangely, under Bill C-56 the best interests of the child would fly out the window if an unknown biological donor did not consent to be identified. However such individuals make a conscious choice to be donors. It is not as if it happens by accident.

Conscious choice means taking responsibility for the choices one makes. That means a child conceived from one's action or choice should have the right to know his or her background. We know children want this kind of information because adopted children by and large choose to pursue it. There is a desire on the part of most people to know something about their heritage and roots.

The hon. member who asked the question talked about medical information. Yes, that is one reason. There are other reasons as well. The whole concept of Bill C-56 flies in the face of what we already do for children who are not raised by their biological parents. It flies in the face of the notion of the best interests of the child. Why is that? We do not know.

I strongly recommend that the House correct the oversight and give children conceived through this procedure the same courtesy, rights and information other children are entitled to and enjoy.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I commend my hon. colleague for the lucid and logical demonstration of what would happen under the bill. I also commend her for dealing with the democratic process that has been involved.

If I understood correctly, the hon. member talked about the subject having been introduced in 1993 through a special commission. Here we are almost 10 years later before seeing something happen. In the meantime we have had rapid progression in terms of science and certain other areas.

The hon. member said something about the government sitting on its hands. However she mentioned a situation where the government did not sit on its hands. The committee studied the proposed bill in great detail. If I remember correctly, the bill was given to the committee before being introduced in the House. This was done to provide ample opportunity for a large number of experts and people who understood the subject to present their cases.

What has happened to the government to allow it to change the committee's recommendations? It first told the committee to study the bill. It then went ahead and changed the bill after the committee had worked on it.

• (1335)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, in all candour, what has happened is that the government has a track record of and an increasing predilection for contempt for members of parliament and the work they do, including its own members.

As my hon. colleague has said, we have a bill that was given to committee before it was introduced in the House. It was a move we applauded because it let the committee shape Bill C-56 before it got to introduction stage so we could make sure the bill would do its job properly.

Let us remember that all House committees are dominated by the Liberals. The Liberals have more members on committees than all the opposition parties put together. The recommendations that come out of committee are not an odd brainchild of opposition members wanting to make mischief. They are the recommendations of Liberal members.

It is absolutely shocking and appalling that the government gives work to committees, the committees work for months and put untold days and hours into studying subjects, and after they make their recommendations the government can say "That is too bad, we will do it differently". Some days we wonder why the democratic process is not more respected by the Prime Minister and the government.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to speak today to Bill C-56, the assisted human reproduction act.

Government Orders

Canadians have waited a long time for comprehensive legislation on this important issue. However in our haste to have legislation in place we should not overlook some important changes that need to be made. Inadequate legislation would not benefit Canadians. Bill C-56 would affect researchers, the medical field and Canadians afflicted with diseases such as Parkinson's and multiple sclerosis.

Amazing discoveries are being made in Canada and other countries in the field of stem cell research. It is important that the field be well regulated. The official opposition believes in the importance of stem cell research. The therapeutic possibilities that can be derived from it are promising and of great importance to many Canadians.

Adult stem cell research has offered hope for many in recent months. It is important to focus on and pursue the possibilities that can result from it. However adult stem cell research is being put on the back burner while embryonic research is being promoted. There is limited proof that this shift in focus is warranted. Adult stem cell research offers great possibilities without being plagued by the difficulties surrounding embryonic research. These include tissue rejection and the need for anti-rejection drugs, issues of supply, and ethical questions.

Canadian researchers at McGill University in Montreal have made great discoveries lately in the area of adult stem cell research. Their findings are promising and should be pursued. The positive results of the experiments have been surprising even to the research staff. Freda Miller, the scientist in charge of the experiments, is quoted as saying:

We gave it two months. But it worked right from the beginning. Every step of the way it's been an "I can't believe that it's true" experience.

This shows that adult stem cell research holds great promise and should be promoted. However embryonic research poses many ethical questions and should be approached with caution. A three year prohibition of embryonic stem cell research would not only allow for further discussion of the issue. It would allow an opportunity for further adult stem cell research.

The standing committee's report on stem cell research states that due to advances in the research, funding should be focused on adult stem cell research. It says advances in embryonic stem cell research have not been as great. The report states:

—in the past year, there have been tremendous gains in adult stem research in humans. We also heard that, after many years of embryo stem cell research with animal models, the results have not provided the expected advances. Therefore, we want to encourage research funding in the area of adult stem cells.

Available resources should be focused on the most productive area. In this case it is adult stem cell research.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research states that funding for adult stem cell research should be available under specific conditions. The CIHR appears to be limiting funding options for adult stem cell research. The CIHR should not limit an area of research that is already providing promising results.

To provide adult stem cell research the time and funding it needs, a three year prohibition of embryonic research would be beneficial. A precautionary approach to embryonic research would be best. As the former minister has said:

—there must be a higher notion than science alone...that can guide scientific research and endeavour. Simply because we can do something does not mean that we should do it.

Where there is a conflict between ethical questions and scientific advancement, ethics should prevail.

● (1340)

In recent years the government has off-loaded the responsibility of health care and health funding to the provinces. This has been done while slashing funding to the provinces. Provincial participation in research and development in the area of stem cells is important as the provinces have jurisdiction in the area of reproductive technologies.

While the government assures us that there will be provincial involvement in the consultation process, the provinces are not offered a voice on the board of the proposed assisted human reproduction agency of Canada. To not allow the provinces a voting voice on the board is a mistake.

Again recommendations from the standing committee have been ignored. An equivalency agreement between the provinces and the federal government must be established. This is a highly sensitive area of research and every effort should be made to ensure that specific provincial views and concerns are addressed.

Provinces should not be forced to follow areas of research with which the majority of their residents do not agree. Provinces should not be mandated to allow embryonic research when their residents and government have hesitations with regard to that area of research.

To ensure that the wishes of the provinces are adequately addressed and heard, they must be allowed to appoint a voting designate to the board of the new AHRAC. Not only must the provinces have a vote on the new board, but also those with direct interest in the research mandated by the board. It is important that the AHRAC board does not become yet another level of bureaucracy but fully represents the interests of Canadians.

Others that should be included in the consultation and advisory processes include representatives from medical and scientific communities, children born through adult human reproduction, people with disabilities, taxpayers, service providers, provinces and territories and other groups that are directly affected by research and therapies derived from stem cell research.

While this area of research holds incredible promise, it also contains the possibility for abuse. For this reason there must be guidelines in place and assurances of accountability.

Government Orders

As this bill is currently written, the new board is accountable and answerable only to the minister. It has been made abundantly clear in recent months that leaving accountability in the hands of a minister in the government is a mistake. This new board must be answerable to parliament. Allowing the minister alone to make policy decisions in this area is misguided. Any policy directions should be made with the full participation of parliament.

This legislation needs to be changed to allow for all regulation changes to be sent to the health committee. The health committee must be allowed the opportunity for full examination and inquiry into any proposed regulation changes. Again accountability is the key. Decisions being made at the whim of the minister are not adequate, democratic, fair or wise.

Currently there is a level of secrecy allowed the minister in this bill. Changes of policy can be made without consultation or input by parliament or the health committee and are not subject to being recorded in the *Canada Gazette*. If this legislation is to be truly effective and in the best interests of all Canadians, openness and accountability must be set out in legislation.

The area of stem cell research is highly sensitive. Every effort must be made to ensure absolute accountability. There is little confidence that leaving accountability solely in the hands of the minister is best for Canadians or for the future of research.

This is the beginning of a new day for science in Canada. The promises of research into stem cells offers great hope for many. I would again suggest that we approach this important issue with caution. We must ensure that the legislation that is passed is beneficial to all involved.

It would be tempting for the government to push this bill through. We have waited years for this legislation but it is important that we take the time to make it right. We as the people's representatives have an obligation to all Canadians to ensure that legislation passed in the House meets the needs of Canadians. I do not believe that the bill, as currently written, will adequately accomplish that goal.

• (1345)

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am in full agreement with my colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar and with her statements. I know she has been involved heavily in the research of this bill.

Although I support the adult stem cell side of the issue, if what I have been led to believe is accurate, we could also achieve stem cells from the afterbirth and the umbilical cord. Are those two options open and available and could they be used as research rather than creating life for the purpose of destroying it?

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, we were speaking before about adult stem cells and the same usage of them from the umbilical cord. Adult stem cells can be used. Researchers are making great strides with adult stem cells. Every hour they are finding new things. That is why we fully believe that researchers should be funded adequately for the discoveries they are making.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to express my appreciation for the comments made by my colleague. She stressed in her presentation that the government

and the legislation for some reason seems to be biased toward embryonic stem cell research and against adult stem cell research. She has made that point clear. I have heard that also expressed by other speakers. Why does my colleague think that bias is there and why would the government do that?

• (1350)

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, I am not really sure why the government would do that. I just think the government wants control of it and is pushing ahead whether we want it or not.

Margaret A. Somerville is a Samuel Gale professor of law at the McGill Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law. She said:

We still don't know if the medical benefits of such stem-cell research can only be achieved by using human embryos. All schools of ethics require that we must exhaust less ethically sensitive approaches to a goal before we are justified (if we ever are) in taking more ethically controversial paths.

That is from a renowned scientist and professor, a lady who has done a lot of research into the matter. I think that explains it. I am not sure why the government is taking this approach.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that legislation has at last come before us because there should be a full debate within the House of Commons on this complex and delicate issue. Certainly I sense a massive consensus within all groups of parliamentarians regarding the cloning question, the prohibition put on cloning. I think there is no dissension among us on this issue. However, I also sense a controversy brewing regarding the question of research on stem cells.

The committee advocated a priority for adult stem cells. Some even say there should be an exclusivity for those stem cells. I am one of those who believes that adult stem cells have been proven over the last 20 years. They provide no risk of rejection. They are far more practical in their application and far more successful than the use of embryonic stem cells because embryonic stem cells are totally unproven.

There is not one case on record of a cure achieved by embryonic stem cells, plus there is the risk of rejection of embryonic stem cells by the recipient. The use of embryonic stem cells for research provides many of us with moral and ethical questions and considerations which represent a huge problem.

I realize that in today's world no doubt a very significant majority of people disagree with my position and would say I am some kind of a moral dinosaur trying to recreate the past. At the same time I feel very deeply on moral grounds that embryos are human life and they should not be used willy-nilly, whether the end justifies the means. What is the reason for using them when safe, practical, moral alternatives such as adult stem cells exist today. So many examples are before us, starting with Dr. Helen Hodges from Britain. She says categorically that adult stem cells are much safer to use and much more successful than embryonic stem cells with the risk they entail.

• (1355)

Professor Prentice in an article in the *Journal of Science* in 1999 reiterated the same findings.

Adult stem cells have been successfully harvested in cases of brain damage, heart, bone and bone marrow transplants, cartilage, umbilical cord blood and other blood. There are several stories of success relating to adult stem cells.

I quote from the Toronto *Star* of August 12, 2001:

—doctors are already using adult stem cells to counteract auto-immune diseases such as Crohn's, multiple sclerosis and lupus.

Doctors at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago said on Thursday that a 22-year old female Crohn's patient, whose white blood cells were attacking her digestive system, was doing "phenomenally well" 2 1/2 months after the procedure. A 16-year old boy with Crohn's, a chronic inflammatory disease that can affect any part of the gastrointestinal tract, underwent the procedure last week.

On August 16, 2001, the *National Post* had a headline which read "Spinal regeneration: Canadian researchers have been able to rebuild nerves in rats by injecting the spinal cord with cells from the intestine" at McMaster University.

On August 13, 2001, the *Globe and Mail* said that a McGill team harvested stem cells from skin. This was referring to Dr. Freda Miller of the Neurological Institute in Montreal whose research was described as groundbreaking work.

I quote from a story in the *Globe and Mail* that appeared on January 19, 2002 regarding Dr. Freda Miller and her achievement. It said:

Freda Miller's discovery last year that stem cells can be harvested from adult skin has massive implications—scientifically, clinically and politically. And it's taking on more urgency now that Quebec has recently banned research using embryonic stem cells...

Miller's groundbreaking work could eventually lead to treatments for Parkinson's disease and the regeneration of damaged spinal cords and brains. It could also, potentially, make unnecessary the harvesting of stem cells from human embryos that are aborted or grown in the lab, resolving one of the thorniest ethical debates of modern times.

[Translation]

Indeed, it is interesting to know that Quebec, which may be Canada's most secular province, issued a release on January 10, 2002, which ends as follows:

In conclusion, Minister Cliche reiterated his confidence in Quebec's scientists.

He said:

Researchers are, just like me—

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but it is time to proceed to statements by members. The hon. member

will have approximately 14 minutes remaining in his intervention following question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 13 to 19 was National Mining Week. This is a week which celebrates the benefits to our country of the mining industry and the contribution the industry makes to our daily quality of life.

From everyday products to high-tech discoveries, mining touches our lives in many ways.

Minerals and metals, as well as their compounds and alloys, play a vital role in our society.

Innovation is essential to the future prosperity of the mining industry. A future marked by new technologies and practices, attentive to our environmental and social needs, will help us meet our economic objectives.

Sustainable development is important not just for the future of the mining industry, but also for the people and communities who depend on the mining industry, such as in Frontenac—Mégantic.

* * *

[English]

MEMBER FOR CALGARY SOUTHWEST

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today we welcome a new member to this Chamber, the hon. member for Calgary Southwest, the leader of our party. It gives me great pleasure to welcome him on behalf of all hon. members, especially our caucus.

In welcoming him I want to extend thanks on behalf of all of us to the other leadership candidates. They conducted themselves in our recent leadership campaign with integrity and vigour and we are a stronger and better party because of that. The hon. members for Calgary—Nose Hill, Okanagan—Coquihalla and Macleod deserve our party's gratitude for the campaigns they ran.

Spring is in the air and we can feel the optimism and the excitement among our members from coast to coast. They are excited because we have chosen a leader from a new generation. I have known him for a long time and am proud to say he believes government should be motivated by concern for the next generation and not the next election.

I welcome his return. This place will be better because of his presence.

S. O. 31

•(1400)

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the 85th anniversary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

For 85 years now, the commission, supported by Veterans Affairs Canada and our Commonwealth partners, has contributed greatly to the commemoration and remembrance of the achievements and sacrifices of those who gave their lives for peace during the first and second world wars. This includes over 110,000 Canadians who paid the ultimate price.

Sir Winston Churchill once said that these beautifully maintained graveyards and monuments would “preserve the memory of a common purpose pursued by great nations in the remote past and will undoubtedly excite the wonder and the reverence of future generations”. Indeed it has.

Over the last 85 years, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has ensured that those who paid the ultimate sacrifice on the fields of Europe would not be forgotten. Today I encourage all Canadians to remember those veterans who fought and died during the first and second world wars and if possible to visit the Commonwealth cemeteries to truly understand the magnitude of the sacrifices made by our Canadian troops and those of our allies.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not understand Radio-Canada. It is refusing to continue negotiations with the communications union, following a very close vote not to accept of 50% plus three votes.

It is now denying the Canadian public its right to news and public affairs broadcasting.

It must not be forgotten that union members were locked out by Radio-Canada on March 23, 2002, moments after they began what was just a 24-hour strike.

Out of respect for its employees and for the public, Radio-Canada's board of directors should take a few moments and decide to return to the bargaining table.

* * *

[*English*]

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 8 I had the great pleasure to learn that Royal Dutch/Shell has made a major investment in the bioethanol industry. This \$46 million investment in Iogen Corporation, a world leading bioethanol technology company, will provide capital to enable Iogen to develop the world's first commercial scale biomass to ethanol plant.

Bioethanol is made from the fermentation of sugars derived from the plant fibre in renewable feed stocks such as wood and straw.

This announcement is a major boost not only for our agricultural sector which could find a market for surplus organic material, but also for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The announcement is one more step toward building the supply capacity to bring bioethanol to market.

I congratulate Iogen and Royal Dutch/Shell for this important investment.

* * *

CROATIAN FRATERNAL UNION

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to welcome Bernard Luketich, president of the Croatian Fraternal Union of America, North America's largest organization representing Canadians and Americans of Croatian descent.

Established in 1894 with over 100,000 current members, the CFU provided accident and life insurance for Croatian immigrants who worked in the most dangerous jobs under hazardous conditions when social supports did not exist.

During both world wars CFU members served in the Canadian and American armed forces, with many paying the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and democracy. The CFU passionately supported the allied war effort through donations, bond drives, blood donations and other activities.

Today there are hundreds of CFU lodges and centres across North America promoting cultural and social events, folklore, sport activities, scholarship programs and other fraternal activities.

I congratulate the CFU on its long and distinguished history, and I wish it continued success in its second century of fraternalism.

* * *

WATERLOO COUNTY & AREA QUILT FESTIVAL

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to invite Canadians to the seventh annual Waterloo County & Area Quilt Festival which is now underway until May 26.

Billed as the largest quilt festival in North America, the festival is truly a regional festival that celebrates the art and heritage of quilting. The festival welcomes approximately 35,000 people to more than 40 events taking place in 10 communities.

Quilting is now the number one recreational artistic pastime of men and women throughout North America. The festival brings together local, national and international quilters and their artworks for all to enjoy.

The 2002 quilt festival includes educational programs; the Canadian Heritage River Quilt Celebration and the Grand River Quilt Collection; world class quilt artists; South African and Newfoundland quilt art; and the Ontario Mennonite Relief Sale quilt auction. The Waterloo County & Area Quilt Festival relies on approximately 4,000 volunteers logging over 10,000 hours annually.

I invite everyone to visit the Waterloo County & Area Quilt Festival.

* * *

•(1405)

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC CITY'S SYNAGOGUE

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week Quebec City's only synagogue was attacked, proving that conflicts know no borders.

Late Sunday night, the jardins Mérici district was shaken by a bomb blast. A bomb had been thrown under the porch of the Beth Israel Synagogue, causing damage to the building.

This incident has led to understandable concerns among Quebecers about the increase in antisemitic acts. The respect for diversity and the tolerance that characterizes our society must continue to be among our fundamental values.

I call upon all parliamentarians to deplore this bombing and to make it clearer than ever that freedom depends on a conviction that violence is not, and cannot be, the proper solution to disagreements.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the world's foremost mineral producers and exporters, producing some 60 mineral commodities. We rank among the world's top 5 in 16 of these commodities. Canadian mining companies are active in over 100 countries around the world.

Canada has a well deserved reputation for leadership on the global stage for promoting sustainable mining and for our innovative approaches to economic, social and technological advances. In sustaining remote communities and on Canadian stock exchanges the impact of the minerals and metals industry is felt on a daily basis.

National Mining Week which was celebrated last week gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance that the mining industry has for the Canadian economy as a whole. It is therefore essential that we continue to support this important sector of our economy.

* * *

MEMBER FOR CALGARY SOUTHWEST

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today signals the beginning of a new era in Canadian politics.

S. O. 31

A few hours ago the newest member for Calgary Southwest was sworn in as a member of the House. In a few minutes he will commence his first question period.

The contrasts between the opposition and the government are more evident than ever before. On this side is a fresh, young, principled, intelligent leader at the head of a united, strong, focused and determined caucus. Over there is a tired, disengaged, distracted, fuzzy leader at the head of a directionless, fractious, incompetent, arrogant and corrupt government.

The official opposition is standing for Canadians, for law and order, good management, lower taxes and less intrusion. The government is standing for nothing but helping its friends with smelly land deals, questionable contracts and a wink, wink, nudge, nudge approach to the business of the nation.

I invite Canadians to watch us and our new leader carefully. We demonstrate both the need for change and the choice for change.

* * *

LANDMINES

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, several guests are here today to open a Croatian art exhibit in support of child mine victims. The event is hosted by the Croatian embassy and Lodge 2000 of the Croatian Fraternal Union of America.

Croatia was among the first countries to sign the Ottawa convention banning anti-personnel landmines and the 12th to ratify it. Some three million landmines litter the country blocking refugee returns, reconstruction efforts and economic development.

Canadian technology has been used in the removal of landmines in Croatia, and last month Canada donated \$3.5 million for several programs including de-mining.

I join members of the House in welcoming CFU national president Bernard Luketich, and I commend Lodge 2000 for its efforts to support child mine victims.

* * *

MEMBER FOR WINDSOR WEST

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to welcome the newly elected member for Windsor West to the House.

On Monday, May 13 the voters of Windsor West made a choice to recognize the new member's hard work, dedication and commitment to his community as a community activist, a city councillor and through his work with youth and persons with disabilities.

The hon. member has been a tireless advocate for his community. I know he will continue to be an outspoken advocate on behalf of the people of Windsor West.

[*Translation*]

The voters of Windsor West have chosen to put an end to 40 years of Liberal reign. They have sent the new member for Windsor West to Ottawa with a clear message for this government.

Routine Proceedings

They want a government that defends our health system. They want a government that protects our environment with real action. They want a government that protects jobs in the automotive industry.

[*English*]

I congratulate the member on his victory and welcome him to the House. We look forward to working with him to ensure the message is heard.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

EAST TIMOR

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, 850,000 Timorese entered into the family of nations after more than four centuries of Portuguese occupation, followed by 25 years of Indonesian occupation.

In August 1999, 78% of the population voted for independence, with a voter turnout of more than 98%, despite threats of violence from Indonesia and the militia.

Alas, these threats were carried out and to such a great extent that the country's poor infrastructure was devastated and a large part of the population was displaced.

Today, the Timorese have their own country, led by Xanana Gusmao, the leader of the resistance under the Indonesian occupation. Along with Kofi Annan, we say:

We honour you, the people of East Timor, for the courage and perseverance you have demonstrated... We also remember the many who are no longer with us, but who dreamt of this moment. It is their day too.

Yet there remains much to do in this country marked by poverty and a tragic history. Let us stand by them.

* * *

[*English*]

THE INTERNET

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the Internet is continuing its exponential growth and its impact on all facets of our economic and social activities.

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre is an international Jewish human rights organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust. It is providing a crucial contribution to our knowledge of Internet use through its evaluation of hi-tech hate with its Digital Hate 2002 program. Digital Hate 2002 examines all varieties of the online content of hate. This includes games that promote racism to the online recruitment and validation of suicide bombings.

Researchers at Canada's Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies have contributed by tracking the significant and troubling contributions of Canadian origin to this worldwide phenomenon.

I urge all members of the House as well as all other Canadians to familiarize themselves with this unique and vital tool in the fight against the promotion of hatred, terror and racism on the Internet.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has come out publicly and said that Ottawa can and may well ratify Kyoto without provincial agreement.

This reminds me of when the federal government showed contempt for the provinces in 1997 when it walked away from a provincial consensus on Kyoto. Why has the government waited five whole years to involve the provinces and territories who are critical partners in an effective climate change strategy?

The government must provide Canadians with a detailed impact analysis done sector by sector, province by province with regulations on implementation. Canadians must know what behavioural expectations the national government has for them. This is what the government should have been doing and still must do.

The Progressive Conservative Party has always advocated a no regret strategy: to have massive tax incentives for renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency investments, to promote conservation, and to promote Canadian agriculture by fostering the use of ethanol and other blended fuels.

Whether we are part of Kyoto or not, Canada must engage the U. S. on a continental strategy. Given the fact that Canada has failed to do its homework, it may be more prudent and is more prudent to develop a North American response to climate change than to blindly ratify an accord we are not ready for.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. R. John Efford, member for the electoral district of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

R. John Efford, member for the electoral district of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, introduced by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien and the Hon. Ralph Goodale.

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● (1415)

[*Translation*]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Liza Frulla, member for the electoral district of Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles.

*Routine Proceedings***NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED**

Liza Frulla, member for the electoral district of Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles, introduced by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien and the Hon. Martin Cauchon.

* * *

[English]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Brian Masse, member for the electoral district of Windsor West.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Brian Masse, member for the electoral district of Windsor West, introduced by Ms. Alexa McDonough and Mr. Joe Comartin.

* * *

[Translation]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Massimo Pacetti, member for the electoral district of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Massimo Pacetti, member for the electoral district of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, introduced by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien and the Hon. Martin Cauchon.

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● (1420)

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Raymond Simard, member for the electoral district of St. Boniface.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Raymond Simard, member for the electoral district of St. Boniface, introduced by the Right Hon. Jean Chrétien and the Hon. Ray Pagtakhon.

* * *

[English]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Stephen Harper, member for the electoral district of Calgary Southwest.

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Stephen Harper, member for the electoral district of Calgary Southwest, introduced by Mr. John Reynolds and Mr. Art Hanger.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On behalf of all the members of parliament I would like to welcome the new Leader of the Opposition.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: Perhaps in terms of security a seat belt should be put on his seat because it is called the ejection seat. I am delighted to be facing my eighth opposition leader.

He is a young man with very good experience. He started his career here as a young man working for a member of parliament. After that he participated in the creation of a party. He became a member of that party and was a good member of parliament for a term. We were sorry to see him leave but we are not disappointed to see him back.

He is a man of strong convictions who expresses himself very well. He wants to serve the country well. His views are well known and well documented. In fact I took a refresher course over the weekend. I hope it will not be used too often but it will permit the leader the occasion to use it once in a while.

[Translation]

I want to congratulate him. He understood what Canada is all about at a very early age. He also learned French when he was very young and he speaks Canada's other official language well. We wish him a very good and a very long stay as leader of the official opposition.

[English]

He has a nice family, kids and a lovely wife. Wives do not want to move too often and now that he is in Stornoway, we would like her and the family to stay there for a long time. She is a lady of great judgment. She said, and I agree entirely with her, that her role model is Aline. She is a lady with the same great judgment that I had when I was 23 and I married Aline.

● (1430)

We wish good luck to the Leader of the Opposition. We will have good debates. However there is a reality in that everyone in the House has been elected to serve his or her constituents and everyone has been elected to serve the country. In having a good democracy it is very important that we have these debates. When I have the occasion to travel in the world and come back to Canada, I am always proud of the fact that we have a real democracy here where we have change and where the government has the opportunity to make sure the opposition remains well divided for a long time. We wish things will remain the same for many years. I want the new Leader of the Opposition to have many, many years to learn how to do the job on the job.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I should take a moment to respond to the kind words of the Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

First, I would like to say to all members that it is wonderful to be back and to see all the familiar faces, and even a few friends. I have been asked many times why I would come back after all these years. I have explained that with statements by members, long debates over the estimates, committee meetings and the debate over the Mace, it has all been too much to stay away from.

There is one reason I came back. Some members will know it has been reported that I was four years old when the Prime Minister first took his seat in the House of Commons. What is not known is that of course I was an avid reader of *Hansard* at the time. I recall reading some of the early speeches of the Prime Minister and turning to my mother, who is here today, and saying "Mom, someone has to do something to stop that guy".

[Translation]

Seriously, the first time I met the Prime Minister—he will not remember the encounter—was during a meeting of students at the University of Calgary, just before his first run at becoming the leader of the Liberal Party. We talked about nuclear arms and controversial issues of the time. On that day, I saw someone who should never be underestimated. I have no intention of making that mistake.

[English]

I am his eighth Leader of the Opposition. However, I am in a privileged position in that besides myself and my party, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Minister of Industry and of course the Minister of Finance are all wishing that I will be his last opposition leader.

Just before I wind up, I would like to thank a couple of people. There are so many people I could thank in my party, but I would especially like to thank the two people who brought me in today. I am very thankful for the assistance of the hon. member for Calgary Northeast who chaired my byelection victory in Calgary Southwest. I would be remiss if I did not thank the outgoing Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast. He did a great job not just for our party but for the House and the country. However, Mr. Speaker, you do have to tell him that he has to return the contents of the wine cellar. I insist on this.

The Speaker: I think that is an internal party matter.

Mr. Stephen Harper: Mr. Speaker, it is true that I may not put on as good a party as he does, but there are some members of my family, including my wife and others, who do know how to have a good time so we would appreciate it.

I also thank the electors of Calgary Southwest for sending me here. It is an important riding for our party not just because it is a very special place in and of itself but because it is the riding of our party's founder, Preston Manning, whose legacy I hope to do honour to in this Chamber.

Last but not least, I would quickly like to thank my family, my wife, my children, my mother, my parents who are here today, for all their love and support. I know they will encourage me to keep my eye on some of the important things in life.

Finally, I will start my first day here by hoping that we always remember that in spite of our differences, we share a great deal as people, as members who represent our constituents, their families

and their needs which tend to be the same in all parts of the country. We should not forget despite all our problems the great blessings we have in our country, a country that God has given unlimited resources to. We have been further blessed, as I have said many times, by the people who have come from all parts of the country, through the generations, to build the country. We should never settle for mediocrity. We should do all we can in the House and elsewhere to build this great land to its full potential.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Members will note that we are beginning oral question period 20 minutes later than usual. We will therefore continue until 3.20 p.m.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the media is reporting today yet another scandal involving federal advertising contracts. After examining a public works audit, it has been estimated that public works paid at least 10 times too much to Groupe Polygone for sponsoring a Montreal hunting and fishing show.

Given the growing evidence of widespread waste and mismanagement of government advertising business and the fact that the government's incompetent handling of its advertising and sponsorship is already under review, will the Prime Minister stop the waste and abuse right now and order a freeze of all discretionary government advertising?

• (1435)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the request of the minister of public works, the auditor general looked into these files, recommended some action and is looking at the program as such.

The sponsorship program has existed in Canada for a long time. It is useful in every riding, in every part of Canada. It is a good program. If there are some problems with the management of some elements of it, of course we will look at the report of the auditor general and remedy the faults. However, I think that many organizations in Canada need this program to be carried out for the good of all Canadians.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is great to say that there are auditor general's examinations going on and of course there may be a police investigation, but what I think the people of Canada are looking for is action now from the government.

[Translation]

All the government's advertising activities are under review because of waste, abuse and mismanagement. The government appears to react only when the opposition or the media draw attention to its actions.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister provide a list of all the discretionary advertising and sponsorship contracts so that we can immediately get to the bottom of things—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a system that allows members to obtain all the information they wish. It is all available.

In fact, the government has acted. In 1999, when auditors pointed out a problem to the then minister, we took steps to improve the program. Some of the charges date from then.

The current minister of public works has added new reforms to ensure that the errors of the past are not repeated.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I think we are all tired of getting this information through access to information and through the media, through all these other channels. We would hope the Prime Minister would do the right thing and make this information immediately available.

Today's reports on Groupe Polygone deal with an internal audit that found problems two years ago. This is the same outfit that hugely overspent tax dollars on *l'Almanach du peuple*. Now it seems that this audit found the government paid a grossly inflated amount to sponsor a hunting and fishing show.

Could the Prime Minister explain why this mismanagement was kept quiet for two years and why it always takes an access to information request or an auditor general's report—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is exactly why we have auditors: to look at the books. In the past the auditor reported to the House of Commons only once a year. In order to make sure that we were more up to date about the problems of administration, the auditor general can now report four times a year. In terms of all the information the new Leader of the Opposition is asking for, he should know that all the information is already available.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, to me it looks like the Prime Minister likes secrets.

Here is another issue. Transelec, a company from the Prime Minister's riding, got a questionable contract for \$6.3 million. Now it is up by \$1.3 million because of cost overruns.

Will the Prime Minister stand in the House today and tell the Canadian public that we will not waste another nickel of taxpayers' money on this company?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has a contract with the government of Mali, which was a memorandum of understanding that we fulfill the terms under that contract and we have paid the terms and conditions under that contract.

• (1440)

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): The auditor general said plainly that this company should not even have bid on the contract.

Hon. members will notice from the answer that we did not get any indication of whether or not the \$1.3 million will be spent or not.

I will ask the question again. Will this minister stand up and tell the Canadian public that we will not waste one more nickel on this company from the Prime Minister's riding? Yes or no.

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, very clearly, as I have said already, our contract, our agreement, was with the government of Mali. We have fulfilled the terms of that contract and we have paid the government under the memorandum of understanding. That is where that situation is right now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this past May 8, the Prime Minister described the RCMP and auditor general's investigations as "quite sufficient". Since then, we have learned that too much was paid to Polygone, that all manner of commissions went to Groupaction and Everest, that their presidents had direct access to Alfonso Gagliano, and that his successor has stayed at a property owned by Claude Boulay.

Since the RCMP investigation will be limited to Groupaction and the auditor general's to management practices, does the Prime Minister realize that, with all these revelations, it is necessary for a public inquiry to be held in order to look into the entire political dimension of awarding contracts to cronies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general is looking at all these files at the present time; this is her role. She has a mandate to look at all the files, all the contracts, and to report to the House of Commons. This is the system that has been in place for a long time. She has said that she is going to make a report on the sponsorship programs, and we await that report.

If there has been abuse, corrective actions will be taken. If people have received money to which they were not entitled, they will have to pay it back. If people have committed criminal acts, they will have to face the courts.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I imagine this is going to be like the CINAR case, when the government refused to co-operate with the RCMP. That story is well known.

If there is no problem, why is the Prime Minister scared of a public inquiry? The auditor general restricted her examination to the administrative aspect. The entire public dimension, the ability to summon witnesses, is not possible with the auditor general. Is he going to call a public inquiry in order to make a clean breast of things and to allow the public to see the reality?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general's work is not just an accounting type audit. Her mandate is to look into the usefulness of the program, and to report to the House of Commons.

Oral Questions

In the past, the auditor general was expected to report on just the accounting aspect. Now there is an entitlement to report on value for money. We have confidence in the auditor general, and I know she is going to do a good job.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the condo of the president of Groupe Everest, which was used by the minister of public works, the minister, in his defence, produced a copy of a cheque apparently written by his son to cover the costs.

Will the minister admit that producing a photocopy of the front of a cheque is insufficient, and that we need to see the back in order to see who cashed it and when it was cashed?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the cottage that my family rented for a weekend, we certainly paid the market price, I believe. We also covered our own other expenses. I also have proof to support all this.

That said, even though I do not think any harm was done, if the member is asking me if I would do it again, clearly the answer is no.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works gave a very nice answer, however that was not my question.

In his defence, he produced a photocopy of a cheque that was apparently issued to pay for the condo. My question—and it is one journalists have asked and he has refused to answer—is this: Will he produce the reverse side of the cheque? If the front is public, I find it difficult to understand why he is keeping the reverse private.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I myself have not produced anything to the media. This is an expense incurred by another member of the family. I explained this to members and the media.

I repeat what I said earlier: although no harm was done, and despite the fact that we paid the market value, I repeat for the member opposite that, obviously, it is not something I would do again.

* * *

●(1445)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Europe, the Prime Minister tried to sell his watered-down version of the Kyoto accord. This cabinet is divided. Their position is not a united one. The Minister of the Environment is meeting with his provincial colleagues today. The minister is trying to sell these exported energy credits in order to back out of our commitments.

Is it the Prime Minister's position that Kyoto will not be ratified without the energy export credits?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the premier of Manitoba and the premier of Saskatchewan are asking that we obtain the approval of other countries for us to be given clean energy export credits.

We are working in co-operation with Canada's two New Democratic governments, which want us to use this system in order to reduce our obligations under the Kyoto accord.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has mentioned Manitoba and Saskatchewan because those NDP governments are leading the way in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With their ethanol strategy, they are providing solid solutions to help Canada meet Kyoto targets.

Even backbench Liberals have called for decisive action on renewable fuels, but we still do not have a national ethanol strategy. The Saskatchewan government has introduced legislation to mandate standards for ethanol. When will the federal government follow the Saskatchewan lead and do the same?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we started in 1995. The NDP government of Saskatchewan is seven years late. We did it in Ontario, for example, many years ago when we helped the private sector to develop ethanol using agricultural products. It was started long before the bill that was passed in Saskatchewan.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. We know about Groupaction. We know about Polygone. We know about Groupe Everest and we know about Columbia. We know that Lafleur Communications received \$31.9 million in contracts under the sponsorship program despite not being approved for that program. Even Via Rail has now called in the auditor general to look at its role in the sponsorship program.

Did Lafleur, now owned by Groupaction, receive untendered contracts from Via Rail specifically or from other departments, agencies or crown corporations?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said that the auditor general, at the request of the minister, is looking into the sponsorship program. She will report when her work is done. If there are some questions to be asked of crown corporations, we will ask the crown corporations.

The leader of the Conservative Party can communicate with these organizations and ask them for the documentation that they could give to him.

We have nothing to hide. We want all the facts to be known by the public.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, Claude Gauthier and Transelec were awarded a CIDA contract in Mali just after Mr. Gauthier paid \$525,000 to buy land at an inflated price from the Grand-Mère golf club in which the Prime Minister then had a financial interest.

CIDA had refused to pay Transelec for cost overruns. Now mysteriously it has changed its mind. That may mean another \$1.3 million for the man who helped bail out the Grand-Mère golf club.

Oral Questions

Why did CIDA change its position? Was Michel Beliveau, who now works for the Prime Minister, involved in those discussions?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a contract that was won by a firm 30% below the other bidders. He got the contract from the government of Mali. He did some work for it. There is some discussion at this time between the contractor and the Mali government about extra work that was asked of them. That dispute is going on between the authorities at this time.

Everything is above board and it is about somebody who won a contract 30% below the second bidder.

• (1450)

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is a clear pattern here and it begins on the Prime Minister's doorstep.

A company does not qualify for taxpayers' money, but Liberals put political pressure on public servants to make the money flow. Now we learn that a former Liberal Party Quebec president and the former minister responsible for CIDA put the heat on departmental officials multiple times to approve the extra \$1.3 million.

For the minister responsible for CIDA, why is the government pressuring the public service to get money for the Prime Minister's liberal friends?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly no decisions have been made for any additional payments. Very clearly, our contract is with the government of Mali and Transelec must resolve its dispute with the government of Mali. If they were to put forward a claim, then that would be done through a third party. Very clearly CIDA has made no decisions, has not retracted any decisions to make any additional payments.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. Mr. Beliveau, the unregistered lobbyist who received another \$1.3 for Transelec, now works in the Prime Minister's own riding office. Somehow everything seems to be connected to the Prime Minister.

The government abuses power and it abuses taxpayer money.

The Prime Minister can hide behind the fact that the auditor general is looking into this or looking into that but when will we get a full public inquiry into this whole issue to clear the air?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear. The contract and the money we have paid was paid through the government of Mali. The government of Mali entered into a contract with Transelec. If there is an outstanding claim, Transelec must resolve that with Energie du Mali which is the government agency that has the contract. If it finds there is a valid claim, then we will go through a third party to see whether or not there should be any additional payment.

Right now we have made no additional payment, have retracted no additional payment and have no intention of making an additional payment.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after learning that the federal government paid 25 times more than the Quebec

government to advertise in *L'Almanach du peuple*, we are now finding out that the federal government paid \$1,288,000 for the Salon national du grand air, while the Quebec government paid \$25,000, or 50 times less, for the same event.

How does the minister justify this 50:1 ratio?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants me to make a list and compare federal and Quebec sponsorship initiatives, I am prepared to do so.

The Canadian government sponsored the jazz festival to the tune of \$400,000, while Quebec provided two and a half times that amount, or \$1 million. The Canadian government gave \$550,000 to the Just for Laughs Festival, while the Quebec government paid two and a half times that, or \$1 million.

If the hon. member wants to make comparisons, I can go on. Last year's federal sponsorship of the Grand Prix de Trois-Rivières totalled \$150,000, compared to \$246,000 for Quebec's. If this is the criterion he wants to apply, the hon. member is mistaken.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, commissions to Groupaction alone have cost us \$114,000, or four times more than Quebec's contribution to the same event. The minister can expect to be invited to Jean Brault's cottage very soon.

How can the minister justify this?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to continue reading the excellent list provided to me by departmental officials.

In the case of Montreal's Tour de l'île, our sponsorship was \$50,000, compared to \$229,772.80 for Quebec. Did the Government of Canada get a deal?

Let me give another example. The Canadian government's sponsorship for Quebec City's Festival d'été international was \$25,000, compared to \$579,900 for the Quebec government.

[English]

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works has announced that he will be selecting new communication agencies this June. It sounds like a little more damage control is going on.

The minister is doing his darndest to deflect blame onto his previously hand-picked agencies for the gross mismanagement of the sponsorship advertising programs. However, Groupaction, one of the outfits, points out that it "provided adequate services that correspond to the communication and political objectives of the government of Canada"

Will the minister stand up today and admit that the whole darned fiasco begins and ends with the questionable ethics practised by his department?

Oral Questions

●(1455)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the firms were not hand-picked as the hon. member alleges. They were picked pursuant to treasury board rules in an open competition. Nine firms qualified and they were awarded contracts in 2001. They were put on a standing offer. I can name them for the House: Armada, Bristol Group, Communication Coffin, Compass Communications Inc., Gosselin Relations publiques, Groupaction, Groupe Everest, Lafleur and TNC.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question earlier from the member for Calgary Southwest, the Prime Minister said that changes would be made so that the errors of the past would not be repeated. However, nine years went by and nobody over there said a word.

The minister's new five point plan that he has just implemented really puts the onus on the contractors to lower themselves to the standard the government asks them to go.

Will the minister admit that the whole problem begins and ends with the corrupt practices of the government?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not correct when he says that the onus to adhere to the rules is placed on the contractor. Some provisions of the new rules apply to contractors such as the ones where they cannot double dip. They cannot collect from the agency and collect from the government at the same time.

There are other rules. For instance, we said that we would open it up completely by ensuring that companies with only 50% Canadian ownership as opposed to 100% with measures such as these and a whole series of others are government sponsored and related. In fact, there are some for both. Both sides must agree to those far stricter rules which were put in place both in February and more—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the investigation into sponsorships were to be limited just to the efforts of the auditor general and the RCMP, one whole aspect of this entire business would be ignored, that being the political one.

Will the minister of public works admit that the auditor general's investigation is not enough and that only an independent public inquiry will shed light on the entire sponsorship program?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opinion of a member of this House that the investigation by the auditor general, who represents this House, is not enough to satisfy this House about the operation of the sponsorship program, is not one I share. I for one have confidence in the auditor general. I am sure that she will do a good job.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after Micheline Charest, of CINAR, Ms. Deslauriers of Groupaction, and Mr. Béliveau of Transelec, does the Prime Minister not think that an independent public inquiry is urgently necessary because many people close to him and to his entire party clearly seem to be mixed up in this affair?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the various

contractors now on file were selected on the basis of a call for tenders in 2001.

I have instituted a new call for tender system. We will put out a call for tenders around June 15, to take effect starting in October, in order to have even more companies participating in government sponsorships. This will be a public call for tenders available on the MERX site, and therefore available to everyone.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Alfonso Gagliano should not represent Canadians in Denmark. Today the Toronto *Star* stated:

There is ample evidence that Gagliano does not belong on the public payroll.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and rescind Alfonso Gagliano's appointment now?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find this very incredulous. There have been no accusations, just innuendoes and members trying to throw dirt like that. As the saying goes "When you throw dirt you lose ground". That is what is happening to the Alliance Party.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Alfonso Gagliano should not be Canada's representative in Denmark. The auditor general said that he broke every rule in the book when he was a minister of this government. Mr. Gagliano does not represent Canadian values.

Will the Prime Minister rescind Mr. Gagliano's appointment right now?

●(1500)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is documentation on that. The member of parliament knows very well that the auditor general never blamed Mr. Gagliano for anything. She was very clear. She made a distinction. She talked about some people in the public service. She never named a minister or the staff of any minister. She named two bureaucrats.

These comments are innuendos. They are dirt. This is absolutely unacceptable to the people who have been elected and who have to respect each other.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 17, 2002, the chairman of the American joint chiefs of staff stated that the U.S. northern command took Norad and moved it under northern command.

Oral Questions

Since General Myers said clearly that Norad would come under the new northern command, could the Minister of National Defence assure the House that Norad will never be placed under U.S. northcom?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, General Eberhart, who is the commander of Norad, will also be the commander of northcom. However they are two separate organizations. Norad will continue as a binational command reporting to both Canada and the United States. We will have command and control over our own forces and our own territory as has been the Norad tradition. There will be no change in that whatsoever.

We are also looking for ways in which we can enhance co-operation for the benefit of our own citizens and our own continent in terms of co-operation in other areas involving the military.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor to Detroit is a vital artery between Canada and the United States with over 40,000 vehicles crossing the bridge daily via Huron Church Road.

The Minister of Transport has said that this was Canada's number one infrastructure priority yet he has done nothing to assist the local municipality that bears the enormous costs of maintaining this vital roadway.

The people of Windsor have seen 11 months of foot dragging to select a consultant for the binational study for a new border crossing. Why has it taken so long for the minister to act and when will we see results?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the hon. member on his first question in the House.

I would like to remind him that the government signed an agreement with the government of the United States and the government of Ontario to plan for access toward the Ambassador Bridge which will look at all of the various options over the next coming years. We do realize however that there is an immediate problem that must be dealt with and the government will deal with that problem.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that still does not answer the question when.

I met with the minister over four years ago. On behalf of the people of Windsor I requested federal funding to cover the costs of such things as policing and snow removal on Huron Church Road. The government has ignored the people of Windsor, meeting behind closed doors and out of sight.

Will he commit today to act on our request for interim operational funding to expedite the binational study, yes or no?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that study needs to be speeded up given the various problems we have had but there are other options the government is looking at. An infrastructure program was announced in the 2001 budget and those are matters under consideration.

This is still the number one surface transportation priority facing the government and the government, as I have said, will act.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services' stay at a chalet owned by Groupe Everest boss, Claude Boulay, gives, at the very least, the perception of bias.

Since 1993 Groupe Everest has received over \$55 million in taxpayer funded government contracts. In exchange, it donated \$77,000 to the Liberal Party. The minister showed bad judgment in vacationing at the donor's fancy digs just two months after a new job and the scandal over cozy government contracts first broke.

Whether or not he or his son paid for the stay is not the real issue. Will the minister admit he broke section 23(1) of the conflict of interest guidelines or continue down this slippery slope of denial?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member perhaps prepared this question previously, and there is nothing wrong with that, but it does not reflect the answer I gave to another hon. member earlier today in which I said that notwithstanding the fact that I did not think I broke any rule, I would not do it again.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, according to reports it was the minister's son who made the weekend arrangements to stay at the Boulay's chalet and the public works minister's son is an aide to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, a fellow former rat packer who used to have histrionics and furious fits over allegations of government corruption when in opposition. Do her staff members have access to Groupe Everest chalets? Is it merely a coincidence that the same company received a number of lucrative contracts from her department just hours after the public works minister and his son enjoyed the weekend visit? What a duplicitous double standard.

● (1505)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in an earlier incarnation I was an opposition critic to a very good minister from Central Nova. He was of course a relative of the member across the way. I never brought that relationship to the attention of the House. My family members are independent beings, as I am, and deserve the respect of all of us, as he does.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada's provincial tourism ministers say the Liberal air tax is crippling travel into rural communities. They are calling on the government to reduce the \$24 tax now to protect their tourism industries for this coming summer.

Oral Questions

Will the government cut the air tax before the House rises for the summer and give Canada's tourism industry a real break?

Hon. John McCallum (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is highly aware of the importance of the tourism industry in the country. Air travel has resumed much faster than any of us thought after September 11. It augurs well for tourism in the country.

We said many times that the government will review the situation in the fall. Should revenues exceed the anticipated expenditures we will reduce the charge at that time.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, why does the transport minister not get up, earn his money and answer the questions rather than sloughing them off to the minister responsible for credit cards.

What the minister does not understand is that if an air carrier does not earn a profit in the summer months it will not earn a profit for the entire year.

Why will the government not cut the tax and finally take the iron boot off the air industry so that finally we could have some competition in our skies and service small communities? Will he do it before the summer break?

Hon. John McCallum (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member on the other side should understand is that taxation is a matter for the finance department. As I just said, the signs are that the tourist industry is improving.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. Even with the minister close at my right hand I cannot hear the answer. We must have some order so that hon. members at the far end of the Chamber can hear the minister.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, matters of taxation and charges come under the authority of the finance department.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in two days, American duties of 27.2% will be applied against the softwood lumber industry in Canada and Quebec. The bill will total almost \$3 billion. The government announcement last week of \$75 million in assistance for the forestry industry is not only completely insufficient, but it completely misses the mark.

Does the Minister for International Trade understand that a grant for research and development does nothing to meet the immediate needs of the industry and does nothing to help the 1,800 workers who have lost their jobs since the beginning of the dispute?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very happy with the ITC's decision last week to return the \$760 million that was posted by the Canadian industry. I think we have to acknowledge that there is some leeway and that our industry won three-quarters of a billion dollars this week.

Also, to say that \$75 million in research and development, \$75 million to expand the international market, is nothing, is certainly not what we are hearing from the industry in Canada, which is very grateful to the government for investing in its future.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I did not say it was nothing, I said it did not meet the immediate needs of the industry or the workers.

Are we to understand, based on the refusal of the Minister for International Trade and his colleagues to announce a real assistance plan, that the government is ready to crawl back and negotiate with the Americans?

• (1510)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is asking us to come up with a plan without even knowing certain facts. We have just had \$760 million freed up. We have to take this information, which we just received last week, into account. The government has not ruled out any options.

Last week, we were careful to state that this was only an initial announcement in our support for the industry. Other assistance will be announced in due course in the coming weeks.

One thing is certain: our government is not ruling out any options and will stand by the Canadian industry.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, President Bush signed the protectionist U.S. farm bill into law last Monday. Besides driving down commodity prices it will also act as a non-tariff barrier to our exports of meat, vegetables and fruit.

Mandatory country of origin labelling is a breach of our trade agreements. The agriculture minister promised to initiate trade challenges if the bill violates our trade laws.

Has the agriculture minister kept his promise and filed challenges to the U.S. farm bill under the WTO and NAFTA?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the hon. member that as much as we are disgusted with the country of origin labelling in the U.S. farm bill, it is at a voluntary stage for two years.

There is considerable opposition to it in the United States. We will continue to pressure the American government so that it will see the reality that what it is doing will hurt not only its industry but ours as well. However, it is not mandatory at this stage.

Oral Questions

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister should understand what the government did under softwood lumber. It waited for five years and did nothing. We will be in the same situation in agriculture.

Not only did the cabinet fail to make any changes to the U.S. farm bill, it also failed to develop an immediate action plan if the farm bill passed. Farmers need an immediate trade challenge to the U.S. farm bill and they must have federal help at home.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister support a trade entry compensation program for Canadian farmers?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated, and we have been joined by the rest of the world, our disgust for the U.S. farm bill and the fact that the U.S. has lost its leadership and credibility in negotiating at the WTO and other panels.

Having said that, we are working with the industry and the provinces to put in place an agricultural policy framework which will be a comprehensive, integrated approach that will lead to more profitability in the agricultural sector.

* * *

[Translation]

VIANDES DU BRETON

Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent months we have all been concerned by the fate of those who have been laid off in the airline, forestry and high tech sectors.

Now a tragedy has occurred at Notre-Dame-du-Lac. The premises of Les Viandes du Breton Inc. were destroyed in a fire on the night of May 15, 2002. No fewer than 460 employees are now out of work.

Can the Minister of Human Resources indicate to this House what measures her department has in mind to get these workers through this difficult time?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada understands how devastating this fire has been for workers of Viandes du Breton in Notre-Dame-du-Lac. I can tell the hon. member and the House that within hours of the fire officials from my department were in touch with the employer.

Today a team of HRDC officials has opened an emergency office at Hôtel La Dolce Vita in Notre-Dame-du-Lac because we appreciate how important it is for these workers to have access to income support through employment insurance.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. decision to impose a 27% tariff on softwood lumber will hit hard when it comes into effect on Thursday. The government has made no specific commitment to assist forest workers and their families. Instead, the trade minister continues to insult laid off workers by denying they have been laid off due to this trade dispute.

When will the government announce a comprehensive forest worker assistance package?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is well aware of the difficult conditions that our communities and workers have been subjected to by American protectionism. The problem is south of the border. The government is also well aware that the uncertainties of the last few months have been very detrimental. They have caused harm in many communities and cost jobs across the country.

We know that when the full tariff of 27% is imposed on us next Thursday the impact will be brutal in many of our communities. However saying, as the opposition is saying now, that the \$75 million worth of international market development and research and development for the industry is nothing is just wrong.

● (1515)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the problem is in our forest communities and in cabinet.

Last week's announcement to spend \$75 million on the softwood lumber industry was simply a smokescreen to disguise inaction from the government. It does nothing to deal with the 27% tariff starting on Thursday.

The same minister from British Columbia who announced this tired package is backpedaling from earlier support for a government back tariff payment scheme. When will the government announce this tariff payment management scheme?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our industry. Our industry has expressed satisfaction for the package we announced last week.

We have said that all options are on the table. We continue to work and consult with the provinces. We continue to talk with the industry systematically. The program of market development has been very welcome. The research and development funding demonstrates that the government continues to believe in the softwood lumber industry and we have eliminated no options whatsoever. We will do our work in continuing this and continuing to focus on American protectionism which is the problem.

Government Orders

[Translation]

VIANDES DU BRETON

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday's fire at the Viandes du Breton plant has triggered a reaction of solidarity. In Quebec City, Bernard Landry has headed a ministerial team to work on getting the plant rebuilt. So far, however, there has been no public reaction by the federal government to help get the company back on its feet.

I am asking the secretary of state with responsibility for the regional development of Quebec whether he can reassure the people of Témiscouata of the federal government's full cooperation in the reconstruction of the plant at Notre-Dame-du-Lac in Témiscouata.

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member of the Bloc Québécois that we have been in contact with Vincent Breton, one of the owners of Les Viandes du Breton, whose 450 employees have been hit by this tragedy, and have assured him of our complete co-operation.

I have, moreover, been in touch with the mayor to inform him of our readiness to co-operate, but this was not done publicly. We are working with them and will be there to support them through this tragedy.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions.

Amid great uncertainty Canadians have worked hard over the past year to weather the volatility of the international world economy. What evidence does the secretary of state have to demonstrate to Canadians that we have been moving in a correct direction for the best interests of Canadians?

Hon. John McCallum (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent question. It is not at all surprising that we get no questions on the economy from the opposition these days.

For the first time in 30 years we are coming out of the slowdown better than the U.S., we have become unambiguously the most powerful job creator of all industrial countries, we have recently re-achieved our top of the world triple A credit rating, and the Canadian dollar stands at a nine month high as of today. No wonder the opposition never asks us about the economy.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on March 12 the solicitor general, responding to a question of mine, stated that first degree murderers served an average of 28.4 years before being released back into the community. However a document recently released by the commissioner of Correctional Service of Canada contradicts the solicitor general. It states:

Offenders convicted of first degree murder are serving an average of 17.6 years prior to their first release.

My question is obvious. Will the solicitor general stand and admit that his numbers are wrong and that his numbers are self-serving?

● (1520)

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that in Canada we have a system second to none. In fact people from all across the world come to visit Canada to see what we are doing and how we are doing it. We can be very proud that we have the kind of system that we do because it is envied around the world.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Muhammad Jamiruddin Sircar, Speaker of the Parliament of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-56, an act respecting assisted human reproduction, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the debate was interrupted, I was referring to a press release issued in January 2002 by the Quebec minister responsible for research, science and technology, which reads as follows:

In conclusion, minister Cliche reiterated his trust in Quebec's scientists and said, "Researchers are, just like me, convinced that research development must be conducted in a climate of trust and transparency. Research that affects these human embryos and the cells from these embryos involves the fundamental values of dignity and human integrity, while also raising many ethical issues. Quebecers must know that the Government of Quebec is fully aware of the issues raised by this research, and that it intends to ensure that ethical rules are followed to the letter.

● (1525)

[English]

Last May 14 an article appeared in the Montreal *Gazette* under the byline of Peter Hadekel. The article stated:

A small but vocal group of Liberal MPs wants a free vote on the controversial legislation, which would permit medical research on leftover embryos from fertility clinics, as long as donor consent is obtained.

The article went on to state:

Their views deserve respect. Like many Canadians, they're concerned that killing embryos for research purposes is morally wrong, no matter what the purported benefits of genetic manipulation might be in the search for cures to diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer or diabetes.

The article also cited the report of the Standing Committee on Health which states:

Therefore, we want to encourage research funding in the area of adult stem cells. We are concerned that embryonic stem-cell research commodifies the embryo.

Government Orders

Mr. Hadeker's article continued:

One looks in vain in the McLellan bill for the same spirit or some sign that the government would encourage adult-stem cell research wherever and whenever possible...for many Canadians concerned about this kind of research, a more troubling question is when human life really begins.

[*Translation*]

That is the issue. When there are alternatives, we must always choose the option for which there is the largest social consensus.

I realize that those who are opposed to research on embryonic cells may be a minority. I do not know what kind of minority. It may even be a small minority, but that is not important. What is important is the fact that there is a significant minority of people with fundamental rights who are saying that to tamper with embryos is to tamper with human life. There are certainly alternatives.

[*English*]

On January 30, 1999 the *British Medical Journal* stated that the use of embryonic stem cells “may soon be eclipsed by the more readily available and less controversial adult stem cells.”

On August 26, 2000 under the heading “Over excitement on embryo stem cells”, the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* stated:

If stem cells do turn out to be a significant source of therapeutic agents they could come not from human embryos but from alternatives such as reprogrammed adult cells.

[*Translation*]

There is an increasing number of examples of projects which, one after the other, involve practical research, research that has proven successful with adult stem cells.

[*English*]

I will conclude by quoting an article by an eminent Canadian whom I know personally and whom I believe represents the best in what we call ethics. She is the head of the Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University, Dr. Margaret A. Somerville. Her research, knowledge, balance, wisdom and judgment have been acclaimed by people not only in Canada but far and wide. In an article entitled “Life Itself in the Balance” which appeared in the April 4, 2001 edition of the *National Post* she concluded:

If we regard the human embryo as wondrous—because it represents the transmission of human life from one generation to the next, and because it is a genetically unique, living entity—we would not use it for research. Should we refrain from such research in order to maintain for ourselves, society and future generations a sense of profound respect for each human life, human life itself, and its transmission?

To conclude, we must carefully examine whether it is ethically acceptable to proceed with human embryo stem cell research and be aware that our decisions might be affected by a lack of courage to refuse the potential therapeutic benefits it promises. We are in a situation where it is far easier to say yes than no. However if we believe research on stem cells obtained from human embryos is inherently wrong or that its overall risks and harms to societal values and norms outweigh its potential benefits, difficult as it will be, we must have the courage to recognize that it cannot be ethically justified and should not proceed.

The minister would garner a tremendous amount of support in the House from all sides were she to admit that the whole question of the

use of embryonic stem cells is not only complex in its scientific impacts but morally and ethically extremely delicate.

Some of us like myself strongly believe that human life starts at conception and that human embryos should not be used for research or in any other manner that detracts from the dignity and integrity of human life. The minister would gain a lot of kudos by recognizing that there are some of us, although perhaps a minority, who believe deeply and with great conviction that we should not use embryonic stem cells, especially when practical, successful alternatives such as adult stem cells are available. Adult stem cells are being used today and have been used for the last two decades in all kinds of successful medical and scientific research.

I ask the minister to reconsider. We should take the path Quebec has courageously adopted and refrain from research on embryonic stem cells. This shows that Quebec, a province where separation of church and state has been the case increasingly since the quiet revolution, is respectful of the ethical dilemma posed to many people who believe human life starts with embryos at conception.

This is a point of view I hold very deeply. I hope the minister will listen to those of us who think this is the right course to take.

● (1530)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I think Canadians will detect his sincere views on the matter, particularly with regard to the ethical issues which are a significant part.

The hon. member probably will know that Dr. Françoise Baylis, a member of the governing council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, shares his view. She said before a health committee that an embryo is a human being. She said it is an uncontested biological fact that an embryo is a member of the human species.

Dr. Baylis had an interesting point on which the hon. member may want to comment: the idea that there are surplus embryos from fertility clinics. She said approximately 250 embryos might be available in Canada and that only half those would survive thawing. Of the remaining 125 only 9 would be able to produce any kind of stem cell line. Less than that, approximately 5, would be able to produce the stem cell lines that are adequate for research purposes. This means 5 of 250 embryos would be acceptable for research purposes. That is only 2%.

Would the member like to comment on whether we should be going that way when so few embryos would be available for stem cell research? Some 2% of the existing stock seems a small amount to be worth going through this kind of acrimonious debate.

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• (1535)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Mississauga South. As members know, he produced the book *The Ethics and Science of Stem Cells* which took a tremendous amount of research and commitment and for which those of us deeply interested in the issue are extremely grateful.

With regard to the issue he raised, according to many scientific and ethical experts there are not only problems with the supply and availability of embryos to effect significant research. The key issue is that we have one possibility that presents deep ethical and moral problems for many people including those in the scientific and medical world and other segments of society, and an alternative that is surer and safer. The alternative is both potentially and practically more successful because it has been used in many cases already. It presents no risk of tissue rejection. Surely the answer is to avoid the ethical and moral dilemmas and go with the sure thing. That is what we are saying.

We are for stem cell research, positively so. However let us avoid the traps and pitfalls. Let us avoid the moral and ethical issues represented by embryonic stem cells.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis who is a distinguished and principled member of this place. I would associate myself with his remarks.

Could the member comment on the hon. Minister of Health's assertion that the provisions of Bill C-56 dealing with embryonic stem cell research, namely the delegation of regulation of the area to the new agency, reflect the recommendations of the health committee report? Does the hon. member agree that the special report of the Standing Committee on Health suggests a much higher standard for the approval of applications for embryonic stem cell research?

Would the hon. member share my party's call for at least a three year moratorium on embryonic stem cell research until we can see the full potential of adult stem cell research to which he has referred?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I read the committee report again this morning. It is quite clear the committee viewed the use of embryonic stem cells totally as a last resort, after all other possibilities had been researched and employed. The committee said to use adult stem cells in research and that if by any chance there was any possibility they would not be successful, then to use embryonic stem cells as a last resort. I must say that I myself would not agree to that use even as a last resort, but it is a far cry from a positive provision allowing the use to start with, from inception.

Obviously I must be on the side of the committee's findings far more than I am on the side of the present legislation. I hope that the views the committee set out regarding the priority of adult stem cell research will lead to the exclusion altogether of embryonic stem cell research.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I missed the beginning of the presentation by the member for Lac-Saint-Louis. However, I heard that he was mainly referring to the issue of embryonic stem cells. He is firmly opposed

to what the bill is proposing. I respect the fact that my colleague may have this opinion. I hope that he too will respect the fact that others may have a contrary opinion.

My question for the member is this: Can we assume that the rest of the bill is well founded and deserves the support of the majority of members of this House, or does he see other problems he would like to share with us?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with my colleague, for whom I have the greatest respect. Our opinions may certainly differ with the greatest mutual respect. I even said in my presentation that I think that I represent a minority here. That does not mean, however, that it is a minority less certain of its opinions.

At the same time, however, the fundamental issue dividing us is the one concerning the use of embryonic stem cells. If this could be resolved tomorrow, the consensus here would become very broad. We are all in favour of regulating reproductive technologies. As for cloning and so forth, there is no problem. We are in favour of research on adult stem cells.

The issue of using embryonic stem cells is an extremely difficult one, one which unfortunately divides us and one on which those who think as I do hold very strong convictions, which make it very repugnant to us.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the CIHR, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, really has been driving this agenda over the last few weeks. It has come out with its own guidelines and in effect has pre-empted this piece of legislation. We are wondering whether or not that was something that was set up by the minister. Maybe it is not really that important, but it is something we question.

The president of the CIHR has suggested that it is not driving for the safe alternative, which is the adult stem cell. The member elaborated on that and I could not agree more that it is an avenue of no ethical concern and tremendous potential which Canadians would be proud to endorse. On the other side is the embryonic stem cell research which is full of hope, but all it is is hope and very weak research.

The CIHR is pushing the envelope toward embryonic stem cell research. Last year the president of the CIHR, Dr. Bernstein, said in committee that the number one issue in the legislation is the regulatory body and the trust it garners from Canadians. Does the way the legislation is written reflect trust for Canadians?

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Mr. Speaker, I think the way it is now gives a tremendous amount of leeway to bodies like the CIHR and the proponents of embryonic stem cell research. As the member rightly suggests, they seem to be leading the whole thrust of the legislation to give primacy and priority to embryonic stem cell research. That is what I detect.

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We have to have a fundamental debate to express the views of people like myself. I appreciate we may be in the minority, but it is a minority that cherishes its convictions and its beliefs must also be taken into account. I sense that when the argument is brought against embryonic stem cell research, certain quarters, such as those cited, view it as coming from a dinosaur living a thousand years in the past.

I happen to believe that the dignity and integrity of human life have no space in time. They were there yesterday, they are there today and they will be there tomorrow. If we have a safe and successful alternative in adult stem cells, that is the direction we must take.

I hope many of us here keep pounding on this so that eventually a reversal of the thrust of the legislation will happen in committee and after.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to take part in this debate on Bill C-56, An Act respecting assisted human reproduction. It is certainly one of the most important pieces of legislation to have been introduced recently in the area of health, but it is also a very delicate bill that will surely be very controversial.

However, the various aspects of this controversy on the legitimacy of this bill, which was much anticipated by the medical and scientific communities, will not prevent our party from supporting, at least in principle, Bill C-56 which, as clearly stated in clause 2, sets out the fundamental principles of assisted human reproduction, and I quote:

2. The Parliament of Canada recognizes and declares that

(a) the benefits of assisted human reproductive technologies and related research for individuals and for society in general can be most effectively secured by taking appropriate measures for the protection and promotion of human health, safety, dignity and rights in the use of these technologies and in related research;

(b) the health and well-being of children born through the application of these technologies must be given priority in all decisions respecting their use;

(c) while all persons are affected by these technologies, women more than men are directly and significantly affected by their application;

(d) the principle of free and informed consent must be promoted and applied as a fundamental condition of the use of human reproductive technologies;

(e) trade in the reproductive capacities of women and men and the exploitation of children, women and men for commercial ends raise health and ethical concerns that justify their prohibition;

(f) human individuality and diversity, and the integrity of the human genome, must be preserved and protected.

Based on these fundamental principles and taking into account the activities that are prohibited in the bill and those that are regulated, Bill C-56 can be summarized as follows.

It prohibits the creation of human clones for any purpose as well as the transplantation of a human clone into a human being.

It permits certain research to be carried out using stem cells from human embryos, while at the same time banning the creation of embryos for the purpose of carrying out such research.

It prohibits commercial activity involving surrogate mothers, and payment of sperm or egg donors, as well as the buying and selling of human embryos.

Finally, it prohibits the sexing of human embryos solely for the purpose of deciding whether or not to continue a pregnancy.

In order to attain the objectives set for assisted reproduction, and in order to make it possible to control activities around these objectives, Bill C-56 creates a new body. The assisted human reproduction agency of Canada will be responsible for regulating fertility clinics and researchers in this area.

In particular, this federal agency will authorize researchers to use stem cells from human embryos, but only when required for such research. Like any body with responsibility for monitoring a specific area, the agency in question will have all the necessary powers to implement the policies and objectives defined by Bill C-56 and its regulation and to inspect the facilities in question, and to monitor application of the law and regulations and initiate proceedings relating to offences under the act.

The Bloc Québécois feels that the government has reached a reasonable compromise between the American position with its restrictions on human embryo research and the British position, which goes too far and allows researchers to create embryos solely for research purposes. This latter practice, of creating embryos for study and research purposes, will be prohibited in Canada under the legislation being proposed in Bill C-56, if it is passed in its present form. Researchers will also be required to apply for authorization from the new assisted reproduction agency in order to gain access to surplus embryos from fertility clinics that are no longer needed by them.

With this we are getting to the most difficult moral issue raised by this bill on human embryos: the use for research of those that are no longer needed.

• (1550)

For some, research on embryos is reprehensible from an ethical point of view, because an embryo is a human being. For others, an embryo is not yet a true human being, a view that was shared by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Bloc Québécois feels that the bill will allow for the establishment of ethical standards for research on stem cells and embryos, and of valid requirements for research authorizations, the monitoring of research laboratories and fertility clinics, so that the fundamental issue of the respect for life can be reasonably monitored and dealt with.

We feel that it is better to have a valid legislative framework, with true control by the new assisted human reproduction agency of Canada, which will be created under this legislation, than to remain in a regulatory void that can lead to all kinds of abuse, as may be the case right now.

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Moreover, the definitions of “human clone”, “embryo”, “*in vitro* embryo”, “foetus”, etc., found at the beginning of Bill C-56, in clause 3, are explicit and restrictive enough to allow for the anticipated monitoring of assisted human reproduction.

It should also be pointed out that Bill C-56 is an important measure for all those who need assistance in the area of human reproduction, something which affects the fate and destiny of mankind.

However, assisted human reproduction will not be the only benefit resulting from this legislation. Indeed, according to a number of experts in genetics, research on embryos and on stem cells from excess embryos—again, it must be emphasized that only excess embryos can be used, and only if a researcher can clearly demonstrate that he cannot conduct his research with other biological material, before he can get an authorization from the agency—could allow us to fight terrible diseases such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis, diabetes and probably others.

These are definitely laudable objectives and we must regulate research in this area, so that these objectives can be achieved and so that science can continue to make progress in our country, under a tight implementation and monitoring framework, and under principles that are recognized by experts in research, by Canada's health research institutes, and by Canada's health research funding agencies.

However, while Bill C-56 has some merits, it also has flaws and I want to mention some of them.

Even though Health Canada is supposed to consult the provinces regarding the regulations governing research and activities related to assisted reproduction, we must ensure that this promise is respected. It is critical that Canadian policy be developed in concert with the provinces and that there be unequivocal recognition that it is an area of shared jurisdiction.

The proposed legislation grants the regulatory and monitoring agency a very broad mandate which gives it significant powers. Yet, nothing guarantees the independence of the agency's board from the Minister of Health. The agency, which reports to the Minister of Health, will advise the minister, and will be headed by a board of directors made up of no more than 13 members who reflect a range of relevant backgrounds and disciplines.

Since it is up to the regulatory agency, and not the provinces, to enforce the regulations, it is important to ensure that the board is representative of Quebec.

Two observers—one representing the federal government and the other representing the provincial governments—will discuss issues of common interest with the board.

Once again, we must ensure that this observer understands and defends the interests of Quebecers. No regulatory body can be completely effective without a fair representation of the provinces on its board.

• (1555)

One clause of the bill stipulates that all of the regulations be introduced in the House for approval and that the committee

consider the bill and propose amendments. Among the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Health, there was a proposal that the bill include provisions comparable to clause 42.1 of the Tobacco Act, provisions that require that proposed regulations be referred automatically to the standing committee. The relative clause in Bill C-56 does not go this far. Given that for this bill, the regulations are equally, if not more important than the bill itself, we must ensure this recommendation made by the committee is respected.

Contrary to the Bloc Québécois' requests and the committee's recommendations, the bill does not amend the Patent Act in order to exclude human genetic material.

In particular, we must define the scope of clause 25 of Bill C-56, which reads as follows:

25. (1) The Minister may issue policy directions to the Agency concerning the exercise of any of its powers, and the Agency shall give effect to directions so issued.

(2) Policy directions issued by the Minister may not affect a matter that is before the Agency at the time they are issued and that relates to a particular person.

(3) Policy directions issued by the Minister are not a statutory instrument for the purposes of the Statutory Instruments Act.

This power given to the federal Minister of Health seems completely excessive and clearly implies that the assisted human reproduction agency of Canada could lose its independence in favour of the minister, and despite all other qualified stakeholders: the content of clause 25 must therefore be clarified in order to bring it into line with the requirement that the agency responsible for monitoring this field be independent.

Finally, Bill C-56 affects all members of parliament with respect to their personal beliefs, religious or not, with respect to human life, the protection of human life, and especially with respect to what constitutes a human being, and for this reason I strongly suggest that the vote on Bill C-56 be entirely free, without party lines. Members will thus be able to vote freely, according to their conscience, without any constraints, for the benefit of all and for the good of democracy.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has made some very important points for the House to consider as we move forward on this bill. It is important that she reiterate a bit more on the background of the Quebec government's decision announced last January to ban embryonic stem cell research.

I know the member is a very experienced member of parliament, and I would like her to comment on polling. In the debate today there have been references made to polling. A poll was conducted in the United States which identified that embryonic stem cell research might have promise, but it disclosed that the embryo had to be destroyed to get the stem cells and that stem cell therapy would be subject to immune rejection. Seventy per cent of Americans who took part in that poll opposed embryonic stem cell research on that basis.

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However a poll conducted in Canada asked if it would be all right to do stem cell research and said that embryonic stem cells had a lot of hope in helping in therapy and finding cures for diseases. Seventy per cent of Canadians supported embryonic stem cell research.

The member is experienced in how we can wordsmith or play with words. Does she believe that Canadians are diametrically opposed to the opinion of Americans because we are different or simply because the questions were absolutely ludicrous?

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pierrette Venne: Mr. Speaker, there are two questions here, the first having to do with Quebec and its position on stem cell research. I must point out to the member that this was only a consultation document. It therefore cannot be said that the Government of Quebec took a definitive stand on this subject.

As for stem cell research per se, I wish to emphasize that in this case and in the bill before us, it is really a system which functions by exception. I therefore think that in this regard, the member opposite is not pressing hard enough.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I will pass on to the member the documents we received announcing the ban by the health minister for Quebec with regard to embryonic stem cell research.

I know the member has a legal background and I want to ask her about the patentability of genetic material. I think the health committee report made it very clear that we had very little idea of what was going on in Canada in terms of research and very little information was offered.

From the information we see in the media, for instance, there is the so-called Harvard mouse that has been genetically modified. A patent is being sought and in fact it is going to the supreme court.

Could the member advise the House whether she is aware of the state of health of the Patent Act and whether it is up to date in terms of being flexible enough to deal with complex matters such as patenting of genetic materials?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pierrette Venne: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Furthermore, I believe I mentioned in my speech earlier that we were sorry that the current bill did not exclude stem cell research from the Patent Act. I therefore mentioned this oversight earlier.

The Bloc Quebecois is also calling for a public morality clause in the Patent Act in order to exclude certain patents. I think that this may answer the member's question.

[*English*]

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* starts with a scene of a bunch of prehumans, ape-like creatures, gathered around doing the various things they do. One of them, in a random act, grabs the femur of some animal, waves it around and eventually smashes another bone with it. He waves it more and smashes more and the next day in an attack uses it to club down somebody. The metaphor was the birth of the age of technology. What it did not show was that night around the campfire when those same groups were talking about what had happened and

one of them said that if the creator had wanted us to have bones to hit people with he would have grown them out of the ends of our arms.

Thus in a sense the debate we are engaged in here was born. Throughout history there has been a constant debate between the capacity that science gives us and the ability of a society to absorb that capacity, to understand it, to come to terms with it and to figure out how it fits into the kind of life we want to lead.

I actually was not going to speak to the bill, but upon reflection and after listening to some of the debate today I thought it would be useful to reflect a bit on what occurred in the committee as we did the pre-study of the bill, because it was a really marvellous opportunity. It was a marvellous time.

In all the years I have been here I have not had a committee process that brought together into a struggle so many people from so many different positions. That is all I can say about it. People fought. They wrestled openly with the concerns they had. Those concerns got debated. We tried to figure out the tremendous promise that was inherent in the advancement of science in this area and the very real fears about what this does to us as a society. What happens if we start to truly treat life as a commodity that can be bought and sold or if we manufacture life for other purposes? These are the kinds of issues where I think this place is at its best when it truly struggles with them. I think the report that was produced was the best we were able to do to try to marry those conflicts.

I wrote a piece some years ago on how parliament could never make an optimal decision because what is optimal is in many ways dependent on one's point of view. We all come to the table with a particular position on something. Ultimately, throughout all of these processes, we pick the best fit, the best marriage of all the pressures, the concerns, the history and the diversity that exists in this country to make a decision that ultimately is not optimal from anybody's point of view but hopefully, in the best of times, is the most optimal decision for a society. I think we achieved that. I think we did something very special in that committee.

We also learned a lot. As someone who has worked with children for a good portion of my life, I learned a lot. I think it is important to step back to what got this started, which was the very real desire of people to have children. We heard images raised in some of the speeches about big farmers doing this and about a corporate agenda trying to achieve something else, but at the end of the day it was about people having difficulty conceiving, and they were searching desperately.

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I was director of child welfare in Manitoba. I can tell hon. members about the numbers of people who are really trying very hard to have children, who want to have the kind of joy and satisfaction that I feel all the time with my kids. Science began to offer them some hope. It is not that long ago that the first in vitro fertilization took place. As well, we are also now doing a bill on the control of pesticides and there are actually concerns that some of the ways in which we burden our environment may contribute to the fact that people are having difficulty conceiving, to this rise in infertility. Also, the fact that people are waiting until later in life to have children is believed to be a big cause of it.

• (1605)

However, the reality was that a lot of very competent, caring Canadians were having trouble producing children. Some solutions were developed, not in a totally random way but by different people trying different things. Some doctors were more aggressive and we saw the rise of the clinics. A great deal of relatively unstructured activity took place at that time.

In a sense what rather surprised me was the randomness, because this was something that was driven by a couple wanting to have a child with all of the dialogue taking place between the couple and with the researcher and the doctor without any sort of social overview or any of the kinds of normal protections we might have in bringing forward a new medical service, to the point where, as we discovered in committee, there were children being produced who in some ways had none of the body of protections or supports and the family had none of the supports that we would offer to anybody adopting a child.

One of the very real issues was the ability to track parents. When I was first a director of child welfare in 1983, an adopted child could not track down his or her parents. Today open adoption is a commonly accepted practice and active adoption registries, where for certain reasons children can seek out their parents, are pretty much the norm. It is done for very real reasons. In this case, with the advancement of knowledge about genetics, knowing the genetic make-up of parents may be very helpful to people in the management of their own health.

Yet in regard to the issue we are dealing with today, we had a group of children being created and going into families but having none of those rights, those systems or that ability to track their parents. We found a sort of randomness in how the records were kept. Some were kept for a few years, but it was all at the discretion of the local physician.

There was a system that had grown. There were also concerns about the protection of the women, who were in effect the active guinea pigs for the advancement of this new technology and who were driven by their overwhelming desire to have children.

Then of course we had the concern that I would rate as the third order of business for the bill, which was the attempt to build a regulatory framework around the other services, the other activities that are enabled by the first ones, such as the availability of embryos so that research could actually be done on them. It was something that could not have been anticipated when all this started. We all see now the absolutely fantastic articles in the scientific journals and certainly in any tabloid. There was one article about combining

spider genes with goats' milk in the hopes that the goats will produce a protein that produces spider silk, because of its wonderful strength. The idea of having goats spinning webs in my house does not thrill me, but it is hard for us to capture these things.

The ideas of combining the genes of animals and plants, as has been talked about with certain foods such as tomatoes, or combining genes of animals and humans to create other kinds of animals, now put very difficult, very frightening possibilities before us. Before now they did not exist and we did not have to worry about them because they could not happen, but today they are real.

On the other side of it, this research adds to our understanding of who and what we are and how we function in the hope that we can correct some of the very horrible conditions that afflict people. Hopefully we can correct some of the tremendous deformities and incapacities children are born with. Hopefully we can find the triggers to help quadriplegics regenerate nerves. There is a tremendous wealth of very exciting possibilities here.

Therefore, as society has had to do with each major advancement, we were called upon to try to figure out what was the optimal path for the group. I think we did a pretty good job.

• (1610)

I think we struck a balance in the committee report and what I see us doing now is a sort of drawing back and a re-fighting of the positions we fought through in that report. I think we need to reflect on what our collective goal was. There was not a surrender in the writing of that report. There was a consensus after a lot of struggle. We tried to strike a balance in regard to creating a commodity. We talked about fees, payment, for people who were acting as surrogates. The report recommended that there be no fee given. I argued that there should be, not that there should be a purchase price for a child, but if somebody's sister agrees to carry a child and take time off work to do so, that person should be able to compensate her. In the end it was decided to take a stronger line on that.

There were a number of issues like that. There were absolute bans and prohibitions on the cloning of human beings and on the creation of chimera, the mixture of animal and human genetic material. There was an absolute ban on it because we just could not imagine where that might go.

The debate about the benefit that may exist here, that sort of Holy Grail of being able to unlock some of these mysteries and actually make seriously injured people whole again, really led us to leave that door open, to leave a regulatory mechanism in there which would allow us to constantly make that decision because that decision needs to be made, remade and made again in the face of advancing knowledge. I think that was the right decision and the right approach to take and I think the bill captures the intention of the work we did. In some sections it does not use the same language. It does not go as far in some of the preambles as we would have gone, but I think it attempts to do that.

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I also want to talk just briefly about what happened with CIHR, because when the Canadian Institutes of Health Research came out very quickly with its own guidelines I felt quite strongly that it was attempting to promote its position and to try to end run this process in advance of the House actually taking the time to act on this. I am here to say that I am very pleased with the actions of CIHR and its director since then. I think they have responded very appropriately by holding back. I really want to thank them for it and I congratulate them for being that sensitive to what has gone on.

There is another aspect to that. In attempting to deal with these very difficult and very sensitive subjects, we have tended to devalue expertise. It is easy to do that, to say that a researcher is just a clone of that particular drug company or that another researcher has some other motivation. The reality is that most of them are just researchers. They are just trying to figure out a new way of doing things. They are not driven by any other secret agenda or whatever. They are like all good researchers: they are in that quest for knowledge. We should listen to them. We should not disavow what they say. If we get ourselves to the point where we are driven only by emotion, then we are not respecting those who spend their time really trying to understand and bring some light to these topics. Then, I think, we do take ourselves back to the time of Galileo and forget to admit that the earth does revolve around the sun. There is a very real danger in this.

I think that where there is real discomfort is in that sense of commodification, that sense of making it really easy to have a child, almost to the point where one can pick the hair colour, the size and the intelligence quotient. There is that sense of almost being able to say that a certain kind of baby is wanted, but if it does not come out quite right we will toss out that one and get another one. I want to do everything we can to push back against that.

● (1615)

We know those forces exist. We see them in other countries with sex selection in children. We want to do everything we can to balance that, regulate it and push back against that trend. I argue educate on the other side of that because the only real change will come through broader education.

We have to be careful too that we do not shut the door on what could be some extremely important advancements in the health of ourselves, our children, our families and our nation.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I found the last speaker rather confusing. I have been trying to follow this issue very carefully.

The thrust of the bill in my mind is stem cell research. The question that we are asking on this side of the House is whether that should be embryonic stem cell research or adult stem cell research. I happen to go toward the stem cell research part because at this point in time it is a safer way for us to go.

I would like to ask the speaker to clarify a couple of things that he mentioned. I believe he said that adult stem cell research was not science. I do not understand that and would like him to explain it.

I would also like to ask him a hypothetical question. Suppose that in two or three years time we discover, if we are going to be using

embryonic stem cell research, that the actual optimum time to harvest is when that embryo is two years old. Would we still be comfortable with the situation we find today or do we want to go down that road? What we want to do is declare a moratorium for three years so this very sensitive and ethical issue can be discussed thoroughly and that we do not rush into something that we regret later.

If he could address those questions, I would be very grateful.

● (1620)

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the member found my speech confusing, although it is a very complex topic. No, I did not say that I thought adult stem cell research was invalid or junk science by any stretch of the imagination. There are researchers working in that area. I did not make that case. If I was believed to have done so, I am sorry. That certainly was not my intention.

On the second question, I am will not respond to it. I can invent all sorts of hypotheticals also. The reality is there is a significant number of highly qualified researchers who say that there is value in embryonic stem cell research just as there are those who say that there is value in doing adult stem cell research.

The compromise that the study tried to reach was to say that we should not close the door. Let us not allow it. It is a controlled activity. We did not ban it outright the way we did on the chimera or the mixing of animal and plant genes. We said it was an area that we did not know and that it would evolve. Therefore we would create a process and a structure that would control and regulate it so that we could manage it, closing the door if necessary or opening the door if necessary. We still have a choice. For us not to leave ourselves the option of evaluating what is happening each step of the way in an area like this is just wrong.

There are two other important areas. The emotional side, the heat is in the use of embryonic stem cells because that is where we get right down to the question of life and the destruction of life for other purposes. It is a hugely important question.

There are other areas. One area that I think is not dealt with adequately in the bill is the fact that children are being produced. It started off with people wanting to have kids and were producing real, live children who are walking around and they are as citizens. Frankly, they have fewer rights today than any other children have and that needs to be corrected. It is not the hot, emotional topic that everyone wants to talk about in terms of stem cell research but it is a real issue and it is a service that needs to be sorted out.

Then there is the larger management of the system and clinics so that women receive consistent quality in the kinds of services that they provide. When we move into the use of new technologies or new techniques, we need a proper service for deciding which can and cannot. It is not just left to the sole discretion of the researcher. All three of those are very important.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg for his comments. He certainly touches on a number of areas where there is concern.

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I believe this has been mentioned previously, and from my own perspective, that the bill is lacking in a number of areas which the committee has recognized should be included. He mentioned that the big topic area was children not knowing where they were from and not having the same rights. As far as I am concerned, this is a big issue. We hear of more and more adults, 40, 50 or 60 years old, who want to know exactly from where they came.

This is an opportunity for us to not allow that to happen to children coming about as a result of reproductive research or medical procedures. This crucial area needs to be addressed. It is not a tough area to include in the bill so it is absolutely beyond me why it is not there.

I am greatly concerned that the bill does not stipulate mandatory testing of reproductive material. At a time when we have so many diseases floating throughout the world, why we would not ensure that testing is done and that it is mandatory within the bill? Again, this is again beyond me. It does not appear to be a big issue.

My colleague spoke highly of researchers and I believe that the majority of researchers are credible and honourable people. However we also have to recognize that there are those individuals who are unscrupulous, dishonest and will do anything for a buck. The bill lacks assurance that those types of people cannot proceed with issues that are contentious.

Though recognizing that there should not be payment for certain procedures, the bill does not contain anything about disallowing patenting and money making from DNA or reproductive technologies. I am a bit concerned about that. Would the member comment on that?

• (1625)

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of children, the bill does try to address some of the privacy and access questions. People are not allowed to donate reproductive material without being willing to have their identity disclosed.

The act of carrying a child and the whole process one goes through preparing their family for that child is a period of time for thought and reflection. It is a period of time for adjustment. For somebody adopting a child there is a need for preparation. When people apply to adopt a child they go through all sorts of processes before they are approved. If surrogacy is involved where someone else carries the child, an individual could become the parent of the child without having gone through anything other than painting the bedroom.

Some children do not fit into those types of homes and are very seriously damaged by that fact. We have lots of examples of that. Should there not be more structure and education in this type of situation? Part of the issue here is that it is the responsibility of the provinces. They manage those types of cases. The department intends to raise these issues with the provinces and look at ways by which these kinds of activities could be brought under that same gambit. An agency will have the same broad regulatory powers as the department itself has.

My comment with regard to scientists was not to say that all scientists were perfect, that nobody had a self-interest and that there was no corporate interest. I did not mean to say that. I am more

concerned about the fact that we are at the point now where we disavow all who disagree with us. A lot of very powerful and positive things could come out of this and we really blind ourselves if we do not allow ourselves to hear them.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his words that, as a member of the health committee, we wrestled with this. I would agree with him that it was a unique process where we looked at the bill before we became partisan about it. Because of that, I think we drew consensus and wrestled with these very difficult issues.

I guess my biggest disappointment is that the bill does not reflect the will of the combined effort of the committee in so many areas. We can argue that the largest and most important part of this bill is stem cell research. It may or may not be. To me it is not. To me the most important part is looking ahead into the 21st century and having a regulatory body that really garners the trust of Canadians, a body that takes us into the 21st century in the way which research from many different areas is looked at in an ethical way.

However, going back to the idea of science and having children, to a scientist success is a brand new baby. However to someone who is a product of reproductive technology in society, that is not where the success is. Success is far more down the road where we have adults who are truly productive to society, who understand where they came from and where they are going. It is much more than just a baby. There are different perspectives on this whole issue.

One thing that is missing in the bill is the anonymous donation of a donor. From the perspective of the member, why would the legislation not have a donor specified in the legislation?

• (1630)

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, just on that final point, perhaps I read this wrong. The member is right, section 14(1) does not say the name of the person. It does say that health reporting information is required to be collected under the regulations. The regulations are not attached to the bill so we do not know how broadly or narrowly that is drawn.

I would agree that in my read of the bill, it does not answer some of the questions that I had about how the second process would take place. There are two parts to it. There is the actual identity of the parent or parents who are missing in the mix. That could be handled more directly. I also think the whole issue of preparing parents for parenthood when they are not going through the process of gestation is an important issue. That is also lacking in the bill.

Beyond that, the bill actually does not do a bad job of reflecting the consensus to which we came. Maybe we are looking at it through different lenses, however it comes fairly close to our intention, which is to control a very difficult and very contentious area of research but not eliminate it.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on this issue.

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As a member of the Standing Committee on Health, I identify with the comments of the hon. member from Winnipeg who just spoke. Members of the committee wrestled with many of the issues surrounding human reproductive technology and came up with the proposals for the draft legislation which has come back in the form of Bill C-56.

Bill C-56 states it may be cited as the assisted human reproduction act. I would like to state for the record that I believe we need much more research on the causes of infertility, particularly in the western world on delayed child bearing. We need more scrutiny on the various practices that defer pregnancy including the birth control pill; the use of abortion and the effect it has on fertility; the accumulation of pesticides in the environment and the effect it may have on human reproduction; and recently, concerns about estrogens accumulating in the water supply which are affecting human fertility.

A lot more research is needed on what is actually causing this epidemic of infertility. Rather than trying to find other ways to produce babies, we should be looking at how we can accommodate successful human fertility in a natural way.

Looking at the bill, the opposition has been calling for legislation since 1993 when the royal commission on new reproductive technologies reported. The government introduced Bill C-47 eventually in June 1996 and it died on the order paper.

This subject has been debated for a long time. In this the 37th parliament the Standing Committee on Health received draft legislation on May 3, 2001, a little more than a year ago. We spent months deliberating and hearing from witnesses from all aspects of Canadian society who are concerned about the complex and varied issues associated with the bill. Finally the committee submitted its report in December to the minister. It is one year later and the bill has finally come to the House for consideration. It has been a long time coming.

There are many controversial aspects and complex issues related to the bill. Probably the most significant one is the issue of stem cell research. To enter into that subject, it was stressed at committee that we need to think of ourselves as cellular beings. An adult human being is some 80 trillion to 100 trillion cells; we are cellular beings.

We are talking about embryonic stem cells versus adult stem cells. We hear in discussions that embryonic stem cells are better because they can produce the entire array of tissue found in an adult human being, which is true. The early cells in an embryo are on their way to producing an 80 trillion to 100 trillion cell adult which will take some 20 years to accomplish. The embryonic cells can produce a whole human being; that is their destiny in the ordinary sense.

Recent research has found what early researchers used to suggest, that adult cells are no longer able to do that. However in the last year and a half we have seen tremendous breakthroughs in adult stem cell research.

It should not have been such a surprise to us. The blueprint for each one of us, including all of the 200 cell types that we have in our body, is found in each and every cell of the human body, except for the red blood cells which do not have a nucleus. Each of us has in each of our 80 trillion to 100 trillion cells a complete set of

chromosomes with a complete blueprint to reproduce a whole human being.

Therefore the dialogue saying that the embryonic cells are better for this reason simply does not hold up with the current research. We are finding tremendous breakthroughs some of which have been cited already today.

• (1635)

We heard from researchers in committee, and even in the months since we concluded our report there has been further research reporting results with Parkinson's disease using adult stem cells. Also with multiple sclerosis, adult stem cells from the donor's body were introduced back into the same body with tremendous results.

From what we heard in the standing committee and in the past year, there have been tremendous gains in adult stem cell research in humans. We heard that after many years of embryo stem cell research with animal models the results have not provided the expected advances. Therefore, it was the conclusion of the standing committee to encourage research funding in the area of adult stem cells.

There are many problems with trying to introduce embryonic cells into another human being not the least of which is each one of our cells has a blueprint, our own genetic marker. An intact immune system checks licence plates. The immune system will reject foreign cells. If embryonic cells are used to produce a new cell source for a human being to try to solve a health problem those cells will be subject to rejection by the immune system of the receiving body unless the patient takes anti-rejection drugs for the rest of his or her life. That is a very significant problem in trying to use embryonic stem cells in another human being. It is a problem that is avoided entirely by the use of autologous cells, or cells from one's own body.

To quote a couple of other advances, recently University of Minnesota Stem Cell Institute researchers showed that adult bone marrow stem cells can become blood vessels. Duke University Medical Center researchers turned adult stem cells from knee fat into cartilage, bone and fat cells. When the research of Dr. Freda Miller from our own McGill University was announced just a few months ago, the newspaper article said that the researchers had found gold with skin cells able to turn into neurons or muscle cells.

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We should have known there were stem cells found in bone marrow because bone marrow regenerates itself. The average human being is replacing 25% of his or her blood every month. Skin cells replace themselves regularly. Therefore stem cells are found. Also we are finding that skin cells not only produce skin but they can be coaxed into forming other tissues, as Dr. Miller found, such as neurons or muscle cells.

If adult cells have the promise to produce tissue, why are researchers reluctant to go there? I posed that question to Dr. Alan Bernstein, the head of the CIHR, when he was at committee and I pose the question again to my colleagues in the House. If we can produce cells from our own bodies that would replace tissue, avoiding the need for anti-rejection drugs for life, if we could take stem cells from our own bodies, grow them in a Petri dish and reintroduce them to our bodies to repair damaged tissue, would that not in fact be superior? That is autologous.

• (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I always hesitate to interrupt a member, but it might be helpful to the Chair to know if in fact members are splitting their time.

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for North Vancouver.

Dr. Bernstein's answer was that yes, of course it is superior to use autologous transplant cells from one's own body. Dr. Ronald Worton from the University of Ottawa when asked the same question replied that of course if we can use cells from our own body that is the gold standard.

With respect to the comments by the hon. member for Winnipeg South who said just a few moments ago that he felt we had struck the middle of the road and we had found the best compromise here, sometimes the middle of the road is not the best place to be. Sometimes the middle of the road can be a very dangerous place. One can be killed in the middle of the road.

I heard one researcher say that in genetic research speed wins. However the slogan used by the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia is that speed kills. We are concerned that researchers may run past the most promising venue of restoration and healing in their search for knowledge. We are concerned it could lead to commodification and industrialization of human tissue.

Our party had encouraged a three year moratorium on the stem cell issue. I still feel that if the CIHR were to use its considerable resources to invest in adult stem cell research, Canada could be a leader rather than a follower in this very promising area of research.

Many other issues need to be addressed, such as the area of chimera, the area of anonymous donations and many other very significant aspects to the bill. I will leave those to my colleagues to bring out and we will be discussing them at committee.

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I note that the member favours the avenue of providing one's own stem cells, adult stem cells I presume he meant, for one's own illnesses.

Would the comments of the member still apply if the requirement were to have one's own embryonic stem cells? That practice would

be banned by the bill, in terms of the actual taking of the genetic material from an embryonic cell and then putting in one's own genetic material and producing material which would definitely not be rejected by the body.

Would the member's view still hold if he had to obtain stem cells from such a source?

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about therapeutic cloning. Indeed the bill would ban that and we certainly support that ban.

We are talking about actually taking cells from one's own blood, bone marrow or skin from one's own body, simply extracting a hair follicle. It has been found that there are skin cells available that can be grown in vitro in larger numbers and injected back into the body.

We heard testimony from Dr. Prentice of Indiana State University that stem cells are being extracted from blood. The bone marrow is chemically stimulated to release stem cells which can be extracted with a simple blood sample, grown in a Petri dish and injected back into the same body. These cells actually would find their way to the damaged tissue and begin to identify with the cell type that is involved in the repair response. There is tremendous promise available in this area.

I agree with the member that we are not interested in going to therapeutic cloning.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution. He is a member of the health committee and has followed this matter since last April when the draft legislation was first presented to the committee by the previous minister of health.

During the hearings at the health committee there was a lot of anecdotal commentary about the agenda being driven by research and that research had progressed very swiftly and was way ahead of the policy makers and legislators. I suppose that when there is a regulatory and legislative vacuum it is easy to understand how that might happen.

I wonder if the member might want to comment on whether or not he got the sense that it is the research community that has driven the legislation thus far, both the draft legislation and the current bill.

I wonder if the member would also comment on whether or not it might be advisable for the health committee to ask those who wish to appear before the health committee on this bill to provide a curriculum vitae in which they identify and declare their relationships and associations. I mention this in view of the fact that so many of the witnesses who appeared the last time around had linkages either by being co-authors or members of the same group, et cetera, and were just filling the committee. I think the vast majority of witnesses were linked in some fashion and supported a particular position.

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•(1645)

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, there was a general feeling in the committee, having listened to witnesses from the scientific community, that they were very keen to advance the issue of embryonic stem cells and for some reason were reticent to engage in discussion about the tremendous potential of adult stem cells. For that reason a preamble was proposed by the standing committee. It put the interests of children first, the interests of the adults participating in assisted human reproduction second, and finally the interests of researchers and physicians supported to the extent that they do not compromise the interests of the children and the adults. That commitment seems to be lacking in the bill.

There is a concern that although researchers say they would not allow research beyond 14 days with an embryo, once they splat that embryo and extract the stem cells it is no longer an embryo in form but they could continue to grow those tissues indefinitely. There is a great danger which some call the slippery slope to industrialization and commodification, that what they can extract from these tissues are products like chemicals, dopamine for Parkinson's, or neurotransmitters for Alzheimer's, or insulin for diabetes. This slippery slope may lead to human tissue factories, the commodification and industrialization of human tissue. That is certainly something the committee is not keen to entertain and as parliamentarians is something we should want to resist.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the first paragraph of an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* on May 19 reads:

Canada's political parties, MPs and bureaucrats aren't giving Canadians the say in policy-making they promised, another blow to the nation's eroding trust in government, says a respected think-tank.

A forthcoming report by the Canadian Policy Research Networks concludes that for all the talk, money and time spent on "public consultations" and "citizen involvement," Canadians aren't having a real say in federal policies.

And if they do get a say, they're rarely listened to.

I have heard a number of members in debate today give their own personal opinions on the bill. That may be doing a disservice to our role as parliamentarians. I know not everyone in this place believes that we should be representing our constituents. I have tried to do my best to achieve that over the years.

In September 2001 I printed an article, in the *North Shore* and *Outlook* newspapers in my riding, predicting the arrival of this bill and asking my community to get involved. It stated:

The final form of the Bill will probably ban certain activities such as human cloning, sex selection, the creation of human embryos for research purposes, and the sale and purchase of human embryos. On the other hand the Bill is almost certain to also include extensive, and some would say quite arbitrary, powers for the Health Minister to regulate reproductive technologies or turn that job over to a new authority created for the purpose.

The time has come to show that my predictions were pretty accurate in that regard. I will come back to that in just a moment. Later on in the article I invited my community to get involved and stated:

Bills like this do not come along very often, but as with the so-called Gun Control Bill of 1994, there is inevitably going to be a lot of media and public discussion about the new legislation.

I invited my community to form two committees, one for the bill and one against, to help me reach a conclusion within my riding on

which way I should vote on various amendments and provisions in the bill.

It is interesting to talk about representing constituents. I received quite an amount of lobbying from those who have very strong moral feelings about this issue. I invited not just experts or those with scientific experience but lay people as well who had strong moral feelings to come forward and help me with the committees.

People did come forward and posed some interesting questions. I will read some of the questions that came from my riding in just a moment but now I will go back to the predictions that I made in the column about the ministerial powers that would probably come forward in the bill. When I read the bill the first thing that struck me was subclause 20(1):

The Minister is responsible for the policy of the Government of Canada respecting assisted human reproduction and any other matter that, in the opinion of the Minister, relates to the subject-matter of this Act.

What an appalling clause to put into a bill. In the opinion of the minister anything in the world that the minister thinks relates to this act therefore relates to this act and is under ministerial control. Couple that with subclause 25(1) which states:

The Minister may issue policy directions to the Agency concerning the exercise of any of its powers, and the Agency shall give effect to directions so issued.

My goodness. What happened to the days of arm's length agencies of government? Here we have a minister who can decide at his or her whim what is connected to the bill and whether it is important or not and then direct the agency with no choice by the agency, no matter whether there is logic for the policy or not, to go ahead and do it or cease doing it, whatever the case may be.

Finally, if we couple that with subclause 25(3) which states quite clearly:

Policy directions issued by the Minister are not a statutory instrument for the purposes of the *Statutory Instruments Act*.

This is the final straw. The government has written into the bill that policy directions which are to all intents and purposes regulations are not even recognized as regulations so we cannot take them to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations to find out if they are even legal.

•(1650)

There has been a ton of talk in this place today about whether embryonic stem cells are better than adult stem cells. My personal feeling is that the most important thing at the moment is the appalling provision in the bill that regardless of what we think about embryonic or adult stem cells, the minister has complete control to do whatever he or she wants.

I want to mention one other subclause in the bill. Subclause 5(1)(f) which deals with prohibitions states:

No person shall knowingly alter the genome of a cell of a human being or *in vitro* embryo such that the alteration is capable of being transmitted to descendants;

If researchers were to find a cure for Parkinson's or heart disease or some other abnormality, would we not want to allow the genome change to be passed to the next generation? Would we not be doing a disservice to prohibit it? This is one area of the bill that disturbs me greatly.

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Maybe the minister made a mistake and did not think about what the implications were of that clause. I hope she will consider amending that clause to ensure that if cures were found they could be passed on to succeeding generations.

I would like to turn to some of the questions that came out of my riding because they are important. Whether embryonic or adult stem cells are better can be argued all day in the House. It can also be argued by scientists

However when we put these issues before the people we represent, we get a number of questions asked. If we were to ban certain types of research in the bill, would we not be kidding ourselves into thinking that this type of research would not happen elsewhere? In other words, would we not just be like the proverbial ostrich, putting our heads in the sand?

Would it not be better to permit wide-ranging research, even that which is banned in the bill, so that we could regulate and monitor it while ensuring that our best researchers remain here in Canada, instead of going to other countries where those types of research are permitted? Are we willing as Canadians to accept the medical benefits which flow from research in other countries, even if that research is of a type banned in Canada? Are we willing to make it a crime for Canadians to travel to another country to take advantage of medical procedures and/or treatments which are banned in Canada under the bill?

How does the bill prevent researchers in other countries from carrying out research, such as the three Middle Eastern women who are supposedly pregnant with clones as a result of the work of an Italian researcher? Are we really advancing the cause of ethics by driving these researchers to work in countries which may not have the same ethics that we do?

Why do some people claim that cloning is unethical? What exactly is it about cloning that makes it unethical? For example, should pro-life groups not be consistent in their support of the right to life and be willing to embrace a cloned person just as they would embrace a person created through natural means?

Here is an example given by the person who posed the last question. Let us say there is a woman, not married, who wants to have a baby. She does not want to go through in vitro fertilization using a donor because she does not want to create a baby with someone else's sperm. She wants her own baby, so she makes the decision that she would like to have a cloned baby. What is unethical about that? I am actually having trouble understanding what is unethical about that. I suspect that the services will be offered in other countries anyway, so a woman in that type of example will just go to the Philippines or to Afghanistan, or somewhere else where she can have it done.

Those are the sorts of questions that have come out of my riding. Those are the concerns I have with the bill. I do hope that the minister at least will take some notice of those concerns.

•(1655)

It was brought to my attention that there was a conference on stem cell research in the Vancouver area in March. Some interesting material came out of that conference. I do not have time at the moment to read it into the record, although I did write one of my

North Shore news articles about it. The two researchers who were speaking at that conference said that it was important for Canadians to understand the science before they make the ethical judgments. That is an important thing for us to consider.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his contribution to the debate. It is important that the kinds of questions that he articulated that come from ordinary Canadians be addressed.

There are certainly far too many that I could possibly help him with now. However, I refer him to a publication called *The Ethics and Science of Stem Cells*. Canadians can get it from their member of parliament or they could see where to get it on my website, www.paulszabo.com.

I know the member is quite active in communicating with his constituents. In his experience has he found whether the kind of information that is currently available would constitute true, full and plain disclosure that would give constituents in his riding the kind of information that they really need to be able to make an informed opinion to let him know?

The member has been involved enough in these matters and probably understands when we say stem cells can probably solve the problem of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's if we use embryonic stem cells. Does he think it is all right to do embryonic stem cell research? We asked that question and 75% of Canadians said yes. What they did not understand were all the other inherent problems, such as immune rejection. Would the member like to comment on the issue of true, full and plain disclosure?

•(1700)

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to comment on that. I am worried that the minister is rushing the bill through. The type of process I want to do in my riding involves full disclosure from both sides of those who argue for and against these issues.

I do not think there will be time the way this thing is moving right now. It concerns me. We have an obligation as parliamentarians to share information with our constituents. Then we should find out whether they agree with our personal views or not.

In that regard I mentioned the convention held in Vancouver. I printed excerpts from that convention in the newspapers so that people would understand some of the things that were there:

That embryonic stem cells can be expanded in vitro while adult stem cells cannot. That embryonic stem cells do not seem to age, while adult stem cells tend to degenerate and fade. That scientists know how to engineer the embryonic stem cell's genome very efficiently and that embryonic stem cells can produce a large variety of specialized cells, both inside and outside the body. That scientists cannot at this time efficiently control the production of mature cells or specialized adult stem cells. The adult stem cells that scientists produce are not quite the same as the cells that are produced with embryonic stem cells. That almost every type of adult tissue contains stem cells but most adult stem cells can only regenerate the tissue from which they are taken.

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I have presented some excerpts from a presentation given by two medical researchers in the Vancouver area. I am willing to bet that there are members who can stand up in the House and quote me from other researchers who contradict that. If that is the case, we are doing our constituents a disservice if we allow the bill to proceed to committee before the summer. We must keep this issue out there to give us time to sort out fact from fiction and ensure our constituents can direct us on what to do.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am seeking some clarification. My colleague from Winnipeg mentioned earlier numerous hypothetical instances. My colleague from the Alliance has just mentioned a situation where an adult woman might want to have her own child without using someone else's sperm. I am rather at a loss as to how that would be possible? Again, relating to the information that the member just read, I would like some clarification as to exactly how the member came up with that idea?

Mr. Ted White: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to clarify the situation. This question came from one of my constituents who gave the example. Because I am not a scientist, I do not know whether it is possible to do that. I assumed it was a cloning type of question where certainly if it is not achievable now, it will not be very long before scientists could implant a cell in a uterus, somehow cause it to turn into an embryo and have a woman clone her own child. That was the basis of the question. I do not pretend to say that it is already possible or even to answer the question of how it could be done.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like a number of other members who have spoken to the bill today, I am doing so with a good deal of reservation and trepidation because inevitably we see ourselves in an atmosphere of gross uncertainty. It is science fiction stuff. I think that is how we see this when we begin to address the ethical and the important public policy issues that are here. We have heard a number of speakers today refer to science fiction scenarios.

What worried me when I reviewed the bill was the lack of courage that I found or more specifically that I did not find in the bill. The point is that the work done by the health committee, and before that the Baird commission, took us further I believe as a society, as a country and as a government than the bill reflects.

The health committee and the commission addressed a number of issues. We heard from various members of the committee who sat through those hearings say that those issues were addressed and discussed extensively. Yes, in a number of cases they began to look toward resolutions that are not found in the bill.

I will come back to some of the areas in which the bill is lacking. Before I do that I want to express a great concern that I and I believe members of my whole party have in the shifting of decision making away from the House and the health committee, elected bodies, to the agency that is envisioned to be established under the bill and to regulations that will be established.

I want to deal initially with the agency in its composition. The provision in the bill simply allows for the establishment of a board of directors who will run the agency. There is some general language that the board of directors should represent various sectors.

One of the matters that was made very clear to the health committee, I understand from its deliberations and the testimony it

heard, was the importance of recognizing that women have a much greater stake in the outcome of the debate and the policies that will flow from it. One would have thought that at the very least the board of directors would have been mandated in the legislation to be composed either primarily of women or at least an equal number of women on the board. That is not provided for at all.

There was a great deal of discussion in the health committee about the potential for some of the research and technology that would flow in this area to be discriminatory, particularly discriminatory for persons with disabilities. I would have thought that we would have looked for mandated representation on the board of directors from the people who suffer from various disabilities. There is no provision for that whatsoever.

Phenomenal ethical considerations will flow from the bill if it becomes law. They have been discussed extensively but probably still not sufficiently to come to a consensus on what the values of the country are on a number of these very important issues.

● (1705)

The provision for some input on an ongoing basis from the academic community that specializes in ethics would have been very important. They could have been representatives on the board or performed a consultative function to bring forward the issues that are evolving. The issues are not fixed and we do not know them all now. They will continue to grow as the technology and the research continue.

This is not to say that the academic community would dictate decisions around ethical considerations. They would simply assess, analyze and bring them before the board of directors who would make some very important decisions and recommendations in other areas regarding regulation.

Another issue that was raised in the minority report from our member was the issue of the very real potential for conflict of interest of people who sit on the board of directors but who may have involvement in research or in the private sector with ownership of some of this technology either at the time or potentially in the future. There are no guidelines with regard to conflict of interest. Because we are in such a new area it is hard at this time to envision all of the possibilities but there should have been some provision for that in the establishment of this agency.

We must appreciate what we are really doing with the bill if it really does become law. We are saying that a good deal of the decision making and discussion will be away from the elected body and will go to the agency, issues like conflict of interest which should have been addressed. This is another area where the bill is wanting.

Although the bill provides for a three year review, the provision states that it can either be a review by the House of Commons or by the Senate. We find it repugnant to have an unelected body conduct the review three years from now. If it comes to a conclusion that changes should be made or new laws passed we will simply get a recommendation. We are seeing too much of that and to see it actually in the bill that it could be the Senate doing the review rather than the House is repugnant to my party. We will oppose that on an ongoing basis.

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I will now turn to some of the other areas the bill does not address. The bill contains no provision to prohibit the commercialization of human genetic material and no proposals to amend that under the Patent Act. In effect we are simply stepping back, which reflects the lack of courage in the bill, and, as we have seen so often from the government, allowing the marketplace to determine whether human genetic material will become patentable.

In some of the analogies we were making on the scientific issue I wondered if we were just opening the door to creating different forms of human life that can be owned? Are we turning the clock back to allow for slavery of a different human life form? It is not addressed in the bill. It would have been very easy to simply say that we would not allow for the ownership and commercialization of human genetic material.

● (1710)

To some degree it is already being determined since there was reference made to the Harvard mouse case. The interesting thing is that human genetic material was implanted into the mouse. We heard a number of examples today of other experiments going on at the present time using human genetic material.

The bill hides its head in the sand, ignores the issue and simply says that nothing will be done about it. The minority report written by our member on the health committee recommended the banning of any ownership of human genetic material. It went beyond that to what I found to be a laudable type of proposal. It stated that in all cases when human genetic material was being used it must be developed for the purposes of the general good of the public. That means it would be controlled by the public sector or at the very least by the non-profit charitable sector.

We saw some of that in the past but we have of course moved completely away from it. Insulin, which was developed by the Connaught Labs, is probably the best example that jumps to my mind.

What we are doing now is simply avoiding the whole issue and opening up the possibility and potential for different types of human life forms to be owned.

The health committee made the recommendation that the precautionary principle be incorporated as the guiding principle in the legislation. The definition it looked at using was the one proposed by the Royal Society of Canada. It essentially says to the person or group proposing or developing any new procedure or technology that the onus is on them to prove that it will not damage our society, and specifically in this case human health.

There is absolutely no reference to that type of concept or principle. The bill certainly does not use the term precautionary principle and makes absolutely no reference to it in any kind of a general way at all.

We are where we have been for some period of time. We saw all sorts of chemicals being dumped into our environment, where if the precautionary principle had been applied these chemicals would never have made it to the market. We are allowing that process to continue in the face of a very clear recommendation from the health committee that the precautionary principle be enshrined in the legislation.

When we talk about the reproduction of humans we cannot help but think of where else we would want to put that principle. It seems that it would be one of the very first priorities for this type of legislation but there is no reference to it whatsoever.

If that had been incorporated a number of the other issues that I already raised would at least have a framework, one could almost argue an ethical framework within which to function. How the agency and the government conducted themselves with regard to regulations would have been guided by that principle and certainly would have left Canada and individuals using these types of technologies in a much more secure position and would have ensured that they were not being taken advantage of. However that is not in the bill.

● (1715)

We have heard about and we recognize the need for legislation. We have heard a number of comments with regard to stem cell research, whether it be the embryo type of research or the adult stem cell research. We have heard from a variety of scientists and medical personnel about the potential for this type of research to advance medical science very dramatically and very significantly to aid in a number of areas, such as Alzheimer's, diabetes and Parkinson's. The list goes on. This research shows great promise, but again the worry is who will determine that it is good research, useful research and beneficial research and that the results will be beneficial for society, versus research that may in fact end in a result that is not responsive to the values of this country. The bill really does little or nothing to deal with that. The government has sidestepped it again. There is that lack of courage again.

As well I want to briefly address the Patent Act. It is quite clear that this is an area that needs further review. We do not know, and I say that with some sense of assurance, how to use the patent type of legislation in this area of human genetic material. We just do not know how to do that.

What I feel very strongly about and can say again unequivocally is that when the Patent Act was designed there were clearly no prospects in view of having to deal with this type of new technology. It is woefully inadequate in dealing with human reproductive technology. As I said earlier, there should be an immediate ban on the use of human genetic material for patent purposes, but it should not stop there. We do need to know how to control the development of this technology. It is my own personal belief that the Patent Act will not do it. We will need a whole new and different approach, not just the framework. It is like trying to use a piece of legislation that developed and evolved over a century or two for something that is so dramatically new that it is not possible to do it. I think that is where we are at with patent legislation when it comes to this type of technology.

We have to take a whole new approach, one in which Canada could in fact be a leader, because we cannot do this just by ourselves. There are no prospects of any of that coming out of the legislation. This has just been shelved, pushed off to the side and ignored.

Government Orders

In conclusion, let me say that there are some very specific things that could be done to change the bill on a short term basis around the agency and the types of regulations that could be passed through the use of the precautionary principle. More important is what we should be doing after that. We should show some vision and some courage and move strongly into this area in the House of Commons and in the general society as the debate continues.

• (1720)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to commercialization. I would like to just note for him section 7.3 of the proposed guidelines of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which states:

Researchers or their institutions with financial interests in the outcome of the stem cell research must disclose this information to the...Oversight Committee, the REB and the prospective research participants [the donors].

It also goes on to say that may not be enough and that:

copies of contracts between researchers, institutions, industry sponsors and any relevant budgetary information must be provided to the...Oversight Committee and the local REB [research ethics board]—

Obviously it is contemplated that there would be commercialization, money changing hands and big business after the donation is made, but the bill specifically prohibits any exchange of money between the donor and any other party. Why is that? Maybe the member could give us an idea of why it is that the donors have to sign off to say that they would not benefit from making their donation whereas others can make money.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I do not have an answer. It seems rather ridiculous that we have this type of situation.

I do not believe in the concept of commercialization of human genetic material. It simply should not be happening. I do not think the CIHR is really prohibiting it. In effect it is allowing for a mechanism to allow it to develop. I will not stand here and suggest that individuals who donate material should somehow benefit from the commercialization of that material. That is just abhorrent. I say no to the individual and to anybody else who wants to commercialize it.

• (1725)

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a question that was raised by someone who appeared before committee on an issue that has not been discussed much. It has to do with donor anonymity.

A woman and her daughter, both of whom are from the city of Nanaimo, appeared before the health committee. They were involved in one of the first donor insemination projects. The daughter is 19 years old. They are involved in a support society related to the whole issue of reproductive technology. This young woman made quite an impassioned plea before the committee on the issue of knowing who her biological parent was.

The bill is about producing children. Would the member agree that children have a right to know? Would he agree that part of their health is knowing where they come from? Would he agree that in fact there is no justifiable reason for having anonymity when Sweden, Australia and other countries have implemented systems that requests disclosure when the offspring requires it?

My second question has to do with the very important issues he raises regarding the patent law. A human being has 30,000 genes and 46 chromosomes. If just one of those genes was changed, would that be patentable? Is the member articulating that we should make changes to the Patent Act to make sure that biological material is not patented?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, It is quite clear that the health committee, after listening to some of the testimony the member referred to, I assume, drew the conclusion that donor anonymity is no longer justifiable, that the primary interest is that of the child and his or her right to know. I always felt very strongly about that during all the adoptions I handled over the years as a lawyer.

Interestingly, and I do not know how many people are aware of this, a number of countries in Europe have never had the provision for anonymity in the adoption process. We can find legislation from the 1910s and 1920s in various countries in Europe allowing for adoptions but never providing anonymity for the parents, without their societies breaking down and with them being able to do the number of adoptions we have done here. That experience should be the same in this case. I believe that is how the health committee came to its conclusions and I would say that I support those conclusions completely.

With regard to the patent law issue, study shows that the patent law was designed in the 1700s and 1800s. Steam engine technology, that type of technology, was beginning back then. Quite frankly, with the exception of some amendments, the legislation has not changed a lot. To use that type of legislation to regulate, control and provide some public infrastructure around human genetic material is impossible. We are so far beyond that with our science that we now need the law to catch up with it, but a different law. I do not think it is possible to change the Patent Act that way. We have to begin to think about this in an entirely different way. I think we are unable to amend the Patent Act or change it in some manner to allow for the legislative infrastructure we need around this type of material.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I would like to inform the member that he still has four minutes left in questions and comments when debate resumes on Bill C-56.

* * *

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY ACT, 2002

The House resumed from May 9, consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, an act to amend certain acts of Canada, and to enact measures for implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to enhance public safety, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the amendment at the second reading stage of Bill C-55.

Government Orders

Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 285)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) | Bergeron |
| Bigras | Blaikie |
| Borotsik | Bourgeois |
| Brien | Cardin |
| Clark | Comartin |
| Crête | Dalphond-Guiral |
| Davies | Desjarlais |
| Desrochers | Doyle |
| Duceppe | Gagnon (Québec) |
| Gagnon (Champlain) | Gauthier |
| Girard-Bujold | Godin |
| Guay | Herron |
| Keddy (South Shore) | Laframboise |
| Lalonde | Lebel |
| Lill | Loubier |
| MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) | Mark |
| Masse | McDonough |
| Ménard | Nystrom |
| Paquette | Perron |
| Picard (Drummond) | Plamondon |
| Proctor | Rocheleau |
| Roy | Sauvageau |
| St-Hilaire | Stoffer |
| Venne | Wasylycia-Leis |
| Wayne — 49 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anders | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Assad | Bagnell |
| Bailey | Barnes |
| Beaumier | Bélangier |
| Bennett | Benoit |
| Bertrand | Bevilacqua |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Boudria |
| Bradshaw | Breitkreuz |
| Brown | Bryden |
| Bulte | Burton |
| Caccia | Calder |
| Caplan | Carignan |
| Carroll | Casson |
| Castonguay | Catterall |
| Cauchon | Chatters |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comuzzi | Copps |
| Cotler | Cullen |
| Cummins | Cuzner |
| Day | DeVillers |
| Dion | Discepola |
| Dromisky | Drouin |
| Duncan | Duplain |
| Easter | Efford |
| Eggleton | Elley |
| Epp | Eyking |
| Farrar | Finlay |
| Fitzpatrick | Fontana |
| Frulla | Gallant |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Goldring | Goodale |
| Gouk | Graham |
| Grewal | Grey |
| Hanger | Harb |
| Harper | Harris |
| Harvard | Harvey |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Hinton |
| Hubbard | Ianno |

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Jackson | Jaffer |
| Jennings | Johnston |
| Jordan | Karetak-Lindell |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Keyes |
| Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) | Knutson |
| Lastewka | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni) | Macklin |
| Mahoney | Malhi |
| Maloney | Manley |
| Marcil | Marleau |
| Martin (LaSalle—Émard) | Mayfield |
| McCallum | McLellan |
| McNally | Meredith |
| Merrifield | Minna |
| Mitchell | Moore |
| Murphy | Myers |
| Nault | Neville |
| Normand | O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| O'Reilly | Obhrai |
| Owen | Pacetti |
| Pagtakhan | Pallister |
| Pankiw | Parrish |
| Patry | Penson |
| Peric | Peschisolido |
| Peterson | Pettigrew |
| Phinney | Pillitteri |
| Pratt | Price |
| Proulx | Rajotte |
| Redman | Reed (Halton) |
| Reid (Lanark—Carleton) | Reynolds |
| Richardson | Ritz |
| Robillard | Rock |
| Saada | Savoy |
| Schmidt | Scott |
| Sgro | Shepherd |
| Simard | Skelton |
| Solberg | Sorenson |
| Speller | Spencer |
| St-Jacques | St-Julien |
| St. Denis | Stewart |
| Strahl | Szabo |
| Thibault (West Nova) | Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) | Tirabassi |
| Tonks | Ur |
| Valeri | Vanclief |
| Whelan | White (North Vancouver) |
| Wilfert | Williams |
| Wood | Yelich — 184 |

PAIRED

Members

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Anderson (Victoria) | Asselin |
| Bachand (Saint-Jean) | Bonwick |
| Byrne | Dubé |
| Fournier | Guimond |
| Lanctôt | LeBlanc |
| Marceau | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| Regan | Torsney |
| Tremblay | Volpe — 16 |

● (1800)

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

* * *

[English]

EXCISE ACT, 2001

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, an act respecting the taxation of spirits, wine and tobacco and the treatment of ships' stores, be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-47.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent in the House that the vote just taken on the subamendment to Bill C-55 be applied in reverse to the vote now before the House, with the exception of the member for LaSalle—Énard and the member for Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant who are not voting on the motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 286)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Alcock | Allard |
| Anders | Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands) |
| Assad | Bagnell |
| Bailey | Barnes |
| Beaumier | Bélangier |
| Bennett | Benoit |
| Bertrand | Bevilacqua |
| Binet | Blondin-Andrew |
| Bonin | Boudria |
| Bradshaw | Breitkreuz |
| Brown | Bryden |
| Bulte | Burton |
| Caccia | Calder |
| Caplan | Carignan |
| Carroll | Casson |
| Castonguay | Catterall |
| Cauchon | Chatters |
| Coderre | Collenette |
| Comuzzi | Copps |
| Cotler | Cullen |
| Cummins | Cuzner |
| Day | DeVillers |
| Dion | Discepolo |
| Dromisky | Drouin |
| Duncan | Duplain |
| Easter | Efford |
| Eggleton | Elley |
| Epp | Eyking |
| Farrah | Finlay |
| Fitzpatrick | Fontana |
| Frulla | Gallant |
| Galloway | Godfrey |
| Goldring | Goodale |
| Gouk | Graham |
| Grewal | Grey |
| Hanger | Harb |
| Harper | Harris |
| Harvard | Harvey |
| Hill (Macleod) | Hill (Prince George—Peace River) |
| Hilstrom | Hinton |
| Hubbard | Ianno |
| Jackson | Jaffier |
| Jennings | Johnston |
| Jordan | Karetak-Lindell |
| Kennedy (Calgary Southeast) | Keyes |
| Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast) | Knutson |
| Lastewka | Lee |
| Leung | Lincoln |
| Longfield | Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands) |
| Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni) | Macklin |
| Mahoney | Malhi |
| Maloney | Manley |
| Marcil | Marleau |

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|---------------------------|
| Mayfield |
| McLellan |
| Meredith |
| Minna |
| Moore |
| Myers |
| Neville |
| O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) |
| Obhrai |
| Pacetti |
| Pallister |
| Parrish |
| Penson |
| Peschisolido |
| Pettigrew |
| Pillitteri |
| Price |
| Rajotte |
| Reed (Halton) |
| Reynolds |
| Ritz |
| Rock |
| Savoy |
| Scott |
| Shepherd |
| Skelton |
| Sorenson |
| St-Jacques |
| St. Denis |
| Strahl |
| Thibault (West Nova) |
| Thompson (Wild Rose) |
| Tonks |
| Valeri |
| Whelan |
| Wilfert |
| Wood |

| |
|--|
| Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska) |
| Bigras |
| Borotsik |
| Brien |
| Clark |
| Crête |
| Davies |
| Desrochers |
| Duceppe |
| Gagnon (Champlain) |
| Girard-Bujold |
| Guay |
| Keddy (South Shore) |
| Lalonde |
| Lill |
| MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough) |
| Masse |
| Ménard |
| Paquette |
| Picard (Drummond) |
| Proctor |
| Roy |
| St-Hilaire |
| Venne |
| Wayne — 49 |

Government Orders

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|---------------------------|
| McCallum |
| McNally |
| Merrifield |
| Mitchell |
| Murphy |
| Nault |
| Normand |
| O'Reilly |
| Owen |
| Pagtakhan |
| Pankiw |
| Patry |
| Peric |
| Peterson |
| Phinney |
| Pratt |
| Proulx |
| Redman |
| Reid (Lanark—Carleton) |
| Richardson |
| Robillard |
| Saada |
| Schmidt |
| Sgro |
| Simard |
| Solberg |
| Spencer |
| St-Julien |
| Stewart |
| Szabo |
| Thibeault (Saint-Lambert) |
| Tirabassi |
| Ur |
| Vanclief |
| White (North Vancouver) |
| Williams |
| Yelich — 182 |

NAYS

Members

| |
|-----------------|
| Bergeron |
| Blaikie |
| Bourgeois |
| Cardin |
| Comartin |
| Dalphond-Guiral |
| Desjarlais |
| Doyle |
| Gagnon (Québec) |
| Gauthier |
| Godin |
| Herron |
| Laframboise |
| Lebel |
| Loubier |
| Mark |
| McDonough |
| Nystrom |
| Perron |
| Plamondon |
| Rocheleau |
| Sauvageau |
| Stoffer |
| Wasylycia-Leis |

PAIRED

Members

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Anderson (Victoria) | Asselin |
| Bachand (Saint-Jean) | Bonwick |
| Byrne | Dubé |
| Fournier | Guimond |
| Lancôt | LeBlanc |
| Marceau | McKay (Scarborough East) |
| Regan | Torsney |
| Tremblay | Volpe — 16 |

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

Private Members' Business

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 6.05 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1805)

[English]

TAX CREDIT

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we in Canada have a rich and wealthy heritage in our youth. It is incumbent on governments at all levels, but particularly at the federal level, of ensuring that education is available to students of all financial ability. I am abhorred by the fact that some students have a lot of mental ability and the motivation but lack the money and are deprived of a necessary education.

It is undoubtedly true that if we were able to take people, particularly from the so-called poorer end of the spectrum, those who are not as well off financially, and help them to become educated, in many instances, that would help those families get off the treadmill of dependency and discouragement which so many people face.

I would endorse any actions that the government would take. I listened to the member who introduced this particular motion. It is a measure which unfortunately is too piecemeal. We should have a measure which will help all Canadians across the board in terms of taking less money out of their pockets and leaving more there so that they could provide for themselves.

I would also be remiss if I did not add that students are a great investment. When I was an instructor, one of the things we did was evaluate the present value of the tax dollars that were earned by a well educated person versus a person who quit after high school. We found out that over a lifetime the incremental amount of additional income tax that was paid yielded a very good return for the taxpayers who invested in the education of young people.

It is a vast benefit to our country to have more people that are well educated, well trained and able to participate not only in our economy, but also in building the standard of living that we have come to enjoy and to expect.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion and to commend my colleague from Fundy—Royal for having the courage to bring forth this kind of motion. It is not something that we would normally expect at this point.

The motion recognizes there is a grave imbalance within Canada with students attending post-secondary education and how they afford to take their education. That imbalance has happened over a number of years, specifically taking a real downturn around 1993, the year the Liberal government came into being as the governing party. It consistently attacked funding and transfer dollars that were

going to the provinces to the point that they went from \$7 billion to 17% lower than they were. As a result we have seen a situation where provinces become cash-strapped.

Hefty tax dollars come into the federal government via gas taxes, income taxes, GST—

An hon. member: Security taxes.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Yes, I am reminded that the government is now collecting literally billions in airport security taxes and is taking in a pile of money from Canadians but not giving back the services it should be providing. It does not give back the transfer dollars to the provinces so that they can provide some of those services as well.

The irresponsible actions of the government are unconscionable. It has failed to accept responsibility to provide the funding for some of those services while it takes a good amount of dollars from Canadians. As a result we have situations where more and more students go into debt but do their darndest to pay it off. The figures are very high as to the percentage of students who will work and work to ensure that they pay off their student loans.

Certainly they pay off their student loans a whole lot better than corporations in Canada pay off what they owe for loans or grants or whatever they may get to say nothing of the money they get purely as a freebie or in tax deferrals. Students have been far more responsible and more active in giving back to Canada in the amount of their student loans but also in providing their different services.

It is unconscionable that for a number of years the Liberal government has continually reduced those dollars and as a result students are in a tougher position. My colleague suggests a tax credit to a maximum of 10% of the principal, per year, for the first 10 years after graduation. Frankly, it is such a minimal amount it would seem that it should be the thing to do. It is worth supporting because it is a step in the right direction.

Ideally what we should have in place is a situation where students are able to access grants for their education. Then for a number of years we know they will be in the country working, paying income tax and paying taxes for everything else. They will give back by providing the services we need.

I think of the number of health care professionals we need. We actually do not need any more lawyers in Canada even though if somebody needs to go into law, so be it. However, we need people in a number of areas such as teaching, health care professionals and different technicians. There is a need for people within the computer industry, computer scientists and researchers.

• (1810)

If dollars were available to provide those students with the education they need, we would be opening up that many more jobs to students going through our school system.

Private Members' Business

I sit on the industry committee and we are dealing with dollars that go into different foundations and research. We recognize that all those dollars are needed. The fact that they do not seem to be going to where they should be is another issue, but they are dollars that are needed. However, what is also needed is an investment in the young people of our country who want to continue their education and give back to the nation.

I listened to numerous witnesses in committee talk about how talented our students are. The key is to be able to get them into the universities. The ones who are there are extremely talented. We would have that many more who would have the opportunity to continue their education by bringing their knowledge and ingenuity. That is equally as important as all those research chairs that we have and the different dollars that go into foundations and research. What is equally important is having the persons there who will expand on what they know and further their education so they can continue on.

It is credible that we have this type of motion but it will not nearly address the needs that are out there for students wanting to continue in post-secondary education.

I want to comment on the student loan program. I represent a riding where most students must travel outside the community to continue their education. We do have some distance education and college programs but there are a number of students who must travel outside the riding to continue their education. There is no way they have the same opportunity to attain that education at the same type of cost as others who live closer to the university areas. There is the increased cost for their residence and for their food. There is no way that is reflected in the dollars they would receive from student loans.

Added to that is a situation where it is almost as if we set up the rules to knock off as many students as we can from being able to access student loans. There could be a family with two or three kids who might be in a situation where they would be attending university around the same time. They might have worked. I have had students who worked for a few years. They make a point of saving and buying their own computer, or they make a point to buy their own vehicle because they would have to travel back and forth 500 to 600 miles to university and then travel around the city to get to their school.

They must have those things. However, if they have spent their summers working away to buy their computer or to buy their car, if they have those things on hand, that is considered against them when they apply for a student loan because they have something of value. It is a detriment. Meanwhile they have worked away at it, trying to provide for themselves.

We have to shake our heads and ask why on earth that would even be considered a part of it. Why would it not be recognized that if students want to attend university in this day and age they should have a computer. It is not easy to access computers in a public library when there are that many students. There are computers at the university but we all recognize more and more that students need one right there with them, especially if they are in specific studies at university.

There are a number of problems out there for students wanting to attend post-secondary education and the Liberal government

presents us with nothing. Actually I am wrong. We were presented with legislation that would not allow those students, just the few who cannot pay their debts, to claim bankruptcy for 10 years. That is longer than anyone else who might be in financial difficulties. There is really nothing from the government to help support students as they try to give back to their country. Most of them want to do that.

We will be supporting the motion and I encourage the government to do a whole lot more to support students.

• (1815)

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to support Motion No. 478 sponsored by my colleague, the hon. member for Fundy—Royal. I was pleased today to note when I appeared with him at a press conference that the motion also has the support of the two largest student groups in the country. We are joined today by Erin Stevenson and Ian Boyko who are chairs respectively of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and the Canadian Federation of Students.

This debate reflects different visions of the future of the country. It raises directly the question, will the federal government take a direct and active role within its jurisdiction in making Canada the best educated country in the world, or will it continue to ignore the crushing burden of student debt which is driving young Canadians not only out of school but also out of our country?

The Liberal government talks piously about the new knowledge economy. Students cannot pay bills with talk. They cannot contribute fully to the knowledge economy with the current cost of education. Access to post-secondary education is becoming one of the crucial and defining issues of modern Canada.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Of course, the solution lies mostly with the provinces, despite the influence the private sector might have. However, the federal government must play a key role and show some leadership, given its unquestionable jurisdiction over tax matters, by setting an example that would urge the other stakeholders to make access to high quality education a national priority in Canada.

[*English*]

The motion would introduce a tax credit based on the repayment of Canada student loan principal to a maximum of 10% of the principal per year for the first 10 years after graduation with a proviso, the proviso being that the individual remains in Canada. This simple initiative helps Canadian students pay down their debt and helps them stay in their country. It addresses student debt and brain drain at one and the same time. It is an area of education where the federal government has both the power to act and, I would argue, the duty to act.

Private Members' Business

This initiative would allow graduate students to pay down their debt more quickly if they remain in Canada as productive taxpaying citizens. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance says that this proposed tax credit is too small to sway a student's career choice. That is not what students in my constituency or those anywhere across the country tell me. That is a bureaucrat's response. It is not the view that we heard in the round table on post-secondary education which my party sponsored last summer nor in our meetings with students across the country.

The government is simply wrong for three reasons. First, any student will say that a tax credit is better than no help at all, which is the Liberal government's response to student debt. Second, this proposal allows a student who stays in Canada to pay off all the principal of his or her Canada student loan. That is a significant help which will encourage young Canadians who are just starting their careers to make their choice to stay in Canada.

Finally, the Liberal government is shortsighted and wrong in its do nothing attitude toward student debt. While the Liberal government is piling up surpluses to look good today, it is forcing the students who will make Canada strong tomorrow to either forgo their studies or move to other countries.

Students today average a debt load of over \$25,000 upon graduation or completion of university. It is estimated that this year alone 350,000 Canadian students will rely on federal loans worth \$1.6 billion to finance their education. Post-secondary education costs have skyrocketed, largely due to the unilateral Liberal cuts to transfer payments which help provinces pay for education.

Since 1993 the Liberal government has cut \$5.3 billion from post-secondary education funding in Canada. One direct result of those federal cuts is that tuition in Canada has increased over 125% in the decade 1990-2000. At the current rate, in 2008 tuition fees will be 226% higher than they were in 1990. That contributes directly to the swelling debt loads of Canadian students.

Despite incentives for parents to save for their children's post-secondary education, many do not or simply cannot. Almost 80% of Canadian parents with household incomes of less than \$30,000 want their children to obtain a university education but only 18.7% are saving for post-secondary education.

My colleague, the hon. member for Fundy—Royal, pointed out that a greater proportion of family after tax income is needed by low income households to cover the cost of tuition and fees. He stated "The lowest quintile of families would have had to set aside 14% of their income in 1990 to pay the cost of university tuition. In 1998-99 that rate increased to 23%."

[*Translation*]

We are not only talking about the lives of students and their families, but also about the role of Canada as a world leader.

Human capital is becoming our most precious resource. The new economy is based on knowledge; it moves as fast as a lightning bolt. Training and human capabilities generate wealth. Education is the key to the future.

● (1825)

[*English*]

The government's own innovation strategy predicts that by 2004 more than 70% of all new jobs created in Canada will require some form of post-secondary education and 25% of new jobs will require a university degree. That is only two years away.

It will not happen unless we help students meet their impossible debt loads. This motion is a first step but there is much more to do.

[*Translation*]

Canada must become a source of sustained excellence through training and education. I fully recognize that education is a provincial area of jurisdiction, but we also need to provide each and every Canadian with the best education possible. Before going any further, the federal government should reaffirm its commitment to respect provincial jurisdiction over this area.

[*English*]

If the federal government wants new scholarship programs, it should work them out co-operatively rather than end-running the provinces with projects like the millennium project that simply broke the trust that is essential to a federation. If Ottawa is to use its spending power, it should do that co-operatively, not unilaterally.

The federal government can provide the leadership. It should co-ordinate either through the Council of Ministers of Education Canada or through first ministers conferences. There is no reason that the first ministers of the country could not be called together regularly to ensure that we have the highest education standards in the world. We could co-ordinate initiatives designed to ensure Canadian competitiveness and Canadian excellence.

The issues of increasing tuition costs, of student debt, of crumbling infrastructure of universities, of access to post-secondary education, of the question of best practices should all be part of the discussion.

[*Translation*]

Instead of showing a total lack of flexibility, the federal government should help the provinces to build an education system worthy of the 21st century. It should urge the provinces to take part in a national debate on these major issues, not so that it can take all the credit, but because it is the best thing to do.

[*English*]

The time to act is now. The motion addresses one aspect of accessibility of post-secondary education, one way to keep the best and the brightest here in Canada. It is a first step in dealing with Canada's competitiveness.

It allows our students to pay down their education debts more quickly. It is an initiative that could be put in place very quickly by the federal government and by the federal government acting alone. It would address the growing concern of Canadians that post-secondary education must be made more affordable.

Private Members' Business

The motion deserves the support of members from all corners of the House. It serves the best interests of the Canadian future. I hope it will be adopted.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be an understatement to say that the federal government recognizes the importance of expanding access to post-secondary education. There are significant benefits to individuals, to the economy and to society.

A cornerstone of the government's efforts is the Canada student loans program. From its inception in 1964 to March 2001 the program has assisted 4.5 million full time students by providing a total of nearly \$20 billion in subsidized loans. I happen to be one of the first ones who entered into the program. I appreciated this assistance. It allows for needy students to access the knowledge, skills and learning they need in order to obtain better jobs and to attain a better standard of living for themselves and for their families.

Not only does the Canada student loans program provide loans to needy students, it also provides additional assistance to students in school and provides help to graduates to deal with the problems of high student debt levels. Many of these measures were key components of the Canadian opportunities strategy announced in the 1998 budget. Specifically the federal government assists those students in school and in financial need by the following approaches.

It provides them with access to Canada student loans of up to \$5,610 in loans per year to help them with their financial needs. Provinces supplement Canada student loans with their own student financial assistance programs.

It fully subsidizes the cost of interest on the loans while the students are in full time studies at an annual cost to the government of nearly \$250 million.

It assists students with special needs through grants to supplement their student loans. There are grants for students with dependants, students with disabilities, high need part time students, and women pursuing doctoral studies. In the recent December 2001 budget the federal government increased by \$10 million a year the assistance available for students with disabilities.

In addition, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, which was established and funded by the federal government, provides bursaries averaging \$3,000 to over 90,000 needy students annually to help reduce the debt they would otherwise incur.

In recognition of the problems caused by increasing student debt loads, the federal government also provides significant additional assistance for graduates experiencing financial difficulties in repaying their student loans, such as the following.

Graduates experiencing financial difficulty in repaying their loans are eligible for interest free periods on their loan for up to 54 months after graduation. During these periods of interest relief, the government pays interest on the loan so that it is kept in good standing.

Also, if the graduate is still experiencing financial difficulty after interest relief has been exhausted, the loan repayment period can be extended from 10 to 15 years, reducing monthly payments by up to 25%. If there are still problems, debt reduction is available. The

maximum amount of assistance is the lesser of 50% of the loan or \$10,000.

In addition, there is a tax credit for interest paid on federal and provincial student debt. On Canada student loans the tax credit reduces the effective interest rate on the loan to slightly above prime.

Together these measures provide an insurance policy for graduates in repayment. They ensure that those having difficulty repaying their student loans will not have to go into default. Those with the most serious problems will have their debt reduced, unlike the member's proposal for a tax credit for principal paid on student loans. These measures target federal assistance to those who need the help the most. These are examples of what we think is smart spending.

In summary, the Canada student loans program currently disburses over \$1.5 billion in loans annually to nearly 400,000 students, and up to \$120 million in Canada study grants. Annually the program assists over 30% of all Canadian post-secondary students.

• (1830)

The cost to the government of the program is expected to be nearly \$925 million in 2002-03. There is little doubt that the Canada student loan program has been an effective way to make post-secondary education more accessible for Canadians.

The cost borne by Canadian taxpayers to expand access to post-secondary education is a necessary investment in Canada's future, one that will pay huge dividends in terms of economic growth, increased productivity and higher incomes for the graduates.

Expanding access to post-secondary education continues to be a priority for the federal government. A key objective of the recently announced innovation strategy is to ensure that all Canadians have access to post-secondary education.

The Minister of Human Resources Development will be consulting with partners and stakeholders to determine how this objective can best be met.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I take exception to a few comments my friend from the Liberal Party of Canada made on the fact that the government had invested \$1.5 billion in education. He did not tell us that it cut \$5.3 billion from post-secondary education.

It is the same old story with the Liberal government. It gives with one hand but takes four times as much back with the other hand. It really has put students who try to excel at a disadvantage.

The motion put forth by the member for Fundy—Royal is excellent and is worth reading again. It says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider introducing a tax credit based on the repayment of Canada Student Loan principal, to a maximum of 10% of the principal, per year, for the first ten years after graduation provided the individual remains in Canada.

He has hit virtually every point in the motion. I will be supporting it. The only thing I might have changed is that instead of would consider, the government would just do it.

Private Members' Business

There is a reason why I think this is so positive. I went to law school at the University of Victoria. A number of my colleagues had significant student loans and it placed them in hardship upon graduation. They had low incomes when they entered the workforce for the first time. They had a difficult time repaying the loans as they had just started their careers. There is no question that their investments in education will be compounded in what they pay in tax dollars over their lifetimes. There is no question the government will get much more back in income tax from them over the years than it would if they were not educated.

It is an excellent motion. What does it do? It gives students a 10% tax credit each year for 10 years for their student loans. It is not a big number item for the government. These people generally are not paying a lot of taxes in their early years of employment anyway. They are in a low tax bracket. They are struggling to make ends meet. They are just getting out of school.

The other point that is good is the individual has to remain in Canada. One of my passions and why I got into parliament is the brain drain. The government will argue that it has a positive brain gain but it is not telling us that we are losing some of our very best and brightest students to our neighbours to the south.

Those very best and brightest students are the future economic engine of this country. They are the future entrepreneurs and CEOs who will create wealth for this country and create permanent lasting jobs that the government cannot, so that we have a strong tax base and can afford the social programs that are so important to us.

The motion goes right to the heart of keeping our graduates in Canada in their early years of life after graduation before they become rooted into a community, before they become involved in a long term relationships and before they become loyal to a company. We need them to stay in Canada upon graduation. We need to give them an incentive to stay here. The motion would do that by giving them a 10% tax credit on a student loan each year for 10 years. By doing that I think we would keep them in Canada.

It brings me back to a story of a mother who came into my riding office last June. There were tears streaming down the poor lady's face. She had just put her son on a plane to the U.S. after he graduated from the University of Victoria. He got a job and was moving there. The opportunities were there for him. She said that she had had dreams of her children and grandchildren growing up in Canada.

• (1835)

She really brought it home to me that her son had a good opportunity to work for a U.S. company, that he would probably meet a girl there, get married and establish a family there. That happens in our younger years. People become loyal to a company, and that is where he will establish his roots.

The point I am trying to make is that it is critical that we get their roots established in Canada in the first 10 years of their employment so that these people can become the economic backbone of this country. We have to keep the very best and brightest here.

I applaud the member for Fundy—Royal for bringing this motion before the House. It is an incredibly important one that should not be overlooked. It is one of the passions that got me into parliament.

We could tweak this when it gets put into legislation to make it stronger, but by and large it hits the high points by giving a tax credit. Once a person graduates, 100% of their student loan could be forgiven over 10 years. In that 10 year time frame these students would likely set roots in Canada, become loyal to companies and make this country prosper.

I believe right now that the average student loan owed by students when they graduate is around \$25,000. I did not have a student loan when I went to school. After working for 10 years, I went back to school on my savings. However many of my fellow students had significant student loans when they were going to law school. They struggled to make ends meet in those early years on very modest incomes. This motion would go a long way to encouraging them to get into the workforce. They only get 10% a year for the first 10 years. There is no point in waiting. This encourages them to get into the workplace early and encourages them to stay in Canada. They will obviously become taxpayers.

I do not look at this as a cost to the Canadian government, but rather as more of an investment. If we keep these people in Canada now, over their lifelong career they will pay a lot of taxes and provide a lot of jobs, thereby providing to our economy.

I encourage all members to support this motion. If this motion passes tomorrow, I hope the government will act on it quickly, unlike other motions passed in the House that do not see the light of day.

I look around in the House right now and I see a number of pages, all first year students at one of the universities in Ottawa. I have no doubt in my mind that if some of them do not have student loans now they will have when they graduate.

This is a very well thought out motion. I spoke with the member for Fundy—Royal and told him of a similar bill I thought of that would have done the same thing over a five year period. I cannot stress the importance of giving our youth, our most important resource in society, every chance to succeed.

Many youth struggle to get into university. Imagine if we could keep these people in Canada once they get out of university. Their roots would be established here and they would become our economic engine in the years ahead and create meaningful lasting jobs. They would become the backbone of our economy. It is critical that we keep them here and this would be an excellent start. This would be an investment in our country's future. It would not be a cost to keep them here. It would be a very positive move.

I encourage all members of the House to support the motion of the member for Fundy—Royal to create a tax credit for students in the first 10 years upon graduation. It is an excellent opportunity. We could then push the government to hopefully bring this from a motion to legislation before the House. We would all be better off for it.

Private Members' Business

• (1840)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a couple of comments. First, I thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for his intervention. It sounds like maybe he wants to renew his old acquaintance with the Progressive Conservative Party. He is always welcome. He recognizes talent when he sees it. He certainly recognizes the ability of members to put forward legislation that should be accepted by the House.

I would also like to congratulate the member for Fundy—Royal for dealing with an issue that is so very important in Canadian society today and so very important to the hundreds of thousands of university and college students who recognize that there is a serious problem. Unfortunately they also recognize that the government is doing absolutely nothing to resolve it.

Therefore it takes someone like the member for Fundy—Royal to take the initiative to bring forward some really good, solid ideas that the government could latch on to and say, "Isn't it absolutely wonderful that we now have the ability to do something to assist these students". What do the government members do? I heard some comments from members on the government side.

I was here when the member for Etobicoke North rose and talked about how this motion should not be supported. One excuse he used was that we should not be rewarding individuals by discharging their debt.

That totally amazes me. I hope all students were listening to that, that we should not reward them by discharging their debt. We should be rewarding them for going to school and for making sure this country has properly educated people in place. We should be rewarding them for staying in this country and putting forward their ability so that we can generate an economy that will maintain our standards.

However, what does the government do? It says that it is doing enough, that it is wonderful and that we should not listen to anyone else who has ideas. The member for Etobicoke North said that we have the millennium scholarship fund. Whoop-de-do. The millennium scholarship and \$1.50 will buy a cup of coffee. It is not doing what is necessary right now to assist students.

What else did the hon. member say? He said that there was enough assistance right now from the government. If students are so good and because of their abilities they get scholarships, the government taxes the scholarships. Not only is the government not assisting students to go to school, not only is it not assisting them in discharging their debt, but now it is charging students more taxes because of their ability and initiative. That is absolutely scandalous.

Mr. Herron: It punishes performance.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: It is awful. It punishes performance, as the member for Fundy—Royal said.

Let me say a couple of things. First, yes, we are a resource based country. However we recognized a long time ago that the real value we have in this country is the value that is between our ears and the

students' value between their ears. Therefore we insist and encourage students to get their education so they can be a contributing member of society. However there is a reality.

The reality is something that the government is sticking its head in the sand and trying not to realize. The reality is those students have accrued huge debt to invest in themselves. It is an investment in themselves and I appreciate that but should we not assist them? We have heard in the debates here that tuition fees in this country have gone up by 125% over the last 10 years. They are going up more every day and will be somewhere around 200% by the year 2008, over the last 10 to 12 years. That is only part of the cost that students incur when they go to school.

Students in my community, if they come to my community, come from some place else. There is housing, food, transportation and clothing. Those are the expenses of students while they go to school. These costs on average generate about \$10,000 a year in costs. The tuition is a major portion of that but certainly the other costs are also major.

• (1845)

In order for them to pay those costs they incur debt. That debt over a four year degree could be somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$40,000. I had an opportunity to go to a presentation from Canadian Bankers Association, which is also concerned about the debt students are accumulating. If we run the numbers on that \$40,000, it effectively means a \$500 monthly payment for the student. That is a mortgage payment for a lot of people. That mortgage, without a house, as has been mentioned, is something that will go on for a number of years. All we are saying is let us help them with that \$40,000 debt. The suggestion of this party and the member for Fundy—Royal is to allow them to use 10% of that debt as a direct write-off to their income taxes over 10 years, as long as they reside in this country. They will be much the better for it.

There would be a very small capital cost for the government. This is a very good, solid, sensible idea. The government speakers against the motion are saying that the government already is doing enough and therefore we should not listen to anyone else.

In fact, everyone in the House should be voting for the motion. I would encourage them to do so, and when they do so to think about the students, the people they actually are helping with this motion.

• (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I thank the hon. member for his co-operation. The time provided for debate has expired. Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of Motion No. 478 are deemed put and a recorded division is deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, May 22 at the end of question period.

It being 6.52 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.52 p.m.)

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