



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 190 • 1st SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, May 23, 2002**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 23, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34 (1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association to the second part of the 2002 ordinary session of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France from April 22 to 26, 2002.

\* \* \*

• (1005)

### PETITIONS

CANADA POST

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by rural mail couriers. These people often earn less than minimum wage.

They are calling for their working conditions, which are reminiscent of another era, to be adjusted.

[*English*]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I would like to present two petitions in the House today.

Both of the petitions, signed by hundreds of people, call on the Government of Canada to state that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by the clear majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way which makes it clear that such exploitation of children will be met with swift punishment.

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the reason why 69% of Canadians polled in a recent survey viewed the “federal political system” as corrupt is because Ministers of this government have failed to make public their secret Code of Conduct, have broken their own Liberal Red Book promises such as the one to appoint an independent Ethics Counsellor who reports directly to Parliament and have failed to clear the air over allegations of abusing their positions to further their own interests and those of their friends.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I stand in this place to speak to this topic. It is a great Canadian tragedy that a government that promised so much has delivered so little to so few, unless the deliveries were to friends and cronies, and then too much was delivered.

Yes, we remember only too well the words of the Liberal Party leader in 1990. He said, and I quote from the February 2 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen*, “I am not interested in patronage because I am a Liberal”. Those words haunt us today. Well they haunt him more than they haunt us but we should all remember them.

Let us look at this spotless record since 1993. Since assuming office the Prime Minister has sent more grateful Liberals to the Senate than Canadians thought existed. When the Senate was full, he outdid the previous prime minister by appointing them to every public post he could unearth or create. Membership always has had and still has its rewards.

The Prime Minister has established a patronage record of which all Liberals can be proud, a record unlikely to be surpassed by any prime minister in this millennium.

### Supply

Let us go back to May 3, 1976, and *Maclean's* magazine. When a constituent was awarded a road construction contract over a lower bidder from outside Saint-Maurice, the then Liberal cabinet minister, now Prime Minister, said "In all honesty, I can say I would prefer that the contract go to a fellow in my own riding".

What do you say, Mr. Speaker, after you say you are not sorry?

Why should he express regret? He has filled so many Liberal hearts with joy and their pockets with dollars that only a bitter individual would not be filled with self-satisfaction. If we think about how Santa Claus feels once a year, we get an idea of how the Prime Minister feels every day of the year.

When the RCMP investigate grants, including many in the Prime Minister's riding, he told the *Montreal Gazette* on March 16, 2000, "It is not allegations of big fraud here".

There is big fraud and there is little fraud and no prime minister has time to waste on the small stuff as evidenced by those words.

To put this another way, the Prime Minister was assuring us that he never sweats the small stuff.

Let us move quickly to the present after establishing the Prime Minister's credentials on this subject. I repeat that it pains my heart to have to stand in this place to talk about this cornucopia of corruption. I am sure Canadians regret as much as the Prime Minister that his government is incompetent even when it comes to corruption but they certainly are skillful when it comes to cover-up.

Let us talk about the recent past. Groupaction Marketing, Groupe Everest and Lafleur Communications Marketing are three Montreal firms that have thrown close to one-quarter of a million dollars at the Liberal Party since 1997. They beat out six other firms for big, fat, juicy government contracts. How much did the other six give the Liberals? Only about a quarter of that amount. Those firms did not know the Liberal number one rule of business: "You have to give it to us if you want to get it from us".

How much did these successful firms get in government business? They received \$158 million in government contracts. It was a terrific return on a \$250,000 investment in the Liberal Party.

Groupaction, a corporate love child of the Liberals, received \$550,000 from public works in early 1999 for an advisory report on government sponsorship opportunities which vanished into thin air. Segments of it were found, according to Groupaction, and these segments were turned over. However there are suspicions that the contents were nearly identical to the contents of another Groupaction report commissioned in late 1999 for \$575,000. We are curious. Is that an environmentally friendly approach to pork-barrelling? Do the Liberals now simply tell their contractors to recycle the previous paperwork?

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I got so excited I threw my notes on the floor, but they did not disappear and we did not pay \$575,000 for them.

Now there is the present ambassador to Denmark, the jolly Mr. Gagliano. Why would he not be jolly? He did what the Prime Minister wanted him to do. What was that? The Prime Minister has said that it had to do with saving the country. Following that

Herculean task, Mr. Gagliano was given Denmark as his reward, either that or it was a safe haven.

• (1010)

Former public works minister Gagliano however was accused of meddling in the affairs of Canada Lands Company, a federal agency that supposedly reports to parliament.

Jon Grant, the former chairman of the company, bravely stepped forward with several allegations, including that the minister insisted Canada Lands hire one of his friends and key political organizers. Mr. Grant said he was told everything outside Quebec was the responsibility of Canada Lands but anything inside Quebec was the domain of the minister. It sounds like an old song. The minister pointed at a map of Canada and sang, "This part belongs to Daddy".

The Prime Minister is no stranger to political lobbying. He admitted he called the president of the Business Development Bank of Canada whose job existed at the Prime Minister's pleasure. The phone call was about loans to a former business associate of the Prime Minister, loans that did not meet the normal policy or criteria of the bank. The loan was granted after the Prime Minister applied sufficient pressure. The former president of the bank has testified under oath that when he wanted to call in the bad loan he was suddenly out of work.

I hear the Prime Minister saying that is not true. We have a man who has sworn under oath that this is what happened. Who lowered the boom? Perhaps when he rises to speak the Prime Minister might want to enlighten us on that.

I am reminded of the words of Shakespeare, and I know William would not mind if I paraphrase, "The evil that men do lives after them. The good is oft interred with stories about their loans", or words to that effect.

Who can forget the grants? The auditor general has confirmed that the Prime Minister announced a \$600,000 grant in his riding just prior to the 1997 election that had not been approved by the department. This is the auditor general saying that the Prime Minister got the grant without having it approved by the department. That business has since gone bankrupt, much like all those promises of integrity and honesty and how the Liberals would govern.

Then there was the grant to Auberge Grand-Mère, a hotel beside a golf course in which the Prime Minister held an interest, contrary to HRDC guidelines. An e-mail from a government employee explained that the Prime Minister had already promised it and added, "I would like to give another answer, but I have no choice". I wonder where he is today, possibly Baffin Island.

It pains us on this side of the House to have to review this long list of government incompetence and waste and ethically challenged decisions. It pains Canadians too, obviously, because 70% of them think that the government is corrupt. How very painful that must be for Canadians that when they hear the word Liberal, the first word that comes to mind is corruption.

*Supply*

We cannot forget the \$25,000 the finance minister returned. What Canadians are unable to grasp is the logic in this. If there was nothing wrong in accepting the \$25,000, why did the finance minister send it back? Was \$25,000 too trifling an amount? How much money is being sent to other leadership hopefuls by firms doing business with their departments or any other departments of government?

All the work we have done on access to information trying to find out the conversations between the Minister of Finance and the ethics counsellor has come back saying that there is nothing recorded, just conversations I guess.

The sponsorship programs are another fiscal nightmare. Who knows how many millions have been spent sponsoring how many events in how many locations in Quebec? We do not have the answers, but we do know, and the Prime Minister should admit it, that all of that money was shovelled out in the electoral interest of the Liberal Party or as payback to good old friends of the good old Liberal Party.

We were fascinated to learn that the Canadian sportsmen's shows, in existence for over 40 years, did not get a single penny from the government, although they staged shows in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Quebec and Montreal. Yet in Montreal, Le Salon National du Grand Air got according to one media report \$1.3 million. That show is run by Groupe Polygone. Who once worked for Groupe Polygone? The present minister of immigration who is also the senior pork barrel minister for Quebec. Why did the older, bigger and more established show get nothing? It was not told there was sponsorship money available. Why was it not told? Only a cynic would suggest it was because it never contributed to the Liberal Party.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** You are a disgrace. You should be ashamed of yourself for saying stupid things like that.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** There is the minister saying we should be ashamed of ourselves. The government should be ashamed.

This is a firm that has been in business for 40 years and did not get one penny from the government to support what it was doing in Canada. The friends of the government did and they did not ask. It is amazing that they did not ask. However lots of other people did.

• (1015)

The national sportsmen's show spokesman was reduced to a whisper when told the Groupe Polygone show received over a million. He said individuals who give them \$75,000 for a full sponsorship get their name and logo plastered from here to eternity. He could not imagine where all the logos, flags, pictures of the Prime Minister and perhaps pictures of Alfonso Gagliano would be hung for that kind of money.

The government of Quebec kicked in \$25,000 to that show and received as much exposure as the Liberals received for \$1 million. That is what Canadians are upset about. We have nothing to be ashamed of on this side of the House for bringing that kind of thing to the floor of the House.

For its money Quebec got two booths, newspaper ads and a plastic pool where kids could try to catch fish. Groupe Polygone obviously

caught a fish, the species we call the federal Liberal sucker. What did the Liberals get? An aboriginal booth and a logo display for \$1 million. There is no comparison. That is why we need an independent inquiry to look into this mess. Those questions have to be asked.

Let me touch on the subject of volunteer firefighters in Canada. It has always been a great method of the Liberal government to attack the opposition because we also ask for grants sometimes for our constituents, which is part of our job as MPs. The volunteer firefighters are brave, selfless individuals who contribute much to many communities around the world.

I wrote a letter in support of their request for matching funds for the sponsorship program because they are having an international gathering on Vancouver Island. Some 3,000 of them from around the world and about 3,000 from Canada are meeting at a convention. My letter of support was hauled out and used as evidence by the Deputy Prime Minister that all members of parliament tried to solicit funds for events in their ridings.

The Liberals are complete strangers to British Columbia. They did not realize that my riding is on the mainland and not on Vancouver Island. It is called an island for another reason, and it is one. It is an insult to the volunteer firefighters across Canada and around the world. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister should apologize. The firefighters did not get any money but they are bringing lots of people here.

**Hon. John Manley:** I will apologize on your behalf for the double standard.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** There is no double standard. The difference here is that we are talking about people getting grants from the Liberal government and kicking back funds to the Liberal Party for the money they received. We are not getting one penny back from the international firefighters. We are doing it on behalf of Canada. That is the difference between that party and this side.

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

• (1020)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Order, please. It seems that the subject at hand is quite popular. We want to hear everyone who wishes to speak on this matter and anyone who wishes to will have the opportunity to do so. In the meantime let us listen to each other, let us co-operate and let us have a bit of decorum.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, the truth does hurt and I can understand why they have to yell a little.

Then there is the present Minister of Public Works and Government Services who has, like Quasimodo, been muttering "sanctuary, sanctuary" as a certain cheque seemed to slip like greased lightning from hand to hand until it wound up soggy from sweat and laundering in the hands of a priest. Members will recall the words of the heritage minister in *Hansard* of September 1, 1988:

—this has to be an unbelievable joke on the part of a Government whose recent history spells corruption of people who sought to take full advantage of the system.

*Supply*

Those were stinging words back then and the sting still remains.

Let me repeat that this has to be an unbelievable joke on the part of a government whose recent history spells corruption of people who sought to take full advantage of the system. That is what we are talking about today. That is what the heritage minister was talking about back in those days when the government of that day was abusing its power.

That is why we brought the subject up again in the House. That is why the auditor general's report is asking for an RCMP investigation. We are doing our job. That is why I quoted the heritage minister.

**Hon. Sheila Copps:** You are a disgrace.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** She yells across that we are a disgrace. I am proud to be a disgrace if that is what she thinks it is because I want to ensure that the people of Canada find out why there are kickbacks from the government.

The public works minister must wince when he recalls those words of his rat pack partner. How many Canadians winced when they learned the Liberals were using the church as an avenue of recourse and refuge to solve their little cheque crisis?

I saw the piece of paper that came out yesterday with the date of when the cheque was written and how many hands it passed through. Is it not amazing how it ends up in the hands of a priest a few weeks later and no one knows whether it has been cashed or not? It is reprehensible behaviour and tantamount to blasphemy to launder money that way.

How low will the government go? There is no answer. The Prime Minister personally demonstrated time and time again that the bar could be stepped over. Is it any wonder that his cabinet ministers were not aware of the existence of any bar? Unless and until he rises to announce that a committee of the House will be assigned the role of recruiting a full time ethics commissioner who will report only to the House, Canadians will continue to believe he does not know that the definition of transparency does not include the word opaque.

We have asked many times to have an ethics commissioner who would report to the House of Commons, not a counsellor who writes answers for the Prime Minister in question period. We want someone who reports to parliament, who is totally independent of everyone in parliament but reports to all of us.

We are heavy hearted. We are saddened that no matter what the Prime Minister announces when he stands to speak, the reputation of himself and his party is tarnished so badly that not even a gallon of Brasso will bring back the lustre.

I will leave him with the thoughts of William Shakespeare, and again I paraphrase. The evil that men do lives after them. Whatever good they intended is interred with stories about loans, grants, untendered contracts, barrels of pork, patronage appointments, toothless ethics counsellors, wastage of hundreds of millions of tax dollars through Liberal friendly firms, broken promises, hypocrisy, \$10,000 a head meet the Prime Minister Montreal weekends—

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** It was \$25,000 for Stockwell Day last year.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** —last minute Hail Mary guidelines on ethical behaviour, golf courses in Quebec, canoe museums, Auberge Grand-Mère, and helpful priests.

The Prime Minister yelled across \$25,000. We have never charged \$25,000 a ticket for anything. The most we have ever charged in this party is \$2,500 for a leader's dinner. Perhaps it was a table for 10.

It cost \$10,000 a head to meet with the Prime Minister on a weekend. I think an old age pensioner gets a little more than that in a whole year. A soldier's widow gets about \$1,400 a month. To pay \$10,000 to meet with the Prime Minister is unacceptable in this country.

The list goes on: Alfonso Gagliano, untendered contracts to handle publicity for francophonie games, \$25,000 sent back by the finance minister, fundraisers for the heritage minister, and buying access to the Prime Minister for a mere \$10,000 each.

• (1025)

We can list conflicts of interest, questionable ministerial ethical behaviour, leadership fundraising activities and memories of a rat pack that once talked only about integrity in government, not to forget a Prime Minister who once made many promises, none of which have been kept. The House has demanded many times that we have an independent ethics counsellor who reports to the House.

It is amazing to watch the minister for heritage, who is yelling across the floor. When she was in opposition she climbed over tables to get at the government because it was doing things that were not correct or proper at that time. It is our duty to bring these issues up so Canadians can have a chance to have them investigated properly.

Why can we not have an independent ethics counsellor to report just to members of parliament? Why can we not have an independent inquiry into this mess so Canadians can get to the bottom of it?

We look forward to hearing the Prime Minister speak this morning. We hope he will bring to Canadians some of these issues so we can start to clean up this corruption in government.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I might, I would like to ask the hon. gentleman a question. It seems to me that the allegations being made are an attempt to perhaps hide some of the problems that have arisen on that side of the House. When members start casting aspersions, as these people have done, it reflects upon all of us. I would suggest that one of our members may have climbed over a table but she did not slide under it the way those people have.

I would like to ask the member to respond to the flip-flop on pensions. They came to the House saying that they would reject the pension. They got here, went right up to the trough and dove in. I would like to ask him about not accepting a car and driver for the leader and not accepting Stornoway as the principal residence.

It seems to me that if there are problems of ethics, frankly they are on that side of the House and they are hurting the reputation of this place and every member in it.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** What about Stornoway?

*Supply*

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister yells across “What about Stornoway?”. I was pleased to live in Stornoway like most other opposition leaders since Confederation. The new leader of our party is pleased to live in Stornoway.

The Leader of the Opposition, like the Prime Minister, has a driver but he does not have nine police cars following him around because he does not need them. He lives in a great, free country where Canadians respect him.

They talk about burying things under tables—

• (1030)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It is very difficult to hear the hon. member who has the floor. I know that the debate generates a lot of enthusiasm but we do have to hear the person who has the floor. Perhaps if fewer people spoke at the same time we would be able to do so.

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, let us get down to the realities of this. The opposition brought up Shawinigate. Out of that there was a police investigation. Two people were charged and convicted. That happened because that side of the House was involved.

This side of the House brought up the issue before us now just a few weeks ago. The minister of public works called in the auditor general after a lot of pressure from the opposition, and now we have a police investigation. That is the job of the opposition.

When I was elected in 1997, I said I would take my pension. I am just like every member in the House. I said before that if the member for Vancouver Centre deserves a pension, then this member of the House deserves a pension. We all should have the same pension. That has always been my philosophy.

They really get upset over there because we are bringing up issues that police are now investigating. That would not be happening without the issues that are going on over there. The opposition is doing its job. We are proud of the job we have done and we look forward to the next few weeks in the House.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the House would agree that the issue the opposition has raised today is an important question to address for all Canadians.

I remember some years ago someone told me that the role of the opposition was to deliver blows that would tenderize a turtle. We do have a presumption of telling the truth in this place. In the motion the corruption allegation refers to the federal political system. However the record will show that the questions of the opposition have always referred the 69% to the Liberal government, not to the federal political system. This is part of the opposition spin.

Members of parliament come to this place to represent the companies and constituents of their area and lobby very fiercely. In fact the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast recently wrote to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services to praise the sponsorship program and to ask sincerely for support for a donation or a sponsorship in his own riding. We understand that is part of the process.

We also have allegations of kickbacks. Yet all members well know that the political donation system is an open and transparent system

and there is a public record that shows everyone who has given any money to the public system.

With those examples as backdrop of how we have the presumption of telling the truth in this place, we also have to have the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. Will the member please rise in his place and say that he respects those principles?

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, we all respect those principles and we respect each other in the House. The fact of the matter is that even a Liberal poll done last week showed that 45% of the people think the government is corrupt. Yes, 69% of people think political people are corrupt because of the type of action that is taking place here right now. That is why we brought up the issue.

I quote the Minister of Canadian Heritage again when she said:

This has to be an unbelievable joke on the part of a Government whose recent history spells corruption of people who sought to take full advantage of the system.

That is what this is all about. Those were Tories. There was no question about that and the minister brought it up. I am saying the same thing is happening right now. That is why we want an independent ethics counsellor in the House. We have been asking for it. If we had that, it would solve a lot of these initial problems because we would have someone to be on the look out.

We also want an independent inquiry to look at this whole issue, which is exactly what those same rat pack members on that side demanded when they were in opposition. They wanted to go after a Tory government that they felt was corrupt at the time. We are just asking for the same things they thought were just fine to ask for when they were in opposition. They can call us all the names they want. We will not stop asking.

New issues crop up every day and they will continue to crop up because the opposition is doing a great job and we intend to keep up that good job.

• (1035)

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to the speech of my colleague, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast. I noticed at the end of it that the industry minister was breathing a sigh of relief because he was not mentioned in the speech. I wonder if my colleague might recall that the industry minister had an assistant who was sent off to Winnipeg on unexplained business and the cost of the airfares was paid for but for some reason the assistant never made a single expense claim.

When we tried to get to the bottom of it a few days ago in question period, the industry minister just kept saying that only the valid expenses were claimed. Yet he could not explain why an assistant on government business would go all the way to Winnipeg with his airfare paid for but not make a single other expense claim. There was nothing for hotels, meals nor paperwork, nothing at all.

*Supply*

Would my colleague for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast place that sort of situation in the same list of corruption that he was talking about earlier today?

**Mr. John Reynolds:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for North Vancouver for bringing up a very good point. As he knows we only have 20 minutes to make a speech on supply days. If I had two hours, I could have brought up the Minister of Industry and other issues in the House. I could have brought up the Prime Minister's approval of the purchase of two jets for he and his cabinet while the armed forces in this country are going without helicopters. We cannot even keep troops in Afghanistan because we do not have enough people in the armed forces. I could have brought up a lot more issues, but time only allows so much so we picked out the most obvious cases.

I thank the hon. member for bringing up that issue. There are a lot of other issues we could talk about in the House. The motion will go on all day. I am sure that colleagues of mine in other parties will talk about some of these issues during that time.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I could talk about what the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast said, but Lester B. Pearson said that one day the ones who threw mud would lose ground.

I have known this member for a long time and I visited him when he was the speaker in the legislature in B.C. I always considered him to be a great gentleman. I even raised money for him in his riding. However I do not know what happens to a member of parliament who becomes a reformist or an Alliance member. He is not the gentleman that I knew before, but I will not add anything more.

I am pleased to take part in this important debate because it is necessary to bring some context to issues which rightly concern members of this House and all Canadians and because of the need to tone down the rhetoric, to deal with the facts and to show mutual respect. Public life is a difficult calling, and I have been a public person for 39 years, but it is a noble life.

I am certain that we all agree that none of us are in this House of Commons for reasons other than a desire to serve our country and our constituents to the best of our ability. We are certainly not here for the perks, unless very long working hours and working weeks are considered perks. We are not here for the money. Most of us could make more in the private sector with less work and a lot more family time. I believe that what I just said about members of parliament applies in the same way to the Public Service of Canada.

Having said that, none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Our electors know that. In my case my wife knows that and reminds me of it once in a while. I believe that we all make our mistakes in good faith. Our motives on all sides of the House are the right ones. All of us are committed to the public interest and to the public good. We can disagree and we can debate. However let us do that in ways that increase respect for our democratic institutions, not in ways that call them into disrepute.

In an organization as large as the Government of Canada, mistakes are made every day. They always have been and always will be. Governments should be judged not on whether mistakes are made but on how problems and mistakes are identified and how they are corrected.

We on this side of the House have every reason to be proud of our record. I am proud that we gave the auditor general the ability to issue four reports a year rather than one. I am proud that we expanded the role of internal departmental audits, that we publicize them and put them on web sites. I am proud that we publicly identify and correct administrative errors.

Because I have been around a long time, I knew that increasing the amount of audit activity would make question period a lot more interesting for the opposition and for the media. This is what a government of integrity does. It publicly identifies problems and fixes them. This is not the essence of scandal. It is the essence of good government. We have raised the bar and I am proud of it.

● (1040)

[*Translation*]

Integrity and public trust are the foundation of democratic government. Since we took office in 1993, we have introduced a conflict of interest code for public office holders. We have introduced the post of ethics counsellor, the first such office to be created in any Commonwealth country. And we have made substantial reforms to the Lobbyists Registration Act, increasing transparency and casting the light of day onto the lobby industry.

I have spoken to this House many times with pride about the record of ministerial probity and high standards of integrity of our government. The world has also taken notice. Since issuing its first report in 1995, Transparency International, the world's leading international organization dedicated to rooting out corruption in government and business, has ranked Canada as the G-8 nation with the lowest level of perceived corruption. And among the seven best in the world.

But I will not be satisfied until we are at the very top. Am I proud of our record? Without a doubt. Is it perfect? Of course not. Have we done enough? No. We must do better. And we will do better.

Indeed, two weeks from now, I will set out a bold eight-point plan of action. Today, let me set out the key elements of the plan we have been working on.

First, for the first time ever, we will make public the guide for ministers and secretaries of state, which outlines the standards of ethical conduct that should guide them. This guide has been around since 1993.

Second, we will be releasing revised rules for ministerial dealings with crown corporations. They will clarify the relationship between ministers, MPs and crown corporations when dealing with constituency matters.

Third, I will be making public guidelines to govern ministerial fundraising for personal political purposes. These will establish rules and procedures that will ensure that such fundraising causes no real or apparent conflict of interest.

*Supply*

Fourth, beginning, this fall, I will table the first annual report of the ethics counsellor to parliament on the range of his duties and activities. And the ethics counsellor will be available to a parliamentary committee to be examined on his report.

• (1045)

[*English*]

For the fifth point in our action plan, in consultation with the opposition parties and drawing inspiration from the Milliken-Oliver report, it is our intention to proceed in the fall with a stand-alone code of conduct for members of parliament and senators.

Sixth, following up on the work of the industry committee of the House, in the fall we will table changes to the Lobbyists Registration Act to enhance clarity, transparency and enforcement.

Seventh, in the fall we will propose fundamental changes to the legislation governing the financing of political parties and candidates for office.

Eighth, we will introduce measures that will strengthen the ability and responsibility of senior public servants to exercise propriety and due diligence in the management of public funds.

The reason for the action plan is to better serve the public, but let us put some of this into perspective. We spent weeks and months in the House early in the year 2000 debating an internal audit of Human Resources Development Canada. Yes, we found some bad record keeping and some poor administration, but we also found deep philosophical disagreements, as we remember, as to the role of government in promoting literacy, in helping the disadvantaged and people with disabilities, in helping students to find summer jobs, et cetera. The opposition was opposing this. We were doing that for the poor and the weak in this society.

Despite the excess of rhetoric, there was no scandal, there was no "shovelgate". There were administrative mistakes, which have been fixed. Public money went to good purpose.

Today we are debating a sponsorship program. If mistakes were made, we will correct them. If money was improperly spent, we will try to recover it. If anyone broke the law, that person will have to face the courts.

Indeed, I have asked the President of the Treasury Board, even before the auditor general reports on the past, to make recommendations for the future on how sponsorship, advertising and polling could be better managed to ensure value for money and to make these recommendations before the House returns in September.

Let me speak about the motives behind the program. Quite frankly, we had a close call in the referendum of 1995. Right after the referendum we took urgent action on many fronts. We passed a resolution on distinct society. We passed a law concerning constitutional vetoes. We transferred control of labour market training to most of the provinces. I brought in new ministers from Quebec. We made reference to the supreme court on the issue of secession. We passed the Clarity Act.

Yes, we undertook to raise the visibility of the Government of Canada in Quebec.

It was an urgent situation, we acted with a sense of urgency, and with urgent actions mistakes can happen. It appears that some mistakes were made and we are determined to correct them, but all in all I think it is fair to say that thanks to the range of actions we took Canada is a much more united country today than it was in October 1995 and of course a much stronger country economically. Just ask Moody's of New York, which has given us the best overall rating because of the strength of our economy and it noted that it is precisely because of the strength of our unity.

• (1050)

Canadians take great pride in our standing in the world. We are known throughout the world for having governments of integrity, for having a private sector of integrity and for being a people of integrity. Clearly we have raised the bar. Canadians expect and demand the very best we can give them. Let us now work together to raise the bar even higher.

Winston Churchill once said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others. I have been in the House since 1963. I love debate, I welcome challenges and I am very proud to defend our record, but I am humble enough to admit that mistakes have been made and I am determined enough to correct them.

However, I ask of everyone, opposition, government and the media, let us tone down our rhetoric. Let us acknowledge our differences but respect the people and respect the motives. In this way we can all get on with what really counts: the business of Canadians, building a strong economy, an inclusive society, safe and secure communities, a distinctive Canadian place in the world and a very strong and very united country.

• (1055)

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister got up today and made passing reference to mistakes. He then proceeded to give us 20 minutes of self congratulation backed by virtually the whole cabinet. We have some 20 ministers here. We have problems with trade, agriculture, the Canadian dollar and the health care system but most of the cabinet is engaging in a self congratulatory rallying around the ethical dilemmas of the government.

Let us be clear what about we did not get from the Prime Minister. We did not get any kind of ministerial statement or ethics package. He talked about his plans. What we got is typical. It was not a solid policy or plan to deal with the problem. It was the beginning of a month long communication exercise. It began today with the speech, the leaks in the papers of the various content, and the floating of the trial balloons. There is one thing we in our party are looking forward to. When the package finally gets released and promoted we will want to see who gets the advertising contract.

*Supply*

We have a minister of public works and, as we all know, some ethical dilemmas and scandals. We have no answers. There was not even a mention of it in the statement by the Prime Minister today. I and others have made demands for information concerning the problems in public works and in advertising and sponsorship. The government claims it is dealing with the issue, yet it will only be forthcoming with the information through access to information requests, auditor general's reports and police investigations. Otherwise it will not be made available.

What we have seen, particularly in the speech and in the last few days, is an incredible attempt to justify all this. The Prime Minister stood today and defended it in the interest of national unity. The Prime Minister is the only person in the country who believes federalist corruption in Quebec somehow enhances the image of Canada in that province. Wrapping himself in the flag is not enough.

I was here Tuesday when the government discovered a great defence in the issue of family values and all the great family relations of the Boudria clan were discovering family values. Now the government has moved on to discovering traditional religion and religious authorities as its sanctuary. It is only a matter of time before these guys become full fledged social conservatives.

I will get to my specific question. The Prime Minister said—

**Hon. Robert Nault:** Where is the question?

**Mr. Stephen Harper:** I have a question, but I have important information to bring to the attention of the House to enhance the Prime Minister's ability to answer the question. On June 16, 1994 the Prime Minister said in the House:

There can be no substitute for responsibility at the top. The Prime Minister sets the moral tone for the government and must make the ultimate decisions when issues of trust or integrity are raised.

My question is simple. What has happened over the past few days to lead the Prime Minister to come here today in this great ministerial rally? What specific ethical problems is the Prime Minister here to take responsibility for today?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition just said that we are not debating trade, the economy or agriculture. In the last 14 days in the House of Commons the Leader of the Opposition, this one and the previous one, used question period 11 times to try to throw mud rather than deal with the real problems of the nation.

I do not know what has happened on the other side after only a few days. I referred to the member who is the previous leader and how he has changed since being a reformist or in the Alliance. We heard the new Leader of the Opposition today. He is already corrupted by his party. Two days ago he was quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying:

I don't throw words around...The issue at this point is not corruption. The issue at this point is incompetence—

We should not use that word. It is a very important word and it is irresponsible to use it. I have been travelling in Europe. It is because of this irresponsibility that we have people like Le Pen who move into a vacuum. All members of parliament here are honest people. Not one member of parliament in the last nine years has been

charged with anything. Alliance members talk about corruption. It is an act of destruction of democracy. It does not serve parliament.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister may try as he will to create a diversion, but absolutely nothing that he announced this morning has helped shed any light on the series of scandals that have plagued his government and that go back, in a well organized system, to well before the current minister of public works, to the former minister of public works and possibly even to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who started the sponsorship program with the Canada Information Office.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Instead of shouting at the official opposition, should he not allow for a public inquiry that would enable citizens to understand what has happened under his government?

He is creating a diversion for a reason. Instead of diverting attention, he should do some explaining. This will allow us to see what has happened. If indeed, as he claims, nothing has happened, why is he so afraid of a public inquiry?

He is afraid that we will find out what happened before the current minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer this question.

First of all, it is the opposition that asked that we refer this matter to the auditor general. Second, if there were a commission that lasted two years, we could be here in the House refusing to answer.

We are not afraid to answer. We welcome the opposition's questions. We do not want to wash our hands of it, create a commission for two years, and then say "We will see".

We are able to face our problems right away. We are not hiding. We are here in the House of Commons answering all of the questions everyday.

[*English*]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have just heard the Prime Minister give a defence against the repeated call for an independent inquiry. The defence was that it could take up to two years.

We are entering the 10th year since the Prime Minister made specific promises and commitments on the campaign trail in 1993. He promised to enshrine the principle of political non-interference in public decisions, ensure free access to public office holders, introduce a code of conduct for public officials, and appoint an independent ethics counsellor who would report directly to parliament.

The Prime Minister has the nerve to stand here today and introduce a warmed over, regurgitated, eight point so-called action plan to finally begin to deal with these things a decade later. Why has it taken the Prime Minister so long? Is it not because the heat is getting way too great in the Liberal kitchen these days?

*Supply*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** Mr. Speaker, on the question of crown corporations we said that we were to have guidelines by this time of the year. On the question of the ministers who are involved in future ambitions, we have to make sure it is done in the proper fashion.

I would like to say something at this moment to the leader of the New Democratic Party. She is the one in the House who has shown the greatest responsibility. During the last 14 days that I checked, she was the one who was talking and asking questions about the real problems of the nation rather than being like the Alliance and just throwing mud all the time.

• (1105)

**Mr. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is a very important issue. The Prime Minister has come here to address the House. A representative of the Progressive Conservative Party has not had an opportunity to ask a question of the Prime Minister. I would ask for unanimous consent, and ask for the Prime Minister to instruct his people to allow that unanimous consent, to take questions from all quarters.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to permit another question?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today's debate deals with a fundamental issue in a democracy, namely ethical rules and the respect of these rules. This debate takes place as we find ourselves in real turmoil, in a true political crisis.

Today, the Prime Minister presented an eight point plan that includes totally inadequate new rules, and I will get back to this. The Prime Minister is primarily trying to create a diversion, so that matters embarrassing to the government and his ministers are no longer raised, and to ensure that we only discuss the rules which, incidentally, will be presented in two weeks.

The Prime Minister would like to erase the past. He keeps telling us "We made mistakes". But every time we raise an issue, he never acknowledges it. He always justifies the mistake.

The Liberals are so bent on erasing the past that they are opposed to a true public inquiry. The Prime Minister tells us about respect. I should point out to him that respect is primarily based on clarity, truth and transparency. These three elements are missing in this government, they are not reflected in the government's actions.

The Prime Minister is telling us about respect for the institution. Well, respect for the institution begins with the establishment of clear rules, and particularly with compliance with the rules put in place by parliament.

I will say a few words about the rules to be introduced in two weeks. We are told that a number of rules will be introduced, but we do not know what these will be. The government may tell us that they will be effective, but we will see once they have been implemented and we also have to see what is included in these rules. Still, I want to discuss two of them.

We are told that the issue of political party funding will be clarified. Is this to say that, from now on, trusts will no longer be set up for members of parliament and ministers? Contributions are given to riding associations by trusts; we do not know who gives money to these trusts. There is a trust in place, but we do not know who gives it money. If there is one area that lacks clarity and transparency, this is it. I am anxious to see if the government will tackle this issue. I doubt it, as we speak.

What is really unfortunate and unacceptable is that the Prime Minister is not making any changes to the role of the ethics counsellor. This ethics counsellor is appointed by the Prime Minister. He investigates matters for the Prime Minister; he even prepares answers for the Prime Minister and he is only accountable to the Prime Minister. This is a joke. The ethics counsellor has not independence whatsoever.

During the last election campaign we called for a true ethics commissioner who would report to parliament, and who would have the same independence as the auditor general. There is much boasting about the auditor general's work and her ability to intervene, yet there is a refusal to give the ethics counsellor the same status.

That being the case, these rules are clearly inadequate. They are, I repeat, mainly diversionary tactics to forget the past, for this is nothing new. We need only recall all the Human Resources Development Canada scandals. We have been waiting more than two years for the outcome of the HRDC investigation.

To raise just one case, Placeteco, a friend of the Prime Minister, Gilles Champagne, who was the lawyer of the owner of Placeteco and at the same time trustee for the Department of Human Resources Development. Mr. Champagne was therefore negotiating with himself. It is, let us face it, rather odd to see someone talking to himself. We have also seen this with the Groupaction contracts. The contract was recommended by senior public servant Charles Guité and approved by—guess who—senior public servant Charles Guité.

There are a multitude of similar examples in each government department. We are still awaiting the results of the investigation at HRDC. They have not yet been revealed; we do not know what happened. We are told that mistakes were made, but there has been no recognition of those mistakes.

I am thinking of the Shawinigan golf club. Here we have a head of state—for the Prime Minister of Canada is a head of state—who settles a financial problem on the corner of a restaurant table cloth and submits that as evidence.

• (1110)

There has been no public inquiry into what went on in Shawinigan. The government would like us to swallow this and say, "It is not serious. Perhaps there were some mistakes". But it is not admitting to any. It is saying that there are some in general, but none in particular, and it definitely does not want to do anything to find out what went on.

### Supply

Another example is CINAR. When this came up, we were told, "That is an urban myth. It is not true. It does not exist". The government should have admitted that there really was a problem. The president of CINAR, Ms. Charest, was also the chair ex officio for the Liberal Party of Canada's fundraising dinners. There was an investigation. At the time, however, the Minister of National Revenue refused to co-operate with the RCMP, which complained, with the result that no charges were laid and no public inquiry was held either.

This is how the Prime Minister can say to us that no one was charged. Of course not—there has been no inquiry. The government does everything possible to keep from knowing what went on. Then it says that people are innocent.

This is what happened during the 2000 election campaign. In full campaign swing, the government brought in its puppet ethics counsellor, Mr. Wilson, to say, "There is no problem. As ethics counsellor, I support what the government has done.

The public, which probably thinks that an ethics counsellor has a certain degree of independence, believed it. They said, "There is no problem; the ethics counsellor said so". But the ethics counsellor is the Prime Minister's puppet. The Prime Minister writes his answers for him. When the Prime Minister is asked questions in the House, he has prepared the answers. Mr. Wilson is not independent at all. Nothing will be any different in the proposed rules.

So, right from the beginning of the election campaign and all through it, the spin was on denying what had gone on in Shawinigan and at the Department of Human Resources Development. We are still waiting for the results of these investigations. The government wants to forget the past.

This comes right in the middle of this incredible Groupe Everest affair that we raised here in the House. We were told, "The minister of public works was with his children". That would be fine if his children were not ministers' assistants; his daughter is an assistant to the Minister of National Revenue and his son is an assistant to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. They too have violated the rules set out by parliament because, at the very least, they appear to be in a conflict of interest.

So off they go to the house of Ms. Deslaurier and Mr. Boulay, the president of Groupe Everest, which has been given many contracts by this very same minister, often in a unusual manner and sometimes without a competitive bid process. And here is what we are told, "Maybe we made a mistake in going". The Prime Minister said, "If he had not paid, it would have been serious".

We were told that he paid. A cheque supposedly written on March 18 was made public around March 21, yet at the same time reporters were revealing that Groupe Everest would be investigated by the auditor general. This is indeed a strange coincidence. We were told that the cheque was cashed. Yesterday—thanks to an affidavit issued by a priest, a friend of the family—we learned that he never did cash the cheque that he said he had cashed last Thursday. So, it was not paid for, but it is no big deal. It was a mistake. It has all been justified. No need for an inquiry. All in good faith.

Those who are listening know that they may be of good faith. The Prime Minister said so. They are interested in what is best for the

population. Yes, they are interested; they take what belongs to the population, and then pass it on to their cronies. That is what is happening here. It is unbelievable. They have no credibility.

Let us look at the case of Groupaction. This government paid half a million dollars three times for the same contract. I will admit that they have a good photocopying machine. However, to pay for the same contract repeatedly is somewhat disturbing. We were told "This company will no longer get contracts". This statement was made by the minister of public works.

• (1115)

Yet, the company continued to get contracts, so much so that it even gave some to another friend of the government who publishes *L'Almanach du peuple*. The Quebec government paid \$250 per page in that publication, while the federal government paid \$6,500 for each page. But there is no problem. Everything was done in good faith.

Of course it was done in good faith. The government acts in good faith with its friends who, in turn, act in good faith with the government. Everyone is acting in good faith, but it is the taxpayer who is footing the bill. This is exactly what is going on.

The government even went so far as to make a travesty of a state's most important duties, those of an ambassador. An ambassador represents his or her country. Yet, someone who was under investigation—because this is the case; since Groupaction is being investigated, I imagine that the minister will also be the target of an investigation at some point—was appointed ambassador to Denmark.

In this way, the government is ensuring that he is not here to answer questions. The Prime Minister said "Yes, we can answer questions every day of the week". But when someone is in hot water, he is appointed to Denmark. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark, and I would add that something is also rotten on the other side of the House of Commons, and only on that side. This is what is going on right now.

A public inquiry is needed, because we want to know what happened in the past, and because there are considerable limits to what the RCMP can do. For one thing, as was seen in the CINAR case, when the government's co-operation is asked for, it is not forthcoming. This gives people a chance to sidestep the issue, and we will never know what went on without a public inquiry.

The RCMP investigation is addressing the three Groupaction contracts, nothing else. Just that, and it is clearly not enough. We are still waiting for the results of the investigation at HRDC.

The auditor general looks at management, not political interference. For example, it will not be possible to know who has contributed to MPs trusts, which then go to the riding associations.

We are, of course, told that everything is transparent. Mr. X's trust fund gave \$20,000 to the riding association in Mr. X's riding. But where did that \$20,000 come from? That we do not know, and they want us to swallow that. That is why a public inquiry is necessary, so that we can investigate, find out the date of the affidavits, how there happens to be a contradiction, who can be questioned and who can come and give evidence.

That is what a public inquiry is all about. This is also the reason we want an ethics commissioner. Because what we have is, I repeat, a master at camouflage—which would probably be useful for the Canadian Forces, but not in any way for ensuring that ethical standards are respected by this government. For that, an independent commissioner is necessary.

The best part of all this, however, is that today the Prime Minister is justifying these mistakes. That is what he has done. Now he is acknowledging them without identifying them. He does not want any inquiry because he does not want too much probing. Yet he is acknowledging them in general and justifying them regardless.

The end justifies the means. The end is to attack the sovereignist movement in Quebec, as they did with the love-in in Montreal. They trampled over all the laws of Quebec, which are far more advanced than here as far as democracy and ethics are concerned. The referendum act was not respected and now they are justifying the errors as a so-called assault on the Quebec sovereignist movement.

Yes, there is an assault going on, but using unacceptable means. We are prepared to fight out in the open, to get to the bottom of it, but here the public's funds are being used as weapons. We have been told, "We are giving money to Quebec. You should be pleased".

Let the government take the \$600 million it invested in propaganda and give it to us for research and development. We will be happy to take it.

What the government is mainly doing is getting a bigger bang for its buck. Not only is it investing money to fight sovereignty in Quebec, but it is using that money to help its cronies at the same time, to the tune of fifty times more a page. Yes, sir, we are paying. Then they get together in chalets to talk about things among friends, among Liberals.

The issue here is not one minister or another. Sending the current minister of public works to be an ambassador somewhere—Copenhagen is taken, but there are other spots, I imagine—will not solve the problem.

• (1120)

This is about a network. This happened at Human Resources Development Canada; it happened at the Department of National Revenue in the deals worked out with CINAR. It is happening at the department of public works. People from Everest are now working in the Department of Justice, which also employs the daughter of the minister of public works. The minister of public works' son works in the Department of Canadian Heritage, whose minister initiated all this propaganda, with all the flags she sold all over the place.

It is a network involving government ministers, a network involving friends of the party, a network involving not just friends, but family members. It is a family compact we are facing, a red family compact. That is what is going on across the way, and that is what we are up against.

That is why we are insisting that there be a public inquiry. A public inquiry would shed light on what has gone on. It would be a way of restraining the Prime Minister, who thinks he is a king, who shows a complete disregard for parliament. He even says to journalists "Today, I will answer such and such a question because it

### *Supply*

is a good one, but not the other one. Today, I am a democrat; tomorrow I may be a dictator". He said this in public.

It is unthinkable that a Prime Minister would use such language. Of course, he will tell us that it was a joke. The other side is doing a lot of laughing. They are laughing at the public, that is what they are doing. They are playing them for fools.

Once again, when the Prime Minister says, "you are not raising any other issues", he needs to take a closer look, many other issues have been raised, but this one is a major issue, because it speaks to the integrity of the government.

How can we trust a government when we know about certain links but remain in the dark about their ramifications? How can we have faith in a government when we know that of all of the mistakes that they have apparently admitted making, they do not recognize any one specific mistake. How can we trust this government, for which the end justifies the means, a government that has just said, "We may have made a mistake, but we will go ahead just the same".

This is the language, the rhetoric, the attitude of this government that we have been up against since the beginning, and we will not stop fighting it, because it is our duty to ensure that there is a public inquiry to get to the bottom of this. One wonders why they are scared of such an inquiry.

When the former minister, Mr. Gagliano said, "I am prepared to appear before a committee and justify everything", he was shipped off to Denmark. From Denmark he has told us:

[*English*]

"One day I will say what I want. I can't now since I am ambassador, the envoy to Denmark".

[*Translation*]

How wonderful. What does he have to say that he cannot say right now? A public inquiry would help us get to the bottom of things. That is what we are calling for, demanding. Even though it may not please the Prime Minister, he should realize that we will not drop this demand. This is something that people expect of us, the respect of this institution and, ultimately, self-respect.

We cannot accept such behaviour and pretend that everything is fine.

**Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the smear campaign undertaken by opposition parties clearly reflects their despair.

To be sure, the Bloc Québécois has reasons to be concerned. Support for sovereignty is diminishing and is now around 40%. Polls in Quebec put the PQ in third place, with 25% of the vote. We can no longer figure out how many members the Bloc Québécois has. Is it 36, 37 or 36? This is not to mention its poor showing in the last by-elections.

Indeed, the Bloc Québécois has reasons to be concerned. It is asking for a public inquiry to evaluate the level of corruption within the Liberal government. The Bloc Québécois had already asked for an investigation. We mandated the auditor general to conduct one. Now, the RCMP will look at the issue.

*Supply*

This morning, the Prime Minister referred to his government's strong performance when he announced the main features of an aggressive eight point plan to raise the bar even higher in terms of ethics and integrity, for our government.

Since the publication of its first report, in 1995, Transparency International, which is the most important international organization dedicated to eliminating corruption in government and in the business world, has recognized Canada as the country where corruption is perceived as being the lowest among all G-7 members.

Is the Bloc Québécois prepared to admit today that its exaggerated and unfounded attacks could adversely affect hundreds of workers who earn a living honorably in Quebec's advertising industry?

• (1125)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, if our attacks are unfounded, then let there be an inquiry. It is not complicated. If the member is right, she will be happy. The government will be happy, and so will you, Mr. Speaker.

That said, they refuse to do so. You cannot be any more sure than I that the attacks are unfounded. We shall see. However, they are scared of an inquiry.

The argument my colleague raised is the same one that was used in the CINAR affair. We were told "You must not do this. It will punish people". Indeed, it punishes artists for the most part. Thousands of workers in advertising, the creative arts and film have had it, they are fed up with acting as servants for government cronies, fed up with having their talent exploited by cronies who pocket the money, and use their talents—

**An hon. member:** To make millions.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Precisely. To put millions in their pockets. That is shameful and is why an inquiry is needed. That is why they are getting scared, because people in these companies are going to come forward. They are giving us information. They see what is going on and they want an inquiry. If the government is not afraid, let it get an inquiry started. We will see that the real hands-on workers are not the ones exploiting people by awarding unjustified contracts, by using public funds shamelessly. People whose talents are being used for the aggrandizement of Quebec are fed up with the mudslinging at Quebec that the Liberal Party is engaged in, for the buddies of the Liberal Party, using the taxpayers' money.

Yes, the advertising agency people would be delighted if their work were not sidetracked, if they were not forced to bow to the buddies of the regime and those who control the taxpayers' money, such as the MPs and ministers on the other side of this House.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister mentioned about five times in his speech about having raised the bar and that this was the justification for this new contrition of having discovered the ethics that Canadians expect.

Given the current standard, which I would suggest is pretty low, the conflict of interest in the post-employment code for public office holders is pretty broad. It was brought in by the government in 1994.

Avoidance of preferential treatment. In section 23(1) it states:

A public office holder shall take care to avoid being placed or the appearance of being placed under an obligation to any person or organization, or the representative of a person or organization, that might profit from special consideration on the part of the office holder.

That is a pretty low bar and yet ministers of the government, most recently the public works minister, have clearly limboed under that bar.

Would the opposition leader agree that the standard has been repeatedly broken by the government?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. There ought to be standards and rules that are even more strict. Yet even the existing ones are not being respected. That is what is worrisome.

The ethics counsellor has said so. The Prime Minister has not changed the counsellor's role and the fact that he will remain answerable only to the Prime Minister.

Returning to the expression "to raise the bar" the Prime Minister has used, the word bar could refer to a wooden bar or a drinks bar. Perhaps the Prime Minister was referring to an "open bar", with free drinks for all his cronies.

[*English*]

To raise the bar means an open bar for friends of the Liberals. It is exactly that, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, frankly, I find that the opposition member is engaging in unjustified smearing.

I have a specific question for the hon. member. In a poll conducted by Léger & Léger, it was found that 53% of respondents said that provincial governments also have problems.

Could the hon. member tell me if he thinks that the Parti Québécois in Quebec is included in this negative perception by Canadians? What does he think? Does he think that there are problems in Quebec, as in Ontario and Alberta, where the Conservatives are in office, and in other provinces?

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, the problem is here. We are debating what is going on here. What my colleague is trying to do is fairly obvious. He does not want to debate this. They are saying, "Don't talk about what is going on here. We will turn the focus elsewhere".

What they are suggesting is without foundation. Prove it with a survey. That is our challenge to this government: face the music, let the public know what has gone on. But they are doing everything they can to avoid this. They are creating diversions. They are saying, "We are here in Ottawa, but we want to talk about what is going on in Alberta, in Quebec, but not what is going on here".

They want us to swallow this. “We have made mistakes”, says the government. What were they? “None in particular, but many in general”, they tell us. Name me one in particular. They are unable. One after another, they justify them.

Above all, they do not want any inquiries, because that would reveal, for example, whether the cheque to Ms. Deslauriers was really made out on March 18, whether the priest cashed it, or whether it was another cheque which he cashed on Thursday but which, according to his affidavit, he did not in fact cash.

Some interesting things could come out of this. We could see who is benefiting from what, but that is not what they want. So, rather than worrying about what is going on somewhere else—my colleague was not elected somewhere else; he was elected here—he should look after his own affairs before worrying about the affairs of others.

If there is no smear campaign, it is perhaps because it is hard to distinguish the offending colour and the odours wafting over from the other side. Let the government prove it. Let the government prove that there is nothing unsavoury about all this. Let the government prove it; I challenge it to do so. It cannot.

I call on the government to prove it, but it does not want to. When people do not want to clean up their act, or prove that they are clean, the only conclusion is that what is going on there is neither very savoury nor very clean. What is not very clean we call filth.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think it is a good thing today that we begin this very important debate on the rules to ensure parliamentarians' integrity and accountability.

I deeply regret the fact that, right now, there are only three Liberals here for this important debate. I think this speaks volumes.

Four years ago, the former member for Halifax West, a distinguished and very respected colleague of mine who spent his life serving the public, presented a new code of ethics.

• (1135)

[*English*]

I will interrupt myself to say that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona.

[*Translation*]

I was just saying that my former colleague, Gordon Earle, presented a new official code of ethics to protect the public interest against actions taken by a parliamentarian to promote private interests.

[*English*]

It was at that time that the former member for Halifax West introduced this important legislation. Six years had already passed since the government came to power on the promise that it would take the initiative to establish the true independence of an ethics counsellor who would report to the House and that it would introduce the legislation that today the Prime Minister has the gall and audacity to stand in the House to talk about as part of an important action plan that even as of this moment we still have not seen and that the Prime Minister said would be forthcoming, when in fact we may not see a good deal of it until the fall.

### *Supply*

That in itself gives a pretty clear message to the people of Canada as to what kind of priority the government gives the whole question of ethical conduct in government.

[*Translation*]

Since then, after this bill was first introduced, my party introduced it again on two occasions. As the leader of the NDP, I did so myself as recently as on March 14, 2001. I want to briefly repeat what I said on that day when I introduced this bill.

[*English*]

The legislation provides for an ethics counsellor who would report directly to parliament and would do so annually. Today the Prime Minister says “Well, we are actually going to introduce that as part of a future action plan”. Such legislation exists in every province and territory in the country and in many other countries that have parliamentary systems similar to that of Canada.

What in the name of heavens has kept the government from dealing with this issue when province after province and nation after nation with similar parliamentary systems have long since had such legislation in place?

As I said on March 14, 2001, when I introduced the legislation:

It is clear that we need such conflict of interest legislation and such a code of conduct to prevent the further erosion of confidence in parliament as an institution and to restore confidence that parliamentarians will act not with conflict of interest but with the public interest at heart.

I want to deal very briefly with what the Prime Minister said here this morning in response to my questions about what had taken the government so long to respond in the heat of the kind of controversy and taint that swirls around the government today. The Prime Minister stood up and used an age old tactic. He tried to deflect from the real issues that his government has refused to deal with and, in the most condescending way, congratulated me and my party for the fact that we alone in the House have continued to focus on the real problems that concern everyday working people in this country.

It is a neat tactic but it is a cheap trick. I do not know whether the Prime Minister wants to hear this, but he should know that people are fed up with him pointing again and again at the opposition to say that the erosion of public confidence in parliament and parliamentarians is the fault of the opposition because it keeps raising the issues.

It is absolutely clear for all to see that the government has failed to provide legislation that would ensure the highest standards of public conduct. It is the government that has, in a kind of ironic, perverse twist, been willing to endure the battering that it has taken from the opposition, particularly from the official opposition, because it has allowed Liberals to get off the hook from dealing with the real issues of the day.

*Supply*

That is why we are doubly furious at what has been going on with the government. I do not think it is too extreme or too paranoid to suggest that the government has rather enjoyed the erosion of public confidence around parliament. I also believe that the official opposition is quite pleased with that erosion of confidence because it serves its objectives, which are to erode confidence and to shrink people's expectations of what they should believe government is capable of and should be required to accomplish on behalf of the people.

What do they get? They cultivate a climate of non-confidence that then results in people being easily led to the next conclusion that if they cannot trust the government, the Prime Minister, parliamentarians or cabinet ministers then they should just remove a lot of the functions of government that are within the public domain, accountable to the public and turn them over to the private sector where they can now commercialize them, commodify them and establish them within the realm of the marketplace on a for profit basis.

That may seem like a long stretch but we have watched the systematic erosion of confidence in the parliamentary process. What is truly heartbreaking is that, in tandem, the Liberal government and the official opposition have accomplished that shared objective to an alarming degree.

• (1140)

Therefore, I rise today to object strenuously to the constant opportunity that the government gives to the Alliance, the official opposition, to tear down and do damage to the reputation of parliamentarians and to the confidence in government that people in a democracy need and deserve and that we mutually have a responsibility to re-establish.

In conclusion, let me say that when the Prime Minister stands in his place and outlines an action program, there is no more reason for people to go away from parliament believing or for the public to believe that the government means business and has any serious intention of delivering, any more than the Liberals did when they made promises to do the very same thing in 1993 when they sought office.

The government alone bears the responsibility for the damage that has been done and the government, by virtue of being the government, continues to bear the responsibility to clean up the mess it has created.

**Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the hon. member from the NDP calling for accountability in government. I wonder where their moral indignation was when the former NDP premier of B.C. was getting his back porch built in exchange for a casino licence.

Is it not the truth that the federal government is more transparent and accountable than ever before, thanks to the Liberal government?

• (1145)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, although I think again the tactic is pretty transparent, let us look at some other jurisdiction. The very same member from the Liberal benches attempted to use the same tactic vis-à-vis the leader of the Bloc in asking him to account for what goes on in Quebec.

Let me make a couple of points. One is that the premier of British Columbia, in the swirl of controversy, understood the notion of ministerial responsibility, particularly prime ministerial responsibility, and he resigned from office.

Second, the member knows and every member on the government benches knows that the matter is before the courts at this very time. We have just heard a Liberal member from the backbench do exactly what the first intervener from the Liberals who stood here today said was completely unacceptable in the House, that is, to presume guilt before one's innocence has been proven. I cannot believe what I have just heard from that member from the backbench. The first Liberal who stood in the House today said that the Liberals were accusing the opposition of violating the fundamental principle of innocence when guilt has not been proven. I think it just serves to underscore once again the cheap tactics of Liberal members and also the depths to which they will stoop to try to distract from the real issues and, let the record show, also violate the presumption of innocence.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we have a good debate going today. It perhaps is going to get more exciting as the day wears on.

I would urge the leader of the NDP not to mix her messages. On one hand she says that we cannot let the Liberals off the hook, that they have to answer for what they have done and shoulder their responsibility, and that they cannot shirk it or blame it on the opposition parties. Then she goes on to say that the Alliance is to blame for the problems in the Liberal Party. She has to get her story straight.

It is a Liberal problem that we are discussing here today. The Liberals have a problem. As our leader said, even if we leave the corruption angle out of it, we have a gross problem with mismanagement, with misplaced priorities and with just complete incompetence on the governing part, the management part, of the people's purse. The member can blame us if she wants, but the problem is on the Liberals' side of the benches.

Furthermore, I would point out that there is a legitimate debate, and a good one, about the proper role for government. How much government is good government? What programs are good? The member does a good job of presenting her party's position on what she thinks is the proper role for government, but that is not what we are debating here today. We are debating whether whatever government is proper is handled right and ethically, and it is not, because the Liberals have botched it in every single identifiable way. The auditor general says so. The people across the country know it—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but I have to give the hon. member for Halifax an opportunity to respond.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I want to resist following rabbit tracks here. Let me repeat: The responsibility is squarely on the Liberal government to bring in the kind of legislation that is needed and has long been promised. On that I agree with the member who just rose.

It is also true, and I think Canadians have seen it, that it is understood for what it reflects: that the official opposition has absolutely feasted—

*Supply*

**An hon. member:** Gorged itself.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, gorged itself, pigged out, on the kinds of problems that the government has created in terms of public confidence.

For that reason I disagree with the member when he says that this is a Liberal problem, a government problem. This is a problem for the Parliament of Canada. More important, this is a problem for the people of Canada, who continue to be frustrated because this House, to which we were elected to do our duty and discharge our responsibilities, does not deal with the real issues of the day that affect their lives.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to say is that I regret very much that my leader is splitting her time with me because I think she was on a roll there and I was sorry to see it end.

I think she was speaking to the underlying question that is of concern to anyone who is concerned about the state of democracy in this country and that is the way in which the preoccupation of the House with scandal and corruption, both real and alleged, has a tendency to call into disrepute the whole democratic process. I think she made a good point when she said that to some extent this serves political parties well, at least those political parties between whom there are not a lot of fundamental differences, in the sense that they like to focus on each other's ethical and administrative behaviour because there are not a lot of policy differences between them. Certainly this has been a condition of Canadian politics for many years.

I certainly remember that this was the case between Liberals and Tories and then between Tories and Liberals and then between Liberals and Tories, or did I get it the wrong way around? They did not want to focus on policy matters because there was not a lot that separated them. We certainly saw that after 1993 when the Liberals came in and carried on with all the policies that had been established by the Conservative government prior to that time. However, when they were in opposition, for the same reason that my leader outlined, they were very fond of scandal-mongering. Unfortunately the minister of public works may have created a little bit of bad karma for himself when he was so good at scandal-mongering himself when he was a member of the so-called rat pack.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Could you give us an example?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** My leader has asked for an example. I just happen to have one here.

On June 3, 1985, the minister of public works got up and referred to the fact that sons of the minister of justice at that time, Mr. Crosbie, were involved in working as legal agents for the government. He said "This whole incident gives new meaning to the theory of relativity". I am not sure what he meant, but maybe he meant that there is a certain moral relativity, that is to say when somebody else is doing it, it is wrong, but when he is doing it, it is not wrong, it is just a mistake that has been cleared up.

What did the minister of public works say at that time? I say this with regret because I have worked with the minister of public works in his capacity as government House leader and I found him to be one of the best government House leaders I have ever dealt with.

That unfortunately does not absolve him of having to answer for the things he has done in the other capacities he has for this government. What the minister of public works said when he was a member of the opposition on June 3, 1985, was that "The Prime Minister...ought to relieve the Minister of Justice of his responsibilities until this whole mess can be cleared up and corrected".

This is all we are asking of this government: that the minister of public works, if he feels that ultimately he has done nothing wrong and that ultimately he has nothing to hide, simply do what he asked of the Conservative minister of justice on June 3, 1985, and resign until such time as this whole matter can be cleared up.

It may well be that the minister of public works would be able to return to the front benches of the government, as other ministers over the years have done in provincial cabinets and federal cabinets. It is not a permanent departure if in fact one is vindicated. I would urge the minister of public works to consider and the Prime Minister to consider taking the advice that was offered at that time.

I do not want to spend a lot of time on that because I think that in fact there is something corrupt in or corrupting of our political culture in the way that we deal with corruption here in the House, in the way that we deal with patronage and in the way that we deal with these ethical questions on the floor of the House of Commons. We had hoped for some redemption from this sandbox mentality that we get into where everyone is saying "You did this" or "You did that". This hardly enhances people's perceptions of parliament or of democracy and it contributes to the kind of disrepute that my leader spoke of, which serves the corporate agenda very well and serves the privatizing agenda very well. If Canadians were to watch parliament for a day would they want their country or anything else to be run by people who are engaged in this kind of constant mudslinging and bickering? No.

• (1150)

Back in 1993 we had hoped that the Prime Minister was serious about trying to redeem that situation by appointing an ethics commissioner, not a counsellor or an extra spin doctor for the government, but an ethics commissioner just as he promised, a truly independent ethics commissioner who would report to parliament. Here we are, it is nine years later and the government is mired in various forms of accusations about patronage and corruption. The Prime Minister said he is going to do something about it and the appointment of an independent ethics commissioner is not even on that list. It is nine years later and he still insists on not keeping that promise.

The Prime Minister has a lot to answer for. He likes to say that he does not want people to act in a way that brings the institution into disrepute. Fair enough. Those of us in the NDP particularly are leery about that. We do not like to do that. We do not want to bring a democracy into disrepute. On the other hand we cannot allow glaring errors of ethical judgment to go uncriticized. We participate but at the same time we want to keep other issues before the House so that the whole political culture does not become obsessed with this and is corrupted by it.

*Supply*

The Prime Minister likes to hide behind not just keeping the reputation of democracy up, but he likes to hide behind national unity. Not everything that is done in the name of national unity is appropriate. Just because something is being done in the name of national unity does not make it right. National unity does not make gross patronage right. National unity does not make all the things the government is being accused of right.

National unity cannot be used as some kind of umbrella or mask for otherwise unacceptable activities. Yet that has been the habit of the Liberal Party for years, not just the Liberal Party but primarily the Liberal Party. That has been the last refuge of scoundrels, as someone said. A lot of scoundrels have hidden under the umbrella of promoting national unity, as if the end justified the means. As someone suggested, how creating the impression of a corrupt federal government in Quebec helps to promote national unity is something we might want to think about a bit more.

The Prime Minister said there is a debate about the role of government. The Liberals believe the role of government is to help the poor, et cetera and members of the official opposition do not and that is why they spend so much time attacking HRDC. That is why in some ways we did not spend as much time on HRDC, because we do not want to be part of an attack on the role of government.

The role of government is being jeopardized not just by the ideology of the official opposition but by the behaviour of the government. It is the government that gives the role of government a bad name. It is the Liberals who for decades have given the role of government a bad name through patronage and all the other kinds of activities it has been accused of here.

We need to look at getting rid of the role of money in our political system. Some innovating has been going on over the years in Quebec and recently in Manitoba. Many people have come to the conclusion that we need more extensive public funding of elections so that we do not have this kind of dependence on corporate money, which presumably has a lot to do with the relationships the Liberal government has established with advertising companies. One of the things we could look at is reducing the role of money in our democratic culture because it does have a corrupting influence.

Finally, I would like to go back to the whole issue of accusation and counteraccusation. One of the things we learned when we were kids, and I am sure your mother said it to you, Mr. Speaker, as my mother said it to me many times, was that two wrongs do not make a right.

The Liberal government gets up and says "You lived in Stornoway and you said you would not, and you took pensions and you said you would not". There was a lot of political dishonesty on the part of the official opposition with respect to a whole lot of things, all of which were part and parcel of the democratic process falling into disrepute. That does not for a minute and should not for a minute obscure the gravity of what is going on on the other side of the House.

● (1155)

For the Prime Minister and others to engage in that kind of counteraccusation does exactly what the Prime Minister says he is concerned about. It calls the whole process into disrepute and should not be engaged in.

● (1200)

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to acknowledge that the member is one of the most highly respected members in parliament. He has been here a long time. He has seen governments come and go. He represents a minority party where he singularly seems to find ways to be re-elected. That is a compliment to the work he must do in his constituency.

Since he has seen all different types of governments, all different types of members in this place, would he agree that these accusations are tantamount to a hijacking of parliament? We do not hear questions or debate on issues around health care or Kyoto. With the odd exception of a question or two from the NDP, we are not hearing about any of those issues. We do not hear about agriculture. We do not hear about Afghanistan.

We do not hear about the things that matter to Canadians when members get outside of the beltway. I wonder if the hon. member would have a comment that when members are outside of the beltway this kind of nonsense does not play with Canadians. It simply serves to deflect the real business of parliament, the real business of government.

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

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps you could ask the members to calm down. I would ask the member to comment.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. It gives me another opportunity to extend the point that he is making. He is making the point that somehow it is the official opposition that does not want to deal with the real issues of the day.

We are making the point that this also serves the government's interest. I am sure the government is much happier to have the House seized of this, although there is a certain point at which the Liberals might get fed up with it and they might feel it is getting a little too close and they might try and deal with it. Today is one of those days.

It is not often that the Prime Minister speaks on an opposition day. I wish it were more the habit of the Prime Minister to come in here and try and deal with issues, although I wish he had a habit of dealing with them better than he did today.

My party's point is that a government which behaves in a way that makes itself open to these kind of accusations is the one that is primarily at fault.

An official opposition that does not really want to talk about policy either and talks about corruption and scandal, both real and alleged, to the exclusion of everything else is not serving the country well either.

*Supply*

It is not an opportunity for a member on the government side to stand up and be self-righteous about the Liberal Party or the Liberal government or about Kyoto. Kyoto is an issue where Liberal cabinet ministers it appears, and I was talking about the role of money earlier in our political culture and it is a Liberal senator who made the accusation that Liberal leadership contenders who happen to be in key positions on the front bench are the ones who may be inappropriately influenced when it comes to the government's position on the Kyoto accord.

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I also want to applaud the member who just spoke for actually addressing the government.

I thought this side of the House was the opposition. I thought our place was to call the government to account. I am really confused as to what is the priority down there because the hon. leader with whom the member split time spent the time dressing down the official opposition. It seems that she has not got it clear in her mind who she is. It appears that she has taken on the position of being the official opposition to the official opposition.

Where is the NDP's priority? Will we hold the government not only to good policy, but carrying out the policy and keeping its promises in a good administration? What is the hon. member's feeling on that?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I thought my leader did such a good job of mopping up the official opposition that I did not need to spend much time on it. I am glad to see it had the desired effect. I think it was Mr. Diefenbaker who said that when a stone is thrown into a pack of dogs and they start to yelp, the person knows he or she has hit something.

• (1205)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my friend from Winnipeg—Transcona, a fellow House leader, for his usual ferocious and fastidious comments. I always love hearing him quote Progressive Conservative prime ministers' remarks.

Let us be very frank about why we are having this debate. It is an official opposition supply day. However, what we see happening here is the attempt by the government to table some sort of rebuttal or response to what has been swirling around it. The timing is interesting. The timing is that the Liberals were caught doing something. They were caught outright with their hands in the proverbial cookie jar and handing cookies out to their friends. This is the reason this is happening now.

The Prime Minister in his remarks stated no less than five times that they have raised the bar. He used that expression repeatedly. I want to draw attention to a quote that is very relevant to this commentary by the Prime Minister. It comes from a very distinguished and decorated individual in the public service, a man by the name of Gordon Robertson. On top of being a privy council officer, Gordon Robertson was clerk of the privy council for prime ministers Diefenbaker, Pearson and Trudeau and spent a very historic career within the public service.

We all recall the Shawinigan scandal when the Prime Minister made inappropriate approaches, called the president of the Business Development Bank to lobby for a government loan for a friend, a

businessman and former business partner in a golf course that he used to own in his riding. There was an RCMP review of the circumstances. There were substantiated allegations that someone from the Prime Minister's Office, Jean Carle, was dispatched to the Business Development Bank to sanitize files and mop up to ensure that Mr. Clean was able to take away all of the evidence that could be found.

This is what Gordon Robertson had to say in response to that particular scandal, which is one of many:

What happened in Shawinigan never would have met the standard set in Pearson's code of ethics. I should know—I drafted it. This Prime Minister has lowered the bar.

That is a fairly damning condemnation from a person in the know, a person who spent his career working in the Parliament of Canada, working in service of Canadians.

This particular issue of corruption has seized the House of Commons. Members opposite and members of the official opposition might like to suggest that the opposition is not focusing on the real issues. We are not talking about health care or the softwood lumber issue and the trade disputes that are jeopardizing Canada's workforce and productivity. We are talking about that but it has become clouded. It has become a distraction when we see the level of corruption, the level of conflict of interest, the level and extent the government is willing to go to perpetrate power, to hold on to and concentrate its power by rewarding individuals who are loyal to it and who in turn make contributions to the Liberals.

This is a very simple issue. It is an issue of competence, but it is an issue of corruption. It is an issue of confidence. It is an issue of Canadians having faith in what their government is doing and believing what the government is going to do. Promises were made prior to elections about what the Liberals were going to do to clean up government, to be more transparent, those famous red book promises that should lead all Liberals to be red in the face when one looks at them in retrospect.

This issue of corruption will not go away with a simple swipe of the hand and the Prime Minister simply stating that the government is going to look into it, that it has a five point or six point plan. We have seen that routine before. It is getting tired. We saw it with the HRDC scandal. We saw it just last week with the public works minister suggesting that all is fine, that the fiefdom will be whole again, that he can clean it up with a five point plan. Now the Prime Minister is trying the same tired routine. It is simply not going to work. This is a problem for which the government has to take account and for which it has to take responsibility.

• (1210)

There was very little apology and responsibility in the remarks made by the Prime Minister in the House today. Let us be clear on one thing. It is the Prime Minister who must set the standard. He is the one who all members of his government should look to to set that standard. What a low standard that is.

There is an old expression that the fish stinks from the head. Clearly, the Prime Minister is the head of the government and what a smell. This standard has never been lower.

### Supply

The Prime Minister likes to make the claim that no one in his cabinet has ever resigned or has had to leave in the midst of scandal and allegation. That is not true. His transport minister resigned over allegations of inappropriate letter writing campaigns. His deputy prime minister at the time resigned over the broken promise of the GST. Do members not remember that? The government was going to abolish it, get rid of it, and rescind it. That did not happen. She ran again of course and was re-elected at a great cost to taxpayers. She at least showed a flicker, a glimmer of accountability. However, she is back in full force. There are other ministers. There was a solicitor general in the government that resigned over loose lips on an airline.

It is not true to say that there was never a resignation. Clearly, there should have been more. The Prime Minister, by setting such a low standard for himself, cannot expect his members to take account or be responsible. We cannot claim that the standards are there if there are no standards. If there are no standards, there are no resignations. That is the formula.

**An hon. member:** You get to go to Denmark.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Liberal members are rewarded, actually, as I am reminded. Mr. Gagliano, who was embroiled in this entire affair, was the previous minister of public works. What happened when the allegations emerged? The usual denials, distractions and accusations were thrown at the accusers, but he is dispatched to Denmark as a reward.

To simply reward and put out of reach that minister is not accountability. That is not the standard Canadians expect. Canadians deserve better. They should expect the government and the Prime Minister to at least stand up and take responsibility for their actions.

Allegations of rewarding friends came repeatedly from members of the government when they were in opposition. The Prime Minister says there should be a standalone code of conduct. He says he will introduce one. He refers with great claim to the report that was tabled by Senator Oliver and the current Speaker of the House of Commons in 1997. Why has it taken the Prime Minister and the government so long to come to the conclusion that an ethical standard is needed, that a code of conduct is necessary?

I should have indicated at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the very ethical member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Let us look at some of the promises and references that the Prime Minister repeatedly made when in opposition. I have already mentioned the red book. He promised to have an independent ethics counsellor appointed. That did not happen. That promise was broken. He spoke about open government being the watchword of the Liberal program. That is not true. In the 1993 red book it states:

A Liberal government will restore public trust and confidence in government.

The Prime Minister, in appointing Mr. Wilson, spoke of the ethics code that would apply. He said that it would appear that unethical or improper conduct that is fundamental of poor political judgment must in the end reside with the Prime Minister. These are lofty words that were never fulfilled.

Instead the ethics counsellor reports directly to the Prime Minister. This is a farce. This further undermines any sense of accountability and public confidence. The immediate reaction of the government

when accused, when confronted with its own actions is to deny, distract and reflect away any kind of criticism.

The Prime Minister used to take great glee in throwing mud. Now he trots out this trite old expression about when we throw dirt we lose ground. He used to say:

So far as this government is concerned, integrity is more than just nice words or photo ops. It's a way of life.

• (1215)

He stated in 1994:

It is because the government is committed to honesty and integrity in the public eye...There can be no substitute for responsibility at the top. The Prime Minister sets the moral tone...

What happened to those words and those promises? Just like the promises for the GST to be rescinded and free trade to be renegotiated, they are gone with the wind. It was a claim that was never fulfilled. It was complete rhetoric. That is now coming back to haunt the government and the Prime Minister as it should. Yes, the opposition will be raising other issues, but this will not go away. There has to be some accounting.

We are hopeful that this is the beginning at least of the government's reflection and inward looking attempt to clean up the mess it has made.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a couple of questions. However I would rather make a statement than ask a question and ask him to respond to it.

I moved to this country in 1967. In 1968 I chose this place to spend the rest of my life. I applied for citizenship and received it in the early seventies. I have always been interested in politics and paid attention to what was going on. One of the things that surprised me over and over again was the objection that the people at large had to certain decisions that were being made by the government. Yet the government made those decisions anyway.

I do not want to argue about whether the metric system was the right thing to do. That is not the point. The point is that at that particular time there was an overwhelming number of people who were against it. Yet we still got it.

There were a number of other issues that came up. The GST came in 1991 under this member's party. I think he would agree with me that there was not overwhelming support from the public, but that did not seem to matter. We got it anyway.

It just appeared to me that, over the years that I was watching, it did not matter which government was in power, whatever it wanted to do, it did it. Committees and debates in the House of Commons were going through the motions. I wonder if it leads anywhere. Does it resolve anything? Is it always what the front row on that side of the House wants, it gets? That is what the country will get, like it or not. We will enjoy one day of democracy, which is election day. Is there any hope that will ever change, in the hon. member's view?

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I hope it will change. The government certainly has to change if we are to renew public confidence in democracy, as he suggests.

The fact is that he came to this country and his constituents are better for his decision to come to Alberta and to serve in the House of Commons. It is the commitment of members of parliament who come here with lofty ideals and hope to represent their constituents ethically and forcefully, to do so within some semblance of accountability.

I was at the swearing in ceremony this morning of the new member for Gander—Grand Falls. In the commitment that is made as a new member of parliament one is asked to serve faithfully Her Majesty The Queen in right of Canada. The government and the Prime Minister, through their actions, have broken that faith. They have broken that public trust.

So what hope is there, the member asks? There is an opportunity for there to be an accounting and it is on election day. Until that time it is the responsibility of the member who asked the question and members here on the opposite side to not just throw baseless allegations.

These are factual scenarios. What happened with the public works minister and his family stay at the chalet is factual. This is not a creation of the opposition. It was a decision, a very poor one, that the minister made. Instead of taking responsibility for it, instead of saying yes, it was wrong, there is an immediate attempt to justify it. To bring in a parish priest to somehow justify a minister's actions is a new low.

As far as the member's commentary on the previous government, sure, there should be some willingness to admit that it did not do everything right. It was an activist government that made big policy changes in this country and invested political capital in doing so. I will say one other thing about that government. When things happened, when decisions that were made were poor, were wrong, ministers resigned. That government had accountability. It took responsibility for its actions. That, at the very least, is within the tradition of ministerial responsibility. That is missing on that side of the House today.

• (1220)

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this is not a happy debate at all. It is interesting that I am one of two members who were defeated in 1993 from the previous government because of accusations and innuendo by the Liberals, the rat pack in particular. They criticized us very effectively while we were making a lot of profound changes and as the previous speaker said, we did not do everything right.

However, because those accusations were repeated over and over we were defeated, all but two members. We went from 160 seats down to 2 and I was one of the ones defeated. I was told to go home because we had done things wrong.

In 1997 I was fortunate enough to win again. I somehow recaptured the trust and faith of people. They voted me back in and defeated the Liberal who had replaced me. I was re-elected in 2000. I am proud of that and grateful for the opportunity to be here.

As foreign affairs critic I get to visit other countries that do not have a parliament that works like this. To see our parliament downgraded and degraded, like has been happening in the last little while, is sad for me. I value this experience and appreciate the value

### *Supply*

of parliament and the role we play. I truly believe in parliament and the parliamentary system.

This morning I talked with John Christianson, a reporter for the *Truro Daily News*. He asked about what was going on in Ottawa. I was talking with him about a local issue. I said we have an opposition day debate about corruption that would probably go on all day. I started to tell him some of the issues and he said there is so much of it now that reporters do not pay any attention or listen to it.

That is the perception out there with the thinking public. There is just so much of this stuff going on, whether it is corruption, incompetence or whatever. People do not even pay attention to it any more.

This morning I was looking at a newspaper. It had a picture of a ski chalet. I had to look at it two or three times. This is no ski chalet. In Atlantic Canada it would be a mansion. I do not know what to call it but it is a castle. I wondered where the money came from to build the castle. Did it come from the department of public works through these millions of dollars in contracts? Then the minister of public works is in there enjoying the castle. No wonder people wonder.

As the whole debate has come out, the son of the current minister of public works used to work for the previous minister of public works, Alfonso Gagliano. When the current minister became minister the son was moved over to another department.

There are rules in the public service. People in my riding cannot even apply for a job in Ottawa because they do not have the right postal code. Here is a minister's family member shuffled from place to place, and there are more family members in the government, as well. I do not want to drag in the family members but it is a fact. They have access to these jobs when people in my riding cannot even apply for them. No wonder people question what is going on and get tired of listening to it.

In the millions of dollars of contracts, who can figure out what \$50 million in advertising went to? Are we talking about signs at arenas, pins or flags? What are we talking about? With millions and millions of dollars, no wonder people are leery. Then there are \$10,000 a plate dinners to meet the Prime Minister. How many veterans will be there at the dinner? How many people with disability pensions will be at the \$10,000 a plate dinner to talk with the Prime Minister about their problems of not making ends meet on \$672 a month? Making \$672 a month, how does one go to \$10,000 a plate dinners to talk to the Prime Minister face to face? No wonder people are leery of the whole screwball outfit we have over there.

I paid particularly close attention to the Prime Minister's speech. He listed the eight points that he would change. They are probably good but they are extraneous points. He could have been so much more effective if he had just said that he would keep his promise and make the ethics counsellor answer to parliament.

He went on and on about unity which has nothing to do with this debate. He did admit some mistakes were made but he did not address the issue of the ethics counsellor.

*Supply*

•(1225)

Imagine if Sheila Fraser were the ethics counsellor and she answered to parliament. Imagine the mess that outfit would be in. This is why the government will not allow the ethics counsellor to report to parliament even though the Prime Minister promised to make the individual accountable to parliament.

The Prime Minister said that honouring the promises he made was a key part in restoring the trust of Canadians. Right off the bat he is acknowledging that he is not going to restore the trust of Canadians because he is not going to honour his promise to make the ethics counsellor accountable to parliament. That is all he had to do today to resolve a lot of the issues at hand and to stop calling parliament into disrepute, and he said that we should stop calling parliament into disrepute.

I remember a time a few years ago during 1988 to 1993 when the Prime Minister and his party had no hesitation in calling parliament into disrepute. They used every trick in the book. Some members may remember seeing the climbing over the desks, the screaming, the hollering, the accusations and innuendoes. They did not hesitate to call parliament into disrepute. Imagine an hon. member climbing over a desk to get to a minister. If that is not putting parliament into disrepute, then nothing is.

I wish only one thing. I do not care about the eight promises the Prime Minister made. I do not care about the eight points he made. This is about the integrity of this House, which I value. If we are going to have integrity in the House, it is clear that the ethics counsellor will have to be totally independent and accountable to parliament in the same way the auditor general is.

The auditor general has done this country an extreme service by the reports she has made. They are courageous and will help the country and the government to address issues that should have been addressed a long time ago. We should all be grateful for that institution. We should also be grateful for an ethics counsellor who reports to parliament in the same way the auditor general does.

All we are asking is for the Prime Minister to keep his promise. He said that it was important to keep promises. He also said another important thing and that was that the ethics counsellor should report to parliament. If he had kept his promise requiring the ethics counsellor to report to parliament, all of this would have been dealt with.

I hope all members of the opposition as well as all members of the government will continue to put pressure on the Prime Minister to bring that about so that the ethics counsellor will report to parliament.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member who just spoke because he dealt with the key issue.

Not only do the people in this place want to see change, but Canadians from coast to coast to coast want to see that change. Would the member agree that there are other democracies in the world that have a better system of ensuring that elected representatives behave in an ethical way rather than having just one appointed person? Would you not agree that an ethics committee—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I want to remind members to please make their interventions through the Chair because sometimes it can become quite problematic.

**Mr. Roy Bailey:** Mr. Speaker, also I would like the member to list at least three different things whereby we on both sides of the Chamber could agree to make certain changes that would prove to the people we represent that we were improving the area of accountability. I know he can do this.

•(1230)

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the test that the hon. member just handed me, and I will do my best to pass it.

If the government abided by the present rules we would not need any changes but unfortunately it is not doing that. We have seen that by just reading the newspapers over the last little while.

There are other democracies that have committees that deal with ethics issues and which report back to their parliaments and legislatures. This one does not have that. We have an ethics counsellor who is not an ethics counsellor but rather the first line of defence for the government. Whenever the government has a problem or gets into a bind, it calls the ethics counsellor and the ethics counsellor writes a report saying that everything is squeaky clean. That is the government's first line of defence and that is a bad mistake.

I will mention to the member three changes I would like to see made.

First, I would like to see committees of the House allowed to elect their own chairs in a proper way. Second, I would like to see committees allowed to choose their agendas, not be driven by ministers who tell it to do this or that. Third, is the same one I mentioned in the first place and that is an ethics counsellor who reports to parliament.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Prime Minister's speech this morning with total disgust quite honestly. I could not believe the Prime Minister of Canada said some of the things he did, trying to find excuses for the inexcusable.

Never mind the reports of the ethics counsellor and the ethics counsellor himself, which is a very serious issue. We have a report from the auditor general, Sheila Fraser, on the Groupaction contracts. I find what the government is attempting to do very troubling and problematic. We have to do a better job at picking up on this.

In the report she said:

Our audit found that senior public servants responsible for managing the contracts demonstrated an appalling disregard for the Financial Administration Act, the Government Contracts Regulations, Treasury Board policy, and rules designed to ensure prudence and probity in government procurement.

This is not a problem of senior public servants. Senior public servants answer to the minister—

*Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sorry to interrupt but I have to give an opportunity to the member for Cumberland—Colchester to respond.

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Mr. Speaker, first, the member said that he listened in disgust to the Prime Minister this morning. My reaction was different. It was more amazement and bewilderment that the Prime Minister could stand and say that we had to maintain the decorum or that we could not let these questions bring parliament into disrepute. When the Liberals were in opposition, their full time job was to bring parliament into disrepute and they left no stone unturned doing it.

Anyway to answer the question, I have a quote here from the Prime Minister who said:

There can be no substitute for responsibility at the top. The Prime Minister sets the moral tone for the government and must make the ultimate decisions when issues of trust or integrity are raised. That is what leadership is all about.

No one should blame the bureaucrats for this. There is a tradition and a precedent for accountability by ministers and that is completely disregarded by the government.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, normally I rise and say I am pleased to engage in the debate but the subject today unfortunately is not one that pleases anybody in the House, I hope. Fighting corruption and acknowledging that corruption is among us is a difficult situation. I remember the Prime Minister saying this morning that we should all be honourable people in the House but honourable people do not engage in corruption. I would like to see us live up to a title of honourable members.

The Ottawa *Citizen* today had an article about a committee meeting yesterday where I appeared as a witness. It was about an organization of parliamentarians that was trying to create an organization around the world called “global organization of parliamentarians against corruption”. This is being spearheaded by Canada and I am glad to say that the Minister for International Cooperation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Finance all support this initiative.

I hope we can hold our heads high as a beacon to the world as we bringing parliamentarians together to put this organization in place and to strengthen parliament so that the issue of corruption is at least controlled, if it cannot be eliminated. Unfortunately human nature when not held accountable, is prone to dipping its fingers into taxpayer money and other opportunities to help itself.

I want to quote a couple of items from the Ottawa *Citizen* article. It says:

—parliamentarians are a critical link in stopping corruption because their job is to hold the government of the day to account...

The whole idea is to strengthen the role of Parliament so it is more effective in holding its executive to account and, by doing so, curb corruption and help the economy...

It also talks about coming up with codes of conduct and best practices for accountability that are key tools to fighting corruption. That is what I said yesterday before committee, and today we have the Prime Minister giving a great speech about how open and transparent his government is.

Let us examine how open and transparent the government really is. Allegations are surrounding the Minister of Industry that his senior staff members, his political staff members, have been travelling the country at government expense doing what perhaps may be his own leadership bid for the party.

The Prime Minister said that he had to open up the expense account statements but we still cannot get them. Funny thing is, three days after the Winnipeg *Free Press* asked for the information, the political staff member reimbursed the government for one of the airplane tickets to Winnipeg. Why does it take a request through the access to information for the government to say “Oh, let us be open and transparent, but let us fix it first”.

The minister of public works, whom I hold in high regard, apologized to the House for accepting a consideration in kind. However we also found that the \$800 cheque, which messed up the whole scenario, was cashed after it became public knowledge. There is a two month gap which is unexplained. Why wait until it becomes public knowledge before the government says that it should be fixed before it comes out in the open?

A couple of years ago we spent months in the House on the HRDC scandal. The point was that while there was no real allegations of corruption, the President of the Treasury Board tabled in the House new rules for internal audit. When it all became public that there was a just a real rat's nest of problems in that department, it said “Okay let us see if we can fix that up”.

Let us look at the Prime Minister's statement this morning. He talked about his plan to introduce an eight point plan, or I hope legislation, to fix the problems, which we are debating today. He talked about introduction of rules relating to ministerial relationships with crown corporations.

● (1235)

It is a good idea, but it comes after Jon Grant talked about the relationship of Mr. Gagliano, the former minister of public works, to Canada Lands Company Limited which is a crown corporation and Downsview Park Inc. which is a subsidiary of Canada Lands Company Limited. The Liberals have been caught with their fingers in the trough so the Prime Minister is saying he will now fix the problem. The Minister of Industry was caught in allegations of wrongdoing. Now the Prime Minister says he will table guidelines for ministerial fundraising.

In the red book in 1993 the Prime Minister said he would create an ethics commissioner reporting to parliament. He now tells us he will give us the first report of the ethics counsellor who, by the way, writes the Prime Minister's responses for question period. That is some ethics counsellor. It will be interesting to see what kind of report it will be. The Prime Minister had no intention of making it public until the pressure was on.

*Supply*

We also have changes to the Lobbyists Registration Act. We have known for a long time that people who forget to register as lobbyists and so on are lobbying the government. The ethics counsellor who writes the Prime Minister's answers for question period is in charge of the Lobbyists Registration Act. It gives me a sore head to think of the lack of transparency and accountability and the conflicts of interest that permeate the entire situation. I am glad the Prime Minister is promising to fix the situation.

The Prime Minister says he will bring in new ideas for the financing of political parties. We have been standing in the House for years saying there seemed to be a correlation between making contributions to the Liberal Party and becoming a recipient of government contracts. It is now becoming a scandal the Prime Minister cannot ignore so he says he will bring in legislation.

The Prime Minister says he will bring in responsibility for senior public officials. As the auditor general has told us, some senior public officials did not think the rules applied to them, and whatever rules they thought applied to them they broke anyway. We sure need ethics.

The Council of Europe is a wonderful organization. It has developed a wonderful code of ethics which has been on its website for a long time. It is for all members of parliament, cabinet ministers and prime ministers. It could have been adopted a long time ago but was not.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, so I have a couple of minutes left.

Let us get everything out in the open. Democracy means openness, transparency and accountability to the electorate. The Prime Minister said democracy was the worst kind of government we could have apart from all the others. That may be true but let us not call it the worst kind. Let us make sure it is the best kind because it is open, transparent and accountable.

Our role as elected representatives of the citizens of Canada is to hold the executive to account. We must ask where the money is being spent, if the rules are being followed, if government members are getting benefits from their friends, and if they are ensuring contracts are open to public tender.

I sincerely hope Canada can be a beacon to the world. I hope we can say corruption has no place in our society the same way racism and bigotry have no place in our society. I hope we can demonstrate to the world that we can and should be the leader of a global organization of parliamentarians against corruption.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during his speech, my friend and colleague, the member for St. Albert, talked about the financing of political parties. While I totally agree with him, I believe that the approach to the financing of political parties should be reviewed in depth.

I would like to hear his comments on this point. Does he agree with the method used in Quebec, where public financing is the chosen approach, or does he think we should simply limit the

corporate contributions to political parties and set the ceiling at \$10,000, \$25,000 or something like that, instead of allowing businesses to give sums of \$500,000, one million dollars or even more?

I would like to hear what the member has to say on public financing and political party financing.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Williams:** Mr. Speaker, any time money is channelled through companies or some other methodology we start to wonder about the intentions. This is why I say democracy is about openness, transparency and accountability. We need to know.

Perhaps the Prime Minister will take to heart this idea when talking about changing the financing of political parties. If a person or company contributes to a political party and gets a contract it should be published. If a company gets a contract for \$550,000 it should say beside it that the company contributed \$75,000 to the governing party. That would let people draw their own conclusions.

Let us get it out front. If there is a correlation we will soon find it and start asking serious questions. If perchance it is proven to be legitimate after investigation I have no problem with that. However let us get it out in the open before we need to drag it out through access to information. Let us do so before we need to guess there is a smelly issue we should be looking at.

Democracy means putting information out. It means transparency. We would all be better off. I can assure the House if the government followed that rule it would not find itself in the position it is in today.

● (1245)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I commend my hon. friend and colleague from St. Albert. He has done a lot of work in the area of cleaning up government and finding out how institutions and administrations can face head on the issue of corruption to bring about the transparent and effective government he speaks of.

I will ask him about the root causes of corruption. We know it is financially driven. It is about money. It is about the redistribution of taxpayers' money for the benefit of government. This cannot be lost in the debate.

Is corruption not really about the perpetuation of power? In awarding these contracts to individuals is the government not gathering favours so the individuals in receipt of the contracts will feel indentured and grateful enough to reciprocate financially and in terms of political favour? Is this not the root cause of the corruption we are seeing perpetuated by the government?

**Mr. John Williams:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is absolutely right. There is nepotism. Someone can tell government members they can use their house for the weekend and say "Thank you very much for the contract you gave me last week. By the way, I have an application for another contract this week".

When one finds oneself in a conflict of interest in private as the minister and the chairman of the company likely did, it is strange that one can say "I am sorry, thank you for the use of your house over the weekend but I nixed your contract. I am putting it out for public tender but you can hike it by 10% to make sure there is extra gravy in it to cover your political contribution to the party I happen to represent".

Corruption is a diversion of public funds for personal gain. Whether it is used to gain power, stay in power, have a holiday for free or put cash into one's own pocket, it is the same thing in different forms. It is corruption, something which should never happen in an open, transparent and accountable democracy.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is with considerable sadness for the state of democracy in Canada that I find it necessary to rise and debate Liberal Party corruption.

It is a sad commentary on the deteriorated state of politics in Canada that members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition should be distracted from the deplorable state of national affairs, the chronic underfunding of health care, the softwood lumber crisis, and the unfolding crisis on the family farm resulting from inept foreign policy with our largest trading partner.

If the purpose of all the petty scandals is to distract the official opposition from the crisis in leadership the country currently faces, the government's strategy is not working. Ethical political behaviour is important to Canadians. While the government has used its friends in the media and elsewhere to slime its way out of past scandals, this time the smell of corruption is too great not to be noticed by the Canadian people.

The current tone of sleaze and corruption was set by no less than the Prime Minister when he directed members of his party during the last campaign to cry racist and try to smear opponents rather than engage in meaningful debate. The Prime Minister set the tone. There can be no doubt that the rot starts in his own office and trickles down to every nook and cranny of the Liberal Party.

There is a myth being sold by supporters of the finance minister that if only the Prime Minister would leave the corruption would leave with him and it would be all right. How wrong they are. Corruption is so deeply ingrained in anyone even remotely associated with the Liberal Party that it would take 20 years to find all the buried skeletons let alone clean up the mess.

In addition to the startling revelations of former senior staffer Jonathan Murphy, sure evidence of rot in the Prime Minister's Office is the Prime Minister's own decision to hire the defeated former candidate for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke as a fetch-it in his office. This two time loser is the same person the Prime Minister condemned for making racist comments against natives at the Pembroke Outdoor Sportsman's Club. His own party supporters wrote the Prime Minister a letter to asking him to intervene so the person would not "spout his extreme positions in the name of the Liberal Party". The Prime Minister answered the people in a letter dated March 20, 1992. He said he had looked into the issue could assure the members "that the views expressed by Mr. Clouthier at a meeting...are, frankly, unacceptable to me."

### *Supply*

In case there is any doubt about the sincerity of his attack against natives, the same person went on local television months later to boast about his comments. He bragged that he stood by everything he had said and would not retract his statements. Regarding the Prime Minister, he commented on the CBC that "The bottom line is, I believe he is not a leader". Yet there he sits at the Prime Minister's right hand.

It would appear that what was unacceptable to the Prime Minister then is now all right. It looks like a lot of things are acceptable now that were not before, or are they? People in my riding say he is there because the two are so alike. However I have news for the Prime Minister. The 43 Grit supporters who signed the letter to the Prime Minister have nominated a candidate to run against the gopher. As supporters of the finance minister they are counting the days until the Prime Minister is forced from office in disgrace and takes the caucus snitch with him.

The Prime Minister's own party is abandoning him. Why else would they run someone against his favourite? Nothing could be more telling than the startling revelations this week by the former Liberal research director Jonathan Murphy. As someone who has endured a smear campaign from the Prime Minister's office I can appreciate Mr. Murphy's description of the Prime Minister's family friend Francine Ducros as a communications director who "favoured a small group of press gallery journalists who were prepared to regurgitate PMO propaganda".

Only one who lives the life of Riley knows if Mr. Murphy is referring to Ms. Ducros or to the civil servants who report the news at the government broadcasting corporation, the CBC, and collect paycheques thanks to the taxpayers of Canada.

•(1250)

As a knowledgeable party insider, Murphy refers to the "nepotism and politicization of the bureaucracy...in a manner reminiscent of a one-party state". In Mr. Murphy's words, the secretive "Communications Co-ordination Group" is just a front for deceptive government propaganda to thwart access to information requests and formulate smear campaigns against the auditor general as that public servant performs her responsibilities.

Earlier I referred to the rot and corruption that have infiltrated every nook and cranny in the Liberal Party. Nowhere is this more evident than in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke where the local Liberal Party association decided to set up a committee it calls the communication and strategy committee. Communication, to a Liberal, means smear. In the Prime Minister's Office, in a riding association, there is no difference: smear is smear.

Strategy consists of sending hate letters to newspapers. In fact, the riding association president bragged to his members that the so-called work of the committee would, and I quote their newsletter, "become evident throughout the riding's media outlets".

*Supply*

The Prime Minister sets the tone. How many other propaganda committees has the party set up in ridings across the country? The Prime Minister's corruption has rotted the grassroots, or what is left of them, in his party. Only a cynical person looking for an appointment with a crown corporation or for some kind of handout wants to join his party now. What a sad commentary on the state of political discourse in his party.

The absolute lowest point of this session had to be the member for Vancouver Centre and her attempt to smear the entire city of Prince George with visions of crosses burning in front yards. The next lowest point was the attempt by the Liberal MPs to smear the auditor general in her role as an impartial public servant in exposing government mismanagement and waste.

If one examines corruption in this current government, it can be divided into two types: institutional and political. The first type of government corruption is political, which I have spoken about. Now I will deal with corruption that is institutional, which includes conscious mismanagement of government.

The Sea King helicopter fiasco is the most public example of this corruption. The decision to cancel the contract was totally political. How many Canadian soldiers must die because they are forced to use unsafe equipment? In the 1960s there was a jet aircraft in use that had the nickname "the widow-maker". How many military widows will there be now because of military cutbacks?

How many other Canadians have died because of Liberal cutbacks to our health care system? In the city of Pembroke in my riding residents are denied basic health care that is taken for granted in other areas, such as MRIs, because of the Liberal cutbacks to health care.

The government's response is that it had to balance the budget, yet it can find almost a billion dollars to harass duck hunters and hundreds of millions of dollars for ad campaigns, but there is no money for health care.

On July 6, 2001, a coroner's jury clearly placed the blame for the drowning deaths of two Bruce Township Central Public School students near Tobermory, Ontario, on federal government cutbacks. Of the 61 recommendations made by the coroner's jury, forty-four were directed to Transport Canada, three to Parks Canada and one each to Environment Canada and the Transportation Safety Board. In the words of the local superintendent of education, "Over forty recommendations were directed at Transport Canada. The poor regulatory process of the Federal Government was likely the reason the boat sank".

What has happened? The cutbacks continue. There is no accountability in the system. The federal Minister of Transport should have resigned and taken responsibility for the needless deaths of these children. Instead the Prime Minister is proud that no minister has resigned. I call the need to resign accountability in our parliamentary democracy. Failure to respect that is corruption of our political institution.

It is clear that the sequel to *On the Take*, crime, corruption and greed in the Prime Minister's years, is now being written. The Prime Minister has said that once there was honour in his party. He has the opportunity to leave a positive legacy. No one wants to be

remembered for corruption and greed. He has an option, Sir. He can continue the old ways or he can be remembered as a statesman. The choice is his. Ethical behaviour is important to the Canadian people. He will be judged by his actions, not by the empty words of communication of the propaganda committee. The choice is clear.

• (1255)

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am frankly very disappointed. The House was exceptionally well served by the former Liberal member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. For many years that riding produced wonderful Liberals. It is quite unfortunate that we have had this hiccup over the past four years, where the constituency, for whatever reason, has decided to experiment with a new member.

Frankly, it is unfortunate that she stands up in the House and attempts to attack the integrity of one of the finest prime ministers that has ever served this country, a Prime Minister who for the past 40 years has proven over and over again the kind of leadership, sincerity, vision and integrity that this country deserves so very much.

I want to ask her this: If it was so bad why would Transparency International have identified this country as one of the cleanest among all of the G-7 countries? Why would the United Nations over and over again identify this country as one of the finest countries in which to live? Are things so bad? Frankly, I think the only corrupt thing is on the other side in the brains of those opposition members who cannot even talk about issues. Rather, they bring the debate to such a low level.

• (1300)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, openness, transparency and accountability are what the official opposition is demanding of government. The member asked the question of why it did this. One only has to look to the different grants that go to countries and that are unaccountable. Obviously somewhere along the line somebody has paid for that too.

Here we are again, resorting to smear tactics instead of discussing the issue.

**Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you said, I am a new member in the House. I came in just a couple of days ago after sixteen and a half years of experience in the provincial house of assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador. I had the good fortune of serving in the opposition for four years and then in three different portfolios, social services, transportation and twice as fisheries minister. There was quite a different setting in the house of assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador with respect to the decorum and the way question period is carried out, so it will take me a while to get used to it.

I have been listening to the opposition members over the last three or four days. They keep using the word corruption. Before I get into what I want to talk about, which is the sensationalism of what the opposition is doing, I want to make mention of the Prime Minister and the statement that he made in the House this morning.

*Supply*

I must say that I have been a Liberal for quite a long time. I have served for sixteen and a half years. I was never more proud to be a Liberal and to be in the House than when I heard the Prime Minister speak this morning. I served in the role of opposition member from 1985 to 1989 and I have some information for the people in the opposition. Those people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. Using the word corruption is degrading all the ministers and all people on both sides of the House.

:

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the new member to the House.

Corruption is defined as the diversion of public funds for private gain. The accusations about the opposition being corrupt are totally unfounded. The corruption is here in the government, and if the name sticks, it is going to wear it.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to inform you that I will share my time with the member for Ottawa Centre.

I am pleased to speak to the motion on public ethics that the opposition has introduced today. This issue is quite important. I believe it should interest all parliamentarians and any institution of democratic government. The welfare of our nation and our ability to govern depend directly on the citizens' trust in the institutions that govern and represent them.

• (1305)

[*English*]

The Prime Minister spoke eloquently and extensively on this matter today. He made clear the government's commitment to the highest ethical standards, not only in repayment of the trust placed in us by Canadians but also as the best guarantor we have of effective governance, which allows our society to thrive and our economy to prosper.

Some of the important measures instituted over the last eight and a half years by the government to ensure that this high ethical standard is maintained and strengthened even further have included: the fulfillment of the pledge to appoint an ethics counsellor, which was done in consultation with the opposition leaders in this House; the tabling of a revised and strengthened code of conduct for public office holders, overseen by the ethics counsellor; the introduction of the toughest legislation in the world for regulating lobbyists; and our support for a motion that increased the frequency of reporting to parliament by Canada's auditor general. All of these are steps that have brought greater transparency and accountability into our system of government in this country.

The Prime Minister has just outlined today a new eight point plan to build on these measures and to raise the standard for government integrity and ethics even higher. For my part, I wish to underscore two key points today.

First, even while we take note of these various guidelines and measures to support probity in public governance, we have to recognize that ethics fundamentally are not about rules. They are

about people making judgments and guiding their behaviour accordingly. We can always enact book loads of rules, but ultimately Canadians will judge their political representatives by their behaviour, by the moral compass that guides them and by the degree to which they uphold the dignity and standards of their office and of our parliamentary traditions.

[*Translation*]

What has allowed this government to do particularly well, and Canadians recognize this, is the fact that its actions respect and go beyond these standards.

No member of this government has deviated from the rules. No member of this government has tried to take advantage of public office for personal gain. Never.

This government takes very seriously the trust that the people has in it and that they have renewed many times.

[*English*]

The second point I wish to make relates very much to the first. It is important that parliament discuss issues associated with ethical behaviour, but we must do so in a manner that inspires the confidence of Canadians. Scandal-mongering and the ability to make allegations in this Chamber without legal consequence benefits no one, least of all our electors. It shames this House.

Unfounded and extreme language is the height of irresponsibility, particularly in the use of words like corruption or crime, which have very specific meanings and which clearly do not apply to anything that has been revealed in the House or outside it in recent weeks. This rhetoric reveals a bankruptcy of genuine thought and considered ideas on real questions of policy and government practice.

In the schoolyard when children have nothing better to say they may scream a curse. In parliament it seems that if the opposition has nothing of substance to criticize or to contribute it shouts corruption.

[*Translation*]

One major responsibility is renewing itself, particularly as the official opposition has now a new leader, that is, to restore some dignity and intelligence to the proceedings of the House.

I would like to encourage my colleagues to make this goal a personal priority.

[*English*]

The dignity of this Chamber depends upon it. Serious questions have every right to be asked and they deserve answers. Where things need to be fixed, they must be fixed. There is no question about that. It is the role of the opposition to challenge the government to do so.

However it also brings this institution into disrepute when extreme language is used, and we hear that repeatedly, without justification, without explanation and without facts.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** You are the extreme.

**Hon. John Manley:** The hon. member for the Alliance says that we are the extreme. However, even in today's motion its members could not state the facts in a truthful way.

*Supply*

We heard the former leader of the opposition get up today and complain that I had used a letter referring to his desire to receive funds under a sponsorship program claiming that his request had not been accepted when in fact it is still under consideration. Let us put that in the context in which it arose and why I raised it.

I raised it because somehow or other the members of the Alliance Party thought it was wrong for me, as the member of parliament for Ottawa South, to write a letter supporting the Ottawa Tulip Festival. Is the tulip festival a scandal? In what way did I personally benefit from that? One hon. member said that I did it for self-aggrandizement.

If the hon. members over there think it is a scandal for a member of parliament to seek self-aggrandizement, I think we had better have a pretty big dock for all the criminals to sit on after watching them outside the Chamber after question period parading around down on the market.

The time has come for us to put a bit of limitation on what people say in this place. We must respect the traditions of parliament that suggest decorum and responsibility ought to be reflected in here. This debate has gone well beyond the questions of proper governance. It has gone into questions of allegation and of guilt by association. I do not think it meets any of the minimal norms of parliamentary behaviour.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to listen very carefully to the language being used in here to ensure it reflects the proper values of this place.

• (1310)

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister is correct when he says that this issue deals with matters of significance. It deals with the confidence that Canadians have in this parliamentary process.

He talks about fulfilling the pledge for an ethics counsellor when he knows full well that in the Liberal red book it called for an ethics commissioner not an ethics counsellor. He talks about transparency and accountability. He talks about extreme language. What about the extreme language of the former immigration minister during the last election? What about calling us anti-Semitic? What about all the racist epithets that she put out?

What about when the current immigration minister said that we were the Le Pen franchise in Canada? That was rather extreme, was it not?

What about the fearmongering? When the heritage minister used the name Mrs. Milosevic when she called across the floor to the member for Calgary North, was that not an obvious inference? What about the extreme language that the Liberals are always putting out?

I happen to have a fairly high regard for that member of parliament so I want to put a very serious question to him.

As the former industry minister, he knows full well that when decisions are made by the CRTC with respect to broadcast licences, satellite images being put out and all these things, these are decisions that affect companies to the tune not of millions but of tens and hundreds of millions of dollars. However we also know that the CRTC rulings can be overridden or reviewed by cabinet. He would know that because he would have been approached by—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sorry to interrupt the member but quite a few members want to ask questions of the Deputy Prime Minister.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, I will get to the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The member has already taken two minutes. I am at your mercy. Is there consent to extend the member's time for questions?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I will allow the member for Kootenay—Columbia 30 seconds to put his question.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, why would the hon. member and the heritage minister not be concerned about the fact that they do not have to tell anybody who is presently supporting their leadership campaigns when they are the people who are responsible for making decisions on the part of companies that stand to win or to lose tens and hundreds of millions of dollars? Why would they not want those companies' names on an open list so that we would know who is supporting the member in his potential leadership race?

**Hon. John Manley:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and I may surprise him with the answer.

First, I condemn excessive language on both sides of the House. I think it is the responsibility of all members to set the tone and decorum here.

Second, I have not personally committed myself to a leadership race but I want to assure the member that among my friends, many of whom are encouraging me to consider it, I have indicated that if, as and when money is raised, contributors must accept that their names will be made public whatever rules may later apply.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to what the Deputy Prime Minister has said and I do agree with him on the importance of decorum and the respect owed to people.

I think he will agree that, being in the opposition or not, we are allowed to criticize ideas but that we also have to be considerate to people. I agree with him on that.

I would like to talk about some of the files that he is responsible for as Deputy Prime Minister and minister, including crown corporations and some foundations. I would say this.

This government seems to rely more and more on foundations to spend public funds. Even in international aid, I learned this morning that the \$500 million set aside for Africa had first been transferred to a trust over which CIDA has no control. I would like the Deputy Prime Minister, who usually has progressive ideas, to tell us if he agrees that, on the contrary, we should review this trend to ensure that parliamentarians have direct access to information by questioning ministers?

**Hon. John Manley:** Mr. Speaker, I am indeed responsible for crown corporations, but not for foundations.

*Supply*

As a matter of fact, when I became the minister in charge of the new infrastructure program, I made a decision with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance not to establish the foundation provided for in the budget. I do not believe that it was the best way to spend these funds. I am responsible for the infrastructure program. When projects are announced, the hon. members could ask me questions on the decisions I make with my colleagues.

As concerns the foundations, I was involved in the creation of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, for example. I think that decisions made in that context are much better decisions. They are made by people with scientific and technical expertise, because the foundation's mandate is to spend on big infrastructure projects, and research and development in universities and research hospitals. Consequently, the decisions are not completely political, left to the experts. I think decisions made on strategic infrastructures are political in nature, though, and I am responsible for them.

[English]

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin my remarks by emphasizing the importance the government places on transparency and openness in all of its actions.

Each day members of the government stand in the House and respond to questions from the opposition. Each day we willingly respond to questions posed by the media. Each day we look for ways to engage Canadians so that their views are taken into consideration in the work that we do.

These are the actions of a government committed to openness in how it conducts business. These are the actions of a government committed to effectiveness in how that business is carried on. These are the actions of a government confident that Canadians know we are committed to doing the right thing.

In his motion, our colleague, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, cites a recent survey of Canadians on how they see the federal political system. I am sure that all members share the view that as members of the House it is important that we listen to what the people of the country have to say. For those of us on the government benches, this principle dominates our actions.

The success of the government is directly linked to its dedication to working with Canadians to build the country we all believe in. From the Prime Minister and his cabinet, to each member of caucus, all of us embrace openness and understand the importance of listening to and hearing what Canadians have to say. That is what makes this government one that speaks for all Canadians and why Canadians have entrusted us to lead the country. I assure members that it is a responsibility that we do not take lightly.

The Prime Minister has risen many times in the House to stand by the action of the government. He, like all other members of the House, understands the importance of vigorous parliamentary debate on all matters of government business. He has also spoken on many occasions of the importance of integrity in how the government and its members conduct themselves.

His 1994 decision to appoint the government's first ever ethics counsellor broke new ground. He also championed the effort to strengthen the rules for lobbying and has been unwavering in his expectation that all public office holders, including ministers, must

adhere to the conflict of interest code for public office holders, a code that has been revised and strengthened under this government.

Also, under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Canada, the government has demonstrated time and again that it is ready to be held to the highest ethical standard and is ready to look for ways to improve upon those standards.

I share the views of all members of the House that we bear special responsibility as keepers of the public trust. As the Prime Minister told the House in 1994, “trust in the institutions of government is not a partisan issue but something all of us elected to public office have an obligation to restore”. He went on to say that “trust in institutions is as vital to a democracy as the air we breathe”.

Like the members of the opposition, we know we must be vigilant in protecting and nurturing that trust. The Prime Minister has stood before us and left no doubt that he willingly takes the responsibility to not only maintain the confidence of Canadians for the actions of his government but for how parliament and its institutions are maintained and seen by Canadians.

Each of us is responsible for our own behaviour as a member of parliament. Each of us is responsible for our own actions as individuals. These principles drive the government and help form the basis of its accountability to Canadians.

We must also remember that this Prime Minister has never shied away from accepting personal responsibility for the standard of conduct for ministers and for ensuring that these high standards are met. Here the ethics counsellor plays an important role in supporting the Prime Minister by providing advice to ministers on how to adhere to the conflict of interest code, as well as meeting the Prime Minister's personal expectations on ethical conduct.

● (1320)

Let me underscore that the process whereby the Prime Minister sets the standards of behaviour for his government and is accountable to Canadians for the government's performance is one of the most fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy. It has existed this way since the beginning of Confederation and continues to be at the heart of the relationship between Canadians and their elected government.

There are many rules in place to guide the conduct of ministers. It was this government that put these rules and the office of the ethics counsellor in place to ensure that the highest standard of conduct is being met. It is this government that has been unwavering in its commitment to operate in a transparent and open manner, never turning away from allegations regarding how it conducted itself.

If the opposition were correct, one might reasonably ask why did this government put ethical guidelines in place? Why did it appoint an ethics counsellor? Why did it turn to the auditor general, an officer of parliament, to look into various matters? Why?

As is so often the case, the answer is quite simple. This is a government that is built on integrity, openness and accountability. It is a government that is not just doing the right thing, but wants to be seen as doing the right thing.

### Supply

We will not be complacent. We will continue to take the appropriate steps to ensure our effectiveness as a government. We will remain open to change, knowing that we best serve Canadians by moving forward. This is about transparency and about getting government right. This is about Canadians knowing this is their government and it is committed to serving in their interests with the utmost honesty and integrity.

I have spoken of the importance of openness to this government. I have spoken of the high standards set by the Prime Minister for this government. Because of the nature of the work of all parliamentarians, from time to time we will face ethical dilemmas and challenges as members of this House. We owe it to all Canadians to ensure that all steps are taken so that the integrity of this institution and its members is above reproach.

Let me close by stating that I understand the role of the opposition in holding the government accountable. This is an important principle of parliamentary democracy, but we must be vigilant in ensuring that the discussion and debate we have on these matters is based on fact and not on fiction or rhetoric. Canadians expect no less than that and the opposition knows it.

• (1325)

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member knows what the words transparent, open, honest or integrity mean because his speech was the exact opposite. It was very deceptive. I want to raise five issues that completely disprove what he said. The so-called democracy that those members say is here is being thwarted.

I served on a committee for private members' business. That committee operates behind closed doors. It is never open. It has never allowed private members' business to become votable.

I have put in over 267 access to information requests on one narrow topic alone. Sometimes it takes over one year for the information to come back and then it is out of date. That is not open and accountable government.

We do not have an ethics commissioner who is accountable to parliament. He is muzzled by the Prime Minister. That is not open and accountable government.

We do not have whistleblower legislation in this parliament whereby someone in the bureaucracy who sees a problem can come forward with it and have something done about it. Any democracy in the modern world has that kind of legislation, yet the government blocks that legislation.

We do not have a committee to examine the 5,000 different appointments to the bureaucracy. That is done behind closed doors. That is not open and accountable government.

The Prime Minister chooses when he will be a dictator and when he will be a democrat and unfortunately it is very seldom that he chooses to be a democrat. The whole system is designed to allow for corruption because there are no appropriate checks and balances in the system.

**Mr. Mac Harb:** Mr. Speaker, I really do not know where to start. The member is wrong, wrong and wrong again.

On the issue of transparency, as I stated earlier, Transparency International is an international non-governmental organization devoted to fighting corruption and promoting transparency in government around the world. It has consistently ranked Canada as the best out of all of the G-7 countries in terms of transparency. I do not understand what the member is talking about.

He talked about watchdogs. It was this government, it was the Prime Minister who decided for the first time ever in the history of Canada to allow the auditor general to report four times a year. That is the watchdog. It was this government for the first time ever that appointed an ethics counsellor to advise ministers and the Prime Minister on issues relating to ethics. That is transparency.

On the last issue, the member was talking about accountability. I thought Canadians elected members on that side of the House in order for them to act as opposition members and not to waste their time making unfounded and senseless allegations, and then coming up with bankrupt ideas. If anything that is what is fueling the cynicism of Canadians.

While I am on my feet, and you are being very generous, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about public trust and public confidence, my colleague knows there was a Léger & Léger survey as early as January before any of these allegations came about. It stated that in terms of the public trust, less than 50% of the people trust journalists; insurance brokers, 51%; publicists, 47%, real estate agents, 44%; and politicians, who were right behind car salesmen, 18%.

Why do people not trust politicians? It is because of those kinds of statements and the way those guys are undermining the public institution and democracy of this country. It is because those ladies and gentlemen are not doing their job and talking about the issues that matter the most to Canadians, issues such as unemployment, economic growth and taxation. Those are the issues that are important to Canadians. They do not want members to stand on their feet and make unfounded allegations, which none of them would make outside the House.

• (1330)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was not a member of parliament in 1988, when the Liberals were the opposition, but I know there was a group called the rat pack.

I would like my colleague to explain to me what this group was all about.

[English]

**Mr. Mac Harb:** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to dignify a senseless question with a senseless answer.

I missed one thing which I want to make clear for the House. This is a good institution. Since Confederation, going back to 1867—

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order about relevancy. I asked the hon. member a question, but he said he would answer the Canadian Alliance because he forgot to answer one of its questions. I would like an answer to my own question.

*Supply*

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The hon. member has reason to complain. With the indulgence of the House, please answer the member's question and I will allow the member for Ottawa Centre another 30 seconds.

**Mr. Mac Harb:** Mr. Speaker, all I want to say is that this institution works. Since 1867 until now, out of 167 ministers who have resigned, five were as a result of conflict of interest, two were Liberals, one in 1965 and one in 1878; two were Conservatives, one in 1988 and one in 1986; and one was a Liberal Conservative in 1891. This is a good institution, my colleagues. We have to respect it. We have to move beyond the past.

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

I will follow up on the previous speaker and say it is important that the institution, the parliamentary system, have a reputation. Canada is taking the lead by holding an international conference on corruption around the world. Representatives of 70 countries around the world will be coming to Canada for the first international conference.

It is extremely important that Canada set an example for the world that any kind of corruption, graft or political influence will not be tolerated and will not be accepted. That is the essence of what we are trying to accomplish with the debate today. We want to make sure that the government understands that under no circumstances will any kind of influence peddling be tolerated.

There is a history here. Whether or not the hon. member wants to acknowledge it, when the Liberals were in opposition there was a rat pack. If he wants to know what the rat pack did and how it lowered the tenor and the reputation of parliamentarians, all he had to do was watch CBC Newsworld the other night and see the present minister of heritage crawling across the table to go after Sinclair Stevens.

The Minister of Public Works and Government Services was also a member of the rat pack. It was quite apparent from the newscast the other night that his behaviour was questionable at that time.

It is interesting that the government members only seemed to be concerned about patronage when it was the Tory patronage. They do not seem to be at all concerned about what they themselves are getting involved in and what they are representing to the Canadian people. It is not just their behaviour in the past. It is promises that they made when they went to the electorate. They made promises in the red book, in a document that they put to Canadians and said "Vote for us because we promise to change the system". They promised an ethics commissioner who would report directly to parliament.

The Prime Minister said this morning, and I do not think he is wrong, that he needs a counsellor, that he needs to have someone counsel him on what behaviour would be appropriate. I do not think that is wrong. Obviously the Liberals need some help. Perhaps they need two positions. Perhaps they need someone on their staff, and I would think justice department has a whole floor of lawyers who could give them counsel. They also need an ethics commissioner

reporting to the House of Commons who is open and transparent and who is free for all Canadians to have some confidence that this kind of stuff will not be tolerated.

I noticed that this morning even the Prime Minister put a plan on the floor with eight proposals, changing rules for how government members would do business, how the cabinet would do business, the rules on the floor. All of it of course is just promises, words, hearsay. We have not seen any actual bills, legislation or regulations that would give any meat to it. We heard him say that he would bring a different standard to the House of Commons, new rules on election funding and rules for cabinet ministers and so on and so forth.

If he is sincere about making this open and transparent and taking away the tint of any kind of influence peddling or patronage, I would like to ask the Prime Minister something. Since the events of September 11, financial institutions are required by law to report all and any transactions involving amounts of \$10,000 or more.

● (1335)

We would assume that means that any transactions of significant amounts of money that might cause some influence or might show where there is money transferring for political influence, that these financial institutions would be required to disclose this money and what account it is being deposited to.

We are wondering if the Prime Minister will also abide by the spirit of this law and disclose the names of all the individuals who will be gathering in Montreal this weekend paying \$10,000 for the privilege of having access to the Prime Minister. Will he hold himself to the same level of scrutiny and accountability as we hold others in this country?

It is interesting that the Prime Minister came to announce these measures today on an opposition supply day motion. What is interesting is that we seldom get a cabinet minister to respond and to speak on a supply day let alone the Prime Minister. In his speech today he made mention that mistakes were made and that the government would correct these mistakes and that it would do the right thing by bringing in a code of ethics which would be made public.

For years we have tried to convince the government to do the right thing. It is interesting that the Prime Minister admitted today that for the last eight and a half years the government has done the wrong thing by not making the code of ethics for ministers public, by not making it accountable and by not bringing it into the House of Commons to make it transparent.

That shows an indication by the Prime Minister that he understands the seriousness of the events that have occurred with his government over the last number of years. It would not be fair to say it is just the last several weeks with the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. Other members have brought up the issue of the HRDC scandal and Shawinigate. The list goes on. It is not about this one issue. It is about the way the government is doing business. One of the more offensive things that Canadians see and they see it not only from the activities in the House of Commons but decisions that are made outside the House, is the arrogance of the Liberal government.

### Supply

We cannot allow any government to feel that it cannot be replaced. If we believe in a democratic process and if we believe in the parliamentary system, we cannot allow any government to feel so arrogant that it can do whatever it wants whenever it wants, however it wants. We cannot allow a government to continue to rule in a fashion that one sometimes has a hard time distinguishing it from a democracy or from a dictatorship.

Some people may think that is an extreme way of talking but Canadians outside the House understand what I mean by that. We have one individual who can choose who he wants to sit as a cabinet minister, one individual who can decide who will be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada, one individual who has such control over the operations of our country and our government, and who then denies responsibility when it comes to being held accountable.

The Prime Minister said not that many years ago that the buck stops at the top, that he took on the responsibility of his ministers and what was happening in his government. It is interesting to see that it took a supply day motion from the opposition to force the Prime Minister of the day who holds such great power to admit that changes had to happen, that there had to be more transparency and accountability. Our role as opposition is to ensure the Prime Minister always understands that he and he alone is responsible for his government and he must take the responsibility of ensuring that his government is acting properly, appropriately and in a very accountable, transparent manner.

• (1340)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is more a comment than a question, but I do want to point out two specifics, particularly to the government members who have said there is no evidence of scandals and what not.

I want to point out something that goes back to 1997 when I was a new member in this place. There was an individual who was a Liberal Party fundraiser in the province of Quebec. His name was Pierre Corbeil. Pierre Corbeil somehow gained access to lists which either came from the minister's department or a cabinet document of some sort. It was not something he could get off the Internet. In other words it was a confidential list.

With this list he approached companies in the province of Quebec which were under consideration for grants from the federal government. This individual was found out. He was not only charged, but convicted of influence peddling. He is a convicted felon, a Quebec Liberal Party fundraiser. It was very, very serious. That is evidence and proof positive of the tip of the iceberg of what is perhaps going on in more detail over there. Second, there is a dual process through the Quebec Liberal Party for approval of grants which came to light during the 2000 election.

Surely these two pieces of evidence would indicate to the public at large that there is a lot to be concerned about with the administration of taxpayer dollars and the way that the government is conducting business.

**Ms. Val Meredith:** Mr. Speaker, I did not realize that earned a response, but the hon. member is quite right. There is enough evidence out there to indicate there is a serious problem here.

Canada should be holding itself up as an example internationally as to how good government can run without influence peddling, without corruption and patronage graft. We can show the rest of the world how it can be done properly, but we have a long way to go to clean up our own act.

It is the government of the day that must clean up its act to give the right impression, not only to the international community, but to the Canadian voters who have lost confidence in the integrity of their government.

• (1345)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley for her comments.

I would like her to comment on the call for an independent ethics commissioner. It was a post that was promised by the federal Liberals in the last election, or three or four elections ago, but it has never been delivered. The ethics commissioner would become an independent officer of parliament, reporting to parliament instead of reporting to the Prime Minister. That is the way to go.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the other independent watchdogs of parliament: the auditor general, who recommends that the finance minister is in contravention of using generally accepted accounting practices; the privacy commissioner, who condemns the government for its intrusions on the privacy of Canadians; the access to information commissioner, an independent commissioner, who condemns the government for the way that it is secretive in keeping things away from Canadians who deserve to have it; and the EI auditor, who says that the fund is vastly overfunded and Canadians are being overcharged day after day for the privilege of working.

Every time an independent officer of parliament reports to parliament the government ignores it anyway. The independence is good because it is the proper way to report it. To the government, even independence does not mean that it will actually listen.

**Ms. Val Meredith:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. An independent ethics commissioner should have the power through legislation, not only to report to parliament, but to actually enforce some kind of sanction, whether it is a fine or having members resign their seats or whatever.

There must be some way that an independent commissioner could have some influence, some impact. The way to do that would be through legislation that would allow a series of sanctions. In less serious situations it could be a minor fine or it could have a member being called to the bar to apologize to the House. In more serious cases it could request a member to resign his or her seat because of ethical behaviour.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the Canadian Alliance supply day motion. The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the reason why 69% of Canadians polled in a recent survey viewed the "federal political system" as corrupt is because Ministers of this government have failed to make public their secret Code of Conduct, have broken their own Liberal Red Book promises such as the one to appoint an independent Ethics Counsellor who reports directly to Parliament and have failed to clear the air over allegations of abusing their positions to further their own interests and those of their friends.

That is what we are discussing here. We bring the motion forward not out of some attempt to be sanctimonious and standing up on top of a mountain telling parliament how it should be run but because there is an important problem happening here.

I listened to the remarks of the Prime Minister this morning when he gave his speech. When he was describing the Quebec contracts, which is a subject of much debate in this place, he said not to judge the government's motives. He said its motives were derived out of the 1995 referendum campaign where the sovereignists almost won. The federalists barely managed to win and the governments's motive was to try to find some kind of new federalist voice in Quebec and to expand the concept of federalism in Quebec.

I say to the Prime Minister that there is simply no virtue in the argument of saying that the government may have screwed up, that there may be accusations of corruption, that the auditor general is breathing down the government's throat and there is an RCMP across the board investigation into what it is doing. However, the motive was x. There is no virtue in that argument.

To back that up I would like to read from a section of a book that was written by an author who is a public philosopher, Dennis Prager, for whom I have a tremendous amount of respect. In a chapter entitled "Don't Judge Motives" he writes:

What we do, not what we intend, is what counts.

On the global level, assessing motives rather than actions has led to serious moral distortions. Take, for example, the differing assessments of capitalism and Communism.

Communism resulted in the loss of freedom by more nations, and the deaths of more individuals, than any other doctrine in history. Yet because it was perceived by many people as emanating from good motives—abolishing poverty, achieving greater equality, etc.—many people refused to accord it the revulsion that its deeds deserved.

On the other hand, capitalism has enabled more people to experience freedom and prosperity than any other economic doctrine. It should therefore be widely admired. Yet it is often vilified. The reason? It is based on selfish motives—profit.

Defenses of Communism and opposition to capitalism have emanated from the same flawed logic—judging motives, not deeds.

What we are trying to do with the motion is to get at the deeds of the government and unearth the problems that are at the core of our system that result in 70% of Canadians thinking that our federal political system is corrupt. They do believe that. That is not some phantom number. I heard one Liberal on television, and I do not believe it was a member of parliament but a spin-meister, saying the poll actually asked four questions and three of the four questions tended to give a response that politics is corrupt. Only one of the four did not. Therefore, 70% of Canadians really do think this place is corrupt. When we walk down Main Street that is what we hear.

We had a break this past week and if any members did even a little bit of what I did, which was spend a lot of time talking to constituents, they would get a real sense that Canadians really believe that. If we were to take a poll of the people who are in the gallery right now in the House of Commons and ask if they think our system of government functions appropriately and effectively and really gives Canadians the most upright, forthright, democratic and open system possible, my guess is seven out of ten would probably say no because they do not see it. They do not see it in the tangible results.

### *Supply*

We do not mean for this to sound as though we are taking a big whack at all Liberal members of parliament. There are some good Liberal members of parliament. The member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey is a good, decent Liberal member of parliament. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is a good man. The member for Yukon, who I spend a lot of time chatting with, is a good, decent member.

I say with absolute sincerity to those members that with the scandals that are going on and with the 70% number that we know about as being fact, they are missing their moment. This is the time when they should stand up and say that what has been going on is wrong. They are missing that moment.

I do not say this because the Canadian Alliance is upright, forthright and moral. The members of the Reform Party missed their moment and I will tell the House the moment that we missed.

It was a couple of years ago when Jack Ramsay was accused of a particular crime. I was a member of the party. I have been a member of the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance going back to 1993. I can tell the House that I was not happy with the way that this party missed its moment in saying that the House needed to raise its standards. It should not just go by the legalities of the law and if a person has obeyed the law that individual could be a member of parliament or if a person has not obeyed the law then that individual should not be a member of parliament. There is a higher standard that we must live by as members of parliament.

My view is that our party in general did not meet that standard but the Canadian people in the next campaign met it for us. I believe the Liberal government is missing that standard. It should not say that the standard to be a member of parliament from the ethical standards are defined by the RCMP, by the law, by the solicitor general or by the auditor general. No. The standards are there and we need to discuss them amongst ourselves, which is what the motion attempts to do. It attempts to say that we are supposed to be representing Canada in the best interests of the country and we are failing that when we do not call on our own.

We must police ourselves in this place and say that when someone does something wrong, that person has to be held accountable. He or she cannot be shuffled off to an embassy to hide or shuffled to a back row like the member for Vancouver Centre who alleged that crosses were burning in Prince George. Members in her own party should have done what members of the opposition said, which was to the member for Vancouver Centre go to Prince George and apologize because that is a standard of decency that most people at the kitchen table would expect of their own family members if they did something wrong but that is not a standard that we hold ourselves to. That just simply is not good enough.

[*Translation*]

I want to continue in French. The Prime Minister said this morning that the reason he gave these contracts to Quebec for these political projects was that, after the 1995 referendum, the country nearly split in two and the Province of Quebec nearly separated from the rest of the country.

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I ask my colleagues from Quebec—I see the hon. member for Quebec East—whether they be Liberal, Bloc or even Progressive Conservative members, to rise in this House and tell Canadians honestly what they think. Do they really think that, by using a small logo saying Canada with a flag over it and granting these contracts, the situation of federalism will improve in this country?

Is that really what they think? If they can say it honestly in this House, I want to hear it. Then I will want to ask questions dealing with the notion that putting up logos on the walls of a hall or a location where festivities related to language or multiculturalism can really improve federalism in this country.

I would rather put that question to Bloc members since we know the real reason federalism has now gained ground in Quebec.

• (1355)

[*English*]

The reason federalism is expanding in Quebec has nothing to do with advertising contracts. The federal government can spend billions of dollars buying Canada logos with the flag over the letter A and say that is why separatism has shrunk in Quebec. However the sovereignist side is receding in Quebec because of politics in Quebec. Quite frankly, Bernard Landry is flaming out as premier. The province's local governments have made stupid and grossly unpopular political decisions with respect to the amalgamation of cities. These things have led to a drop in the polls. It has nothing to do with the federal government, much like the federal budget surplus.

With respect to fiscal policy and federalism policy the government is living off the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy. It believes that because the rooster crows when the sun rises the crowing of the rooster causes the sun to rise. The federal Liberal government is here in Ottawa. The Parti Quebecois is going down in the polls. It is therefore the handiwork of the federal government in brewing its schemes that has brought this about.

That is not the reality. Our economy is taking off is because in the 1990s the American economy took off due to low interest rates, lower taxes and a government that was committed to expanding free trade in good economic times. It had nothing to do with the way the federal Liberals gutted transfers to the provinces and so on. We rode on the back of the bigger economy to the south with which we expanded our trading relationship under the Progressive Conservative government, a government the Liberals kicked out of office by arguing against free trade ties with the U.S.

On the issue of federalism, the contracts are duplicitous. They smell. Liberal members are missing their moment to stand up for what is right and say members of parliament and the Government of Canada must live up to a higher standard.

I encourage the government, as have other members of the opposition, to raise the standard of ethics in this place. Let us reduce the number of Canadians who have a low or cynical view of the House from 70% to about .5%.

**Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with a lot of interest to the hon. member across the way from Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam. He started out well at the beginning of his speech but

flamed out at the end. This is the same member who once spoke in the House about bringing back capital punishment to take care of terrorists who fly airplanes into buildings.

**Mr. James Moore:** That is not what I said.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** What is your point?

**Mr. Murray Calder:** The hon. member talks about missed moments. He was not a member of the House when some of these things happened, but what about the missed moment when his party made a flip flop over pensions and Stornoway? What about the missed moment with respect to his party leader's car and driver or the well kept secret of his clothing and vacation allowance? What about the \$50,000 to get another member to vacate his—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** We have time for a brief response from the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, if the member is really concerned about the issues and wants them addressed in law, why would the biggest policy issue he brought to the House be the identification of a Canadian horse? Why would he not put forward a private member's bill to rectify the MP pension plan?

I will address his accusation that I said we should bring back capital punishment. It is in *Hansard*. If he read the whole thing he might understand it. I said the only way to prevent suicide bombings is to stop suicide bombers before they kill innocent civilians. That is the Liberal government's policy. That is what capital punishment is.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, how times have changed the members of the Liberal ranks.

The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has gone through an amazing metamorphosis, from rat packer opposition critic for public works to the minister of public works today. Back then he would thump his desk, stand on his chair, wave his fist in the air and give shrieking calls for investigations into the odorous Conservative mismanagement. Now in charge of the public works file he is magically transformed. Now with much more suffocating odours of corruption emanating from Liberal held public works files he has lost his sense of smell.

There are two conclusions here. Could it be that donations to the Liberal Party perfume the air and mask the odour, or could it be that his sense of smell never was very keen?

Sixty-nine per cent of Canadians smell mismanagement. Sixty-nine per cent of Canadians smell corruption. Canadians want to know why the Liberals do not.

•(1400)

[*Translation*]

### 2002 CANADIAN SENIOR WEIGHTLIFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Mr. Serge Marcil (Beauharnois—Salaberry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate two residents of the riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry who won awards at the 2002 Canadian Senior Weightlifting Championships, held on May 18.

Luc Lefebvre was awarded the bronze medal in the 105 kg class, and Julien Galipeau won the gold medal in the 94 kg class.

It should also be noted that Mr. Galipeau was chosen as one of the six top male athletes to participate in the Commonwealth Games, which will take place in Manchester, UK, from July 25 through August 4, 2002.

I wish him the best of luck for this competition, which is a qualifying competition for the 2002 World Senior Championships that will be held in Warsaw this year.

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[*English*]

### NUNAVUT SIVUNIKSAVUT

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on May 15 this year's students of Nunavut Sivuniksavut celebrated their graduation with family and friends.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut is a unique eight month training program based here in Ottawa for young Nunavut beneficiaries to study Inuit history, contemporary issues, the Nunavut land claim, Inuit government relations and learn cultural activities that include traditional games, drum dancing and throat singing.

It is very exciting for students to come south to explore a different kind of culture and to experience living on their own. The students act as a support group for each other and lasting friendships are made during the program.

Nunavut Sivuniksavut is a beneficial program providing both excellent academic and life skills to the future leaders of Nunavut.

I congratulate the students of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut training program for their achievements and wish them luck in their future endeavours.

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### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have just published another fairy tale for Canadians.

Once upon a time, the emperor from Shawinigan appointed a brand new grand vizier of public works. The last vizier, Alfonso Gagliano, was living happily ever after in the land of Hans Christian Andersen as a reward for showering Liberal cronies with the people's gold.

Well, one day a member of the tribe of media mischief makers revealed a secret: the new grand vizier of public works had accepted

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a luxury weekend at the country palace of one of the major recipients of the people's gold. "Not so!" cried the grand vizier. "It was not a favour. I paid rent", and he wildly waved an uncashed cheque.

Then by Liberal magic the uncashed cheque turned into a sacred offering. The people were amazed at the Liberals' attempt to deceive them with such a clumsy illusion. They saw that the grand vizier of public works only wanted to waste their gold and tell them fairy tales.

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### BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the International Day for Biological Diversity. In this same month we celebrate two of Canada's investments in biological diversity: the founding of Prince Albert National Park in Saskatchewan in 1927; and the establishment of Vuntut National Park, Old Crow Flats, in the Yukon in 1993.

Our national parks are top of the line contributions to biological diversity. They are sanctuaries for plants and animals. The parks have been deliberately chosen over the years to reflect a wide variety of national conditions. As a result they not only protect wide expanses of Canada. They protect a wide selection of habitat and life forms.

While recognizing the International Day for Biological Diversity I urge all members to support the extension and strengthening of our national parks system, one of Canada's great contributions to biological diversity. In the 20th century we built the foundations of a fine parks system on land. In the 21st century let us extend it, both on land and under our oceans.

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[*Translation*]

### MEDICALERT MONTH

**Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to remind the House that May is MedicAlert Month.

The Canadian MedicAlert Foundation is a national registered charity that protects Canadians with medical information needs. For more than 40 years, MedicAlert has provided medical information services through engraved bracelets that provide health care professionals with access to a member's medical file stored in a confidential data base.

This year, as part of its mandate to protect children, MedicAlert has set a goal to educate people about protecting the health and safety of children and youth.

It is estimated that one third of all young Canadians between the ages of 6 and 19 have medical problems that must be treated. As summer approaches, MedicAlert hopes to protect these children and help them participate safely in outdoor activities during the summer, while providing peace of mind to parents.

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Join me in wishing the Canadian MedicAlert Foundation a successful MedicAlert Month.

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• (1405)

[*English*]

#### VOLUNTEERISM

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Mr. Paul Matthews, a constituent in my riding, for his voluntary work with the Canadian Executive Service Organization.

Mr. Matthews recently returned from an overseas assignment in Romania where he helped a women's clothing manufacturer design a program in human resources development. He assisted in the training of a human resources manager and in devising policies and procedures including recruitment and selection processes, employment advertising, interview techniques, and evaluation of applicants. The training will help to reduce staff turnover and increase plant productivity.

Mr. Matthew's voluntary work is another fine example of the willingness of Canadians to share our expertise with others around the world. I call upon my colleagues to join me in congratulating Paul Matthews for his exceptional work and selfless duty.

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[*Translation*]

#### RADIO-CANADA

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is delighted that an agreement was reached yesterday and approved by nearly 70% of Radio-Canada's unionized employees.

We acknowledge the contribution made by Gérald Larose, whose expertise helped get the negotiations out of the impasse they were in. We must not have any illusions, however; a number of union members have expressed concern and report that they have gone back reluctantly. This long conflict will leave its mark.

In this connection, we encourage the Minister of Canadian Heritage to keep a close eye on labour relations at CBC, because this conflict has made the public aware of the terrible atmosphere there. If the minister wants to keep French radio and television services running, she must make sure that action is taken in response to the Hay report. It would be important for her to at least examine the report's conclusions.

We welcome all Radio-Canada staff back to work and hope that the ties of solidarity that have developed among them will help to bring about change from within.

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#### PRIX GALIEN CANADA RESEARCH AWARD

**Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate the three recipients of the Prix Galien Canada research award, who were honoured last night in Montreal.

They are, first, Drs. Julia Levy and David Dolphin of British Columbia, for Visydune, a drug used to fight blindness and

distributed in 52 countries, and Dr. Anthony J. Paulson, for his drug, Gleevec, used to treat leukemia.

The Galien Canada award is a prestigious honour in the field of pharmaceutical research and innovation. Galien, also known as Galen and Claudius Galenus, is considered the father of experimental physiology and the precursor of modern pharmacology.

The Government of Canada's \$7.4 billion contribution to research and development was also celebrated by the industry, particularly for the creation of the institutes for health research, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, Genome Canada and the research chairs.

I congratulate—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon member for Wild Rose.

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[*English*]

#### MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I went on a family holiday. I did not have to get my son to pay for our holiday. I paid for it myself and I paid for it right at the time I was taking the holiday. I wonder if the minister of public works can say that today.

When I took my holiday I did not have to discuss it with my political staff. I did not have to call a big advertising firm to see if I could use its mansion. I did not have to check to see if companies I patronized during my holiday had donated to a political party, check the size of their cheque or make any promises of future contracts. I wonder if the minister of public works can say that today.

Because I did all these things I did not have to get a priest to sign an affidavit, produce any of my cancelled cheques or answer any embarrassing questions to anyone about my holiday. I would bet the minister of public works wishes he could say that today.

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[*Translation*]

#### VANDALISM

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to tell this House that I strongly condemn the acts of violence that were committed on May 8 in front of the Bethtikvah synagogue, in Dollard-des-Ormeaux.

Posters announcing the walk to Jerusalem were removed and burned, while hate messages were written on other signs.

This anti-semitic vandalism, these acts of violence against a specific group of citizens are unacceptable, like any other act of violence and hatred, and they can only adversely affect the peace process.

Canada is a welcoming place and it strongly supports the peace process in the Middle East, where the conflict can only be settled through dialogue and mutual respect.

• (1410)  
[English]

#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to the concerns of various and many legions across the country on the issue of the proposal by the French government to expand an airport which in turn may desecrate thousands of graves of British and Commonwealth soldiers who fought in the Battle of the Somme in the first world war.

News reports yesterday and today indicate the French government may have second thoughts about the expansion of the airport, but I call on the federal government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Veterans Affairs to do everything in their power to ensure they tell the French government that any expansion of the airport which may alter or desecrate the grave sites of our fallen heroes is unacceptable to the memories of the brave men and women who fought so valiantly for peace during the first world war.

On behalf of all veterans in the country I would like to say lest we forget, and we will remember them at the going down of the sun.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### MELINDA-SUE BELTRAN

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to welcome Melinda-Sue Beltran, the winner of the MP for a day contest in the riding of Longueuil.

A fourth year student at Jacques-Rousseau high school, Melinda-Sue came first among the students in the national history course.

This visit to Ottawa, with her father, Cesar Quevedo, will give Melinda-Sue a chance to familiarize herself with the hectic life in parliament.

It is always an honour for me to meet young people who are aware of the importance of playing an active role to further our society. Regardless of what Melinda-Sue may choose to do, I am convinced that her open-mindedness and her dynamism will lead her to a very promising career.

Melinda-Sue, on behalf of my Bloc Quebecois colleagues, I welcome you to parliament and I hope that you will appreciate having had the privilege of being an MP for a day.

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[English]

#### MEMBER FOR HASTINGS—FRONTENAC—LENNOX AND ADDINGTON

**Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my best wishes to the hon. member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington who underwent successful surgery earlier this week.

The hon. member was first elected in 1993 and his warm and caring nature has been a welcome addition to the House. His hard work and dedication to small business, agriculture and rural

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communities is both appreciated in his riding and through his work as the past chair of the Liberal rural caucus and currently as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food.

I would like to take this time to send our prayers and best wishes to the hon. member, his wife Rita and their daughter Kayla. I am sure all members will join me in wishing him a full and speedy recovery. We look forward to his return to this House.

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#### NATIONAL DRINKING WATER STANDARDS

**Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the second report into the inquiry about Walkerton is set to be released. Like the first inquiry report, it will be a damning indictment of the status quo on drinking water safety in Canada and will outline how the public was not informed about harmful substances in their drinking water. We had hoped that the Walkerton tragedy would have served as a wake-up call to the federal government.

Not only have they refused to act, but the Liberals have broken a promise they made on May 8 of last year when they supported the amendment of Progressive Conservative Party to take immediate action in conjunction with the provinces and territories to ensure enforceable national drinking water standards and to protect the public's right to know.

The reality is that the problems that converged in Walkerton can now be found in scores of Canadian communities. That is why earlier this month the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, in the name of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, tabled a safe water act. We did the government's homework for it, and now it has no excuse not to take the urgent action it promised and provide this nation with national enforceable drinking water standards.

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#### GOLD MEDALLION AWARD

**Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Richard Pound of Montreal as a recipient of the Gold Medallion Award.

The Gold Medallion Award is given annually to a former competitive swimmer for national or international achievements in the field of science, entertainment, art, business, education or government.

Mr. Pound competed for Canada in the 1960 Olympics in Rome and is a long time member of the international Olympic committee. He was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame on May 11.

Mr. Pound, as chairman of the world anti-doping agency, has played a leadership role at the international level and in the worldwide fight against doping in sport. As a result of his vision and perseverance, all athletes and Canadians can look forward to the opening of the new headquarters of the world anti-doping agency in Montreal next month.

*Oral Questions*

●(1415)

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the smell of corruption, scandal and kickbacks that has been emanating from public works has outraged many Canadians. Whether it is former ministers or current ministers, nothing seems to change. There are contracts without open bidding, contracts to friends, hospitality at mansions supplied by contractors, money for reports not written, kickbacks to the Liberal Party, conflict of interest rules broken or ignored and government procurement rules ignored or broken. Unfortunately it is only a matter of time before we find that money has made its way into a minister's pocket.

The minister of public works must come clean. Democracy is about openness, transparency and accountability. It is time the minister of public works and indeed the entire government respect democracy and demonstrate that this is the best form of government, not the worst kind of government as the Prime Minister said this morning.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***NEW MEMBER**

**The Deputy 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. Rex Barnes, member for the electoral district of Gander—Grand Falls.

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**NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED**

Rex Barnes, member for the electoral district of Gander—Grand Falls, introduced by the Right Hon. Joe Clark and Mr. Norman Doyle.

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**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works has gone from the rat pack to the mousetrap. Whether this particular mess is a case of deception or bungling, the minister of public works no longer has the credibility to clean up the mess in his department.

Under the circumstances, I want to know if the minister of public works has done the honourable thing and offered his resignation, and has the Prime Minister done the right thing and accepted it?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a member of parliament who has done something that is very rare. He started his life here working in the restaurant and moved up all the ladders. He is the first Canadian to get his university degree while working as a minister. He is a very honourable member. He is doing a good job. He is working under difficult circumstances, but he has my confidence.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will just ignore the sounds of violins for a second.

I want to be clear. The minister received a favour from a government contractor. Subsequently, his company received three-quarters of a million dollars in contracts from the minister's department. The minister of public works then tried to convince this House and the public that he had paid the contractor for the service. That proved not to be true. No transaction actually took place until yesterday.

Does the minister not understand why the right thing to do is to resign?

●(1420)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there were about as many things wrong in that question as there were words to it.

First, I did not, and the hon. member knows it, participate in that transaction. Second, I did not personally award any contracts. Third, that company and any other company wins their contracts through a competitive process. They are standing offer agreements. Even those agreements are up for renewal shortly and I have already announced that.

The hon. member knows that or those people briefing him should have known enough to tell him so.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should be responsible for the contracts in his department. The transaction he should have participated in was paying for that chalet himself right off the bat.

It is clear the minister acted inappropriately, whether by incompetence or by design. We should not have been led into believing the stay at the chalet was an upfront commercial transaction when it was not. Canadians deserve better.

My question is for the Prime Minister. When did the Prime Minister learn that there was actually no transaction between the minister of public works, the Boulay family and the chalet? Was the Prime Minister misled by the minister or did—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if he read the affidavit of the priest who received the cheque, the cheque was endorsed in the month of March by the lady who was the owner of the house. The cheque was transmitted in April to the priest who did not cash it because the local caisse populaire did not accept that type of transaction. However the minute the cheque was endorsed by the lady who owned the house, at that moment the transaction was completed.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this story has more twists and turns than the Molson Indy track and is just as slippery.

Let us see if we can figure out where the cheque really went. It went from the minister's daughter-in-law to the chalet owner to the priest, then to the photocopier, then to the bank, then back to the priest, then back to the owner and then to the bank again, we think. It never did go in the collection plate.

*Oral Questions*

All the while the minister changes the version of events several times a day: the luxury chalet, the mystery cheque; more big untendered ad contracts, brand new ones, within days; sanctuary in the church; and backpedaling, misdirection, broken rules and broken promises.

The minister's credibility is as questionable as this cheque. How can he—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is hardly better than the previous questioner. First, there was no untendered contract. Second, perhaps the hon. member would like to seize the occasion so that all Canadians will know if he really meant it yesterday when he accused the priest and the church of money laundering.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, what I said was the minister used the church to hide the cheque. It is clear the minister got caught. He is now desperately trying to cover up the inappropriate favour from a major beneficiary of his department. He is now covering it up in a most audacious and self-serving manner.

Either the minister knowingly signed off on \$760,000 worth of new, untendered contracts just days after accepting the favour of the chalet or he is not in control of his department. Either way it is clear that he promised all kinds of new rules, five new rules, but he is playing the same old games.

Will the Prime Minister stay true to form and ship him off to an unsuspecting country?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the business of the nation all the time. For the last 14 days they are not asking any questions; they are just throwing mud. It is the level of where they are. I have never seen such harassment in a situation like this when the people of Canada expect members of parliament to be serious and stop making fun like they try to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the links between the minister of public works and Groupe Everest were established even before he was appointed to clean up the mess. When he was responsible for the Games of la Francophonie, his political staff negotiated with Everest, without looking any further, a \$56,000 advertising contract drafted by Everest, which public works awarded unchanged six months later.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, once again, there has been political intervention to sidestep the rules for awarding contracts, that problems are mounting, and that a public inquiry is more necessary than ever to get to the bottom of the government's sponsorship program?

• (1425)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the member is mixing apples and oranges. On that occasion, what was involved was not a sponsorship but an advertising or rather a communications contract. Furthermore, the member is mistaken when he says that my

office awarded the contract. In fact, it was the department of public works. I was certainly not the minister of public works three years ago. I was a minister of state and the government House leader.

**An hon. member:** The lies are the same.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I in fact said “before he became minister”, but it was his staff who did the negotiating and public works then awarded it. He has confirmed exactly what I just said.

The Liberal web is not limited to the Games of la Francophonie, to the Department of Canadian Heritage, and to public works; it even extends as far as the Department of Justice. In fact, the present chief of staff of the Minister of Justice, Luce Asselin, was responsible for the negotiations for the Games of la Francophonie advertising contract when she was with Groupe Everest.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that the entire political network behind the sponsorship program—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this contract was awarded by the department of public works following well-established guidelines. There is a process for obtaining these contracts. People must qualify to receive them.

When people qualify, the contracts are awarded. In this case, the company qualified and the contract was awarded in accordance with all the existing standards for contracts of this type.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will not be able to deny that his minister of public works has put himself in a totally unacceptable position by being in the company of his son, who is a political advisor to the minister of heritage, and his daughter, who is at justice, at the chalet of the head of Everest, one of the officers of which has become the executive assistant to the Minister of Justice.

Will the Prime Minister not admit that this constitutes a whole network of people working on behalf of Everest which would make many companies wishing to do business with the government green with envy?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, these are totally false accusations, and the hon. member is well aware of this. Moreover the contracts were awarded through competitive bidding, as the hon. member must also know, only in this way and in no other.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this affair, the Prime Minister told the press that if the chalet had not been paid for, this would have been serious, but it was paid for. Now we realize that the cheque had never been cashed and that neither the minister nor his family had, in fact, paid for the chalet.

Does the Prime Minister not consider that his minister and, unfortunately, his family members who are policy advisors to ministers, placed themselves in what he himself has termed a very serious situation?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that, when they used the chalet, they immediately gave a cheque to the owner. The cheque was then endorsed and handed over to the priest. There was nothing else that needed to be done. They paid, and the owner of the chalet endorsed the cheque, or in other words accepted payment.

[English]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, maybe we can test the memory of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

When the rat packers sat in opposition, a Tory scandal seized parliament. Here is what the rat packers said then:

The minister...has been caught with a snout in the trough in the latest incident of pork barreling.... The Prime Minister ought to relieve the minister...of his responsibilities until this whole mess can be cleared up and corrected.

That demand should surely apply today. I ask the public works minister, consistent with his own stated principles, will he step down?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have answered a number of questions to this effect already.

I believe that no rules were broken. Notwithstanding that, I have said that were I to do the same thing over again, and I am not someone who will say anything else, but clearly I would not. I have said that before all members of the House and would repeat it for anyone today, all Canadians, members of the press and anyone else.

• (1430)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in opposition the minister was mister tough guy. Boy, was he tough on corruption, on Tory corruption, that is. Does he think that Liberal corruption does not count? It is time for the rat packer to pack it in and resign.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has used the word corruption. What possibly did I or any member of my family gain by renting and paying \$800 for a weekend at a chalet? Who in their right mind would think there was a benefit to anyone from that? Surely if there was by anyone, it was not me, it was not my son, it was not my daughter, it was not my grandchildren and it was not anyone else.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is beyond contempt for the government and the minister to hide behind the church. The facts are clear. The minister awarded contracts to his friends. He broke the rules. He made a deal and accepted a gift from a client. He broke the rules. He broke the conflict of interest guidelines.

Does the minister not have enough respect for the House to know that it is time for him now to step aside, to do the honourable thing, to resign from his office and to stop being a disgrace—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the family of the minister paid \$800 for two nights to sleep in a house while they were skiing. The facts are known. The payment was made. The payment was accepted by the owner of the house.

What happened to the cheque after it was given to the owner was not the responsibility of those who paid. All the facts are absolutely known. The minister did not accept any gain in that. It is just something that the family paid for. The minister has the confidence of this party and of this Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the Shawinigate prime minister.

Today we know of one minister's holiday at the Boulay mansion on the lake in violation of conflict of interest guidelines. However Groupe Everest has business with more than one government department and it contributes to the war chests of many Liberal ministers.

I am sure the Prime Minister has now asked whether other members of his government have stayed at the Boulay mansion. Has he asked whether other ministers accepted the hospitality of Groupe Everest?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what a fishing expedition.

In nine years all the ministers of the government have been extremely careful with everything they have done. I do not have to ask them every day if they are behaving well or not. They have done very well in the last nine years.

In this case all the facts are known. The minister of public works did not accept any benefit. He paid for the eight hours or more that he had to sleep in the bed before going skiing.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the owner of Groupe Everest, Mr. Boulay, affirmed to the press that he does not normally rent his chalet but that he made an exception for the minister's family.

Will the minister of public works admit that he received an exceptional personal favour from a company which receives millions in contracts from his own department?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, most people in their right mind would not think that paying \$800 for a chalet for a weekend is a benefit.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the questions will keep coming if we do not get any answers from the other side.

Why would the owner of Groupe Everest make an exception for the minister? It is clear that he wanted the minister to give him favourable consideration in the future. As Mr. Boulay himself said last week in an interview on television "You don't have to be a Liberal to get a contract, but it helps."

The minister placed himself in a position of obligation to Groupe Everest by accepting a personal favour from its owner. This is unacceptable behaviour from a minister of the crown. Will he do the honourable thing today and resign?

*Oral Questions*

•(1435)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just raised the names of people who are on the list of assigned agencies for the Government of Canada. Let me remind him there are a whole lot of people who are on that list. And let me tell the right hon. member for Calgary Centre that McKim Advertising Ltd. does it for western economic diversification. If my memory serves me right, that was the group of people who approved and supported him in his failed leadership bid last time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works, who has some experience in politics, knew full well that he was in a very awkward position when he used the chalet of the president of Groupe Everest, a firm with which he has had ties since at least the games of la Francophonie.

How can the minister of public works justify that, being in an awkward position, he never ensured that his family had indeed paid to use the chalet and that it was not provided to him for free?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member. He knows full well, as I do, that, in fact, the chalet was paid from the moment that the cheque was handed over to the family.

Contrary to what some members are claiming, that did not take place yesterday. The cheque was given at the time of the transaction by other people, namely members of my family.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the strategy used by the minister of public works is that of the cheque never to be cashed. The minister knows that.

How can he base his whole defence on a cheque that was not cashed until two months after it was made, that is after the scandal surfaced? That cheque would probably never have been cashed had the matter not become public?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member alleged that, until yesterday, there was never any intention of cashing this cheque. All parliamentarians in this House just heard him. This is the accusation that he is making.

He is saying that those who received the cheque did not intend to cash it, that the priest who received it, notwithstanding the notice, had no intention of cashing it, and that the person who cashed it yesterday did not intend to do so, even though he did. This is what the member just told the House. I hope that he can explain himself outside the House later on.

[*English*]

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want answers. All we are getting today is misdirection and spin from the minister.

The fact is the minister did not pay. His family paid. His family did not pay until two months after the fact, after the opposition and the media asked questions.

Why will the minister not come clean about what really happened, tell us whether or not the agreement of \$800 happened before he went there and answer some real questions in the House or resign? Will he do one of the two?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just said that there was no intention to pay notwithstanding the fact that a cheque was issued. I would like him to say on what legal principle this kind of reasoning applies where people issue a cheque, pay for something and then somehow the hon. member is justified in saying that even though something was paid, it does not count.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, after an investigation of Mr. Gagliano last May, the ethics counsellor described the rules for approving advertising contracts. He said “a recommendation. . .is submitted to the minister of the client department. . .for approval”. So it is the minister who approves.

Did the minister follow the rules and personally approve the awarding of six contracts worth \$760,000 to Groupe Everest just days after he spent the weekend at the mansion owned by the president of Groupe Everest?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker. The member already knows the answer if he listened to the questions from the right hon. member for Calgary Centre yesterday. He asked the same question, word for word. Of course, the answer is no today, just as it was yesterday. It is called delegation of authority. Such a thing exists.

I see that the member is not listening, because that is not the answer he was hoping for.

•(1440)

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since July 2000, Groupe Everest has been awarded 29 federal government contracts worth a total of \$2.8 million. Approximately one-third of these contracts were awarded during the month that followed the minister of public works' stay at the chalet belonging to the president of Groupe Everest.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for to launch an independent public inquiry in order to get to the bottom of what appears to be a well organized network benefiting the cronies of the Liberal government?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister explained the whole thing. Contracts were awarded according to well established rules. There is delegated authority. Decisions are made by the officials in charge. Contracts are awarded based on company qualification.

This company had qualified, and it won contracts under long established government rules.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, despite promises made by the minister of public works to clean up his department, it is clear, based on the facts, that nothing has really changed since his predecessor left for Denmark. Everything is being done as before.

*Oral Questions*

Once again, I ask the Prime Minister what he is waiting for to launch an independent public inquiry that will give us an idea of the size and scope of this network his government is using.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have spoken about this every day in the House of Commons. We cannot be any more open than that. With the opposition asking questions in the House of Commons, there is no need for a public inquiry.

Furthermore, the auditor general, who reports to the House of Commons, is in the process of studying the matter. This is an officer of the House of Commons whom we trust.

Members of the House are free to ask us all the questions they like. We cannot be any more open than we are being right now.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the public works minister accepted a weekend at a luxury country home belonging to a Liberal donor receiving millions in government contracts. He clearly violated the conflict of interest code. It states:

Public office holders shall arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest from arising.

Why did this very savvy Minister of Public Works and Government Services go ahead and violate the code of conduct?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the preamble to the hon. member's question is factually incorrect. I did not accept the benefit that she alleges I did. She is making the accusation. She knows her accusation is inaccurate.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, so now the minister was not even at the luxury vacation home. That is very interesting. The code continues:

If a conflict does arise, the conflict shall be resolved in the public interest.

When he was loudly preaching integrity for government as a righteous Liberal rat packer, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services demanded that government ministers who violated the conflict of interest code resign in the public interest.

Does the minister still hold to the same high ethical standards today and has he therefore tendered his resignation?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to the public interest. It is of course with that interest in mind that I personally contacted the ethics counsellor earlier this week. Of course I am willing to co-operate fully with him in order to ensure that the right thing is done.

I believe that I have done and will continue to do the right thing for my constituents and my country.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The standing committee has heard many presentations by farmers expressing their concerns regarding their limited access to minor use pesticides.

Can the minister tell the House how he intends to respond to the committee's recommendation that the government provide at least \$1 million a year to help speed up the approval process for minor use pesticides in Canada?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and her colleagues for the work they have done to bring forward and emphasize the importance of this issue.

Today I am pleased to join with my colleague the Minister of Health in announcing a major new initiative of \$7.3 million to help provide our industry with safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly minor use products so that it can be more competitive in the agriculture community. As well, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will be doubling its research in that area.

\* \* \*

•(1445)

[*Translation*]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a question for the minister of public works. I clearly remember his days in the opposition rat pack 15 years ago. I also remember his asking John Crosbie questions relating to his family problems, and calling for Crosbie's resignation as a minister.

What is the difference between Mr. Crosbie's situation and the minister's present situation? I believe that the present one is worse than Mr. Crosbie's. Why did he call for Mr. Crosbie's resignation, yet has not acted in keeping with his own words by resigning now himself?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question startles me a bit, since he is the one to have these recollections. Without making a comparison, since I am not the one who brought it up, I will answer his question nevertheless.

If I remember the situation correctly at that time, it had to do with documents which indicated that the minister in question had sought out a contract that would benefit the people to whom he has referred.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the year, crab fishers withdrew from the solidarity fund, when the minister of fisheries refused to allocate crab quotas to plant workers.

*Oral Questions*

Processing plants are planning on shutting down in a few weeks. These plant workers will not even have enough weeks to qualify for EI. The gap created by the Liberal government will begin next week.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. Given that she is already aware of these details, what does the minister intend to do to prevent this situation, which will have a disastrous impact on hundreds of families and that New Brunswick does not want—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Minister of Human Resources Development.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are concerned as always when employees find themselves without work. In this particular case, however, I would remind the hon. member that we are working with community groups in his own constituency, looking at strategies to deal with the gap between employment from year to year.

I would continue to encourage the hon. member to work with us and to remind him that we transfer considerable funds to his own province of New Brunswick for use in precisely this kind of circumstance.

\* \* \*

**LEWISPORTE MARINE TERMINAL**

**Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Lewisporte in my riding will be devastated economically if the federal marine terminal is closed. The minister for ACOA told the House that concrete solutions and ideas for the town of Lewisporte would be put in place but still today nothing has happened.

Will the Minister of Transport commit to the people of Lewisporte that the marine terminal will be kept open until a new economic diversification plan is put in place?

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this has been the subject of discussion between myself and the secretary of state for ACOA. We obviously do not want any harm to come to the people in the hon. member's constituency. We take particular note of the challenges faced in the marine community and especially at the ports in Atlantic Canada.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the minister of public works does not understand that he was in a real and perceived conflict of interest by staying at Mr. Boulay's mansion while at the same time giving out millions of dollars in contracts to his host's company. The issue is not what he got, it is what he gave, and no absolution after the fact will change that.

In his previous incarnation as a rat packer, that minister would howl like a banshee and regularly slur the names of ministers and their families. How things change.

Will the minister now restore some honour to his office, to himself and to the House and tender his resignation today?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding my human imperfections, which I am the first to admit to, I do believe that I behaved honourably before the House, outside the House, in my constituency and before all Canadians.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, clearly the cheque that was written and signed by the daughter-in-law of the minister of public works was not cashed until yesterday which means that no dollars left the account until yesterday. Therefore the minister's assertion that he had paid for his stay at this luxury cottage was inaccurate.

Why did the minister attempt to mislead the House?

● (1450)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** I missed some of that, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. I never said that I had personally issued that cheque. That is factually inaccurate and the hon. member knows it.

Of course the amount was paid at the time. The cheque confirms that. The one who received the cheque confirmed that. The one who received the cheque after the one who received the cheque confirmed that. It seems that everybody knows that except the hon. member asking the question.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, surely the member knows that it is not paid for until the cheque is cashed. Surely the daughter-in-law of the minister of public works informed him that the cheque had never been cashed. Therefore their stay at the luxury cottage was in fact a freebie. It was gratis, meaning that the minister clearly violated the conflict rules.

Obviously the minister of public works deliberately misled the House and I therefore ask—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I would ask the member for Crowfoot to withdraw the words "deliberately misled".

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Speaker, the minister stood and said that he had paid. I will not withdraw them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It would be my intention to return to this matter at 3 o'clock. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this whole story came out last week and the minister of public works told us that, indeed, his son or his daughter-in-law had paid for the cottage.

I wonder if, last week, the minister of public works bothered to check with his daughter-in-law to see if, indeed, the cheque had been cashed. Because it is only once the cheque is cashed that the transaction is completed.

Was the minister prudent enough to then ask his daughter-in-law if the transaction had indeed been done and if the cheque had been cashed, to ensure that it was in circulation?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is nonsense. Of course the cheque was in circulation; it was issued and given. People at the other end of the process acknowledged receipt of the cheque, which was given to a third party who, yesterday, in this House, through an affidavit, confirmed that he received it. So, everything is clear.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is not much that is clear in this.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. We must hear the question. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is telling us that everything is clear. What is clear is that there is a cheque of \$800 supposedly written on March 18, that it is only in April, three days after the first revelations were made, that a priest was contacted, that the daughter-in-law did not bother to check to see if the \$800 cheque had been cashed or not, that the priest told us that he cashed the cheque last week, while yesterday he said that he never cashed it.

Could the Minister of Public Works explain to me what he finds clear in this, in this cheque that travels—

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I graduated from law school some 40 years ago. I still remember that a transaction is completed when the will is received.

When the lady signed the cheque, the payment was made, legally speaking. The person who signed the cheque could not do anything, except pay. This is taught in first year of law school in the province of Quebec.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, when the minister was in opposition, he often spoke of government ethics and morals.

Today he is coping with an ethical problem he created for himself. Now, when he should be cleaning up the mess left by his predecessor, he finds himself in an unfortunate situation.

Clearly, in order to reassure the 70% of Canadians who believe there is corruption, this minister must be replaced. Why is the Prime Minister refusing to take action right away?

• (1455)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just mentioned that I spoke about ethics when I was in opposition, and this is true. I spoke about ethics recently. I am speaking about ethics today. I will speak about them tomorrow and ever after, as long as I am a parliamentarian.

[English]

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** The unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister has lost all credibility on the issue of ethics now.

The Prime Minister spoke in the House earlier today about the ethics and morals in government. He claims that he runs a clean government but 70% of Canadians do not believe that.

We have had enough of the lapdog ethics counsellor and enough of the broken promises and empty platitudes. Why will the Prime Minister not do something specific and real to demonstrate that he is serious about cleaning up and fire the public works minister?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it strikes me that we are now in a very interesting area. A first year law student knows that a contract is complete when the two parties exchange the will, so when the cheque is signed and accepted, the transaction is over. They should go back to school.

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**CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS**

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the finance minister.

Again we read in the media of charities raising money from a trusting public and none of it going to people in need.

The Toronto *Star* has reported that a charity called Planet Aid Canada raised \$1.7 million only to pocket it all. This situation is being repeated time and time again by organizations that have charitable status but operate almost exclusively to the financial benefit of the people running them.

When will the government do something to force charities to be transparent and accountable so that the giving public can spot the bad from the good?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks the question from a wealth of personal knowledge and experience. He also asked it from a deep appreciation of the invaluable contribution that Canadian charities have made to the fabric of our society right across the land.

I can assure him that the Minister of National Revenue and myself, through our departments, are working very closely with the voluntary sector to explore all avenues that will result in more effective and more transparent regulation on charities.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works is giving vague answers and refusing to acknowledge that he has broken the rules.

On Tuesday, when asked about the mysterious cheque, he said, "Of course we paid". Now today we learn that the cheque was not cashed until yesterday, when the scandal hit the papers.

I would like to see whether the minister is going to answer a question he himself asked here in 1989, "Why has this information, which is far from accurate, been given to the House?"

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is not being kept very busy, since the arrival of the new leader, he should go back to school to learn that the transaction was completed at the time the cheque was accepted by the owner, and then he can quit making insinuations.

A first year law student, in Quebec civil law or English common law, knows very well that a transaction is completed at the moment a cheque is accepted.

[English]

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, a student of first year public ethics should know that a minister ought not to be a guest at the home of a major contractor who is receiving untendered contracts from his department. He was such a student when he was in opposition and had a very high standard for ministers.

Why was a high public standard for ministers so right when he was in opposition and so wrong now that he is in government?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it still is a high standard under this Prime Minister. I hope all members of the House would agree that I still live with that high standard. It is of course what I want to do now, what I will do in the future and what I did before.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

[Translation]

**WHARF MAINTENANCE**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 10, we asked the Minister of Transport to provide urgent authorization for repairs to the Escoumins wharf. Because of the federal government's inaction over the last five years, the deterioration of the wharf has led to the cancellation of the ferry service to Trois-Pistoles, thereby seriously compromising tourism and economic development in eastern Quebec.

Before the tide washes the wharf away, does the Minister of Transport intend to behave like a responsible owner and repair the wharf, so that the ferry service between Trois-Pistoles and les Escoumins can resume as soon as possible?

[English]

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I was otherwise engaged. I would ask that the question be repeated.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, on May 10, we asked the Minister of Transport, who does not listen to the questions, to provide urgent authorization for repairs to the Escoumins wharf. Because of the federal government's inaction over the last five years, the deterioration of the wharf has led to the cancellation of the ferry service to Trois-Pistoles, thereby seriously compromising tourism and economic development in eastern Quebec.

Before the tide washes the wharf away, does the Minister of Transport intend to behave like a responsible owner and repair the

wharf, so that the ferry service between Trois-Pistoles and les Escoumins can resume as soon as possible? Did he listen this time?

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, officials from my department are examining all of the options for the Escoumins wharf. I am fully aware of the problem; it needs repairing. The person responsible for services was informed that there was a problem last year. We hope to come up with solutions in the coming weeks, between now and June.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct another question to the minister of public works.

The minister knows that when he demanded the resignation of the former minister of justice, when allegations of scandal swirled around him and when confusion reigned about whether he had engaged in unethical conduct or not, he asked that the minister step down "until the whole mess can be cleared up and corrected". At the very least the public works minister must agree that there has been a virtual rat's maze created of confusion about—

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for obvious reasons I did not hear the end of that question or statement, whatever it was.

There is no confusion as alleged in part of the question. There is not mass confusion. The hon. member knows that. I believe, and this is probably the last question today, that I have not done anything morally or ethically wrong, but I have said that I regret whatever happened and that it will never happen again notwithstanding that, and I believe that I am behaving and that I always will behave with integrity before Canada, before my constituents and before this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would like to return to the matter involving the hon. member for Crowfoot.

I will very quickly draw his attention to *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 6th Edition, at page 144, article 489. I will simply quote one line:

Since 1958, it has been ruled unparliamentary to use the following expressions:—

A list of those expressions follows. I particularly draw the hon. member's attention to the expression used in part in his question: "deliberately misled". There is ample documentation that there has been a stated practice that it in fact is not acceptable so I would ask him to please withdraw the words.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in all good conscience and with all the respect that I have for the House, I cannot withdraw that statement.

*Supply*

•(1505)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair is very mindful that from time to time in debates, and maybe particularly in question period, there is a great deal of emotion, a great deal of passion, and that in the heat of battle and exchanges between parties and members these occurrences happen occasionally.

I appeal to the hon. member for Crowfoot. Upon some reflection and out of respect for the institution, for our parliament and its practices, which are well documented, I ask him to please withdraw the words deliberately misled.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Speaker, in that case and with your wisdom from the Chair I will withdraw the word deliberate.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government what business it has for the remainder of today, tomorrow and for the next week.

*[Translation]*

**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.):** Mr. Speaker, we shall continue this afternoon with the debate on the opposition motion. Tomorrow, we will return to Bill C-56, respecting reproductive technologies, followed by Bill C-55, the public safety bill, and Bill C-15B, the criminal code amendments. On Monday, we will continue consideration of these bills.

*[English]*

Tuesday will be an allotted day. In the evening on Tuesday, as the House already knows, we will sit in committee of the whole pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a) to consider the estimates of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

On Wednesday, if necessary, we will return to any of the bills I have previously mentioned that may not already been completed, subject to arrangements we may make to deal with the Senate amendments to Bill C-23, the competition legislation, Bill S-34, dealing with royal assent, and perhaps Bill C-5 concerning species at risk. We are also hopeful that Bill C-54, the sports bill, and Bill C-53, the pest control bill, will be reported from committee in the very near future, so that we may take up report stage and third reading of those particular items.

Finally, we are also looking forward to reports from committees of the House on two other bills that have been in committee for what would appear to be an inordinate length of time, namely, Bill C-48 dealing with copyright, which has been before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for more than three months now, and Bill C-19, the amendments to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which is fast approaching its first anniversary before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I am sure the House is anxiously awaiting the reports of those committees so that legislation can be proceeded with through its final stages.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

•(1510)

*[English]***SUPPLY**

ALLOTTED DAY—FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam has approximately three minutes remaining in his question and comment period.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated how my colleague put into context the whole issue we are debating today. We as the official opposition are not doing this from some position of moral superiority, but the government has complete responsibility for the administration of government. It has control over \$140 billion in tax dollars, so when grants go to certain firms with little or no work done or an open accountable process is not followed and then donations flow into the Liberal election fund coffers, not other party coffers, that strikes at the very heart of democracy, and that is corruption.

Would my colleague from Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam not agree that this does strike at the very heart of democracy? Money is the stuff that helps win elections. It can be used to give the public an impression via the media at election time that things are just fine. That is why the misuse of tax dollars undermines the democratic process.

That puts this issue in perspective. In essence, the decision making process at election time is tainted because tax dollars are used to gain votes. I would like his comment on that, please.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly do agree with my colleague from Yorkton—Melville. He is exactly right, particularly in his argument about the fact that money is an inseparable element of political power in this country and, frankly, in all democracies. I remember the 1996 presidential campaign when Senator Phil Gramm from Texas was running for the nomination. He was asked about polling data in regard to whether or not he had a chance of winning the nomination to become the Republican nominee to challenge Bill Clinton at that time. He said that he did not know about the polls but he had the most important thing in politics and that was “ready money”.

*Supply*

Money is absolutely important. Because we are dealing with public contracts and the facts that the Prime Minister may very well no longer be considering campaigning in the next federal election campaign and we have a number of senior cabinet ministers who have run for leadership in the past and have access to public money, it is very important. Not only is it important to stop any explicit misuse of money, which may or may not be happening, but also to prevent the appearance of that happening so that we can make a collective effort to reduce from 70% down to as few as absolutely possible the number of Canadians who believe that our political system is corrupt.

We have that responsibility, the government has that power, and the motion simply asks it to act on that.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga West.

Although I oppose the motion put forward by the opposition, I do believe this is a topic that is very important to us all and that the debate itself very valuable for the operation of parliament. It is a serious issue for all Canadians, particularly for those of us in the House of Commons who have been elected to serve Canadians.

We all recognize that public confidence is vital to democracy. If we individually and collectively do not tackle this issue head on, this phenomenon could well undermine the legitimacy not only of this government but of all governments in Canada.

I believe all of us chose public life based on the simple but important belief that we want to make a difference in the lives of all Canadians.

Confidence in government is rooted in trust. This trust in government is fostered when it meets the public's expectations for fair and effective administration through ethical and transparent activities. Citizens expect elected officials like us to perform their duties in a fair, honest and transparent way, where decisions are not affected by self-interest. As elected officials, we need to ensure that our government strives toward greater transparency and accountability to the public.

I believe this government recognizes the importance of this issue to Canadians. The evidence of that is that the government has been actively engaged in promoting initiatives to foster trust since we took office in 1993.

Maintaining and enhancing public confidence has been and will continue to be a key concern of the government. Public office holders are expected to observe the key principles of impartiality, fairness and objectivity in the performance of their official functions. All activities of the government are based on several basic yet critical principles that have served as cornerstones for everything that I believe we have done since 1993.

We do not take words like integrity, objectivity, accountability, impartiality, openness, honesty and leadership lightly. Public confidence and trust in the government must be conserved and enhanced, not only for the benefit of members who are here now but for members who will take our place in shorter or longer periods of time.

Let me mention a few of the initiatives the government has put in place already in recent years. This has nothing to do with the announcements of this morning.

For example, in June 1994 the Prime Minister tabled a new conflict of interest code for public office holders. All public officers, including cabinet ministers, are bound by its key principles.

For the two years I was a parliamentary secretary and I was subject to that code. I found the experience of being subject to it, of having to go through the procedures and think about potential conflict of interest very useful to me, to my family and to my staff in my constituency and Parliament Hill offices.

I am glad that now members of parliament will be subject to similar guidelines, not because I suspect my colleagues of anything untoward but because I think, like me, they will learn from the process of having to think about conflict of interest in a disciplined way.

The government has also brought openness and transparency to the work of parliament by participating in more policy debates, innovative prebudget consultations and involving MPs in the drafting of legislation.

I am chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I know that the involvement of private members in the House of Commons is now a matter of debate and has always been a matter of debate since the House existed. However there have been steps since we came to power to improve that. I mentioned the new prebudget consultations which now typically begin in the fall and continue through to a spring budget.

• (1515)

I have worked with colleagues on this side in caucus on post-secondary education and research. Throughout the year we engage people in the higher education and research community. We talk to them. We encourage them to be involved in these new prebudget consultations. It is to their benefit. They will be heard in the budgetary process because of these changes.

As the House knows, there are now more reports by the auditor general than there were when we came into power thanks to a private member's bill that was passed under this government. The auditor general now reports four times a year. I am glad about that even though in my riding every three months the auditor general inevitably finds something that has gone wrong in the system. That is her job. She is a key, independent part of making the system better.

I have also greatly appreciated the increased work of internal auditors in our various departments. They have been much more effective in recent years.

Time and time again the government has shown the kind of leadership demanded by Canadians. The leadership of the Prime Minister in these matters has been very important. The confidence that Canadians have in us has been shown a number of times in elections and has been shown time and time again in polls across the country.

### Supply

Ethical issues affect us all, at least they should. They affect how Canadians view us and how they view public institutions. Our collective challenge is to enhance the confidence of Canadians in government, not just for this government specifically but governments in general. Our challenge is also to continue to earn the respect of Canadians for public office holders and the institutions that serve them well.

Again I repeat that this debate is very useful and healthy exercise. I would point out that it is not the sort of debate that would take place in parliaments in other jurisdictions. This is a very open debate on a very serious matter. I am glad it is happening, but I will not be supporting this motion.

• (1520)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, while I do not agree with everything the member said, I certainly appreciate the tone of the speech as apart from the tone of some of his colleagues who spoke earlier in the House.

I would like to ask him a specific question. I raised it earlier in the House today and I will raise it with him.

When people have talked about the appearance of a scandal and that money has not been handed well on the government side, not this member but other members have said that there is no evidence of that, or it is overblown or it is rhetoric.

I would direct his attention to a case from 1997 when there was a Liberal fundraiser in the province of Quebec whose name was Pierre Corbeil. He was charged with influence peddling. Somehow he got hold of a list of contracts or grants that were being given out by the government. He went to those businesses and said that they needed to pay a certain sum of money, I believe it was \$10,000, to the Liberal Party or they would not get their grants. Rightly so, he was convicted of influence peddling.

That of course is a big concern. That is one fact of evidence in this case. I think that is part of the reason why people have concerns and issues about this topic today.

While I know the member said he cannot support the motion, he said he looked forward to accountability and transparency. Would he not agree with me that that case was troubling and should be troubling to the government?

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments and question. I have been following the debate all day, and heard him ask the question previously.

There are two things in play here. One would be, as in the case he described, that a very specific incident should be dealt with and that one was. Something was seriously wrong, was proved to be criminally wrong and the person was handed over to law enforcement authorities and was appropriately prosecuted. Each time such a thing occurs members of parliament should do their best to see that convictions are achieved in those cases.

With all due respect, as members of parliament we should constantly think about the system. There are two systems here. One is the system of operations or the bureaucracy of the federal government. The other is the operation of parliament. Then there are

the links between the two. This is a good example of parliament exercising the sort of overview functions that it should.

The striking thing in recent years has been that the system, and I would say both sides of it, the House of Commons side and the bureaucracy side, has been working well.

One of my concerns in recent parliaments has been the fact that there have been four parties in opposition. With due respect that weakens the key function of government which is the official opposition. In the last couple of years it has been particularly weak because it seems to me for various reasons each of the parties opposite has been divided within themselves. The opposition function has been weakened in parliament. As a result, the system itself is very important.

A matter of great debate a few years ago involved HRDC. The striking thing was that it was discovered by an internal auditor, not by the official opposition. A new minister came in and publicly tabled a report recounting serious problems in HRDC. The minister took the full heat in the House of Commons, and rightfully so, about those matters. The incident was sorted out administratively and some charges were laid by the RCMP. It is important to realize that this matter was not raised by the opposition but by an internal audit.

When problems float to the top of a huge system, such as the one we are administering, then the system is in good shape. I do not mean it is perfect and we should have debates like this to make it stronger. It means that the system itself is working.

What I was trying to say in my remarks was that our governments have done their best to strengthen that internal process which ideally identifies problems such as the one that the member mentioned.

• (1525)

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure some members opposite will be pleased to rise in questions and say a similar thing, that they appreciate the tone I intend to bring to this particular debate. I do not care if they do, but it might be interesting if they did.

I should point out this is the worst part of political life. I have been on the other side of accusations in the provincial legislature in Ontario. Knowing that we have been falsely accused of something in a public place, seeing it in the newspaper and attempting to prove our innocence is one of the most frustrating and difficult experiences that any politician can ever go through.

It is also an interesting phenomenon that quite often it is members with whom we may have developed friendships in working on committees or travelling to various places who will lead these charges. So the acrimony just adds to the acidity that develops in a place like this. I honestly believe that the word respect is thrown around much too loosely in this place by many members who indeed have no respect for the institution or for the members who got here.

Let me say at the outset that I do not care what party members represents. They got to this place the same way I did. They put their name on a campaign piece of literature, on a ballot, they knocked on doors, went to meetings, talked to people, defended their integrity and that of their party. They deserve to be in this place, one of only 301 members. It is quite an honour. It is a shame when the wheels come off and we spend question period after question period on issues that I frankly and honestly believe the majority of Canadians do not care about.

What happened to questions about health care? What about our infrastructure? We have a major new infrastructure program. Not once has anyone stood in this place and asked about the \$2.6 billion infrastructure program which includes \$600 million for border security. Not once have I heard anyone in the last 14 or 15 question periods ask the Deputy Prime Minister about his 30 point plan worked out with Governor Ridge on border security.

What happened to questions about security in our skies? What happened to questions about Afghanistan? What happened to questions about agriculture? Do we not care about that any more? Were we simply sent here to beat up on one another? I do not think so. I think it denigrates the role of parliamentarians when we lower ourselves to the level that we are at today.

I believe this is about frustration by the official opposition much more than it is about \$800 for a chalet for a weekend. The frustration is that a regional party has grown up literally from nothing in a short time, roughly a decade. It has grown from one member elected in this place to become the second largest opposition party eventually becoming the official opposition. Opposition members are frustrated because they have not been able to win seats east of the Manitoba border, except for two in the last election. They are frustrated because in essence what they have done is shown up at the front door of this place and said they want to take over. When they find out that Canadians do not want to let them take over, they decide that the best route is to destroy the institution and everything it stands for.

We have ample examples. We have a member opposite who reaches over and grabs the Mace and waves it around in the air. We have members who make accusations and it takes only the Speaker's persuasiveness to get them to withdraw those accusations. Are either one of those acts of respect of this place or its members?

• (1530)

I have no difficulty. I served five years in opposition to Bob Rae and the New Democrats in Ontario. It was scandal du jour, believe me. I have no difficulty with opposition members seizing a particular issue and fighting on behalf of their constituents. To become so myopic and to use the words they throw around of corruption and the aspersions that they cast on the Prime Minister and everyone is so counterproductive.

This is sometimes our biggest problem and it happens on both sides of the House. We think that everyone is seized with whatever it is we are talking about. I talked to a constituent today who happens to be a well informed businessman in Mississauga. I said that everyone was looking over our shoulders here. I told him what was going on, and he did not know anything about it.

### *Supply*

I am not saying that things should not be done. Our Prime Minister has introduced some substantial changes that will be brought in. I would agree with the opposition on one point, and that is that they are overdue.

In the Ontario legislature, we have had a commissioner that reports to the legislature for many years. Judge Evans was the judge when I was an MPP. It did not matter whether one was a parliamentary assistant, a minister or a backbencher in the opposition or in the government. We all had an interview with Judge Evans. We would simply lay out what our assets and liabilities were, and he would give us advice as to any conflicting problems that might arise. I found it comforting to be able to go to someone to whom I could say that my wife or my son was involved in this or that and ask for his opinion. He would analyze it, give me an opinion and we would clear the air right away.

It is a good thing that we are doing this. All members on all sides should be prepared to do it. Somehow we must get over this mentality that democracy is broken because a majority of Liberals were elected to parliament three times in a row, because that is what I hear. It is not that democracy does not work because someone lost. That is not true.

This is the most democratic country in the world. All one has to do is travel around the world to see what people think of this country and this place. It is only in this place, in this media, in this political atmosphere, that we destroy and denigrate the institutions and the people who dedicate their years and service. I believe we are all in that category.

We does not come to this place without some serious sacrifice to our family and community, and without the dedication that it takes to work long, hard hours. Every single member in this place deserves that recognition. What I find interesting is that I will talk to constituents who will say that politicians are all corrupt and they do not believe them. Then they say they do not mean me. I talk to other members and they get the same thing.

It is sort of like if we want to make people think something we should keep saying it often enough. I do not suggest that the opposition should stand and sing our praises but why can we not get back to the business of this nation, of building this nation, of continuing to make this the greatest country?

What about our immigration bill? I have not heard a question in weeks about the biggest reforms to immigration since 1952. Does that mean the opposition does not care about that? I find that hard to believe.

The feeding frenzy must stop. We must somehow find a way to work better together. We must be able to define the issues and the roles and respect the opposition. It has a job to do. It is called Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Whether it believes in the Queen or not, that is what the role is. It is an important role. It makes government and parliament a better place.

When it falls down on the job, as I submit is happening now, it destroys the credibility of each and every member of this wonderful institution. We owe it to Canadians to get back to the business of the nation.

*Supply*

• (1535)

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the members from the government side for their great comments, casting aspersions on someone else's speech and this sort of thing. I remind the member for Mississauga West that precisely 20 questions have been asked by myself and other colleagues from the official opposition, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, on agriculture during the month of May.

The member constantly says that nothing is being done on agriculture. Why has the member not spoken up with regard to the trade injury compensation program that Ontario farmers are calling for as a result of the U.S. farm bill? Why has he not spoken up about the tuberculosis problem in our wild elk herds? What about challenging the U.S. farm bill under the WTO and NAFTA?

These are questions that I have asked the minister of agriculture and the trade minister 20 times over the last month and received zero answers. Does the member stand by his statement that we have done nothing on agriculture or is he willing to withdraw that statement right now?

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I sure do stand by that statement.

Let me tell the House what this caucus has done. If it were not for the efforts of the Liberal caucus on Wednesday morning and all of the work that is done for our caucus committee structure there would never have been any assistance for agriculture. It did not come from that side of the House. It did not come from the media. It came from the Liberal members. A lot of those members represent urban ridings, not rural ridings, who realize that we need our agricultural sector to be strong to help feed our families.

This member would not know what goes on within the structure of our caucus, but it is a strong, unified organization that cares about issues like agriculture and many others. If the business cannot get done in this place, we will do it there.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Mississauga West is attempting to do what the Prime Minister did this morning. It is to lecture members of parliament and all the opposition parties on the role they are playing in undermining public confidence in government by focusing on scandal.

Yet the speaking notes for the Liberal Party are nothing but an attack on every opposition member in the House and nothing but a collection of sleaze and scurrilous attempts to keep this debate at a level that is reprehensible. The Liberals continue to obfuscate and disguise the difficult issues that are before them by blaming the opposition.

If we look at the notes provided for the Liberal Party, they are nothing but a chronicle of misdemeanors by the Conservative and Alliance parties. The Liberal members tried hard to go after the NDP. They could not find anything with our federal colleagues so they went after provincial governments. They could not find anything so they were forced to recognize that the federal NDP is actually a leader in the field of government ethics. They had to refer to our election campaign which made commitments to amend the Elections Act to incorporate the funding of party leadership campaigns, and to

remove the Prime Minister's arbitrary power to make unilateral appointments without any checks or balances.

The only thing they forgot to mention, and this is regrettable, is that the leader of the NDP caucus and other members have introduced private members' bills on a code of ethics for parliamentarians.

Will the member for Mississauga West commit to the House today that we will put an end to this kind of name calling, starting with cleaning up the mess in his caucus so that we can get back to the main issues, so we can get back to debates on health care, agriculture and the environment that many of us have been attempting to do for weeks to no avail. The government is either so buried under in terms of scandals or deflects every serious issue that comes along.

• (1540)

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry we did not find enough difficulties with the NDP governments, but fortunately there are not that many of them for us to do the research on.

I do not think that my comments were lecturing at all. I am giving an opinion based on 25 years in public life. I believe what is happening here is simply born out of frustration by members opposite who cannot seem to find their way in the front door so they are tearing down the institution. That is what they are doing.

They think if they yell scandal and corruption enough that all of a sudden Canadians will believe it and they will somehow reward them with the mantle of power. That will not happen. It would be much more productive for us to get back to work.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite a heated debate we are having here today. Certainly the hot air is adding to the climate change the government is working so hard against. We are adding more to it when I hear the pomposity from the other side.

In a recent poll 69% of Canadians said they find the federal government corrupt. We are all here together. The problem is that everybody gets tarred with the same brush. Out of 301 people there are bound to be a few bad apples. We have seen evidence of that in the last little while. Some 69% of Canadians hold us in contempt for the jobs we are not doing here on their behalf. That is despicable and we have to rightly clean that up. The job of the official opposition is to hold the government to account and to bring to the light of day a lot of the things that are wrongheaded and going in the wrong direction.

Out west we had evidence of that from a couple of terms ago with Bill C-68, the firearms bill. A cost of \$85 million was talked about. It is now 10 times that and growing and we still have seen absolutely no results.

*Supply*

The Liberals' own pollsters would tell them it is not working to the extent they thought it would so people hold us in contempt. We are all tarred with the same brush. We start to bring programs like that into the light of day and point out the problems with them. We amend things in committee but they never get adopted. We have private members' business that has gone south. Many members over there are nodding their heads because that is their avenue to get their issues before the House of Commons and they have been stymied as well. They cannot seem to get them through and when they do, there might be an hour of debate and then it is scrapped, it is gone. The item cannot be made votable.

We are all caught in that. That leads to low voter turnout. If we look at the last federal election and some of the byelections, there has been low voter turnout. People have written off the federal government system. They see that we are incorrigible and we are corruptible and they write us all off. They flush us all with the same bath water which is unfortunate.

The Liberals did not like those numbers so they had their own pollster do a poll talking about just their party because certainly it could not be them. That poll showed that 45% of Canadians polled blame it on the front bench, the executive of the federal government. That is unfortunate but there are things we can do about it.

The members opposite today have been saying we are not fulfilling the role of the official opposition, that we are not bringing to the light of day agriculture issues, softwood lumber, health care and so on. I heard the senior minister for Saskatchewan on a radio talk show last week. We cannot put on the air shows that we usually have. Moose Jaw has a huge air show. Usually 45,000 to 50,000 people go to it. The one in Saskatoon is just starting to grow with 30,000 to 35,000 people who come to see it. There are other ones across the country. They cannot afford the liability insurance that is now demanded to put those shows on. The government House leader said on the radio that the government cannot afford that because it is working so diligently putting all of the money into agriculture, the softwood file and health care.

Nobody in the agriculture sector has seen any money. The member opposite who just spoke said it is because of the Liberal backbench that farmers were saved. I guess now we know who to blame. If it is the Liberal backbench that gave us AIDA and CFIP and took the money out of crop insurance, then it is their fault. It was not the minister of agriculture after all, it is the backbench. How ridiculous.

Money has been gutted out of health care but we still have no money for a lot of other programs. The softwood lumber file bubbled away for five years and here we are paying a 27.2% tariff. Five years slipped by. The government did not change but a few of the faces over there did. The same folks let it percolate for five years and here we are with a problem. If that is their attention to agriculture, softwood and health care, no wonder people hold us in contempt and say that we are incorrigible and they want to make some changes.

The Prime Minister today announced a new glorious program that will make everything better. He will bring in some more rules and add some more legislation. Many of those are common sense and we cannot disagree with some of them but those same promises were made in 1993 in the first red book. Nobody ever delivered on those.

Where is this ethics commissioner who was going to be independent and table his reports with parliament? It did not happen. We finally got an ethics counsellor with basically a set of training wheels for the front bench. He does not report to anybody but the Prime Minister because that is who hired him.

• (1545)

Now we are being promised another one. Should we believe it this time, the second, third or fourth time? It is just like some of the legislation brought forward; it never quite happens the way it was set out.

There are some good things in those eight points but we are asking, why now? Why is it finally today? I guess the biggest reason, and most people are cluing into this, is that another minister is in trouble.

I understand it is only an \$800 bill, but that is not the point. It is not the money. As one person said in question period today, it is not what he or his family gave, the \$800, but it is what he got. It is what Claude Boulay, the head of Everest communications got. He got the minister's ear for two or three days, whatever it was. It was an inside track. Shortly after that we saw another \$760,000 of ad contracts funnelled to Groupe Everest. That is a problem.

If those guys cannot see that and why people are upset with the way the Liberals are governing the country, then we have a problem. We will have a lower voter turnout in the next election and the status quo will continue. That is great for them but it certainly is not good for Canadians. Canadians deserve better.

The Prime Minister took credit for sweeping changes he has made since 1993. The auditor general can now report to parliament four times a year. Imagine that. How great. The problem is that nobody listens to what she reports. Nobody acts on it.

The auditor general brings in scathing indictments, things like who is minding the store. There are people who should face criminal charges. She said to bring in the RCMP because she thought it was outrageous. Four times a year she gets to say that. It is not the report but the action which is never taken that encourages Canadians to say that we are corrupt and contemptible. I am tired of being tarred with that brush. We do some great work over here and bring to light a lot of the problems.

### Supply

The Prime Minister talked about having a great rah-rah party for \$10,000 a hit. That is wonderful but I cannot see any real people being able to afford the \$10,000. Again that gets people his ear for that length of time. I know a lot of people in western Canada would pay \$10,000 to get an hour of the Prime Minister's time but they would like to see him sitting on the seat of a dunk tank before they would put the \$10,000 there. They would have some fun and maybe he would raise some money. Let us get real.

Canada will sponsor and fund an anti-corruption summit next fall from October 13 to 16. People will come from around the globe. We are seventh out of 91 in the way we handle our affairs. We are in the top 10% but is that good enough? We are going to sponsor a corruption seminar. I guess we are going to tell them what they can and cannot get away with. We are hoping that we bring to the light of day a whole lot more things that are starting to worm their way out.

The next thing the Prime Minister talked about in his eight points was a standalone code of conduct for MPs and senators. He just happened to skip right over the people on the front bench. They supposedly already have one that nobody has ever seen. We do not know what is in it, other than that the ethics counsellor gets to decide what is good and what is not. That is ridiculous. Now there will be a code of conduct for MPs and senators.

I will quote what a Liberal MP said yesterday after caucus. The member for Mississauga West said that they do great work there. Apparently they do. Here is the quote from the *National Post*:

"Are we the problem?" one MP, who attended yesterday's caucus, said. "It's just amazing. As if we have a lot of clout.... It's going to be interesting to see how [the new rules] go over in caucus. I'm sure members are going to start saying, 'How are we the problem?'"

That is absolutely bang on. It tells us how impotent they are as backbenchers and the frustration level rises. It will be interesting to see a lot of this stuff hit the fan in the next little while.

A code of conduct will come into play for the others who do not have access to public funds like those on the front bench who have discretionary spending amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars. Where is the retribution, clawbacks and chance for taxpayers to rear up and say they want the money back?

On Groupaction there were three reports for \$1.6 million. We got some photocopied paper. I guess that same photocopy paper works for affidavits, bum cheques and everything else. It is just amazing that the Liberals think they can get away with it by throwing some smoke in front of the fan. Canadians are supposed to bow and say "Well, that is government. They are unaccountable and we cannot touch them". Yes they can. The best thing Canadians can do is rear up on their high horse and tell those folks it is unacceptable behaviour and they will not tolerate it.

• (1550)

**Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you and I came to the House at about the same time and I never thought I would have to rise on an occasion such as this to defend a former colleague who is being maligned by the House almost on a daily basis. The opposition keeps maligning his character and his reputation. His character is often brought into disrepute and the member is no longer in the House to defend

himself or his position. Above all else this is blatantly unfair. It is inequitable, unfair and should not be done.

The former colleague was a former minister of public works, Alfonso Gagliano, now Ambassador Gagliano. We know the way things run around here and I am positive that if he were to read *Hansard* or be advised that I am up in the House today defending him, he would be absolutely surprised. I confess that Ambassador Gagliano and I were not the best of friends. We were often at loggerheads on issues that affected my riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North. Many of the issues over the years were never reconciled which thus lead to a stalemate perhaps between two rather stubborn individuals who share the same heritage.

Ambassador Gagliano above all was very dedicated to his job. He worked exceedingly hard. One could often find him in his office late at night. He does not deserve what he is getting. Above all Alfonso Gagliano was a gentleman and a good person.

The problem is not with the present minister of public works who is now under attack, or the previous minister of public works. The Department of Public Works and Government Services is large and cumbersome. It reaches into every part of Canada and is involved in many contracts. It really is a very difficult department to administer. I could cite example upon example of problems I have had with the Ontario section of public works in the area I represent.

I ask the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, on a valuable day where the whole day is devoted to the opposition, why can we not be constructive instead of destructive? Why do we not—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I regret to have to interrupt the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North but when members split their time, the period for questions and comments is limited to five minutes. I want to give the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster an opportunity to respond.

• (1555)

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is ever an invaluable day in the House.

When we bring forward issues like this one where we are talking about corruption of government and the perception of the people out there, the problem is that this is the foundation which ordinary citizens, the electorate, think we are based on. We have to fix it in order to get out of their heads the thought process that we are incorrigible. We have to fix that and then get on with the agriculture, health care and defence issues and everything else that has been let slide for the last nine years. Certainly we know there are hundreds of issues out there to fix because no one has attacked them.

In my province of Saskatchewan the government has not fixed the highways or spent the proper money on them for 10 years. Now there is a flurry to fill pot holes that we could lose cars in. The same thing has happened in this place. We have let it slide to the point where we cannot address the major issues because everything has been permeated with that air of corruption.

*Supply*

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the motion today. I am not exactly sure where the members of the Liberal Party want to go with it, although I do have their talking points. It is a scurrilous bag of scum if ever there was one. It is just an awful list. It is a litany of accusations and unfounded garbage of the worst kind.

I want to tell the House what I think this is not about today. It is not just about patronage, although we could go on about that. We could go on about the Senate appointments, the appointment of Mr. Gagliano to Denmark or the 5,000 other appointments the Prime Minister gives every year. However I do not think that is really the problem.

I think people understand what is going on and they do not like it. They kind of hearken back to Mr. Mulroney's promise that he would appoint Liberals to these patronage appointments only after every last living, breathing Progressive Conservative member was appointed. That attitude was no good and it is still no good today. However I do not think that is what the motion is really about.

It is also not about influence peddling, although we could go on about that. We could go on about the fact that Pierre Corbeil, a Liberal fundraiser, was convicted of influence peddling. The Liberals have now disassociated themselves from him but he was a Liberal fundraiser who was convicted. In fact, following his conviction we found out that not only was he selling access to ministers but a whole structure was in place in the Quebec federal Liberal wing of dual approvals. Approval was required from not only the minister but from the Quebec Liberal wing for a project to go ahead and the grant to be accepted.

It is totally unacceptable. It is beyond the pale for someone to say that a political party should get to approve who gets the grants, which are taxpayer dollars. However I do not think that is what this is about today.

I also do not think the debate is about broken promises. We talked quite a bit about the need to have an independent ethics commissioner. I do think it is still necessary. I think the Prime Minister finally understands that there is a problem. Today was the first time I ever remember the Prime Minister respond to an opposition motion. He spoke today to address the fact that his government is embraced and embroiled in many scandals and he needs to find a way out of them. He may feel the need to appoint an ethics commissioner somewhere down the road. Who knows? It was a promise from the red book and I think it is long overdue. I think it is like many other broken promises. People kind of shrug their shoulders and say "What do you expect? How do you tell when a politician is lying? His lips are moving". It is sad but that is where we are at right now.

I also do not think the debate is about a refusal by the government to listen to the other independent watchdogs of parliament. We could go down the list. It has refused to listen to the auditor general. When the auditor general said that the finance minister did not use accepted accounting practices, what was the government's response? It said that it was too bad but that was the way it was.

The auditor general said that it was almost beyond belief how many rules were broken under the Financial Administration Act, the

treasury board guidelines and the minister's own guidelines on allocations of contracts. The debate is not about ignoring that, although in and of itself that would be a good debate. However I do not think that is what we are talking about today.

How about the auditor of the EI fund who said that the government was consistently overcharging EI premiums and taxing workers and employers for creating jobs in the country? The government refused to listen to that independent auditor.

The government refused to listen to the privacy commissioner who warned the government that the bills it had just brought forward attacked the privacy of Canadians and warned the government of the fact that we were becoming almost a police state. I am not overstating that. That is what the privacy commissioner said.

The access to information commissioner, who is another independent officer of parliament, said that the government had almost a code of secrecy regarding what it did. He warned Canadians and parliamentarians that the access to information that we deserve was being compromised by the government. That would have been a good debate in and of itself but again I do not think that is what we are talking about today.

When things get really bad and warrant inquiries, such as the Krever commission on the tainted blood scandal, the Somalia inquiry, the APEC inquiry and the Nixon inquiry into the Pearson airport deal, time and again those inquiries are shut down, the funding is withdrawn, the mandate is changed and the appointments to those commissions are cooked.

● (1600)

Time and again there are problems with those inquiries. There is no independence. They are not allowed to come to a conclusion and, even if they could, nothing happens to follow. We could talk about that at length and, in and of itself, would be enough to be debated today, but I do not think that is the core of the issue.

We could even be talking today, and there has already been some discussion, about the long overdue reforms of parliament and the frustrations in this place from not only the opposition side but the government side about the lack of respect for private member's business. People have asked why the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca touched the mace the other day. It was in utter frustration over his private member's bill being eviscerated and emasculated by the government.

This is the same frustration felt by the government backbenchers who sit wringing their hands over the fact that their private member's business is often not votable, that they cannot get something into the hopper and when it does it does not go anywhere. Even if it does get to the floor of the House, passes and goes to a committee, the committee spends 90% of its time emasculating it and nuking the clauses out of the bill.

*Supply*

Even when a private member's bill gets as far as the Senate, the Liberals use their power in the Senate to make sure it does not progress to actual law. They make sure it never comes up on the order paper, never gets debated and never becomes law.

We were stuck patting ourselves on the back when we created the new Canadian horse, which was not a bad thing in and of itself, but what a minor role for legislators to say that our crowning glory was that we were able to stand in support of creating an official Canadian horse. What a moment. Neither the Liberals nor the opposition members came here to be glorified in trivial legislation like that.

Therefore, the debate could be about the exasperations in the House, the lack of free votes and the lack of influence. We are seeing it manifest itself on the Liberal side to the point where people are starting to push back both in the newspapers and even a bit in the House. They are starting to get so exasperated that they are standing up and speaking out. We could go on about that and it would be a good debate, but again I do not think that is what we are talking about today.

What we are talking about today is a malaise that has hit the government after nine long years in power. It is a malaise that cannot be explained away by an \$800 cheque, when it was issued, when the priest saw it, when it was cashed and all of that. That is not the issue.

This is not an issue of whether Mr. Gagliano should have been appointed an ambassador or whether he went out of town before the RCMP moved in to check the books.

The issue is about the new Minister of Public Works and Government Services, a man I have a lot of respect for because I worked with him for quite a while when he was House leader, not seeing the train coming down the tracks where he was standing. That is the problem the Liberal government is facing today.

Why on earth did the minister of public works allow himself to be put in the position of a conflict of interest like that? I cannot believe it.

I know the man and I know him to be a good sort but he is the minister of public works and he is in charge of handing out millions of dollars in contracts, some of which have had huge controversy over the last few weeks and months. For him to stay at someone's place who is intricately involved, in a business sense, in acquiring more contracts, in essence, from him, the public works minister, I cannot believe he would let that happen. He said himself that he would not do it again. I do not doubt that because, in retrospect, I think he has seen how bad it looks and how wrong it is to sit in the cottage of someone who wants to influence the minister. It is just wrong to do that.

This train was coming, the light was on but he did not even notice. That is the problem. What we are talking about today is that time and again the members on that side of the House stand on the tracks with the train coming and say that there is nothing wrong with this. When they get caught, like the auditor general caught them, like the independent auditor caught them, like privacy commissioner caught them or the independent retired generals from the armed forces caught them, time and again they say that they had better change.

● (1605)

When the Minister of Finance found out that a lobbyist in Alberta gave him a cheque for \$25,000 to help with his future leadership campaign, he said "Oh, my goodness, I got caught. That is so wrong. I will give the cheque back". The train ran right over him. He did not see it and did not even hear it.

The Liberals are so desensitized that they have not realized that time and again these examples are proving to Canadians that the government has lost its moral compass. I think that malaise is the subject of today's debate. It is not about any one of those things. It is the fact that they have been desensitized to an important issue to the point where they do not even know when they have done wrong.

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member just did a great job proving to us that the speech from the member for Mississauga West was just a crock. He gave illustrations of the problems in this place.

The member for Mississauga West said that the Canadian Alliance was trying to destroy this institution but we are not the government. The Liberals are the government. They are the ones destroying it by their scandals and their outrageous behaviour.

The member for Mississauga West claimed that we have never asked questions in the House about immigration or agriculture. Our agriculture critic already pointed out that we have asked 20 questions in the last few days. Just a week and a half ago we spent the entire question period and a whole day talking about the immigration process and how bogus refugees come in from the United States. The terribly racist idea we had of actually stopping them was suddenly adopted by the government a few days later as a good idea.

He then talked about how we were the problem, how we were trying to pull this place down.

Today the member for Scarborough—Rouge River sent out a whole bunch of suggestions in a booklet on how to improve this place, how to deal with the problems and the inability of members to influence the actions of the government.

I think the member for Fraser Valley has done a great job of pointing out the frivolous nature of the speech given by the member for Mississauga West. I congratulate him for the work he just did today.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, the member from Mississauga has made his way back here. We would have loved to have asked him a few more questions but we ran out of time.

At the beginning of his speech he said that he hoped members would be able to say at the end of his speech how he had changed the tone of the debate today. I would love to be able to say that but if we go back and read *Hansard*, he did not improve the tone of the debate at all.

I probably got carried away in my description of those talking points earlier. It is just that I am repeatedly offended by the government's defence of its actions and that it has come to the conclusion that the only defence is a good offence.

The Prime Minister is intent on retiring, sooner, hopefully, rather than later, being able to say that he has never had a minister resign under his watch. They do not resign. They get shuffled off. They get sent to the Senate. They get sent to Denmark. They get sent to the back bench. They get sent to be chairman of the justice committee. The Prime Minister wants to be able to stand at the end and say that none of his ministers have had to resign under scandal.

I do not know what it would take to get a minister of the government to resign. The Liberals have blinders on. They are determined they are right. It is like they are telling everyone who has anything to say to them “look at the prime ministerial rules around here. The rule says that we are never wrong. I have told that to my independent ethics counsellor. My independent ethics counsellor knows that the number one rule in this House is that we are never wrong. Therefore, if we are never wrong, we cannot be wrong”.

It is a beautiful circle and it comes from having an ethics counsellor who no doubt pleads with the Prime Minister from time to time to do something but he says “Check the number one rule. We are never wrong”. The Prime Minister wants to leave his office as being the man who never had someone resign.

However that is not an honourable situation. It is because the whole thing is cooked, the malaise has set in and it is pervasive now on the entire front bench.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener Centre.

I would like to quickly read the motion we are debating today. It says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the reason why 69% of Canadians polled in a recent survey viewed the “federal political system” as corrupt is because Ministers of this government have failed to make public their secret Code of Conduct, have broken their own Liberal Red Book promises such as the one to appoint an independent Ethics Counsellor who reports directly to Parliament and have failed to clear the air over allegations of abusing their positions to further their own interests and those of their friends.

I must inform all members of the House that I am opposed to the very principle of this motion. This motion is confusing and misleads Canadians about the significance of the survey in question and about the work of this government.

Politicians from every party, not just the party in power, need to take some responsibility for the way Canadians view the political system. When I speak about the political system, I mean the provincial, municipal or federal political system. However, I will limit my remarks to the federal political system.

As the Prime Minister told this House in 1994, “trust in the institutions of government is not a partisan issue, but something all of us elected to public office have an obligation to restore”.

The public trust must be earned day after day. It is the cornerstone of good government. It promotes acceptance of our democratic institutions and creates a sense of confidence in the ability of our

### *Supply*

governments to improve the wellbeing of our society and of our citizens.

The word “honesty” is not an empty word for me or for my government. In a report tabled in 2000, the former Auditor General of Canada told us that a prerequisite for the success of ongoing measures to promote values and ethics is the leadership of parliamentarians, ministers and senior officials.

This government has shown leadership by putting in place mechanisms and procedures to protect the integrity of public affairs. All is not perfect, as we are the first to admit. But I would like to mention something the new auditor general said when she tabled her report in December 2001.

She was commenting on how this government responds to the conclusions in her reports. She said:

• (1615)

[*English*]

Although we do mention examples of good management throughout our report, sometimes these get lost in the glare of publicity that surrounds the bad examples. I'd like to mention just a few examples of good management, most of which came to light in the course of our follow-up work:

—Human Resources Development Canada's improved management of grants and contributions.

—Meeting the deadline for bringing departmental financial systems on-line as part of implementing the Financial Information Strategy.

—The processing of GST refunds.

—The successful management of Y2K readiness.

—The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's management of capital projects.

I am encouraged to find these examples of good management throughout government.

These are the words of the auditor general herself, who felt it necessary to underline examples that she has found of good management because she finds that unfortunately the few bad examples catch the glare of the publicity. This is one of the points that leads to the perception within our Canadian society that all politicians and all political regimes in Canada suffer from corruption.

[*Translation*]

We could look at a few of the mechanisms put in place by our government to protect the integrity of public affairs. These include the 1996 amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act, increasing transparency and casting the light of day onto the lobby industry, and the Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment Code for Public Office Holders applicable to ministers and senior officials.

The government has also introduced more transparency into the work of parliament: it holds more policy debates; it introduced pre-budget consultations; and it has allowed members to play a larger role in drafting legislation.

*Supply*

In addition, as other members have already mentioned, the auditor general can now table up to four reports a year in parliament, instead of one annual report.

In my opinion, by adopting measures such as these, the government is showing the leadership mentioned by the former auditor general. In this regard, the Prime Minister has truly orchestrated all our efforts. He is personally responsible for the standards and conduct of the government as a whole.

I would like to mention—even though a colleague across the way has already done so, but it bears repeating—the issue of our government's transparency and probity.

There is an international non-governmental agency known as Transparency International. This agency is dedicated to rooting out corruption and promoting transparency in governments throughout the world. It therefore enjoys unparalleled respect worldwide.

[*English*]

It has consistently ranked Canada as one of the cleanest and most transparent governments in the world. In fact, Transparency International ranks Canada as the cleanest and most transparent of all the G-8 countries. I think this needs to be highlighted.

When a member of the opposition tables a motion, as was done and which we are debating right now, the very nature of that motion in my view is only to continue to throw sand into the eyes of Canadians, to continue to encourage and push Canadians to believe that government is corrupt, to bandy about those words that are of such a serious nature in such a cavalier fashion knowing very well that they disinform and misinform.

We had an example just moments ago. A member of the Canadian Alliance, citing the survey, said the survey showed that 69% of Canadians think this federal government is corrupt. He knew full well that was not what the survey said. Members on the government side had to correct him several times before he finally made the correct factual statement.

I will not be supporting the motion. That is the first thing. The second thing is that I would like to encourage all 301 members of the House, and I would call on our colleagues in the other House as well, to do our part as individuals to make sure that if we are going to lay accusations they are based on fact, that there is no exaggeration, no disinformation or misinformation, and that the debate that takes place is one of seriousness, gravity and mutual respect.

If we are going to take the auditor general's word on one, she has proven her qualifications, so we have to take it on all. When she says that there are many examples of good management and good governance on the part of the government, I ask that members recognize that as well.

• (1620)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the member for the Liberal Party very carefully. I appreciate her attempt to put a good face on a very bad situation, but it is hard to accept the statement that in fact the government is beyond reproach.

The member will know that since the last election of November 2000 this place has been consumed with one issue after another that

has been the result of some wrongdoing, some inappropriate action, on the part of a number of members on the government benches. This place has had to deal with that. If we do not deal with those issues, we clearly leave the perception with the public that we condone wrongdoing.

The other problem for all of us is that it is part of a bigger issue. The fact is that the arrogance of the government on those issues of wrongdoing pervades everything else. It pervades the whole debate in this place and our ability to ask questions on substantive issues. It leads the government to in fact evade substantive issues in question period, to deride members who ask serious questions and to offer empty platitudes.

Health care is probably the best example we have seen in the last little while. Question after question has been posed to the government, but we get nothing back from the new Minister of Health but accusations of fearmongering. There is no attempt to seriously deal with the questions we are raising.

It is a pervasive attitude that has set in because of arrogance on the part of Liberals who feel they are above and beyond the concerns of Canadians and the concerns raised by members in this place.

I would ask the member if she would not agree that in fact we have to deal with those repeated incidents of allegations of wrongdoing, of evidence of wrongdoing, so that we can in fact get down to the important business that Canadians want us to do.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I am quite disappointed. One of the points I made was that I called on our members here to try make statements as accurately as possible. I expected at least that from the member who just made some statements and finished with a question.

She said I made the statement that the government was beyond reproach. I never once, in any part of my statement, made such a statement. It is an example of what I attempted to show. It can create false perceptions within the public. If I were not here to correct it, one of my constituents could see a transcript of that member's statement and beat me over the head figuratively and ask me how I could make such a statement. I did not.

Neither did I say that the government has not committed mistakes. The government itself, because of mistakes, which either its own internal audits within the various departments have brought to light or the auditor general's audit have brought to light, has changed processes, procedures, rules and guidelines.

The auditor general herself stated that in follow-ups to her reports and audits that showed problems. An example is Human Resources Development Canada and the grants and contributions program. On her follow-up, the auditor general commended HRDC and the minister responsible for, and let me quote, "improved management of grants and contributions". She used that as an example of good management, which she cites throughout her report, "but which gets lost in the glare", and I am using her words, "of publicity that surrounds the bad examples".

What I ask is that when accusations are made they are based on fact. I ask that members not distort the facts because there is some other objective out there. I honestly believe that if there are reasons why our government has been re-elected three times they are, first, because most Canadians think we are a good government, and second, because the opposition, in my view, has fallen down on its job.

• (1625)

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the supply day motion. It is not that most speeches I deliver in the House do not have a lot of passion in them, but this is probably the most personal speech I will ever deliver in the House.

We come as 301 individuals to this place and we are clearly divided by partisan policies and philosophies. I believe that we are basically united in our will to make the nation a better place for all Canadians. We reflect very much the diversity of Canadians in this House through our different religions, ethnicity, careers and life experiences. I know that I serve with doctors, accountants, lawyers and former educators. We even have a member who is currently a member of ACTRA.

We each enter this House with a desire to contribute to public policy as well as to serve the public's best interest. That is true on all sides of the House. Members are elected to serve, not because of their economic credentials, business success or academic achievements. Instead, the majority of the members in the House are here because the people they represent believed that they were the best candidate to represent their interests in this place. Entrusted with the public confidence we are empowered to take a seat in this House and we must earn that trust every day.

On every occasion that my schedule permits, I visit school children and I always tell them that this seat does not belong to me. It belongs to the constituents of Kitchener Centre. This is an incredibly historic place that we have the privilege to serve in. We must earn that trust every day and the government does that.

The eight point plan outlined by the Prime Minister today would build on the significant steps that we have taken since first being elected to earn the trust and confidence of Canadians. The government has been consistent in its efforts to raise the bar on the standards of ethics in government.

We introduced a conflict of interest code for public office holders. We created the post of the ethics counsellor, the first of its kind in a Commonwealth country. We made substantial reforms to the Lobbyists Registration Act, increasing transparency and casting the light of day onto the lobby industry.

We also increased the frequency of the auditor general's report to four reports per year. That is up from one in previous governments. We expanded the role of internal departmental audits to publicly identify and publicly correct administrative errors. The government has never shied away from its convictions that the system can and should be better. When it is necessary we call in the auditor general and examine the systems. If it is warranted, we ask the RCMP to investigate.

### *Supply*

I must comment, as many of my Liberal colleagues have, on the courage and the leadership shown by the Minister of Human Resources Development. I admire the courage of her convictions in identifying a problem that existed within the grants and contributions program within her department. It was an internal audit which happens all the time in government departments.

Human Resources Development Canada is a huge department. One in three Canadians is touched by the services of this department. As a result of her dealing upfront and head on with the issues that were identified, she devised a six point plan and brought it forward to the House that remedied that program's shortcomings.

The real work of parliament goes far beyond the sound bites that people catch when they happen to tune in to the 6 o'clock news and listen to question period. Aside from the histrionics and the competition for the sound bite and the elbowing amongst the five parties, this House does a lot of productive work. We do work in committees. We do person to person and government to government outreach in substantive programs around the globe as is fitting of members who represent the government and the people of Canada.

This House is a very historic place. It is representative of the democratic processes which are how we define ourselves as a nation. These processes must transcend any individual, any party or any government. These aspects come and go, but this institution remains the best of Canada.

• (1630)

I cannot help but reflect that recently an Alliance colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect, admitted that he entered the House, grabbed the Mace and waved it over his head for publicity. It is historic in its inappropriateness of behaviour in the House. I worry about the integrity of this place. I am saddened to see that kind of political opportunism being taken.

Currently there are attacks on a minister and his character. Those attacks denigrate this place, our role as representatives and our communities. The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is somebody for whom I have a great deal of respect. He is a fellow graduate of the University of Waterloo which he accomplished while serving in this place.

I happen to be the mother of four children. I finished my education while continuing to be an at home parent. The member accomplished no mean feat when he continued to be dedicated to the public good while personally getting his degree. I am proud to serve with my caucus colleagues.

Politicians from every party need to take responsibility for the way Canadians view our political system. As the Prime Minister told the House in 1994, trust in institutions of government is not a partisan issue, but something all of us elected to public office have an obligation to restore. Ethics, trust and integrity are not partisan issues. They matter to all Canadians. They are essential if we as a parliament want to keep earning the trust of Canadians and ensure their faith in democracy.

*Supply*

I will do something that might be a little bit shocking for those of us who have served on the Hill. I want to speak about the dedication of the bureaucrats who make the business of the House and the business of Canada move forward. I recall my goodbye speech when I was a councillor in the city of Kitchener. I took a moment to reflect on the people who served the public at that level of government. They are often drawn into public service for very much the same reason that we in public life are drawn, because they feel that they can do something that is in the public's best interest.

We are not looking for glory or riches, because truly there are faster and shorter roads to that than serving the public interest. Bureaucrats do their best to work within the system. If the system is not working, it is a political responsibility to rectify that and it is a responsibility that the government takes very seriously.

Canada is known worldwide as a good place to do business. In no small part it is thanks to the trustworthy political system. We do not wrestle in the aisles as in some systems of government. I am confident that the government will continue to take steps to make the Government of Canada open, transparent and characterized by ethics and integrity. However it is something that is the responsibility of all elected members in the House.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of attention to the speeches we have just heard from our Liberal colleagues in connection with the motion we are debating today.

I find it shocking that they are trying to use fine words and dulcet tones to show just how purely they are administering this big beautiful country of Canada.

However, if they abandoned their fine words and got down to some fine actions, did things properly, perhaps we would have some credibility with the public, with Canadians and with Quebecers.

It is insulting to be told all that has been done to improve the system. What I am going to say is not, however, demagoguery, but truth. When it comes to a page of advertising that costs 25 or 30 times what it is worth, rather than saying: "Maybe we made a mistake", maybe they should admit it, correct it and call for an investigation in order to show they are prepared to do more than drone on with fancy speeches.

They talk about the appointment of an ethics counsellor. This is one appointed by the Prime Minister, reporting to the Prime Minister and writing the PM's responses. Is it not high time to stop making Canadians laugh? If we want to take a bit of the tarnish off our image and regain a bit of credibility, would it not be high time for the hon. member to admit that this system is a fake?

To be credible, an ethics counsellor should be answerable to the House and not to the person who appointed him, hired him and asks him to investigate what he wants investigated.

This is why Canadians and Quebecers are starting to be fed up with the way they are being made fools of. Money is being wasted, because when a page of advertising costs 25 times what it should, there might be something else to do than to say "Maybe we made a

mistake". There should be an inquiry. This must stop happening. The money we administer here is not ours, it belongs to all Canadians.

I would ask the hon. member, who has given a very fine speech, if she would not be more in favour of a proper correction of this situation, for instance having the ethics counsellor become a true ethics counsellor, playing a proper role and not answerable solely to the person who hired him, but rather to the House. We are talking of a neutral ethics counsellor, one who would be unbiased in any blame that had to be laid. This is what Canadians want of their government. This is what we are reproached for, when it is said that we lack credibility with the public. We are not credible. I would like to hear the hon. member's reaction to this.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member opposite was listening closely. I am sorry if I have a soft voice and I am shorter but we come in all shapes and sizes in the House.

I would point out that the eight point plan the Prime Minister tabled today indicates we are taking corrective action. At no point in my speech did I say we were perfect. We should be judged by what we have done. Regarding HRDC, we dealt with it. We called the auditor general in. We reacted to the auditor general's report and we will continue to do so.

That is what will give Canadians confidence, not only in the government but in this place of democracy which represents all of us. The eight point plan would cover off so many of the objections and concerns of the members opposite that I am surprised they are even able to rise and ask questions.

• (1640)

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars are being squandered by the government on contracts that were untendered and awarded to its friends, yet the member opposite stood and criticized a CA member for bringing attention to the appalling state of private members' business in this place.

The public is not fooled by diversionary tactics. Two polls, one of them by the government's own Liberal pollster, has shown that a majority of people in the country do not believe that the government is honourable and straightforward. They think it is corrupt and that there are problems with the political system.

Is the member ignoring the results of that poll? Can she not see that the public thinks this place is dysfunctional?

**Mrs. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to admit that I do not believe in governing by polls, however the Alliance colleague opposite wants to misrepresent what I thought was a badly worded poll.

I can think back to an earlier Bloc member who took his chair and walked out of this place because he was objecting to the disparity between the rich and poor in this country. I really tried to make the segue from that action to that issue. I would tell my hon. colleague opposite that I had the same problem with the frustration and the misguided attempt by someone who had otherwise been a credible colleague. This hysterical action had little to do with the fact that he was trying to draw attention to private members' legislation.

*Supply*

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

Yesterday I was fortunate enough to get my name on the Speaker's list for today. As I started thinking about putting a speech together I wondered why I would even do this. It is as upsetting to me as it is to many other members, that we are today having to discuss this topic.

I started thinking about why it was bothering me and I thought back to an analogy from being on the farm. A couple of years ago we had a combine with a very slow hydraulic leak. A high pressure line was leaking. It was spraying a little oil consistently onto the inside and under the covers of the combine. Over the first day or so there was just a little oil but as we went more oil and more dirt attached to it. Eventually the chaff built up. We ended up with a situation where not only was it filthy but it was dangerous.

I could not help but think that we have a situation something like that. With the combine we could not get close to it without getting dirty. It seemed like we did not even have to touch anything and we had chaff and oil all over our clothes and ourselves.

I guess I was thinking that we needed to fix the oil leak on the combine or we could never clean it up. It is the same with the situation we are talking about today and the problems with the government. There is an oil leak that needs to be fixed. It starts off spraying very quietly and gently. It does not seem to be make a big difference but over time it adds up to an awful lot of oil and dirt.

This afternoon the member from Mississauga in particular, but the previous member also, spoke about us having disrespect for the House if we questioned anything that went on here. I would argue that if we are going to see our way through to having a healthy machine, we need to fix the problems we have. We need to fix the leak.

There are a number of things that we need to examine. We can look at some of the examples like the \$40 million in unsupervised sponsorship money, the advertising contracts, ministers getting personal favours, quiet deals being made on the side and those kinds of things.

I grew up in western Canada. As a young person John Diefenbaker was one of the main politicians in our area of the world. He was a person of perseverance. It took him many times to get elected to the House and he was very successful with that. He was a popular person. When one talks to a lot of people in Saskatchewan, virtually everyone of them is sure that they met him at some time or another and talked to him. He was very popular. Eventually his career was brought to an end by some of the machinations that happened in Ottawa.

The prime minister who followed him was Mr. Pearson. It was the beginning of a long list of Liberal prime ministers who really had no connection with western Canada. Mr. Pearson always struck me as being someone who was as bland as beige paint but he was certainly followed up by someone who was not, Prime Minister Trudeau. In our part of the world I guess he has always been seen as having charisma but no content at all. It is more obvious as time goes on that his influence still guides the Liberal Party. Today we see that he was the architect in a lot of ways of so much that divides and splits the

country. I think he was also the architect of a spirit we see permeating the Liberal Party.

He was the gentleman who came out to western Canada and so casually flipped the bird to people who were daring to question some of the things that he had to say. He came out to western Canada another time and asked western Canadian farmers, when they had absolutely no choice but to go through his mandatory marketing system "Why should I sell your wheat?" People wonder why we had little patience for him.

Once he was done, the PCs came to power and again we saw terrible results. Western Canadians rejected that way of doing business. Now we see this government following up on the PCs. It should know better. It should have been able to prevent the things that have happened because it should have seen what happened with the previous government did and avoided it. However it does not seem to have learned from that.

The main reason people in my part of the world do not support the Liberal Party and this government is because they have seen this wasteful foolishness for years. I found a quote by H.L. Mencken, which is an interesting one because it applies. It is part of the government's philosophy and attitude toward the people of Canada. He said "Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard". This government has an attitude like that toward the people of Canada.

•(1645)

I grew up expecting more from government. When I came here I expected more from the Liberal government. I am disappointed and afraid that it seems to be worse than I thought it would be in terms of attitude, arrogance and corruption.

I have to admit that this is a bit of a puzzle to me also because many of the Liberal members seem to be decent people. It seems there is an ethos or a core philosophy of their party that is rotten. It is like a boat floating with no direction. With no solid principles around it, sooner or later it is bound to crash on the shore and that Liberal boat has just hit that shore.

I do not think it is just western Canadians who want higher standards. Canadians as a whole deserve much better.

This has been an interesting day. I guess I would call it a day of justification rather than a day of apology from the government. I kept track of some of the things that had been said today. This morning the PM referred to the HRDC scandal. His explanation for it was that it had some bad housekeeping, some poor administration and some administrative mistakes. That was as far as he would go in admitting that there was a problem with the billion dollar boondoggle. He also said some mistakes had been made but went on to explain that the government had saved Canada in spite of those mistakes. I guess anyone on this side knows that is just rubbish.

Later a PC member, the member for South Shore, made the good point that the government today is making excuses for the inexcusable.

### Supply

Apparently the Deputy Prime Minister was trying to take the high road a little earlier today but he still did not seem to get his own facts right. He said he knew the red book spoke of an ethics counsellor. We want to see one answerable to parliament as soon as possible. He was also defending his ability to influence the awarding of sponsorship money.

The most interesting thing I heard was the member for Ottawa Centre said that he thought he heard the Prime Minister take responsibility for the standard of conduct in the government. He said that the PM set the standard for the government. I guess that is one comment we would definitely agree with, particularly after seeing Shawinigate and some of the results of that.

He also claimed that the government was build on integrity, openness and accountability. I wonder if it was he who wrote in his last householder that he had been given \$1 million for a project in his urban Ottawa riding to address the issues of homeless aboriginal people. I wonder if he would be open to us perhaps looking at that to see what kind of value we are getting for that money? I am from Saskatchewan and that money probably would be very well spent in a place like Regina or Saskatoon where those issues are a major problem. In his quotes he reminded once again that the emptiest barrel seems to make the most noise.

This government's arrogance is longstanding and it shows up in my constituency. I come from an area of rural people. The government does not seem to know us at all but it always seems to know what is best. It seems it is more of the problem not the solution in my part of the world. This goes back years. For example, in the 1990s the Canadian Wheat Board felt that it needed to take issue with some of the farmers who had been hauling grain to the States. All of a sudden it was a big issue.

I found it interesting that the government brought together the RCMP, the justice department, customs and revenue and Canadian Wheat Board officials just to take on ordinary people. Those who are familiar with the situation will know the names of Desrochers, Sawatsky and McMechan. Their homes were raided and they were locked up in jail. Mr. McMechan spent months in jail and was strip searched for having the gall to actually try to haul his grain to the United States.

There are a number of other areas I could talk about. The helicopter fiasco, for instance, has cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. It already could have been done, if the Prime Minister had just admitted that he was wrong and had let that project go ahead.

To wrap up, we do have some suggestions that would work here. One of them is, as we have heard from other members today, that we need an ethics commissioner immediately and we need that person to be responsible and accountable to parliament. We need immediate standards that are public, set for members of cabinet in particular. The Prime Minister thinks it is important to put standards in place for the members of parliament. That may be okay, but it is not the members of parliament who are abusing their position.

•(1650)

Most of us do not have a lot of authority or ability to influence the public in the awarding of contracts or any of those kinds of things.

The government obviously needs to get a vision for the country. It is getting very old and it needs a vision. We need to deal with the attitude of corruption here.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate all day. I listened to my colleague opposite and his predecessors. I would like to address the difference between denigrating and undermining public institutions and healthy criticism. The House is as good an example as any that healthy criticism is necessary all the time, not only for public and private institutions but for us as individuals and for our families. Criticism is necessary and as often as possible it should be constructive.

My colleague and I were elected to run a business which is a billion dollar working day business. A billion dollars of government business has been done on this opposition day in which I am glad to participate. In the department of public works, which is being focused on particularly, a few hundred contracts have been signed today representing some tens of millions of dollars. That is an average day although I do not know about this day specifically.

Given the scale of that, it is very important that we criticize properly, that we find out problems and that we dig out problems. However we do not want at the same time to undermine the validity of the whole institution.

The member mentioned strip searches for the wheat board. He also mentioned the helicopter issue but did that without taking note of the fact that shipborne helicopters are being delivered at the present time. I know there are other helicopters but that is a fact.

His colleagues have asked what is transparency. I view one of the roles of the House as being a window on this great big government system which we are all elected to operate. I would suggest that this is one of the most transparent windows of its type in the world.

For example, this session is being televised. Committees whenever possible are televised. A good example of transparency is that we have numerous opposition days. The opposition picked the topic for today and has had all day on television to deal with it. Our question period is the most open transparent question period in the world. No notice is given. The cabinet and the Prime Minister are here virtually every day and not just for a few minutes.

I ask the member this and I wish he will comment genuinely. Does he truly believe that the government system and the House are corrupt? Does he not accept the fact that we have a transparency in Canada of which we can be very proud?

•(1655)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, when I am asked about this job and the fact that I have it, I tell people that it is a privilege. I say, as other people have done today, that there are 301 of us who have the privilege to do this job and to have this position in the country. I am glad that I have that opportunity.

*Supply*

I do not consider the House to be corrupt. However I used this illustration before. If we have an oil leak and it is gradually polluting everything around it. At some point we have to fix that. I would argue that the attitude of the government has become the oil leak that sprays around the inside of the House. At some point we need to repair that leak or it will bring this House into disrepute.

It is not the opposition's problem that we brought these things to the attention of the public. The government needs to respond in ways that will correct that situation and not leave things the same way. The Canadian people perceive that there are problems here because there are problems. Those need to be fixed.

I would suggest that individuals members, such as the one across the way, need to take the initiative within their caucus and within the leadership of that party to say that there are some things that need to change because the Canadian people deserve better. If not, we expect that the Canadian people will choose next time to put a different government in place.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member used a phrase "quiet deals" in his speech, trying to become as extreme as he possibly could. He should stand up and name the quiet deals or withdraw the phrase.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member wants me to go into this but I would suggest that the issue we have been talking about all day today and in question period would be one of those situations where things were going on behind the scenes which people were not aware of. They never would have been brought into the public's eye unless the opposition had brought them up. We see people getting special favours, spending weekends—

**An hon. member:** Don't make things up.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I hope members will allow me to finish.

In any case, we see situations like that. It is good that the opposition is bringing them forward now, so that the public is aware of them as well.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian democracy is alive and well. We see it functioning here today. I have been in the House all day. I am participating in the debate concerning the morality of the cabinet members of the federal Liberal government and the examination by the auditor general into practices concerning financial activities of the government that have the taint about them not only of conflict of interest and scandal but of actual criminal activity to the point where it has been referred to the RCMP. That is why this day is so important. We are spending it on corruption and allegations of corruption in the cabinet.

The backbenchers want to keep their jobs. Like any good politician they want to get re-elected, so they are going to try, as they have been all day long, to make up excuses why it is the opposition and everyone but them who is in trouble or is corrupt and is not making this place work.

I was really amazed today that the Prime Minister stood and in essence said that the end justifies the means. I never thought I would hear a prime minister say that. He said in regard to Quebec separation that perhaps some mistakes were made. He was talking

about dumping in hundreds of millions of dollars to address a problem without any guidelines. In fact cabinet ministers appear to have used that opportunity to shovel money to their friends, the people who donate to their political party.

Let us examine what the public works minister did. The public works minister was the former Francophonie minister. He was the government House leader when I came to this place in 1997. In 1998 Groupe Everest and the top political aide, Mr. Alain Pilon, launched discussions about a public advertising campaign for the 2001 Francophonie games.

Around January 15, 2002 the former House leader became the new minister of public works. Remember that he already knew the president of Groupe Everest and that they were having discussions in regard to an ad campaign for the Francophonie games.

Around March the current public works minister and his family stayed at a Quebec lakeside mansion which is owned by Mr. Claude Boulay, the president of Groupe Everest, the advertising firm. We can see the linkages coming around.

I may use in the next few minutes some terms that are used in police work. I spent 30 years as a member of the RCMP, including 16 on commercial crime, fraud, theft, influence peddling and also money laundering.

In May it became public that the public works minister and his family spent two days at the mansion. During the week around May 13 to May 20, the public works minister said that his family paid for the stay at the mansion. The pressure came on and more questions were asked by the media. Then the House resumed and the public works minister provided an affidavit that has a photocopy of the front of a cheque that was supposedly used to pay for that stay.

When looking at activity from a policeman's point of view, one looks for a course of conduct that is dishonest, or in essence is wilful blindness.

The minister by this time was starting to sweat bullets. He and his family got together, and Mr. Boulay. They were worried about what would happen with this. They said "Let us put these guys off in the House of Commons by showing them the front of the cheque. They are not smart enough to know about the back of the cheque".

There is the first incidence of wilful blindness or attempting to obscure the facts of the case. I am not sure I am going to be using the word misleading here, just to keep things straight.

● (1700)

That is the first case of a wilful blindness to the facts in an effort to throw the House of Commons off the trail. If we look at the cheque, there is a high likelihood it was not written at the time the public works minister alleges it was or on the date that is shown on the cheque. If the mansion was a legitimate business, the business would have cashed the cheque right away with its normal deposits. I do not think that the mansion is a regular business. I am not sure what it was, but the—

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think the member's remarks went beyond even allegation of wrongdoing. The remarks about the cheque and when it was signed are out of order.

*Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jordan):** The member prefaced his remarks by referring to his background as a policeman and notified the House that he would be using police terms. I think he is on the line but I would just ask members to be very judicious in their use of phrases. Certainly I will direct my remarks to the member that the phrase “obscuring the facts” is fine but I think I would stay away from the term “misleading”.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, as a former member of the RCMP, I am speaking with some background with regard to cheques.

If the private mansion was not really a business place, there would be no expectation that a payment was necessary. Once it was out in the public, the public works minister started to worry that maybe there was a conflict of interest and was contrary to the ethics of his Prime Minister. He figured he had to do something about this, so his family had a cheque brought forward to show that his family paid for it so there was no conflict of interest.

That would tend to address the conflict of interest if the cheque had been handled in a normal way, but it was not handled in a normal way by Mr. Boulay. It was not returned. The other thing the public works minister could have done was to bring forward evidence that the cheque was written in the proper numbering sequence in his daughter-in-law's cheque book. Those cheques beforehand would have shown when it was written. I suspect it was written in May but we will wait to see what the auditor general finds out.

If the cheque book disappears, I should warn the public works minister that the RCMP or the auditor general will still go into that bank account. They will get photocopies of both sides of that cheque. They will be able to prove when the cheque was written. We will be looking forward to that. There is no way of covering this up now. We have been asking the public works minister to fully clarify this matter. He has not provided the back of the cheque or any of the other evidence that is necessary.

It ends up with the public works minister trying to bring in another person to back up that he is being honest. This happens to be the priest, Father Savoie. They must have some reasonably close connection because Father Savoie says he cannot say anything because this is a seal of confessional in the church. Even that is not honest. A reverend from a university has said that the information the priest has in regard to this cheque is not a seal of confessional and that he can in fact explain it to the police and the auditor general. Here we have another course of dishonest conduct, in my opinion, by not having the full truth come out right away.

With this course of conduct which is enough to cause a police investigation we then have to look at what was given in return. First there was supposed to be the free stay which it turns out had to be covered up. Then there is the \$77,000 worth of political contributions to the Liberal Party. When average Canadians see what I have just described, that is why they have lost all faith not in democracy, not in parliament, but in the honesty of the Prime Minister and all of the cabinet ministers.

● (1705)

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am always a little surprised by the debates in the House of Commons. For nine years, I had the chance and the privilege of following the debates in another place, another parliament. I have never seen debates where such unacceptable language was allowed in a chamber.

Words are used in this place which are not allowed and are considered unparliamentary in other places. All kinds of allegations are made here, including allegations of corruption.

Corruption means paying someone to get favours, or it means pocketing money. This was never addressed in any debate. There is no evidence to this effect. Yet parliamentarians are allowed to make allegations such as—

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** You should have heard what Trudeau used to say.

**Mr. Myron Thompson:** You guys might call it normal procedure.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** That is just the way of doing business over there.

**Mr. Serge Marcil:** Shut your mouths. I am speaking.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I caution members that interventions have to be made through the Chair. I think we have an example where sometimes when we try to take a different, more direct route it can lead to some, let us say, chaos. Let us try to put things back on line in the parliamentary fashion we are accustomed to.

I will give the floor back to the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport.

● (1710)

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Marcil:** Mr. Speaker, they should at least listen. If they are afraid of the truth, it is probably because they have things to hide.

All kinds of insinuations are made in this House, without any substantiation. It is as if anyone could be accused of just about any crime, and nothing is unparliamentary. This is widely accepted. I do not get it. I have a very hard time figuring how any real debate can take place here.

Accusations are made. Incidentally, in response to the comments of the member opposite, I want to point out to him that in Quebec it is common to rent—even though it may not be a commercial cottage—a friend's cottage for a family weekend. These cottages do not necessarily belong to companies. This happens all the time, and there is nothing wrong with that.

However, evidence tabled in this House is being questioned. I find it a shame to see a parliamentarian rise and make statements to that effect. The 301 parliamentarians in this House are not corrupt people. They are dignified people. Ministers are also parliamentarians.

*Supply*

It seems to me that if we wanted to improve the debates somewhat and try to respect the parliamentarians in this House, we should stick to a certain level of language and avoid certain words.

To my knowledge, over the past nine years, no one, on either side of this House, has ever been accused of corruption. So, in making accusations, one has to produce evidence.

Whatever you say in the House, you should be honest enough to say outside—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I will once again repeat the practices of the House. Comments are directed through the chair. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

[*English*]

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, the allegations are being made by the auditor general for the most part and the examination is being done by the auditor general and the RCMP, so we will wait to see what comes out of that. I was certainly relating the facts of what has happened up until today as well as my interpretation of what is happening.

There is another contract that is under suspicion. It is the contract that is given out under the solicitor general's office. Adult education contracts in the prisons in the western region are consistently going to Excalibur Learning Resource Centre.

The centre is believed to be owned by former employees of Correctional Service Canada. It has consistently won the contract for the Stoney Mountain federal penitentiary which is in my riding. The Evergreen School Division which has been bidding and in fact had those contracts at one time, has put in bids that have been \$2.5 million lower than Excalibur's, yet Excalibur has won the contract every time.

We also have a case where Excalibur was unable to issue grade 12 certificates to students who had passed the courses, whereas Evergreen School Division could.

The question I would ask the House, the auditor general and the Prime Minister is was that contract given out fairly or was there some corruption in that, because it is former employees of the government's own department who have the contract?

The best bid, which was \$2.5 million less, was by Evergreen School Division. I think Evergreen School Division was screwed out of that contract because of inside work by these government departments.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today I had the opportunity to ask a question. My preamble was that I thought that this was an important resolution or motion that the opposition brought to the House for us to discuss.

It deals with some very fundamental points and many of them have come up. There are people in this place who are best friends here and it has nothing to do with party lines. I can say as I look around this place that I know almost every member personally. We do talk. I hope Canadians understand that. What Canadians see in this place about the thrust and parry of debate and some of the jabs, et cetera, is not a reflection of our relationships within the House. There are some very good relationships and they have been

established across all party lines. It is important that Canadians understand that we are human beings. We are just like their neighbours.

I note that the motion before the House refers to a poll. The motion states:

...69% of Canadians polled in a recent survey viewed the "federal political system" as corrupt—

If we look at the transcripts of the debate in the House of Commons about this 69%, particularly the questions at question period, members will see that many of the questioners said that 69% of Canadians believe the Liberal government is corrupt.

That was not what the poll said, but in this place wordsmithing and a little bit of massaging of the language allows insinuations. However, members will know that the poll basically shows that our profession is not held in high esteem and that is unfortunate for all of us. It is a reflection on all of us.

I remember being at a political meeting about 20 years ago, when I first became involved in the political process, where someone asked the rhetorical question: What is the role of the opposition? Someone who is now a member of parliament stood up at that meeting and suggested that the role of the opposition is to deliver blows that would tenderize a turtle. I think it was rather crass language. I think it was a rough analogy. However, I think it is very reflective of what happens in this place, at least during question period.

Question period lasts 45 minutes a day, but I only wish Canadians could see the debate within the House when we are debating various bills. I wish the public could see more of members of parliament working in committee and how they work with the committee system and witnesses and how they are dealing with some detailed legislation.

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, but if there is time left I will be splitting my time with the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot.

I wish Canadians could see members of parliament when they are exercising their responsibilities here on Parliament Hill in their roles of doing some very good and constructive work. I know that all members here have had tremendous opportunities to influence the operations of committee, debate, legislation, motions and discussion of issues and to make sure that the broad range of important issues is there.

That part of our job is probably the 90% that Canadians do not see, but question period is a strange animal. Question period is the time when the ministers are here and all the opposition is here. No committees meet during question period and all members are present. It is the only time period when all the members of parliament are in the House.

### Supply

When there are over a couple of hundred people in the same room at the same time and someone suggests something that another person might disagree with, it is easy to understand that there will be a reaction. People see question period and say that we are a bunch of children, hooting and hollering, and they ask what is wrong with us. However, I do not think it is possible to put 300 people in a room, split them in two and say one group is the good guys and another group is also good guys, but one group does not like the other group over there. Somebody will stand up and say, "You know what? I think your mother wears army boots", or something like that, and before you know it the room will start to get pretty excited. It happens. We are human beings.

• (1715)

As members of parliament, because we have good, close relationships across party lines, we cannot ever forget the importance of respecting each other in this place. We cannot forget the importance of the presumption that when members speak here they are telling the truth. There is a presumption of honesty in this place.

I also believe that part of the line we should not be crossing is the presumption of innocent until proven guilty. While I understand that people can get excited and emotional about some of the debate that goes on here, we have to show that level of respect. We have to make sure that we are not twisting facts to the point where we are making allegations that are hurtful and meanspirited, because that is a reflection on all of us. The consequence of being meanspirited and less than forthright with the facts means that 69% of Canadians will believe that the federal system of government is corrupt.

I think it is important that the members of the opposition do their job and continue to prod the government on the important questions of the day that are of interest to them. That is their job. They are the official opposition and it is their job to make sure they ask the tough questions and put the government's feet to the fire. However, we cannot and we should not cross the line with regard to respecting each other, with regard to the presumption of innocence and with regard to the presumption of honesty. I believe that these days we have been getting a little too far over that line. I think it is time to tone down the rhetoric. It is time to get to the facts.

The previous speaker said it could very well be that the cheque was not even signed on that date, that maybe it was done just two days ago. A lot of things are possible, but when the facts are not known we have ways of dealing with it. If it is not the auditor general who deals with it, if it is not the RCMP, we have the procedure and House affairs committee. When there has been disagreement regarding facts, or facts have not been forthcoming, or this place has not been an appropriate forum for the facts to come out, we have often referred matters to the procedure and House affairs committee to make sure that all members get an opportunity, in an appropriate forum, to get the facts out.

**An hon. member:** Why doesn't the minister give the facts?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** We want to know the facts and I think the reputation of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, to whom I am the parliamentary secretary, speaks for itself. He is an honourable member of parliament. He has served his constituents well. He has served the House well. He also has friends in all corners of this place. Members will acknowledge that. We do

not need to prove this member's integrity. It is unquestioned in this place. That is an uncontested fact.

We have a culture, a situation where members of parliament come to the House on behalf of their constituents and often on behalf of companies that reside in their constituency or in their region. They come here and lobby on their behalf. I know that the former leader of the opposition, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, wrote a wonderful letter to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services saying that there was this thing going on in Victoria, I think it was, and the sponsorship program was an excellent instrument to promote Canadiana et cetera. He supported that program and asked the minister to ensure that due consideration was given to funding that program.

That is not wrong. It is not wrong for a member to do that. We understand that our job is to represent our constituents and often to represent the interests of the industry and businesses in our area, but not to unduly influence or somehow do anything wrong. This is part of our job.

• (1720)

I only have a minute left so I want to close by talking about language. I have heard some words here that make me feel uncomfortable. I have heard words like corrupt. I am not a lawyer, but I thought that if someone was corrupt that meant the person was involved in an illegal act. I think that if we ever use the word corrupt in this place it should be preceded by a report, a charge being laid and someone being convicted. We have to do this. We have to respect the presumption of innocence.

I have also heard about kickbacks and that bothers me as well. We have a political system that is funded by political donations. The political donation process is there and it is transparent, but it is there to ensure that ordinary folk like us can raise enough money to be able to run in elections and to carry on our political work as members of parliament. It is an important process. The fact that someone gives money to someone and subsequently has some relationship with that person does not necessarily go hand in hand, because we do have a public process.

I ask all hon. members to seriously consider the rhetoric that we use to make sure that we show due respect to all members of parliament.

• (1725)

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, here is what the member is missing. We talked about the misuse of funds, the misappropriation of funds and the auditor general's scathing report. There is enough information there to indicate that somebody has to clean up their act, but it never seems to get cleaned up. This kind of report comes down year after year. It never changes. Why does it never change?

For example, the Divorce Act was passed by all committees and passed in the House of Commons. They wanted it enacted and yet only one person sitting on that front row stopped the whole thing from being enacted. No wonder it is called corruption. No wonder people have no faith and no confidence.

Some members may remember John Nunziata. He introduced the idea of getting rid of the faint hope clause. It passed in the House of Commons. Has that clause gone through? No.

When are we going to get some democracy in here? That is the real question. When are we going to get some real competence?

Those members can blather all they want but they know very well they were part of the group of people who voted yes to the Divorce Act, and it has never been implemented and it will not be because one person refuses to allow it.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I will address the member's comments with regard to the auditor general's report.

The member and all hon. members know that the auditor general identified the case of two public servants who did not follow the work in an appropriate fashion. In fact, I think she said they broke every rule in the book. As a consequence, further work will be done. The RCMP have been called in and the auditor general has undertaken to do a broader review to look into this matter in more detail. The member at least should be encouraged that the auditor general, who is an officer of this place, will be looking into it.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have all tried today to base our statements and comments on the facts. If I or any of us have failed to do that, we certainly regret it. I particularly want to indicate that if I have interpreted incorrectly anything the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine said, I want to apologize.

However, our reaction today comes from the fact that so many Liberal speakers have stood up in the House and suggested that those of us in the opposition who are raising questions about wrongdoing are in fact as guilty of causing problems as those who are actually making errors in judgment and are involved in wrongdoing.

My question for the member is this: Is that not the problem? Should we not be dealing with the basic issue at hand, which is the legitimate and widespread perception among Canadians that wheeling, dealing, trimming and misleading has become the standard method of operation and we have to correct that?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree. I think that the slinging of mud and that kind of thing on this issue is inappropriate. I am sorry that some members choose to go that way, but I think there are enough members in this place who legitimately want to have an influence on what happens in this place and on what happens in Canada, and we will use our best judgment and our best wisdom to make sure that the process proceeds in that fashion.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, to quote the Prime Minister, he said in the House that honouring the promises they made is a key part in restoring the trust of Canadians. The Prime Minister promised to establish an ethics commissioner who would report to parliament. Does the member think the Prime Minister should keep that promise?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, we had discussions on the issue earlier. It was the ethics counsellor designate himself who advised that the position not report to the House. The reason was that if certain matters went through the House it would make it difficult for the ethics counsellor to do his job and protect the privacy of people.

### *Private Members' Business*

Notwithstanding, the Prime Minister has made a commitment to have an ethics position established not only for ministers but for all parliamentarians. I believe it will happen in the fall.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired. The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

### PROTECTION OF THE UNBORN CHILD

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance)** moved:

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights review the current definition of "human being" in section 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada and report (a) whether the law needs to be amended to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to provide appropriate legal protection for a child before as well as after birth; and (b) whether the law should be amended so that an unborn child is considered a human being at the point of conception, when the baby's brain waves can be detected, when the baby starts to move within the womb, or when the baby is able to survive outside the womb.

He said: Mr. Speaker, a little over a year ago on March 22, 2001 we debated my Motion No. 228 to reword the definition of a human being in the Criminal Code of Canada. One Liberal MP and one Bloc MP refused my two motions for unanimous consent. The first would have made the motion a votable item. The second would have referred it to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Today with Motion No. 392 I am not trying to redefine a human being. I am trying to convince the House the issue is important enough to be referred to committee to be reviewed and reported back to parliament. Motion No. 392 is self explanatory. It urges:

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights review the current definition of "human being" in section 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada and report (a) whether the law needs to be amended to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to provide appropriate legal protection for a child before as well as after birth; and (b) whether the law should be amended so that an unborn child is considered a human being at the point of conception, when the baby's brain waves can be detected, when the baby starts to move within the womb, or when the baby is able to survive outside the womb.

I do not know why my motion was not made a votable item. Maybe it makes so much sense the subcommittee on private members' business thought it did not need three hours of debate to make a decision. I guess we will see in a few minutes.

*Private Members' Business*

Why is the issue so important that it needs to be studied by the justice and human rights committee? There are a few reasons. First, all my constituents told me it was important to them. Last July I had a professional polling company conduct a scientific survey of my constituents. Some 75% of them said Canadian law should be amended so the definition of human being includes unborn children. They objected to the current definition of human being in section 223 of the Criminal Code of Canada. It reads as follows:

- (1) A child becomes a human being within the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother, whether or not
- (a) it has breathed;
  - (b) it has an independent circulation; or
  - (c) the navel string is severed.

According to the current criminal code definition of a human being, which is scientifically incorrect, a baby must emerge completely from the birth canal before it becomes a human being. It is obvious to the vast majority of my constituents that a baby is a human being before it is born. This is what they object to.

Only 12% of my constituents thought the definition of a human being did not need to be amended. Those who thought section 223 of the Criminal Code needed to be amended answered the second part of my question this way: Some 56% indicated that an unborn baby should be a human being in Canadian law from the moment of conception; 16% indicated that this should be so from the time the child's brain waves can be detected; 7% indicated it should be so from the time the child starts to move in the womb; and 9% indicated it should be so from the time the child is able to survive outside the womb. An unscientific household survey in my riding produced similar results.

Second, the issue is important enough to warrant serious review by the standing committee because of the overwhelming response of the general public. Since Motion No. 392 was selected in the private members' business lottery a month ago I have received literally thousands of letters, e-mails and faxes from citizens telling me what they think about the contents of my motion. There have been so many responses I could make a lecture out of them if I wanted to. We are receiving hundreds of responses each day. In the last couple of weeks we have only had time to tabulate the results from 3,511 responses. Many members are getting the same information from their constituents.

This is what Canadians are telling their members of parliament: Of 3,511 respondents, 3,450 or 98% said they were not satisfied with the current definition of human being in the criminal code; 3,421 respondents or 97% said the definition should be amended to protect the unborn child from the point of conception; 21 respondents said it should be amended to protect an unborn child from the point when the baby's brain waves can be detected; 3 respondents said it should be amended to protect an unborn child from the point when the baby starts to move in the womb; only 7 respondents said it should be amended to protect an unborn child from the point when the baby is able to survive outside the womb; and 12 respondents said it should be amended to protect an unborn child from the point when a child is developing inside the womb.

• (1735)

Third and most important, the matter should be referred to the committee because of the cold, hard statistics from Statistics Canada.

StatsCan reports show that since 1988 more than a million babies have been the victims of therapeutic abortions. If we did not hear anything else here today, is that not reason enough to have the human rights committee review the current definition of a human being?

During last year's debate on my previous motion the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health bragged about the government's policy governing research using gametes, zygotes, embryos and fetuses. Only the Liberal government could be so two faced and hypocritical. A year ago according to the government zygotes, embryos and fetuses had the right not to be used for research but a perfectly healthy baby growing inside a perfectly healthy mother had no rights whatsoever.

Yesterday *National Post* editor Jonathan Kay pointed out that after introducing the bill on assisted human reproduction the Liberal government is still confused. Mr. Kay said the proposed legislation was "morally incoherent". He quite correctly pointed out that under the current definition of a human being in Canadian law a woman is "free to create an embryo if all she wants to do is abort it", but the new legislation proposed by the health minister would make it a crime to create a human embryo for the purpose of saving a life.

The moral incoherence of the Liberal government was pointed out a year ago by a number of members in the House. The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest in Ontario spoke eloquently in support of my motion. He said:

Do you not find it interesting, Madam Speaker, that on the one hand it is perfectly acceptable and legal in Canada at the present time to kill an unborn child at any point of its development, right up until it comes out of the womb, yet on the other hand we are wringing our hands about the ethics of experimentation on zygotes? Where is the logic in that? How can it be logical to permit a third trimester abortion at eight months without blinking our eyes and wring our hands about whether or not a fertilized egg is going to be flushed down a scientist's drain?

The hon. member for Mississauga South in Ontario and then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services also spoke in support of the motion. He said:

All one needs to do is go to a baby shower and ask what everyone is celebrating.

The minister pointed out that in a number of jurisdictions in the United States chronic drinking during pregnancy is a criminal offence. This stands in stark contrast to the law in Canada where unborn children have no rights at all.

The hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette in B.C. pointed out the hypocrisy of the legal definition of a human being during his remarks. He said:

We know that in one room we may have a doctor performing microsurgery with the latest technology to save the life of what some may call a fetus, an unborn child who might be six months in its development, while in the very next room we might have somebody else in a very similar situation having the termination of a pregnancy or an abortion. That is a big dilemma. How do we explain that? How do we deal with that?

The Department of Health is not helping resolve the moral incoherence. On the department's website the words child and fetus are used interchangeably in 175 documents. The words baby and fetus are used interchangeably 56 times.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1740)

The Department of Health further confused the issue in its response to my access to information request. Last year I asked the department for documents, reports and correspondence that provide evidence that abortions are medically necessary. On March 8, 2001, the department responded:

I regret to inform you that after a thorough search of all likely record holdings, departmental officials have confirmed that they have no records relevant to your request.

No records. Is that not amazing? More than 100,000 unborn babies lose their right to life every year and the Department of Health does not even have one document that says abortions are medically necessary. If they are not medically necessary or therapeutic, why are we performing them? Why are taxpayers paying for them?

Last month I asked the Department of Health for documents, reports and correspondence in the department with respect to the total death risk by women having an elective abortion compared to women carrying their baby to term. The department's response to this question was just as unbelievable as the one last year. The health minister's bureaucrat said:

I regret to inform you that following a thorough search the department must confirm that it has no records relevant to your request.

No records. Can any member believe that?

The department does not have any documents showing that abortions are medically necessary, nor does it have any documents showing that abortions are medically risky. Is not one of the main purposes of the Department of Health to advise Canadians about what medical procedures are medically necessary and which ones pose a health risk?

Talk about burying heads in the sand and moral incoherence. Recently the Minister of Health contributed even more to the moral incoherence of the government's position. On May 10, the *National Post* reported that the justice minister had this to say about the fate of so-called surplus embryos at Canadian fertility clinics:

"Do you know what happens to them?" she asked reporters. "They go in the garbage. So, the donor can choose to have them thrown out, which is quite clearly their right, or they can also choose to let those surplus embryos be used for the purposes of medical research," she said.

Talk about a slippery slope. What does the minister think happens to more than the 100,000 aborted fetuses every year? That is right, Madam Minister, they are thrown in the garbage. In a CBC *NewsWorld* interview on March 4, 2002, ethicist Maureen McTeer had this to say about research on human embryos:

In terms of research on embryos, you want to talk slippery slope, that was the argument used in Nazi Germany; these are only Jews. Now we are saying these are only embryos.

At least the Canadian Alliance position is morally coherent. The official opposition minority report on reproductive technologies recommended:

That the final legislation clearly recognize the human embryo as human life and that the Statutory Declaration include the phrase "respect for human life."

Most Canadians believe it is time to end this moral incoherence. In fact it is 14 years overdue. It is time to have a House of Commons committee review the current definition of a human being. That is all my motion is asking. A far less convincing reason, but a reason

nonetheless, for referring this matter to the human rights committee is Canada's failure to comply with one of the terms and conditions of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

I am no big fan of the United Nations. I find most of the articles in the UN convention on the rights of the child a gross intrusion on parental rights and liberties and most articles are definitely not in the best interests of the child. However the Liberal government chooses to cherry pick sections from the UN convention on the rights of the child. It ignores sections that would violate the government's policy on moral incoherence. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which Canada signed, states:

—the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.

In Canadian law there is simply no protection for a child before birth. The Government of Canada has never met its legal obligation to this section of the UN convention. The government cannot discharge its legal obligations under this international agreement, an agreement the federal government and 10 provinces have ratified, unless and until it amends the definition of a human being.

Therefore, I request unanimous consent of the House to make the motion a votable item.

● (1745)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

The motion calls for the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to review the current definition of a human being in subsection 223(1) of the criminal code. The motion raises the issue of the point at which a fetus becomes a human being and whether the current definition of human being complies with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child.

I cannot support the motion. The views of Canadians diverge significantly on the rights of the fetus. The very question raises a whole host of issues with moral, social, economic, health and legal implications. Achieving consensus on an issue that touches on so many fundamental values in Canadian society is an extremely difficult task.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville raises the issue of whether the current definition of a human being is consistent with the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which Canada ratified, does not address the issue of when a child's life begins. It was not an oversight but rather recognition of the fact that each country must determine the issue for itself based on a balancing of a number of fundamental values.

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The Supreme Court of Canada commented on the rights of the fetus in two key decisions: the Dobson decision and the Winnipeg Child and Family Services decision.

In the latter decision, the supreme court questioned whether a pregnant woman could be confined and treated against her will in order to protect the fetus. The court held that child protection was an area of provincial responsibility, particularly if the decision affected provincial child welfare laws. The court also held that any attempt to address the rights of the fetus must be balanced with the rights of the pregnant woman.

We have reached a delicate balance in Canada. The definition of a human being in the criminal code states that:

A child becomes a human being with the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother..."

The criminal code provides a certain degree of protection to the fetus by stating that a person commits homicide by killing an unborn child in the act of birth, under certain conditions. For example, section 238 creates the offence of killing an unborn child in the act of birth. This offence applies even though the child has not yet technically met the definition of a human being.

These provisions properly balance the need to protect the fetus and the circumstances of the pregnant woman, her rights, interests, and claim to protection in Canadian society. Any change to the definition of human being in the criminal code could have the effect of criminalizing abortion.

When the provision of the criminal code dealing with abortion was struck down by the supreme court in January 1988, parliamentarians endeavoured to find a basis of agreement that respected differing opinions and constitutional guarantees. Members will recall that Bill C-43, an act respecting abortion, was defeated in the Senate on January 31, 1991, on the basis of a 43:43 vote.

The absence of a criminal law on abortion does not mean that a legislative or legal vacuum exists. The delivery of abortion services is currently regulated by provincial governments who are responsible for the delivery of health care services, and by the standards set by the medical profession itself.

The majority of Canadians are satisfied with this division of regulatory responsibilities and that abortion is regulated as a health and medical matter, and not a criminal matter.

• (1750)

Motion No. 392 clearly touches upon some of the most fundamental moral, social, economic, health and legal questions. These questions often come down to our own fundamental and personal values. It is the responsibility of the government to examine these fundamental questions and strive to achieve some balance between the competing views.

This is what parliament and the provincial legislatures have done since 1991 on the issue of abortion. This is precisely the same approach of the government on the issue of when a child becomes a human being. We believe that a majority of Canadians are comfortable with this approach. We have balanced the rights of the fetus with the rights of the pregnant woman. We have done so in a way that is consistent with our international obligations. We have

also committed not to criminalize a woman's right to make choices regarding her physical and mental health.

Given the delicate balancing that was required to get to where we are today, I cannot support opening up the definition of a human being in the criminal code. For these reasons I am unable to support the motion.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I rise to address a motion which seeks to recognize the fetus as a human being.

The first time, a similar motion was presented by the same colleague from the Canadian Alliance. This first motion was not moved for debate in the House because the Bloc Québécois, mindful of the interests of Quebecers and Canadians, opposed presenting a bill to, "define a 'human being' as a human fetus or embryo from the moment of conception, whether in the womb of the mother or not and whether conceived naturally or otherwise, and making any and all consequential amendments required".

Today, the same member is bringing up once again a debate that I had thought had been settled some time ago. He is moving a motion that would have the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights review the current definition of human being to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child, obviously with a view to taking a position against abortion.

We believe that this debate has had its day. Moving such a motion serves no purpose. The motion reads as follows:

That the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights review the current definition of "human being" in section 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada and report—

Subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada provides that a child becomes a human being "when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother". This is what the member told us earlier. The section continues "whether or not it has breathed, it has an independent circulation, or the navel string is severed". I think that the wording is very clear.

The motion before us asks that the committee:

—report (a) whether the law needs to be amended to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Nowhere in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is there any reference to the conception of the embryo, or fetus, to its development, or even to gestation. Nor is there any definition of pregnancy. I think that this is the important point. It is interesting to note that the United Nations convention gives as a definition, in its first article, "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years".

Article 5 provides that every child has the inherent right to life, and that states parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child. This is important: the survival and development of the child.

In its preamble, the United Nations convention says:

that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding;

that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration;

that due account must be taken of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child.

So, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides legal protection after birth. This is what the members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will discover when they study the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is no mention of “before” birth.

● (1755)

As for the second part of the motion, it deserves our full attention. The second part states that the Standing Committee on Justice should see “whether the law should be amended so that an unborn child is considered a human being at the point of conception—” and so forth. It would have committee members debate a motion on which the Senate of Canada and the Supreme Court of Canada have already ruled.

In 1988, the supreme court declared the sections in the criminal code on abortion at the time as unconstitutional. Since then, all women in Canada have the right to decide on their own whether or not to terminate their pregnancy. To my knowledge, Newfoundland is the only province that has no specific abortion facilities. However, it is recognized across Canada.

In 1989, the Senate of Canada rejected a bill passed by the House of Commons that would have recriminalized abortion. In 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada refused to recognize the fetus as a person with legal rights and affirmed that it was up to an elected body to make such a decision. For the third time, the supreme court established that a fetus has no legal status before birth.

The landmark decision on this, however, was more than fifteen years ago, when it ruled in favour of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, who performed abortions. At the same time, it made a recommendation for fair and reasonable access to abortion services.

In conclusion, I must reaffirm that, for all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois maintains that this motion is null and void. I would add that, when I debated this issue here in the House last year, the members across the way, through the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, seemed to me to be prepared to recriminalize abortion and to present the motion to the House. Today, I note and appreciate the open-mindedness which will mean that women's right to choose will be respected.

My party will also always be vigilant to ensure that such motions, which are contrary to the freedom of choice women obtained only after much struggle, are not passed through male dominated parliaments which claim to want to see the population comply with the laws they themselves put in place.

If this motion were to follow its course and the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights were to examine it, it ought to also take mothers' rights into consideration. Mothers are human beings with rights that are protected by law.

In closing, I would emphasize that the member who introduced the motion wondered or simply informed us that there were filing cabinets filled with responses to his survey as to whether people were for or against abortion. I am certain that there were no cabinets

### *Private Members' Business*

filled with responses from women, because women are the ones who have to deal with child rearing on a day to day basis.

● (1800)

[English]

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to join in this debate to express my grave concerns about the motion and to indicate my opposition to the intentions of this resolution.

The motion is an attempt to undermine the hard won gains of women in the area of reproductive health. It is an attempt to undercut well established rights of women to choose when it comes to reproductive health. The motion attempts to reopen the abortion debate. It appears to be an ideological marker for an anti-choice agenda. It also appears to have the goal of changing federal law so that an embryo fetus is considered a person with rights separate and equal to that of a woman.

That is clearly an agenda about reopening the entire issue of a woman's right to choose on reproductive health matters. That debate has taken place in the House and across this land. That matter has been resolved. Canadians have spoken. The vast majority of Canadians have expressed their desire to ensure that the laws and programs of our government respect and reflect a woman's right to choose.

If the motion is not an attempt to reopen the abortion debate and it is instead an attempt to address the health concerns of pregnant women and the children they are carrying, then the emphasis is sorely misplaced. If that is the intent we will end up with nothing but legal wrangling and navel gazing at a time when urgent action dealing with the needs of children and the health of pregnant women is absolutely required.

If the member's intentions were to ensure that every child born in our society is loved, wanted and cared for, then he ought to put his energy and efforts into joining the thousands of Canadians fighting to ensure appropriate change and innovative programs to address those very needs. I do not need to tell the member the kind of situation we are facing when it comes to children in Canada or around the world. However, the debate is important because it begs the question: where does the member and his party stand when it comes to some of those critical issues?

I want to mention a couple of statistics to make that point. We just received another report from Campaign 2000 regarding the level of child poverty in Canada. As we debate the question about the legal interpretation of the rights of the fetus, 18.5% of all Canadian children live in poverty. Approximately 45% of those children are under the age of six.

What has happened since 1989 when we unanimously passed the motion in the House to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000? Child poverty went up 39% since 1989. Instead of one in seven children living in poverty, today one in five live in poverty. There is an agenda for members. If we were concerned about children, that is where we should put our priorities.

*Private Members' Business*

● (1805)

Some of us had the benefit of hearing Stephen Lewis speak at the parliamentary internship alumni association dinner a couple of nights ago. Stephen Lewis was passionate about his work as a special UN envoy in the sub-Saharan nations dealing with HIV-AIDS. He told us about a village in Namibia where there were papier mâché infant coffins, tiny boxes decorated with silver handles, that were made specifically to deal with the thousands of children who were dying every day from malnutrition and from HIV-AIDS and other preventable illnesses.

He told us about the millions of children who were orphaned in Africa because their parents had died from HIV-AIDS. He told us that almost half of those children would not have died if countries like Canada had taken its role seriously in terms of international aid and ensuring the provision of necessary drugs to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS from the mother to the unborn child. There is an agenda for the member.

I would suggest that we leave this debate once and for all. The question of a woman's right to choose has been decided. Canadians have made a decision that is right with their values and appropriate for this country.

Let us now put our energies where it really matters, helping children who live in poverty, who are malnourished, who live in deplorable living conditions and who do not have access to basic shelter, food and clean water.

Let us put our energies into helping the pregnant woman give birth to a healthy child. Let us try to find a way for the government to finally act on such basic issues as preventing fetal alcohol syndrome. Why is it that we join together in this House to support a motion to do the simple thing of putting labels on alcohol beverage containers to warn pregnant women that drinking while they are expecting could cause fetal alcohol syndrome and the government will not act? Why is the Minister of Health now saying she has no intentions of moving on this issue?

Why can we not get a few changes to the bill on pesticides to reflect the needs of pregnant women and the children they are carrying and to prevent exposure to toxic synergistic materials?

Why does the government choose to cut its budget in the area of mental health which would make such a difference to women who are facing postpartum depression and who are unable to handle the challenges and responsibilities before them?

Why are we not investing in good prenatal programs, in nutritional programs, in child care arrangements and in support for young moms? Why are we not ensuring that every child born in this country today and around this world is born healthy, with all the love, care and attention that is so necessary for the future well-being of that individual?

I would suggest there is a lot of work to be done in this place. There is a lot of work to be done when it comes to children, to pregnant women and to functional healthy families. I would suggest this is not the way to go. The member's motion is a diversion and a distraction from the work at hand. We must put that debate aside, allow women the freedom they deserve to make responsible

decisions in conjunction with their families and their doctors, with all the support and advice they need to carry a child to term without being judgmental and without engaging in legal navel gazing.

Is it not ironic, whether considering the member's motion or the action of the president of the United States, that so much effort is going into the issue of the rights of the fetus when we cannot get agreement on the rights of the child? Is it not interesting that the United States of America continues to object to the 1990 declaration of the universal rights of the child while putting all its energy into the unborn child?

● (1810)

I suggest those priorities are wrong. The needs are clear. Let us put our energies into helping all families, women and children with their daily health and living needs and conditions.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wanted to be here to participate in this debate. It is an interesting question about defining the human being and is one that has seized this place with regard to Bill C-56 on reproductive technologies. It allows us to raise some very important points about the abortion question. We should never be afraid to raise those issues or to understand what the fundamental issues are.

With regard to research, the tri-council policy statement, which was made in 1998 and reflected an international standard with regard to research on human beings, concluded that there should not be any research on an embryo once it hit 14 days. The reason is that at that point the embryo has proceeded far enough that it is past the primitive streak. It has a spinal cord. It has a fixed DNA. It cannot split into a twin. In fact it has all of the characteristics that it will have throughout the rest of its life if it were allowed to be in a nurturing environment and to develop further into another form of a human being. A human being does in fact look like an embryo at the beginning and it looks like an adult usually in an aged state in a later part. Human beings look different throughout their years. Therefore we should never be afraid to discuss the fundamentals.

With regard to Bill C-56, one of the issues is whether we would permit embryonic stem cell research. There are those who believe that human beings begin at conception, and I am one of them. Dr. Françoise Baylis, a medical doctor and ethicist with Dalhousie University and a member of the governing council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has appeared before Standing Committee on Health. She has said that in all our discussions and in all our legislation we should always remember that the embryo is a human being and it is a member of the human species. Therefore we do have research and medical testimony to this place that in fact an embryo is a human being.

The fact that there was a tri-council policy statement in 1998 that recognized a human being at least by day 14 has had no effect on the abortion debate. Anyone who feels that this issue is a matter of abortion should not be threatened by this discussion simply because of other views or opinions with regard to when a human being exists.

I thank the member for bringing the issue forward and not being afraid to discuss sensitive but important issues of the day.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1815)

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my goal is not to enter into the abortion debate. My goal is to exercise my personal right to reflect my own personal views in spite of the intimidation these days of anyone who wants to speak for the rights of the unborn. We are oppressed on every side to keep quiet and not say anything. Why is that? This is not right. We are being fought because so many understand that what is going on is not right.

There are differing opinions. There is the embryo, the fetus, the baby, the child, the adolescent and the adult. At what point do we say that it is a human being? Maybe I should say that anyone who is not at least 60 does not have the status of human being because I am over 60. Where do we draw the line?

We know and we understand according to science that when a sperm and an egg come together they grow and develop. Scientifically that is life. What is it if it is not human life? If it is human life, what is it and how is it that we can we so glibly dismiss it as garbage? How can we do that? How can we just stick our heads in the sand and say we want our rights?

What if I, a man, impregnated a woman and said “A part of my body is in you. I don't want it there. Adios. Out of here with you, woman.” I know that is a little absurd and that is way over the edge, because that would be taking a human life. Yes, it is funny. It is really funny.

I once read a very old book that stated “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”. I think we have a perfect example of that when we refuse to look at the reality of what a fetus-embryo-child is: even the definition we have in the criminal code states if it proceeds “in a living state, from the body of its mother”. I used to think that was because once it breathed it then became a human being. I am surprised that it states that even if it has not breathed, even if it does not have its own circulation, just if it is all the way out, it is a human being. I guess, then, that even if the doctor has pierced the skull and taken out the living parts of the baby, what comes out is no longer a human being. I do not understand that. I do not understand how it can be a baby outside and just five seconds before when it was inside it was not. How is that?

How is that? Human life is human life. We need to face this issue. Where does it come from? I happen to believe that we have so very little to do with human life that when an egg and a sperm come together it is not because we have been so intelligent and able to do something that a life is created. It is because a creator is involved that life is there. Life is not given by air. It is given by a creator. For us to deny the fact that this is life at any stage of the development of an embryo or a fetus is absurd. It does not make good sense. Logic is totally gone.

I sympathize with and understand the need for a woman to be able to protect her health. There are considerations there, but let us give some consideration to assigning to life human status when, I believe, the creator has done it.

•(1820)

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do

not support the motion that is being debated tonight. My statement will be very simple.

I have had the opportunity to hear the statements of some of the members in the House, particularly those of the member for Winnipeg North Centre and the member for Terrebonne—Blainville. I appreciate their considered statements and views and I appreciate the suggestions they made. In particular, I appreciated those statements made by the member for Winnipeg North Centre as to the kind of issues on which the time of the House of Commons could be best used in order to get on with the business of providing quality of life for our children here in Canada and elsewhere. I support wholeheartedly the statements made by the member for Terrebonne—Blainville and the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the reason this motion is necessary is that in Canada there is currently absolutely no legal value ascribed to human life prior to full delivery from the birth canal.

In the Sullivan and Lemay case some 15 years ago, a child was almost completely born but still had part of its body remaining in the birth canal and was inadvertently killed by a midwife. The court ruled that the midwife could not be held culpable for criminal negligence because a child seven-eighths of the way to being completely born had less legal status than we give to protected non-human vertebrates.

There was the pellet gun case, as it was known, here in Ottawa about six years ago. A distressed and emotionally disturbed mother attempted to kill her unborn child in the ninth month of pregnancy by firing a pellet gun into her womb. Miraculously the child survived. Criminal authorities were not able to obtain a prosecution for attempted assault to that child even though it was in the ninth month of development because our law allocates precisely no legal status or rights of any kind to what every single one of us in this society would recognize as a human being.

Some members have said that a delicate balance has been reached that is supported by public opinion. Nothing could be further from the truth. Canada is the only country in the democratic world which permits an unborn child to be destroyed for any reason or no reason up to full delivery from the birth canal and in every single instance at public expense. This is not a delicate balance. This is an indelicate, extreme legal status quo that we have with respect to unborn human life and it is not supported by public opinion.

Roughly 20% of Canadians in public opinion polls would ascribe full legal protection to the unborn in every instance. Some 30% would permit the destruction of the unborn at any stage of pregnancy. The other 50% of Canadians in the middle would seek what they would characterize as a delicate balance to prohibit the destruction of the unborn for reasons other than grave health necessity, for conception as a result of rape or incest, et cetera.

I submit that the motion seeks to develop that balance, that social consensus. It provides a range of different options at which time this parliament could recognize the inception of rights and legal protection for the unborn.

*Private Members' Business*

Those who pretend that the status quo in Canada is somehow a balance, which as the Prime Minister said during the election represents a consensus or social peace, ignore the fact that this country alone in the civilized world has seen fit to suggest that a child seven-eighths of the way from full delivery from her mother's birth canal is just a meaningless blob of cells and possesses no human rights.

If we are the civilized, generous and tolerant nation which we claim to be, then we ought to welcome in love and protect in law all human life.

• (1825)

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it should be pretty obvious by the debate that has taken place and the 300 to 400 letters per day that I have received in support of my motion that the debate is not over. It should be obvious that the government's contention that the debate is over is absolutely not true. Before today's one hour debate is over we need to review a bit of the history on this life and death issue before we let it drop.

Prior to 1969 all abortions were illegal. From 1969 to 1988 Canada had a law in our criminal code providing for an abortion only when a therapeutic abortion committee of three doctors agreed that the continuation of the pregnancy would cause harm to the life or health of the mother and the word "health" was not defined or limited. In 1988 the supreme court struck down the abortion law as unconstitutional.

The supreme court ruling commonly referred to as the Morgentaler decision provided constitutional parameters for a new abortion law. Based on the instructions from the supreme court justices in 1990 the government of the day introduced, debated and passed Bill C-43 in the House of Commons but the bill was defeated by one vote in the Senate.

Since that time the government has not restricted abortions in any way and all unborn children have been without any rights. Since then more than one million babies have been aborted.

Most politicians were hoping the issue would just go away. I sensed that from the government again today. In 1988 the supreme court said that this was an issue best left to parliament. I say it is time for parliament to assume its responsibility.

Many key moral and legal issues such as reproductive technologies, rights of the unborn and a mother's duty of care for her unborn hinge on when the law says a child becomes a human being.

In May 1991 Bill C-43, an act respecting abortions, was debated in parliament. That was the last time there was any serious debate about the rights of the unborn in the House. That is a disgrace and it should change.

The unwillingness of the government to even debate or study the issue or to ask Canadians what they think about the issue is negligence on a grand scale. If the United Nations contends that

babies need the government's protection before as well as after birth, then this 14 years of government neglect amounts to a clear case of criminal negligence.

Every time I raise this life and death issue in the House I am always asked what about a woman's right to her own body? It happened again today. People ask if approval of my motion results in a change in the definition of a human being in Canadian law, whose rights come first, the baby's or the woman's? I agree that everyone has a right to their own body until it interferes with someone else's right to their own body.

The problem is that under Canadian law the human being growing inside the woman has no rights until he or she has fully emerged from the birth canal. I maintain that at some point during the pregnancy the unborn baby's rights are equal to the woman's rights. Even the United Nations agrees that every unborn child has rights and that these rights need the protection of the Government of Canada.

Passing my motion would start a debate in parliament and in public to determine at what point during the pregnancy the helpless unborn child deserves some protection, any protection under law. Perhaps those who are heckling me right now would like to support my motion and start that debate rather than just heckle.

I respectfully request that the House give consent to refer this motion to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights so that parliament can hear what Canadians really think. I would like that to be done at this time. If consent is given I would be pleased to do that.

There are questions that face us right now. What is the unborn? Does the size of the human being matter? Does its level of development define its essence? Does its environment affect its humanity? Does its degree of dependency determine its value? Those are all questions that we should be talking about and it all hinges on this. That is why I am asking for consent to refer this motion to the standing committee.

• (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the House give its consent to the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10.00 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)





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