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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 29, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-271, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (revocation of citizenship).

He said: Mr. Speaker, there are over six million Canadians who are citizens by choice, not by birth. They came here believing that Canada would be a place where they could be safe and secure because their civil rights were enshrined in our Constitution and protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It is doubly ironic that the revocation process in the Citizenship Act does not provide for their security of citizenship. This flawed process does not allow for the normal judicial process for establishing guilt or innocence by the judiciary with appeal rights based on matters of fact and law.

Further, it politicizes the process by allowing cabinet to make the final decision to remove citizenship, in secret, with no representation for the person whose citizenship is being revoked.

The bill I have introduced today will remedy this situation by placing the citizenship revocation process under the normal judicial process with appeal rights, where it will be administered according to the principles of fundamental justice.

It is high time that we end the secondclass citizenship status of Canadians who have chosen Canada as their home.

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

PETITIONS

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a number of petitioners draw to the attention of the House that hundreds of thousands of Canadians suffer from debilitating diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer and so on. They point out that Canadians do support ethical stem cell research but do not support embryonic stem cell research because of more apparent benefits from adult stem cell research.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support for adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat the illnesses and diseases of suffering Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be sponsoring the first opposition motion presented by the Bloc Québécois during this second session of the 37th Parliament. This honour is even more appreciated because the subject matter of today will hopefully launch a vigorous debate involving each and every one of us in this House.

Supply

Over the last few years, the more perceptive observers of the federal political scene have noted that the role and the functions of members of Parliament have been increasingly eroded. This government certainly had a part to play in the loss of the nobleness that once was attached to our profession. The concentration of power in the executive branch, and more specifically in the hands of the Prime Minister, has led to decreased influence of the backbenchers on both sides of the House.

This is a stark statement, and the shock is even greater. Democracy in Canada is sick, sicker than it has ever been, it would seem. To put it more precisely, we can say that Parliamentary democracy in Canada is affected by this malaise, which makes it impossible for us to perform some of the duties the people of our ridings have entrusted to us. Fortunately, we seem to still have a bit of time to be able to reverse engines and regain control over the meaning and value of our commitment to public service.

The media and numerous academics are currently involved in examining the endemic loss of importance by the House of Commons and are engaged in an open debate on how the influence of MPs has been reduced, despite their being elected representatives of the people.

There have been some comprehensive and well documented works published on this matter, one of the most interesting and most current of these being *Governing from the Center* by Professor Donald Savoie of the Université de Moncton. The vision he offers of the situation could not be any more lucid, and comes from a man with close ties to the federal cabinet in the days of first Mulroney mandate.

According to Professor Savoie, Canada has fallen into a form of presidential regime, but without the advantage of what the U.S. system has in its principle of checks and balances.

Similarly, the author describes the role of the Prime Minister as no longer being *primus inter pares* but one of absolute power, the power to step into any area and to dictate, over the head of the person holding the portfolio, the direction the government will take on a given issue.

Professor Savoie's rigorous and highly documented conclusions tend to demonstrate the erosion of Parliament, the legislative branch, compared to the executive, and the omnipotence of the head of the government, through his direct control over caucus and the agenda of the houses of Parliament. The author goes so far as to state that, in certain cases, the wishes of the cabinet and the orientation of the government can be overthrown by nothing more than the wishes of the Prime Minister and of his immediate entourage.

As a further demonstration of the irony of the situation, we might use the example of Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States between 1861 and 1865. At a cabinet meeting, he was the only one voting in favour of a motion, with all other cabinet members opposed. His reaction was to announce, "Yeas: one; Nays: eight. The Yeas have it!" It is no exaggeration to believe that the Canadian federal cabinet is operating along those lines today.

As a matter of fact, the former finance minister and hon. member for LaSalle—Émard has come to a similar conclusion. Last week, at a meeting with Osgoode Hall students in Toronto, he made a strong

plea for an in-depth reform of our parliamentary institutions and of the exercise of power.

• (1010)

What he termed a democratic deficit and made abundantly clear, in connection with his well publicized campaign to replace the current Prime Minister, is nevertheless the same conclusion as the one the Bloc Québécois reached over two years ago in its discussion paper entitled "Chantier de réflexion sur la démocratie", a study of democracy launched by our leader, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Besides, and in the same vein, several weeks ago, the Quebec government undertook a broad consultation process with the Quebec society about its institutions and its democratic system. There also, a loss of the power and importance of elected officials has been identified. So the estates general on the reform of democratic institutions, chaired by Claude Béland, will really sound out the population, and no option will be excluded.

Getting back to the federal level, the reality is getting such that, as the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard rightly pointed out, the only viable solution for a member wanting to get legislation close to his or her heart enacted is to relentlessly and effectively lobby the Prime Minister's Office, and thus to answer our colleague's question, "Who do you know in the PMO?"

The centralization and concentration of decision-making power in the Prime Minister's Office and in the hands of the Prime Minister himself are very bad for the health of democracy.

The most direct and probably telling consequence of this reality is no doubt the transformation of the House of Commons into a rubber stamp for approving whatever the Prime Minister wants, and the initiatives led by cabinet members who have received the imprimatur of the Prime Minister's Office. In other words, Parliament would become nothing more than the government's rubber stamp.

In theory, we know that, in the British parliamentary system, the House of Commons is there to counterbalance and control the government in its decisions and in how it manages the state. Yet, the situation has deteriorated to the point where the opposite is true, to the point where it is now the government that, in reality, controls the House of Commons and its committees.

This shift has led to increased dissatisfaction among members of Parliament, who feel less involved in the process of government and less valued as Parliamentarians. The current political situation within the Liberal Party of Canada—now that the Prime Minister has announced that he will step down in February, 2004—seems to be lessening, to some extent, the frustration that Liberal members have been feeling. As a result, they do not fear the consequences as much as they used to, if they take a stand against the official position of the Prime Minister and his advisers.

Supply

Members who under the current regime have no hope at all of one day sitting at the cabinet table, or of being given the chairmanship of a parliamentary committee, or of having some type of official government duties, now have the courage to take a stand and openly criticize their own government on occasion. This situation is likely the healthiest one we could imagine, even though it is guided, unfortunately, by the personal ambition and prestige of those involved, rather than by any democratic concern.

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister seems to be getting what he deserves. His moral and political authority over the government and the party he leads is now being undermined by the regime that he himself built. When one tries to control everything, it breeds discontent.

Liberal backbench members, first the member for Louis-Hébert, then the member for Ajax and then the member for Winnipeg South, are no longer shying away from criticizing the government, with the Prime Minister at the top of their lists. They are breaking from the traditional partisan solidarity that their disconcerting submissiveness allowed the Prime Minister and his advisers to take for granted until recently. Unfortunately, they are the exception.

Dozens of members on both sides of the House are discouraged, when it comes to their role and their duties.

● (1015)

Frustration reaches its peak on the opposition side when members know from the start that their proposals, which are generally very constructive, will be defeated by their Liberal opponents who are under orders to blindly object to any initiatives not originating from the Prime Minister's Office.

The Liberal government is using the House of Commons and its forums as an extension of its executive arm, thereby polluting the climate of discussion, negotiation and debate that should exist in this place.

Powerless, Liberal backbenchers witness their own humiliation, often orchestrated by non-elected individuals who draw legitimacy from their obedience and loyalty to the Prime Minister. This is how Liberal members come to vote, blindly, on issues that are often crucial, without even appreciating the impact of their action.

I have seen in this House Liberal members forced to vote against their conscience in the debate on the compensation of hepatitis C victims. That is unacceptable.

By obediently following the course mapped out by the ministers, themselves bound by the Prime Minister's Office, they just keep rubberstamping the PM's whims.

Out of respect for my hon. colleagues, I will not dwell on the thankless role they are made to play, nor will I enumerate all of these unfortunate behaviours. However, I hope some will appreciate what I am saying. I am thinking for instance of the openmindedness and insight exhibited from time to time by the hon. members for Ottawa—Vanier, Lac-Saint-Louis, Davenport and Sarnia—Lambton, to name but a few.

In light of all this, it would seem that oral question period is ultimately the last bastion of parliamentary efficiency, and this is

only because of the media attention surrounding this high point of the day. Without the media, the relevance of this House would be even more compromised.

On the topic of this key element of the parliamentary system and the government's arrogance, one has no trouble understanding the joke about question period being only about questions, not answers.

As a result, media coverage is ensured because of the sensational nature of the event, which captures the public's attention, and not because of its impact on the government. Liberal members are becoming little more than pawns in a game to manipulate the public, nevertheless leaving the wisest players with a bitter taste in their mouth.

Several approaches have been suggested over the years to counter the growing alienation of members of Parliament from their basic functions. Reforms that can be described as major or even revolutionary have been suggested, but they never materialized.

For example, it has often been suggested that the present electoral system be changed to a more proportional type of system, with all the variations we know and can imagine. Thought was even given to replacing the British parliamentary system with a presidential or quasi-presidential system, although this idea was not thoroughly considered and its implementation was not encouraged.

Others have come up with less sweeping suggestions. In this respect, the reforms the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard described to the students at Osgoode Hall, in Toronto, are hardly innovative, although they are a good starting point.

More independent parliamentary committees would certainly make a better job of examining bills and would be more responsive to the public's needs and concerns. The public interest would be better served. It could even contribute to a better examination of the many government appointments made every year.

We should keep in mind that the governor in council, that is the Prime Minister, makes appointments by order in council for over 3,500 positions, that is about 1,000 judges, about 100 heads of missions abroad, particularly ambassadors and high commissioners, and 500 full time employees and 1,900 part time employees in a whole range of agencies, boards, commissions, Crown corporations and federal departments.

● (1020)

Among these appointees there are deputy ministers, heads and members of organizations, CEOs and board members of crown corporations as well as returning officers. Their responsibilities are varied and range from making quasi-judicial decisions to developing recommendations in the field of socio-economic development, and managing large corporations, to name but a few. The Prime Minister's powers of appointment are quasi-imperial.

The Bloc Québécois' motion is aimed at restricting this power of appointment and increasing the government's transparency and accountability. The motion says:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

Supply

The acknowledged purpose of the motion is to allow members of Parliament, on behalf of the people they represent, to review more carefully and intervene directly in the appointment process of certain high-ranking government officials.

Recent history has shown what a futile exercise the review of government appointments by parliamentary committees has been. I would not want to suggest that we again go over the murky circumstances under which the previous public works minister, Alfonso Gagliano, was expelled from cabinet, but his immediate appointment as Canada's ambassador to Denmark baffled and surprised everybody, and probably frustrated many diplomats who were highly qualified for the job. The diplomatic credentials of the disgraced minister were highly questionable, and the fact that this colourful character on the Canadian political scene was on his way to their country raised many eyebrows among the Danish media and government.

As members will recall, at the time, it took a broad consensus from across Canada and in the House of Commons to compel Alfonso Gagliano to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. Moreover, we will also recall that the committee chair, no doubt on the orders of the PMO, prevented members from fully grilling Mr. Gagliano.

If committees were more independent and had broader powers, such a situation would never occur again. The same goes for the appointment of top government officials. The appointment of CEOs and managers of crown corporations and federal agencies should always be based on merit and competence.

In his report tabled in the House of Commons on February 6, 2001, then Auditor General Denis Desautels urged the government to improve the way Crown corporations were managed. He also reported flaws within the boards of directors and the audit committees and in the very role played by the government in the strategic orientation of the Crown corporations. The Auditor General also said that these flaws persisted, even if they had been flagged again and again in the past in his reports and in other external studies and documents.

On this subject, Mr. Desautels said:

Crown corporations account for a significant portion of government activity and play an important role in the policy making process of the country. As public sector organizations, it is of the utmost importance that Crown corporations be well managed to guarantee that public money is well spent.

To be well managed, Crown corporations must be headed by people who are more than competent. Unfortunately, political patronage sometimes prevails. Some observers would have liked us to mention the judicial appointments to the Appeal Court and to the Supreme Court of Canada in this motion. I did it in a motion, Motion M-288, that was tabled last Friday in the House of Commons.

I urge my colleagues opposite to support the Bloc Québécois reform, to support the Bloc Québécois motion on accountability, to assume their true duties and to vote in favour of including the relevant committees in the nomination process for many other positions at the top of many Crown corporations.

• (1025)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech. I believe he has given the House an opportunity to hold a very relevant debate that will allow us to show the public that it is possible to bring in a breath of fresh air and eliminate political patronage.

I wish to come back to the example he gave, that of Mr. Gagliano. When Mr. Gagliano was named ambassador to Denmark, we could at that time have passed a definitive judgment on his involvement in the sponsorship scandal, which would have triggered a public inquiry. In terms of the appearance of justice, it is clear that it was unacceptable for this person to be named Canada's representative abroad, when important doubts still lingered.

Would the hon. member's motion not allow us to have an even broader debate on the whole issue of appointments? One or two years down the road, we could have significant statistics allowing us to see if the problem is very deep-rooted, as many of our fellow Canadians believe. So, in the vast majority of appointments, we would be able to know if the person chosen were a member of the government family, of the Liberal family. After this first screening, we would appoint the person who presents the best profile.

I would like to know if my colleague believes that, if this motion were passed, we could have a still broader debate allowing us to clean up this unacceptable situation.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Indeed, to have a democracy that works and institutions that are respected by the population in general, it must be ensured that the people who are appointed to head these institutions are recognized as having the skills necessary to hold these positions.

However, in the case of the appointment of Jean Carle to the Business Development Bank of Canada, or of Jean Pelletier as the head of VIA Rail, for example, we know full well that these people were not appointed because of their skills, but because they were friends of the Prime Minister and had worked in his cabinet. It is time we were treated as adults, as the member for Mississauga Centre was today quoted in a newspaper as saying.

I would invite my colleagues from all parties in the House not to ask the government to treat us as adults. We must treat ourselves as adults, take our responsibilities and reclaim powers that were given to the Prime Minister, powers that rightfully belong to members of Parliament in committees and in the House of Commons.

I ask members of the House, including members opposite, in particular the member for LaSalle—Émard and those who support him, to take action instead of just talking, and to support the motion of the Bloc Québécois, which would allow us to take responsibility for ourselves, as we must do, because otherwise, we will remain the eunuchs that we are.

• (1030)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier for his speech and most of all for the initiative he took this morning by introducing this motion—

Supply

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Antoine Dubé:—despite the protests of the House leader. As all members have noticed, we are dealing this morning a huge legislative void, for which this government is responsible. Fortunately, we have this debate. The party in power obviously has nothing new to propose, at least for the time being.

Since we are given the opportunity in this debate, and we hear a lot about it in the news, we will discuss the issue of secret ballots in committees. I would like the hon. member who introduced this motion to explain his position on this point.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, to a certain extent, the government House leader is undermining this debate about the choice of committee chairs by a secret ballot.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is currently considering this possibility. The liberal federal government, through its House leader who is acting as a strategist, is stonewalling and filibustering to prevent members of Parliament from choosing committee chairs by a secret ballot.

Today, the member for Mississauga Centre said in a newspaper that a vote is an important thing and that she would support the motion now before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. However, aware of the fact that several government backbenchers are supporting this motion, the government House leader decided to get tough with them and to turn the screws to deny them a free vote on the issue.

I am happy to be able to tell the truth and repeat what the member for Mississauga Centre said, namely that she is not being treated as an adult by this government. She is tired of being treated like a child. She is right and I agree with her.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier for his initiative and the passion he used to convince the Bloc leadership to put forward this motion today.

I have two questions for him, one that has to do with the past and one that is related to a more current issue. Let me begin with the more current issue.

We know that, as a matter of internal policy I guess, the Liberal Party of Canada used taxpayer dollars to very politely invite the former member for Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles to take a very comfortable seat in the Canadian Senate.

Pursuant to a decision made behind closed doors by the apparatchiks surrounding the Prime Minister, the former member of Parliament is now sitting in the Senate. As the member for Saint-Maurice put it, the riding was practically handed over to the current member for Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles on a silver platter, and she only had to make a personal decision.

I would like the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier to tell us how such a phenomenon fits in the Canadian culture.

My second question has more to do with the past.

● (1035)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry, but I have to interrupt the hon. member, because we are running out of time. We have to give the main speaker the opportunity to reply. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier has the floor.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Trois-Rivières for his question, because he identified something very important, that is, the excessive growth of the Prime Minister's powers, for which there are no checks and balances in the Canadian system.

The Prime Minister appoints the judges to the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and the Superior Court, he appoints senators, ambassadors and consuls general. He appoints lieutenant governors, and there are no checks and balances. He also appoints returning officers.

We have a quasi imperial, almost presidential system, but without the checks and balances inherent in pure presidential systems, such as the one they have in the United States.

This is a serious flaw. It shows how dismal the situation in Parliament and in federal political life has become in Canada.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would love to be able to say that I listened with interest to the hon. member's comments, but let me say something that Sir Winston Churchill once said and that was deemed parliamentary, which means that it will still be the case today. He said, "I should think it hardly possible to state the opposite of the truth with more precision". This comment is not unparliamentary.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Don Boudria: I was quoting Sir Winston Churchill.

The motion before us today reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House—

As it was tabled yesterday, the motion of the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is redundant, since it quite accurately reflects what is currently provided under the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. In fact, it is so similar that we wondered if it should be withdrawn and replaced with another motion, since it is asking us to do what is already being done. I will get back to this.

Standing Order 110 provides that a minister of the Crown shall lay upon the Table a certified copy of an order in council stating that a certain individual has been appointed to a certain non-judicial post, not later than five sitting days after the order in council is published in the *Canada Gazette*.

Therefore, this document is automatically tabled in the House after five sitting days. I am the minister who signs these documents; it is my duty as government House leader. I am well aware of the fact that this is done, because we table such documents in the House on a regular basis. I am not the only one who is saying that it is being done and I will get back to this later on.

Supply

Standing Order 110 also provides, and I quote, “The same shall be deemed to have been referred to a standing committee specified... for its consideration”. It is deemed to have been referred to the committee. This is done automatically. Again, and I am repeating it for the benefit of the member opposite, this is deemed to have been done immediately.

Standing Order 111 provides that committees have up to 30 sitting days to examine the qualifications and competency of the appointee or nominee. Hon. members automatically have this right.

Of course, the decision of whether or not to call an appointee or nominee to appear before the committee is up to the committee. The hon. member just made a not so eloquent plea, but a plea nevertheless, asking that the committee have greater autonomy, and now he is telling us that the committee should not have the power to decide which witnesses it wants to hear. The comments made by the member opposite are totally contradictory.

In any case, the issue is referred to the committee. It is done automatically after five days. Therefore, the motion is totally redundant.

Standing Order 111 also requires that the curriculum vitae of the person be provided to the committee. Not only is the appointment automatically referred to committee after five days, thereby giving the committee 30 days to study the matter, the committee also has the curriculum vitae of the candidate, which allows it to decide whether or not to call the witness to appear before the committee in question.

Therefore, the House of Commons already has the procedure in question in place. I wish I could say that it was this government that established these procedures, but they predate our government, which has been in office since 1993. These procedures have been in place in the House for 15 years. They have been in place for so long that I used to have hair when they were introduced, which was some time ago.

Virtually all appointments that are not judicial appointments are tabled in the House. The member did not refer to judicial appointments in his motion. I am not among those who would like to see justices of the Supreme Court of Canada dragged before committees, as is done in the United States. I think that would be a bad idea, and I presume the member agrees with me, since he did not mention it in his motion.

● (1040)

[*English*]

The government believes that parliamentary scrutiny supports the selection of qualified candidates for senior government positions. This is a commitment that we confirmed in our 1993 red book.

Since we were elected in 1993, approximately 4,300 appointments have been tabled in the House. My predecessor, the former member for Windsor West, and I signed for 4,300 of these appointments which were tabled in the House and automatically referred to committee. What the hon. member is asking, we have done 4,300 times. One would think, not after once, or twice or three times, that after 4,300 times the hon. member would get it but inevitably he has

not, or whomever researched this motion and put it under his name failed to do so.

Committees have had the opportunity to review each of these 4,300 appointments and the committees have been free to choose how they exercise that authority.

[*Translation*]

In the unlikely event that some members are tempted to doubt what I just said, surely the member opposite will believe his colleague, his party's critic for foreign affairs, the member for Mercier. I quote. Even though her name is given in the quote, since it is unparliamentary, I will not repeat it:

The member for Mercier—this is the headline from the release—asks that Alfonso Gagliano appear before the foreign affairs committee

She could have said the hon. Alfonso Gagliano, out of respect for parliamentary traditions, however. Here is the text of her release:

The Bloc Quebecois critic for foreign affairs and member for Mercier—followed by her name—moved a motion today calling for the former minister—to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade—

Here is what she did in the next paragraph, and again, I am quoting:

She invokes Standing Orders 110 and 111—and this is still in her words—which stipulate that the committee may call a person appointed by order in council to appear within thirty sitting days following the date the appointment was tabled, in order to examine the person's qualifications and competence to perform the duties of the post to which he or she has been appointed or nominated.

This is not me who said this, this is the member for Mercier. And that is not all. Finally, the member for Mercier, also in her release, expresses satisfaction. Here is why, and I quote:

The hon. member—I am not reading out her name—indicates that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade has, since 1997, received 11 invitations to appear in connection with appointments by order in council and none of these was met by a refusal.

She expressed satisfaction that, in 100% of the cases in which the committee members had requested the attendance of an individual, the individual in question had attended. She was pleased with that result. She was pleased with the fact that standing orders 110 and 111 had been complied with, these orders requiring—as I have already pointed out—that nominations be automatically referred to the committee, and that in 100% of the cases when they had been invited to appear, particularly by the foreign affairs committee, people had in fact appeared.

She was pleased that the system had worked 100% of the time, and surely would continue to do so. Then, guess what? Within a few days, the hon. Alfonso Gagliano was also summoned to appear before the parliamentary committee.

We can see just how redundant and empty the Bloc Quebecois deputation here is when it is incapable of presenting on an opposition day anything that is not redundant or has already been addressed by the government.

I found what the hon. member had to say this morning concerning the power of the PMO. I will deviate from my text here to address this. It is most interesting.

Supply

I recall a time—as you do perhaps, Mr. Speaker, with your objectivity toward such matters—a time in the past, when there was a certain government in Quebec. One might say with PQ leanings, that summoned its officers overseas to it, and required them to bow the knee to sovereignty. The premier required support for sovereignty in exchange for job security.

People will remember those actions by the separatist government of Quebec.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Don Boudria: I hear the hubbub on the other side. Of course, it is because they have trouble swallowing this reality. It is very hard for them to do. Today they are claiming to be lily white, but their dark deeds of the past are well known to everyone.

• (1045)

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask you whether the words dark deeds, as used by the government House leader, is parliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It really depends on the context in which the words are used. In this case, I do not believe that it is unparliamentary.

The hon. government House leader may continue.

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, some members will remember the McGrath committee report. I was in the House when the report was tabled in 1985. I was not a member of the McGrath committee but the committee at the time made recommendations regarding the role of Parliament and government appointments.

It took a long time before the then prime minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, decided to establish such a rule, a rule that would provide for a mechanism by which parliamentary committees could review all non-judicial order in council appointments. The rule that we have now applies to deputy ministers, ambassadors, consuls general, and heads of most regulatory bodies and crown corporations. Canadians can be confident that the best appointments are being made by the government.

Those appointments have stood the test of scrutiny. In the vast majority of cases parliamentarians do not even ask for these people to appear before the parliamentary committee. Why? They are not questioning the competence of these people because they know that they are competent.

[*Translation*]

Earlier, the member opposite talked about the quality of appointees. He claimed that these people were appointed only because they were friends of the government.

On 134 occasions since 1993, we have advertised either in the *Canada Gazette* or in newspapers to try to recruit candidates for several positions that were subsequently filled through order-in-council appointments. Again that goes to show the great transparency of this government and of the Prime Minister, who has done such a good job on this issue and on all the other issues.

• (1050)

[*English*]

The motion in question is consistent with the Standing Orders. It essentially asks us to do that which we are doing. It is difficult for us to say that we are against that which we are doing already. I wonder why it is that the official opposition, perhaps not that party as much, refuses to have committees sit. It is on a work-to-rule campaign, working about 45 minutes a day during question period and refusing to do any other work around here.

Sooner or later the media and others will hold it to account for that and hopefully its constituents will also. In the name of so-called parliamentary modernization it has decided it does not want to work. How that constitutes modernization is beyond me. To that we can add that on the seven allotted days where our Standing Orders provide that the opposition can raise issues in the House of its liking, its solemn duty to air the grievances of the people before the sovereign as it were, we have today a motion repeating the existing Standing Orders of the House.

This is the best testimony, that we have had in a long time, that we are having good government in Canada. We cannot, even by offering an opposition day, convince the opposition to find something to criticize us. It has not been able to generate criticism of the government at all on a designated opposition day, a date that it has had for weeks. It has had weeks to think of something to criticize the government and after a week or more, what has it produced? It produced a motion that the House be in favour of a Standing Order that already exists. That is the only criticism of the government that it has been able to muster.

Of course I am in favour of the Standing Order that already exists and that has been used consistently without failure, according to the member for Mercier, the hon. member's seatmate in the House.

[*Translation*]

It is hard to understand but I am happy that the opposition, particularly the Bloc, does not have any particular criticism to direct at the government. In this day allotted to the Bloc to criticize the government, it has not found one single issue on which to criticize the government.

Instead it chose to propose a motion saying that certain provisions should be included in the Standing Orders, but these provisions already exist and are used constantly as another member of the Bloc, the member for Mercier, proudly pointed out.

We are pleased with the fact that members of the Bloc Québécois have no criticism to express. They have nothing to say against the government. If they cannot find anything on which to criticize the government, they will certainly want to skip their turn in question period later today. In that case, our members will gladly take their place since they have several issues to raise, issues that Canadians want to see addressed in the House.

Supply

[English]

The Bloc motion that we have before us is a repetition of our existing Standing Orders and nothing else. It does not increase anything that we already have. It says that our traditions and conventions need to be upheld. This is a sign to me that the people across the way have been unable, after several days of research, to find one thing on which to criticize the government.

I am sure that my cabinet colleagues, our Prime Minister, and our caucus in its entirety, would thank them for this vote of confidence that they are expressing in this motion today.

● (1055)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on his acting talent.

To say with a straight face that there is no concentration of powers in the Prime Minister's Office takes more acting talent than I could ever have. Strangely enough, and quite fortuitously, our motion proposes something similar to what the member for LaSalle—Émard himself proposed last week in Toronto.

Is the Leader of the Government in the House saying that the member for LaSalle—Émard was wrong in his analysis and his proposals? Is he saying that the member for LaSalle—Émard, a member of Parliament since 1988, does not understand how the House works? Is he saying that the member for LaSalle—Émard is totally out of touch with parliamentary reality for having made these proposals?

He cannot have it both ways; either the member for LaSalle—Émard was right when he said we must do something and suggested possible actions, or the member for LaSalle—Émard was totally wrong. Would the Leader of the Government in the House tell us which it is? Was the member mistaken, yes or no?

Hon. Don Boudria: We have seen everything now, Mr. Speaker

In fact, the hon. member opposite just confirmed what I had previously said, which is that they had prepared themselves very poorly for this opposition day. Proof in hand, they have just confirmed their plagiarism. The hon. member opposite and the Bloc had so few issues to raise that, by their own admission, they extrapolated from a speech made by a Liberal member as a way to prepare themselves for their allotted day. And on top of that they did not even do a good job of it.

I have read carefully the speech made by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard and of course they misrepresented it. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard never said in his speech that the House should adopt Standing Orders 110 and 111 that we already had. That is what the hon. member opposite is asking us to do today.

Not only they have done their research poorly but we just heard that they did not do any at all. They simply picked up a story in a newspaper about a member on the other side of the House. They could not even write it correctly and they took it as a basis for the motion they presented to the House. It is even worse than what I thought.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, invited to answer a question by my colleague, I underlined his acting talents. The government House leader showed us another of his talents, the art of diversion.

I will ask him a very specific question. In his reply, when he said that the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier had asked if that existed already, he was wrong. If he reads properly, he will find that the wording is automatically and not by representation, on request and certain committees.

To put this in the right perspective, it is about Mr. Gagliano, the former Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Indeed, on the issue of ambassadors representing Canada abroad, the hon. member of Mercier found that part of the Standing Orders, but for that case only. I would like to give you other examples where this part of the Standing Orders was used by other committees.

He said the member was not well prepared. So, let us hear his answer. If he is so well prepared, he will be able to say "here are all the cases where this was invoked". So I am inviting him to read the word automatically properly, instead of the word may.

● (1100)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I went through all of this a moment ago. I am sorry if, for some reason, the hon. member did not understand what I said. As a matter of fact, appointments are referred to committee, and I just explained how it is done.

Since 1994, 4,300 appointments of this nature have been automatically referred to parliamentary committees. The minister responsible, generally myself or my predecessor, when somebody else had this job, signs the document within five days.

After the document has been signed and it has been tabled by my parliamentary secretary, who does an excellent job, by the way, it is deemed referred to committee. The word deemed means the procedure is automatic and does not require a vote. The appointment is simply deemed referred to committee.

I am explaining this in greater detail to the hon. member, and I urge him to read Standing Orders 110 and 111. He will realize it will be embarrassing later on today, when he takes the floor to ask the House to vote for something that is already in existence.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, who said that the government House leader was a born comedian.

Personally, I would like to see him as the subject of a sketch in one of the future installments of *La petite vie*, because what is going on here as we speak is really fit for *La petite vie*. Given his experience, the leader really has to be happy-go-lucky to interpret parliamentary procedure the way he does.

There is an impending danger for democracy in this great Canada, known as the very best country in the world. Do not forget that more people refrained from voting in the last election in this alleged great country than those who voted for the Liberal Party.

Supply

There is a problem. The government House leader reminds me of the Creditists who said “We are standing on the edge, and with Social Credit, we will take a step forward”. This is what the government House leader is inviting us to do.

I would like to ask him this. Does he agree that there is still a problem? In the case of the most recent appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada, where all the dealing seems to have been done on a weekend, the announcement was made public around 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning, when Madam agreed to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is asking me a question about the new justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Of course, judges cannot be criticized in the House after they have been appointed. This is against our rules and we except that no one would do so. Moreover—

Mr. Yves Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I never criticized the judge in question. I am criticizing the appointment process. I am asking the House leader whether he agrees with the appointment process, where there is no consultation of members of Parliament or any other authority of the Canadian government as to the appointment of a justice to the Supreme Court. This is left entirely to the discretion of the Prime Minister and his office.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): This is a point of debate. The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the last question and to comment on the statements made by the member.

At the beginning of my speech, I clearly indicated that I was against hearings on judicial appointments. We do it for other appointments, under the Standing Orders. We all agree that it is already in the rules.

Besides, the motion does not provide for hearings on the appointment of judges, not to mention justices of the Supreme Court. The United States holds such hearings. As far as I know, almost no other jurisdiction in the world that makes Supreme Court appointments hold hearings, as the United States do. I do not see why we should imitate the Americans.

The hon. member argued that the appointments are made solely by the Prime Minister. It is not true. The Prime Minister relies, of course, on cabinet. Cabinet is consulted on such issues, as are the justice minister and all of the ministers. That is how things are done.

I am not in favour of having televised public hearings that delve into the private lives of justices of the Supreme Court, and so on, as we have seen in the United States. The member's colleague may agree with me, since he did not mention it in his motion. I would not go for that; I am totally against it.

The current process is a good one. Can it be applied to other appointments? It depends on parliamentary committees. It is up to them. But we currently have a process in place and it is effective.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the debate of the member of the Bloc Québécois and the great protestations by the government House leader about how wonderful the current system is. He made specific reference to Standing Order 110 and talked about how these appointments were automatically referred to the standing committee and therefore we did not need to vote in the House. I fully agree with the government House leader because it states that they shall be deemed to have been referred to a standing committee. The only problem, of course, is that they are referred after the decision has been made and the decision is not reviewable.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the hon. member for Calgary East.

What is the point of a committee reviewing the appointment after the government has made the decision, it is an actual fact and that is the way it will be? We could talk about it until the cows come home but the government will not listen. The whole system is about getting in a huddle in a corner behind closed doors, making a decision, some Liberal hack gets a job, then it is referred to a committee. What are we supposed to do about it? We can do nothing because there is no opportunity in the Standing Orders for us to do anything other than talk about it.

The government House leader has told us that Standing Order is great, that there is control and supervision and that we have input in these appointments. We have no input on these appointments, none whatsoever.

It is interesting that we are having this debate today and that the Bloc is putting forward a motion that states that we should review appointments of ambassadors, consuls general, heads of regulatory bodies, Crown corporations, et cetera. We have to ask ourselves why the Bloc is coming forward with this motion today, with ambassadors being first.

Of course, one ambassador comes to mind immediately. That is the ambassador to Denmark, a former member of the cabinet and the House, who made a very quick exit from this place. He disappeared from here and popped up as our ambassador to Denmark. Perhaps it was under a cloud but we have never been able to ascertain that, so I have to be careful what I say. However there are serious allegations against the way his department managed the advertising contracts, a \$40 million program under his watch.

The current Minister of Public Works has told us that there are 13 police investigations. The Auditor General absolutely trashed the administration of that program. Every rule in the book was broken, money disappeared, and now we have police investigations. One day the minister is gone and he pops up in Denmark, and we wonder why the Bloc has brought forth a motion that says perhaps we should review these appointments. Of course we should review them. We should have reviewed the appointment of the ambassador to Denmark long before he left the country. It is an embarrassment to the country that an ambassador would have a cloud hanging over his head and yet be representing the country. It is shameful.

Supply

The Bloc's motion is very much in order. The days are over when the government can huddle in a corner behind closed doors, come up with a name and say that this person will be our Supreme Court judge, or the head of a Crown corporation in charge of the railways, transportation, ships or whatever the Crown corporation happens to be and that he is a wonderful guy because he contributes to the Liberal party. Those days should be gone completely.

The government House leader has drawn the comparison that we could have either this non-transparent system of doing it behind closed doors or have the American system where everything is on television, front and centre. I think there is something else in between. That is why I have Motion No. 79 on the Order Paper which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, appointees and potential appointees to the positions of Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada should receive parliamentary scrutiny, and that Standing Orders 110 and 111 of the House of Commons should be amended to include such appointees and potential appointees.

• (1110)

They are the exact same standing orders referred to by the government House leader which say we need to change the system to one where parliament has a role to play in vetting appointments, especially ambassadors under a cloud, as well as the justices and chief justice of the Supreme Court. Today they do not apply the law; they interpret the law and even create law. They strike down laws that have been passed by this place, the highest court in the land, yet those people down the street think they are the highest court. They are not. This is the highest court in the land, yet the government has abdicated its responsibility so that when the judges down the street say that a law does not meet the test, we just acquiesce, fall over and say, "Okay, I guess they are right".

This House determines what society shall have, what it wants and what it needs. We are the ones who provide it. It is not the Supreme Court justices down the street. We are not supposed to fall down prostrate at their feet every time they make a pronouncement that offends society. We need to review the people who get appointed to that place before they take a seat down there so that we can find out if their morality reflects the morality of society. That is fundamentally important.

As the government House leader said, the Minister of Justice, the Prime Minister and a few bureaucrats huddle in a corner, maybe check with the law society, come up with a name and it is foisted upon us, this the highest court in the land. It is an affront to us. We say why is this and why do we not change the rules?

The member for LaSalle—Émard has made a proposal that if he ever gets to the big chair, the Prime Minister's chair, he will change Parliament and give us more authority. I say, and I think I was quoted in my local paper as saying, wimps to them, because we have the authority today. The member for LaSalle—Émard proposed that if he became the Prime Minister he would give us some extra authority. He would allow us to vote freely. We can vote freely today. There is nothing that he has proposed that we do not have today, if we choose to exercise that authority.

If we want to change Standing Order 110, and if we want to say that we want to examine ambassadors, consuls general, heads of

regulatory bodies and Supreme Court justices before they take their positions, we have that authority. However, the wimps on that side of the House say that whatever the Prime Minister wants is what the Prime Minister gets. They acquiesce, prostrate at his feet. That is why this place is dysfunctional.

Here we have a potential prime minister saying, "I will allow you to exercise the little bit of authority that you have". We have a huge amount of authority. We are the highest court in the land, yet because of the government majority that bows down and gives the Prime Minister whatever he wants, we are ineffective. The country knows it and that is why people say we are dysfunctional. That is why Pierre Trudeau said that 100 yards from this place MPs are all nobodies. It is because the Prime Minister has all the authority.

I congratulate the Bloc for bringing forward this motion today. I would hope that, since that side of the House is talking about parliamentary reform, we recognize that parliamentary reform simply means taking command of the powers that we already have and exercising them to ensure that this is a better society and that the House works to deliver the services to society that it wants. This includes ensuring that the people who are given the authority to make the rules and make the decisions on behalf of the country are accountable. Need I say more?

• (1115)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I say to my hon. colleague from the Alliance Party that although we tend not to agree on too many things, I definitely agree with his summation of the debate. I too thank the Bloc for bringing forward this important motion.

As the member knows, the committees are stacked with Liberals. They have the majority. If there are Liberals who want to vote for a particular opposition motion, the Liberals can stack the committee if they wish with people who are more favourable to the whip's charges.

If we are going to vet nominations, for example the head of the CBC, we want that person to appear before the committee to show what qualifications he or she has and what he or she plans to do with the CBC under his or her leadership. How would the member change the committee format so that we do not have a biased perception, one side over the other, so that we have a clear vetting of the individual's qualifications to ensure that we indeed get the best person for the job?

Mr. John Williams: It is very simple, Mr. Speaker. First of all every crown corporation has a mandate, a public policy, the CBC included, that this is what the organization is created to do, to implement a public policy. We could ask the proposed appointee, "How well can you fulfill this mandate? Are you the best person for the job?" We hear the testimony. We interview and listen to the witness. Then all the members of the committee, including the Liberal members, the government side, would cast a vote yea or nay. The problem today is that members on the government side do not cast a vote yea or nay. They check with the Prime Minister and ask how they shall vote. They vote according to the Prime Minister who has the majority of votes on every committee.

That is the point. We have the authority. The member for LaSalle—Énard proposes that we have more authority, just a little bit more. We have tons of authority; we just have to exercise it. We truly have to be representatives of the people who elected us. If we did that, the system would work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Canadian Alliance for his well put together speech.

As the tendency in our system is toward a greater concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, should we not, as parliamentarians, act right now to establish clear rules, as proposed in the motion before us today, that would enable us to stop this transfer of power to the Prime Minister? Government members are often inclined, out of ambition or out of habit, to pass their responsibilities on to the executive, meaning to the Prime Minister.

Would supporting this motion not be an effective way of curbing this natural tendency of government members?

[*English*]

Mr. John Williams: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Bloc on bringing forward this motion because it is time we started talking about the powers that we have but we do not use. Standing Order 110 says “a minister of the crown shall lay upon the table a certified copy of an order in council” and so on, but this of course is after the fact. We could quite easily put in “a proposed order in council” which would mean that we would deliberate it before the fact.

There is only one organization that can change the standing orders and that is this House. It is not the Prime Minister. It is not the government House leader. The House could put that word into Standing Order 110 to make it a “proposed order in council” rather than after the fact.

We have that authority so why do we not just do it, courtesy of the support from the government members, and get the job done and get on with it? It would be simple. We do not have to wait for the member for LaSalle—Énard to say he will let us do this and this, but not the big stuff. No, he will reserve that for himself. We need to exercise our authority.

• (1120)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak to the motion brought forward by the Bloc. All members in the House, including the ones on the government side, know that the motion is very important.

When we come to the House as new members of Parliament, we come with a dedication and commitment that we are representing the people of Canada and that in this House we have the power to bring forward issues from our constituents. Lo and behold, it is not very long before we learn that we really do not have much power in this House.

The tragedy is that we go around the world preaching democracy to other countries. We tell them what they should do, but we seem to be slowly eroding democracy in our own institutions. Over the years patronage and cronyism have served the governing party well. That is why it likes to call itself the natural governing party of Canada. What a joke.

Supply

Sitting over here, we know that slowly but surely the actions of the government have come to the point where the concentration of power in the Prime Minister's Office is talked about by everybody today, including Liberal members of Parliament and including one of the Liberal leadership contenders.

I just listened to the House leader trying to defend his position. What can we expect from the House leader? It helps him and his government send their friends overseas and put their friends into positions. Then they can count on them for their leadership support and for their fundraising efforts. Blatant patronage and abuse have been going on for some time. Who does it help? Them. The Prime Minister is not willing to change. They will say it is opposition rhetoric again. It is not the opposition rhetoric again. It is being said by a member of Parliament who finds himself sitting over here trying to do things and being stonewalled.

Why can the Parliament of Canada not speak on behalf of the people of Canada? Why not? The Parliament of Canada is not made up of the Liberal Party. It is made up of five parties of members of Parliament sitting here who would like to bring forward issues that Canadians want to be discussed. Is that what is happening? No. What is happening is a total manipulation by the Liberal Party in promoting its agenda.

There was the spectre last year of ministers crossing the ethical lines, including at some point, and we do not know whether it is true, the Prime Minister himself, and he said it is because the ministers have become complacent. Of course they have become complacent. There is nobody to hold them accountable. They have a majority. They can manipulate the system. They have slowly been doing that over the years to the point where today even Liberals, including one of the Liberal Party leadership candidates admit that the PMO has too much power. One would wonder why the frontrunner, who could easily take it, is now saying that the Prime Minister's Office has so much power. It is because Canadians are saying that enough if enough.

• (1125)

If the government carries on with this farce Canadians will talk, and the way they will talk is by not going out and voting. We all know that has been the trend. If we do not listen to Canadians they will simply say it by not voting. Then we will stand here saying that we have the mandate from the people of Canada to come and speak here. I am saying that we will not have that mandate if we carry on and not give confidence back to the people of Canada that the Parliament of Canada is relevant.

This motion is one of those attempts by my colleague from the Bloc to make the governing of the country accountable to where it should be, to the people of Canada. That is the essence and the point of democracy.

When I came here I proposed four private members' bills to the House and not even one of them has been made votable. Nobody wants to discuss them.

Supply

I have had support for my break and enter bill from the police associations and Canadians from all across the country but, guess what? Because the justice minister is not interested it is manipulated and lo and behold nobody discusses the issue. It is done and out the window.

How many hours and how many consultations have we had? Many colleagues on this side have brought in private members' bills? Where have they gone? The government side has also brought in private members' bills. The frustration is not only on this side. It is also on that side. I hope today some of them will realize that they do not have to be worried or afraid of the Prime Minister. He is going in the year 2004. I ask them to stand up and say what Canadians want them to say, which is to give Parliament back to the people of Canada, away from the PMOs office.

I have travelled outside the country and have met many great ambassadors but I have also met those who were appointed through patronage. I find it amazing that those patronage appointments who represent Canada are still biased. Who do they represent? They represent their party, not the people of Canada.

I will be very happy to vote in favour of this motion because all we are doing is trying to speak on behalf of the people of Canada.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, one of the dangers we have in Canada in saying that we are democratic, lies in the fact that the majority of Canadians did not elect the government for many elections. Will the percentage of people actually voting not continue to drop unless there are some very serious changes made in the House?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, time after time Canadians exercise their right to vote but lose their confidence when they see we no longer can represent them. They have only one way to speak. The majority of the people speak through silence. They just go away. As my colleague has alluded, that is what is happening. The government is not sitting there with a majority of the vote.

Many democracies have seen that danger and have put rules in to force people to come out to vote. In Australia, for example, the people have to vote. We want to stand with confidence over here that we are representing the people of Canada. However, if there is no power, as it is happening slowly in the country, we are losing the goodwill of the people of Canada, and it is important that we retain that goodwill.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

He stated his position in support of the motion brought forward by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. I have had the opportunity to work with the member on a number of occasions over the last few years because of the responsibilities he has held with regard to foreign affairs. Like him, I have noticed that many appointments to ambassador positions are political. The former public works minister is an example, but there are other ambassadors as well. I am also thinking of government corporations such as the Canada Post Corporation. I would like him to comment on the fact

that many of these appointees are Liberal candidates who were defeated.

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, it is on the record that the government is appointing its friends to these positions which should be non-partisan positions. We take pride in saying that our civil service, our administration arm, is independent of the legislative arm, but the government is overriding that.

My colleague from the Bloc is absolutely right. Not only does the ambassador to Denmark come into play but even the WTO ambassador, Mr. Marchi, was a patronage appointment. As a matter of fact when my colleague and I visited Geneva, he was over there telling me that he had taken the Alliance on before and that he could take us on any time. I told him that he was no longer in the House of Commons, that he was an ambassador representing the people of Canada.

Yes, that erosion of confidence carries on when patronage appointments are made. What the motion does is it tries to take that away and says that the people of Canada must be allowed to speak through the committee and through their elected officials. Perhaps the WTO ambassador was the right choice but if he had come in front of the committee he would have received the legitimacy that he needs.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, does my hon. colleague feel that the government backbenchers are the ones who are allowing the government to force their agenda and to force the situation on the House of Commons because they do not stand up, do not think for themselves and do not represent their constituents, but allow the Prime Minister and the cabinet to think for them?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, being on the committee where we have these parliamentary secretaries, whom I love to call the whips because they come in with their whips, I have witnessed what my hon. colleague has said. The backbenchers backtrack and by backtracking they give away their power. They have done a marvellous job in getting their Prime Minister to start off in office so they can run the agenda. They have done it. They have the Prime Minister retiring so they do have the power, as my colleague said, and I hope they will utilize it.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today to what I consider a very important motion brought forward by the Bloc Quebecois.

I think most Canadians would be quite surprised that the perception of the separatist party bringing forward a most democratic motion for the entire country is one that is worthy of debate. I thank the Bloc very much because I know it is rooted in social democracy. I know it has many policies similar to that of the NDP. I want to thank it for taking the opportunity to use its day in order to raise this very important issue.

Supply

It is not too difficult to understand why we are having the debate when we see in Quorum today that the finance minister said in the *Ottawa Citizen* “MPs should elect governor general”. Why does that same finance minister not say that we should peer review and have a serious look at supreme court judges and the chairmen of various boards?

Recently we saw the member from Malpeque, P.E.I., who I consider to be a very good friend of mine, become the Solicitor General. He admits that he is a farmer by trade and a very proud farmer, but is now, by the appointment of the Prime Minister, the number one top cop in the country. I would never ever stand up in the House to say to the Prime Minister that he cannot appoint people into his cabinet whom he or his ring of people deem fit. What this particular motion talks about are those people on all the boards and agencies outside of the House, one of those, of course, being the Senate.

We have long known that Conservative and Liberal governments have used the Senate for what I call a den of iniquity in terms of putting their people there in order to get things passed. I will not come down too hard on the Tories because I think they are starting to change their tune on this, but Brian Mulroney forced the GST through the Senate by stacking the Senate with his friends to do one thing and one thing only: pass the dreaded GST when it went through the House of Commons. The Liberals in the Senate were going to hold it up but it was then turned around and the GST was passed.

Mr. Scott Brison: A great tax and a great Canadian, Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: My colleague from Kings—Hants says that it is a great tax. However just the mention of an increase in that tax and we would have the wrath of Canadians on us like a pack of dogs to a raw piece of meat. If the Conservatives believe that it is a great tax, then why not raise it once or twice to pay for things like military expenditures, health care, education, et cetera?

However, mention the GST to Canadians and they will be on us like anything. It is not a great tax. It was a tax forced upon Canadians by the Conservatives. However what did we hear from members on that side of the House? They said that if they were elected they would get rid of it. Here we are nine years later and the GST is still here.

• (1135)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I hesitate to interrupt my friend but he has diverted somewhat from the subject at hand. Talking about the GST at this point in time is not relevant in the eyes of the Speaker.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, in a roundabout way I was getting back to my point about appointments. Governments are free to appoint whomever they wish, whenever they wish, wherever they wish. All we ask on this side of the House is for an opportunity to speak to those people and ask for their qualifications because Canadian taxpayers are paying their salaries, whether it be the Transportation Safety Board, the Veterans Appeals Board, the Senate, the CBC, the post office or whatever. Canadians have a right to know who those people are that are appointed to those boards. What are their qualifications? What are their plans? What are their

objectives? Will Canadians get the best value for their tax dollars to ensure we have the best person?

It should not be because of what the member for LaSalle—Émard said: “Who do you know in the PMO?” That was a telling statement. I could not agree with the individual more than I am sitting here now. He is absolutely correct. Getting things done in this country and moving things forward depends upon who one knows in the PMO.

We talk about a declining voting rate in this country of 61%. My colleague from Saskatchewan in the Reform Party said earlier that it will be even lower in the next election. He is absolutely right. This is the fault of all of us, not just the government, for not explaining to Canadians clearly enough what our roles in society are as members of Parliament and how we as legislators enact laws and taxation policies, et cetera, to better the lives of all Canadians. Instead we do a lot of in-fighting in the House. We do it a lot to get that little four or seven second sound clip. We do it to make the government look bad, or the government to make the opposition look bad, or opposition members to make one another look bad.

The reality is that Canadians do not care. We could stand in the House day in and day out, and I may get one or two responses from my riding saying that they heard my speech or saw me on TV. All Canadians care about is whether they are getting the best value for their tax dollars by their elected officials and those officials who are appointed to various boards and agencies.

There is nothing wrong with a venting process of people and their applications. If someone were appointed to the Transportation Safety Board, we would hope that person would have some kind of background in transportation policies. If someone were appointed to the CBC, we would hope that person would have some sort of cultural or technical background in issues of that nature. If someone were appointed to the post office, we would hope that person would have some sort of expertise in mail delivery or something of that nature. We hope, but we do not know because these people are appointed and we hear about it later. That is simply wrong and unacceptable.

Canadians want a clear and transparent process. That process should be vented in committee, and not a stacked committee where the Liberals bring people who are more favourable to the whip at any time to make certain concessions or allowances, or rubber stamp the appointment. The whip should be off committees. Backbench members of Parliament must be able to vote their consciences, vote the way their constituents are telling them, and vote with what their guts are telling them half the time, not what someone else is telling them. That is not happening right now.

We constantly hear in the papers that the chair of a particular committee has already been selected. We have not even met in committee, yet we already know who the chairperson is. How can that be? The chairperson is supposed to be voted for in committee, yet we are told in newspapers that the chairperson has already been selected. If that is not a farce of parliamentary procedure, I do not know what is.

Supply

Canadians and the opposition want to know why that is happening? Why is so much power controlled in the hands of so few?

• (1140)

Democracy is not a spectator sport. We all have obligations and responsibilities and so do the citizens of this country. However when they see what is going on they just turn off the TV or crank it up or throw our householder in the garbage. They say they have their own lives and they forget us altogether because we have no effect on their lives. If anything we interfere in their day to day lives and they want us gone.

That is a sad state because pretty soon we will be celebrating Remembrance Day, a celebration and remembrance of those who passed on in defence of freedom and democracy. What do we do? We force issues down people's throats. We ram them through behind closed doors. We appoint people to the Senate to ram a bad bill through that no one wants except a handful of people. We tell Canadians we live in a great democracy. It is a capitulated democracy in many ways. As long as we tell them what we want and we have the majority to do it they will have to live with it. That is the way it is and that is wrong.

Instead of top down solutions we should have ground up solutions. Whether we are talking about fisheries, forestry, Kyoto or whatever, the solutions for these issues can come from Canadians. We should engage Canadians in the debate.

Stanley Knowles, a great parliamentarian and probably the finest parliamentarian to grace these halls, once said that debate is not a sin, it is not a crime, debate is good. The exchange and free flow of ideas is a good thing to have. However we shut Canadians out of that process. We tell Canadians they elected us and we will see them in four or five years, to go away and not bother us. This is what we are going to do and the heck with them.

That is simply wrong. With that type of attitude coming out of this legislature and other legislatures across the country it is no wonder Canadians are turning off from the polls. There was a 6% reduction the last federal election. In our province of Nova Scotia 48% voted provincially. Municipally, in the HRM area of Halifax, 38% of the people voted. About 62% of the Halifax regional municipality did not even bother to vote for their council or their mayor. By all accounts that number will be lower the next time.

Is anyone from the PMO or anywhere else asking why this is happening, where the problem is? No, it is the status quo, everything is fine. They are the government. They were elected with a slim majority. Although only 38% of the people of Canada voted for the Liberal government, 62% of the people said they did not want those people, yet they have them. This is why my colleague from Regina—Qu'Appelle is working so hard on proportional representation, to say if one votes for the Alliance in Saint John's, Newfoundland and Labrador or if one votes for the NDP in Calgary, then that vote will count at the end of the day. That is why PR is so important in changing the actual structure of this place.

We are one of the few parliamentary democracies without PR and the sooner we can get a committee together to seriously strike this

idea and discuss it in an open and transparent manner, it will be much better for democracy and for all of Canada.

The Bloc Québécois has a right, and I thank it for bringing this important motion to the House today. It is something the government does not want to talk about because as long as power is controlled in the hands of a few everything is fine. I thank my hon. colleagues from across the House for bringing their issues to debate because I am sure in many ways we can agree that Parliament must change to be more proactive and acceptable to Canadians who pay our salaries to be here.

• (1145)

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I followed the comments made by the hon. member from Nova Scotia attentively. He criticized the system we have in the House of Commons. I would like to remind him and also ask him if this is not the same system unions use to elect their executive? They are given a mandate to govern and after so many years they return and ask for a mandate again and if they are renewed, fine, if not, they are thrown out. This is the same system in the House of Commons. If he is so critical of our system maybe he should start changing the union system first.

Second, if he were proposing proportional representation for us maybe it would be a good idea for him to start in his place. We could follow his career and his union's achievement. If it were good for the unions then maybe the House of Commons would adopt the same principles of proportional representation.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, normally I would bat that one out of the park but I will be easy on my colleague over there. There is probably no more democratic organization than the union movement in this country. The CLC and unions are more democratic than this structure.

Does my hon. colleague think that the board of directors of the major corporation that his party gets some funding from asks its shareholders if they should donate money to the Liberal Party? I think not. As I respect the hon. gentleman I will leave that one in the park for this time.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his usual insightful speech. At the beginning of his speech he touched on the issue of the power of appointment and the need to curb the Prime Minister's power of appointment. He touched on an important point and I would like him to expand on it.

Looking at classical political theory, there are three branches of government in a democracy: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. The Prime Minister today has power over the legislative branch because he appoints the entire Senate. He appoints committee chairs so he has a lot of control over the House of Commons, particularly through party line votes. He has entire control over the executive branch, the cabinet. As well, but to a lesser extent, he has power over the judiciary through appointments which are not vetted through a parliamentary process.

The three important functions of government are all directly controlled by one person. Regardless of who the Prime Minister is, that is something that should definitely be changed in a democracy. Would my hon. colleague care to comment on that?

• (1150)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from the Alliance has hit the nail on the head. That is what this entire debate is all about. A lot of people in this country owe their livelihood to one person and that person is the Prime Minister. His office can control all three branches of government. The member is absolutely correct. That has to change for people to know that their vote counts, and that their opinions and concerns matter. Supreme Court justices, members of the Senate, and members of major bodies that govern this country are all appointed. My hon. colleague is absolutely correct, that has to change.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to relate to the member an incident that happened not too long ago and which has happened before. The government advertised that a certain position was available and a board would be conducted. Applications flowed in and individuals telephoned, only to be told that the position had already been filled by ministerial appointment. I have seen that happen many times, and that is a terrible smack in the face to the democratic process. Would the hon. member like to comment on that?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member brings up a good point. My Progressive Conservative colleague from Cumberland—Colchester raised the fact that if people want a job on the Hill for example, they have to live within a certain radius of the Hill. These are federal taxpayers' dollars. Any Canadian who qualifies for a position should be able to send in his or her resume. No minister or department should have the power over that to freeze people out of the hiring process. The best person through the resume and interview process should be hired for the job and not appointed because of who that person knows in the PMO.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the NDP for making some rational, practical points around this important issue of the need to have greater transparency and democracy in appointing people to boards, commissions and crown corporations. Members of the Bloc have done a good thing in bringing this motion forward.

People who work for the federal public service are under employment equity rules to ensure that the workforce of the civil service is representative of qualified people in Canada in terms of visible minorities, women, and people with disabilities. However we see powerful people being appointed to influential positions without any consideration given other than their political partisanship.

Does the member believe that we should be applying some of those principles to these influential appointments?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Vancouver East is absolutely correct. People get these appointments because of who they know, not what they are or what part of Canada they reflect.

Canada is often called a mosaic of cultures from around the world living within the confines of one border. Our officials, the House of Commons, legislators, boards and officials should reflect that

Supply

transparency and have a good cross-gender, for lack of a better term, reflection of Canadian society in those particular relationships that we have in boards, in appointments or in the House of Commons and legislatures across the country.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by congratulating my friend, the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. His motion is very important, very substantive and very practical. I know that he works hard on this issue. This is not new to him.

• (1155)

[English]

Last week, with respect to much of the subject matter that we see before us, there was a great deal of media attention paid to a speech given by the member for LaSalle—Émard. His speech was titled "Proposal for Reform of the House of Commons". Unlike that of my colleague from the Bloc, this is a bit of a revelation coming from that particular member.

[Translation]

This speech was made by the former finance minister, co-author of the red book. This man was a member of cabinet for nine years and he now describes himself as the architect of the democratic deficit.

[English]

This was a speech in which the member for LaSalle—Émard said:

We have allowed power to become too centralized. Too concentrated in the hands of a few and too remote from the influence of the many.

We have permitted a culture to arise that has been some thirty years in the making. One that can be best summarized by the one question that everyone in Ottawa believes has become the key to getting things done: "Who do you know in the PMO?"

As the Prime Minister himself was quick to point out, the former finance minister knew him and served him in the cabinet. He was part and parcel of any of the decisions the government has made and in fact led and clearly was the architect behind many of the decisions to reduce transfer payments to the provinces by billions, which obviously devastated health care and education as a direct result. During his time in cabinet, he hypocritically reaped the benefits of the GST to claim victory over the deficit. He absconded with \$30 billion from the EI fund to put against the debt, and that is confirming that it was all collected under false pretences.

That speech given by the member for LaSalle—Émard would have been greater in its credibility had the member chosen to deliver it in the House of Commons, for example, which he could have done during his part in the throne speech. Instead, he followed the old pattern of ignoring the House of Commons. He delivered it when he knew there would be no rigorous questioning before he could escape back into the cocoon of his campaign spinners.

I want to spend a few minutes looking at the "who do you know?" speech and then discuss some of the proposals of my own party. I will also relate both of these to the motion brought forward by my friend from the Bloc.

Supply

Very little of what the member for LaSalle—Émard proposed had anything to do with Parliament or the House of Commons. He spoke first of party discipline and free votes. That is a matter for each party, I would suggest. What was really being said is that as Prime Minister the member for LaSalle—Émard would tell his caucus how far he was prepared to tolerate dissent. The real day of freedom will come when members of Parliament, members of the Liberal caucus, themselves decide the degree to which they are prepared to support the government on issues. This will be the test: what caucus tells the cabinet, not what the Prime Minister tells the caucus to do.

Then he advocated referral of bills to committees before second reading. It is hardly a revolutionary concept. It was enacted in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons in 1994 while the member was in cabinet. Why is he only discovering this procedure now?

His third area of reform is to call for a rewrite of rules governing private members' business. We all know that there needs to be change there. His proposal is to permit the government to throttle bills in a large number of committees instead of throttling them in one committee.

The fourth item of the great reformer from LaSalle—Émard deals with the committees and touches on the motion before the House. I will return to this in a moment, as I will to the fifth item concerning government appointments, but the last of the six items is the best of all, for the member for LaSalle—Émard has discovered the merits of an independent ethics counsellor who would report directly to Parliament. Yet he stood in the House of Commons twice voting against his own words that were plucked verbatim from the red book that he co-authored. The member went on to Toronto to announce his recantation. Nobody there would point out this double standard. Had he done so in the House of Commons, I suggest he would have received a little more scrutiny. The first year law students of constitutional law where he made his announcement were simply too polite.

Let us go back to the fourth and fifth items: first, committee chairs being elected by secret ballot. That would be revolutionary and is an item that I think all members of the House of Commons would embrace, but let me remind the House of Commons that the secret ballot election of the Speaker of the House of Commons was in fact brought into effect by the Mulroney government, the same government that gave wide ranging mandates to the standing committees of the House.

What of committees in the world of the member for LaSalle—Émard? The membership would be determined by caucus and the chairs by secret ballot. The underlying assumption is that the government caucus would still hold all of these offices.

● (1200)

Nowhere does the member for LaSalle—Émard see that the role of members of Parliament who do not sit in the Liberal caucus would really be nil. Perhaps he is not aware that at Westminster, where he discovered the three-line whip, committee chairs are shared across the floor. One does not have to be a government supporter to chair a committee.

A final word on committees does deserve to be read into *Hansard*. This is again a direct quote from the member for LaSalle—Émard. He speaks of this issue:

There is a final issue I would raise on the subject. All Ministers should be compelled to appear more routinely before committee. This, to the government's credit, is a move that has been undertaken in recent years. For instance, the House Leader's Office has urged ministers to appear annually before their relevant standing committees on the subject of their departments' estimates.

This story is behind us. Is this what the member for LaSalle—Émard really expects people to believe, given that in his years in cabinet he failed to appear before his committee to defend his estimates? How can he now stand and simply tell Canadians "Wash me, but don't make me wet, completely forget what I have done, listen to my words, don't look at my actions for almost a decade". Now he has discovered the word accountability, whereby he should go before committees and answer for his actions.

It was in fact the Progressive Conservative caucus that created the fuss that led to the intervention of the government House leader and the Prime Minister. Even after all that, if we check the record we will find that for his final year in office as the great steward of the consolidated revenue fund of Canada, the former minister of finance again failed to appear at committee to defend his estimates, but he wants us to believe that he really does think it would be a good idea if we all sat down and had a nice chat about a year from now, once a year, perhaps.

Now for the last point, which speaks of reforming the process surrounding government appointments and which in fact is the very basis of the motion before the House. At the moment, as a result of the initiatives of the previous Conservative government, the committees of the House have the right on their own motion to examine any order in council appointment. We do not do it often and have not, particularly in the last 10 years, and some may say the results are unsatisfactory. Some will say that the failure of the system is best summed up in two words: Alfonso Gagliano.

It was in fact some of the supporters of the member for LaSalle—Émard who were members of that committee who moved to block a motion that would have allowed the committee to examine the appointment process that led to the departure of the former government member, Alfonso Gagliano, for Denmark. I ask again rhetorically: What did Denmark do to deserve that? We saw how the Liberals stonewalled any credible examination of that appointment. We saw how they blocked questions, how they were determined at all costs to support what was a rotten appointment and a disgrace to the Canadian diplomatic corps.

The proposals from the member for LaSalle—Émard would not have changed this result. Let us be clear: There is in reality no increase in scrutiny being proposed. What is being put forward would simply put a stamp of parliamentary scrutiny on bad appointments as well as the good ones.

Those are the vapid proposals from the front-runner of the Liberal leadership race, not to mention that in examining them in greater detail we find no mention of greater financial scrutiny, no mention of the rights of the opposition and no mention of the need to bring the cabinet back into Parliament for greater accountability on the floor of the House of Commons. These are alternate versions that in fact really amount to very little.

This summer the Progressive Conservative Party adopted a significant policy of democratic reform when it met in Edmonton. This policy is one of the fruits of the collaboration between the PC caucus and the member for Edmonton North and other members of that coalition. We favour a lessening of party discipline and less use of the corrosive and over-the-top overuse of threats of loss of confidence. In fact, I believe one of the most beneficial efforts that came from this democratic working task force was the recognition that for the greater good much of the old concepts of party discipline could be put to one side, and that individuality, with members of Parliament coming forward on behalf of their constituents and taking strong positions on issues of morality, of a regional interest or of a personal interest for those members, should not be dissuaded.

● (1205)

We favour the tenure for committee membership. The whip would not be able to remove a member of Parliament who was making life unpleasant for the government. What a novel concept; having independent action by members of the House of Commons who are democratically elected by their constituents, events that we favour with respect to the election of committee chairs, secret balloting and vice-chairs. These would be distributed throughout the parties in relation to party standings. Therefore we would do away with some of the partiality and politics that enter inevitably into this process in which we live and breathe.

We favour keeping parliamentary secretaries, whips and other party office-holders off committees, again enhancing their independence. We would insist that ministers attend committees while their legislation is under consideration. That would rock the member for LaSalle—Émard who never carried a single bill through all stages while acting as finance minister.

In the report by the Progressive Conservative Party, we champion the appointment of an independent ethics counsellor who would report directly to Parliament through a committee that would allow for examination of any indiscretion by ministers or members of the House of Commons.

We would insist that ministers outline government positions in the House of Commons before any federal-provincial meetings take place and report the outcome of those meetings to the House. What a novel concept again were that to have happened with respect to Kyoto, rather than this cloak and dagger exercise where it appears the government's position was decided upon in the taxi on the way to the conference, and has been in complete turmoil ever since.

We would like to create federal-provincial interparliamentary relationships with policy fields, such as transportation, agriculture and justice, to name but a few, that would allow for direct input and interaction between our provincial colleagues and provincial governments, which would enhance greatly the relationship that should exist between all levels of government and yet has been

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extremely exacerbated by the past 10 years of the Liberal government.

We want to improve upon the scrutiny of public spending, by examining in detail the estimates of four departments selected by the opposition, not the government, for 160 hours in committee of the whole of the House of Commons. Contrast that with the silence of the member for LaSalle—Émard.

We would require independent legal advisers for the Parliament of Canada on the charter and the compatibility of the charter with legislation.

We would establish a judicial review committee of Parliament to prepare an appropriate response to those court decisions that Parliament believed should be addressed through legislation. What an opportunity that would be in the face of decisions, such as the Sharpe case, which could directly result in the intervention of Parliament and a response through legislation, rather than the convoluted process where we are left waiting for the Minister of Justice to respond.

We would have the name and the qualifications of any person proposed for the appointment to the Supreme Court of Canada to be presented to Parliament which would, after debate, make a recommendation on the suitability of that nominee's candidacy. This vote would be conducted and communicated to the governor in council prior to any appointment being made. Again, it is something very simple, yet very significant for all Canadians to realize that their elected officials, the persons whom they have entrusted to go to Ottawa, would actually have a say in appointing the judges who make very important decisions, and in the final analysis make law in many cases by virtue of those decisions.

We would have direct elections for senators and would assign 24 seats to the province of British Columbia and look at how we would rebalance and bring back into the debate the issue of how we could make the Senate of Canada, the other place, more relevant to this process and to Canadians generally.

The Progressive Conservative Party would rebalance the constitutional powers of the Senate to reflect the objective of provincial, territorial and regional representation in the federal legislative process while ensuring the supremacy of the House of Commons. That is not a new concept. That has been proposed before by our party and by other parties.

The Conservative Party would also require the government to table draft regulations before the passage of any bill seeking regulation-making authority and we would put into the law the powers of Parliament to disallow regulations.

We would also strengthen the rights of Canadians to petition Parliament. Again, that form of direct interaction and contact, is something that we should be quick to embrace.

Supply

•(1210)

We would in some circumstances involve citizens directly in the legislative process through hybrid committees of MPs and citizens. A classic example of that are the recent changes to the Indian Act where members of first nations would like to participate directly, sit on committees, have the opportunity to question witnesses and give those very necessary perspectives on such an important issue that affects them.

The Progressive Conservative Party would conduct an examination of the electoral system. We would reform the financial disclosure requirements of the electoral system to make leadership funding transparent.

Another issue which I think is important overall is the way in which elections are currently paid for. Perhaps we should embark on publicly funded elections, given that almost 70% of the funding, because of tax write-offs, is currently picked up by the public. It would also allow for an equal starting point. If the publicly funded elections were in place, all parties would begin on the same footing. There would be complete transparency. There would be an ability to see exactly from where the money came because it would be clearly set out in a single amount that applied to all parties.

Let me return now to the motion itself that has been proposed by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. He is asking that the committee of the House of Commons exercise greater scrutiny over order in council appointments. We support that wholeheartedly, but in doing so we are under no illusions that there will be any change under the Liberal administration. As I mentioned before, that pattern was clearly established by the appointment of Alfonso Gagliano. Stay tuned, there will be others.

The member for LaSalle—Émard has failed to disown that travesty. He has made great efforts to portray himself now as the leader of the sixth party, and to say that somehow he was not present at the cabinet table when all these decisions were made. He has somehow mysteriously gone off into the netherland, suggesting that he was not there, that he was not part of the government's decision making for the last 10 years.

What is clearly required is a bigger vision for what Parliament can and should be. I have outlined some of the changes that my party, the Progressive Conservative Party, offers Canadians. It demonstrates a commitment to a strong renewal of our democratic system through a stronger Parliament. I contrast that with the myopic vision of the member for LaSalle—Émard who in the end is engaging in a make work project for his Liberal caucus. There is every reason to believe, should he gain the leadership of his party, that people will still ask, "Who do you know in the PMO?"

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough on his speech and ask him the following question. What does he think can explain this tendency on the part of government members to relinquish an important part of their responsibilities to the Prime Minister and his staff? Is it simply in their nature to do such a thing? Is it the way the system is designed or is it simply that they have decided that the less they speak up and the more they follow, the greater their chances are of acceding one

day to certain positions to which they would be appointed by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question, which is a hard one to answer. I think that Liberal members live in constant fear.

•(1215)

[*English*]

There is constant fear: fear of re-election; fear of being taken off committees; fear of their inability to advance through the ranks; and fear of re-election. That sentiment has been advanced because of the actions of the Prime Minister. That concentration of power in the PMO has resulted in members being pulled out of cabinet and being removed from committees. There is every reason for them to have that fear.

Also there is the process itself. The member quite clearly pointed out that much of the environment that Liberal backbenchers are living in is enhanced by the system itself. It has curtailed their activities. It has indicated that should they break from the ranks, should they show some initiative or independence, they will be knocked down for it. There is very much an attitude that is very pervasive in the government. Attitudes can only change over time. They can only change through a change in leadership and a change in government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is very important. Observers who have been here, like us, for the past nine years, around and on Parliament Hill, are beginning to get to know a lot of people. People start to talk a bit more after nine years. I do not know if, like me, he has heard civil servants and even senior officials say that the system is really deeply rooted, which means it has been in existence for some time now.

Except for the nine years the Conservative Party under Brian Mulroney was in office, the Liberals have been running this country for a very long time. In fact, people have secretly told us that the same system exists at the lower echelons. It does not affect only heads of crown corporations or deputy ministers. Since this is widespread, despite all the goodwill in the world, it will take some time to change the system.

Since he is a young member of Parliament, we cannot blame him for past mistakes. Could he suggest how to change things around?

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Motivation and attitude are very important issues. In fact, they are crucial for Parliament.

[*English*]

I believe much of what the member speaks, as to how it will evolve, will come from the election of new members of Parliament who come here perhaps with the belief that the work to be done can be done in such a way that the government will not just focus in on their actions, but will allow them to work with greater freedom and greater independence.

Supply

This is a very simple example that demonstrates a change in attitude. When was the last time we saw a minister of the crown get up and acknowledge that perhaps the government had done something inappropriate or that it could have done things differently, if different information was available to them? A simple acknowledgment or a simple offering of apology would mark a great departure from the government's practice.

How do we do so in a way that changes the system and how do we legislate change is a tougher question. I believe much of it, and I believe what the hon. member is referring to, comes from the spirit, *l'esprit des nouveaux députés*.

We are increasingly seeing a desire for change in Canada. We are at a critical point where if that change does not take place we will see further apathy and cynicism throughout the country, in his province and mine. We are seeing young Canadians switching off and taking a pass on political involvement. They are looking for other political vehicles, whether it be a protest movement or a special interest group, rather than involving themselves in the most democratic process of all, and that is seeking election and making change through actions, words and the ability to motivate people.

I believe that can only come in some ways with new ideas that people are prepared to stick to and prepared to start working on the day after they become elected. They must not simply look at ways to avoid difficult issues and pass on important issues. They must participate in the democratic process.

I look forward to working with him and other members of the House of Commons in pursuit of that change. If we do nothing and if we take the approach that we have seen from the government, where it actively seeks out the status quo and continually looks for ways to do nothing, we do so at our peril. The cost is too high to this great country and to the many people who live here and who want concrete action on issues that matter in their back yards and in their back pockets.

• (1220)

Mr. John Finlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been here all morning and I must congratulate my colleague who moved the motion because it has certainly led us into some interesting forays through present and past history. I have lost my way every now and then of course, because we have not been sticking to the point. We have more interest in what we have hidden here that we must get expressed.

I have two questions for the hon. member who spoke so eloquently. He seems to have forgotten when he talks about patronage appointments that the undisputed master of patronage appointments was the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, his party's former leader. After a very telling cut at Mr. Turner in the debate when he said, "You did have an option, sir", he then proceeded in his nine years in office to make more patronage appointments than any other prime minister before or since.

The member talked about fear of re-election keeping the backbenchers of the Liberal Party in line. I would like him to explain that for me. I have no fear of re-election. I have no fear of the PMO. I have no fear of anybody and I am a backbencher.

Mr. Peter MacKay: You are going to retire.

Mr. John Finlay: I might retire. I am thinking of it.

The second question is regarding why people do not vote. There have been a lot of statements in the House about why the voting percentage has gone down. We have to look at that a little more carefully. Why? Has anyone studied it? Have we any polls on it?

My idea on it is that many people do not vote because they do not feel motivated to vote. They are uninterested. I guess that some people do not vote because they are lazy. Some do not vote because they think all politicians are crooked. Of course, when I look around the House this morning, that cannot be true because there are a number of politicians here and I do not think any of them think they are crooked. I know I do not. I know that members who have spoken do not. I suppose another reason people do not vote is that they are quite satisfied; they are not dissatisfied.

The member asked how do people make their voices heard around here. Many members will remember the two things that occurred in the last nine years which raised the most reaction from Canadians. One was negative option billing of TV programming. All members' offices were deluged on that issue. The other was the issue of giving money to hockey teams.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I apologize to the hon. member, but the time has run out. I will permit the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough to answer in less than a minute, please.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member opposite. I am not sure I completely follow his line of thinking. If it is followed to the natural extension, I guess he is saying his government was elected like negative option billing; that the Liberals were elected because people did not vote. That is a sad admission in a democratic state.

As for his attempt to draw me into a partisan commentary on the previous government being more corrupt than his government and that patronage appointments somehow in the previous administration could even hold a candle to his Prime Minister, I am going to avoid that commentary. Suffice it to say that I was in high school when that previous administration was in place.

The hon. member is a hardworking member of Parliament and I respect that about him. I think he is right to point out that all members of Parliament are not corrupt.

I think he and I could agree that this Parliament and politics generally are falling into disrepute. We have to make efforts to modernize Parliament to make it more relevant, to make it something that Canadians feel works for them. There is a disconnect that is growing. That is what in my view is accounting for the low voter turnout. Young people in particular do not feel that politics and politicians are relevant in their lives and they are looking for other options.

We can reinvigorate and revive the sense of efficiency in Parliament if we work smarter, if we speak directly to people and if we pass laws that will have an immediate impact on their lives. Currently the country is slipping. His administration has the—

Supply

•(1225)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mercier.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

This morning, while preparing for this debate, I got angry all over again when I tried to examine the qualifications and competence of a former minister turned ambassador, and I am referring to Mr. Gagliano, in light of the existing Standing Orders.

I believe that if there is a case which illustrates well the inability of the House, in the current environment, to find out and make known the ability of a person to perform a job, it is that of ambassador Gagliano.

I would like to recall briefly that former minister Gagliano was not reappointed by the Prime Minister last January and that the latter promised him, as compensation, the post of ambassador to Denmark.

Incidentally, everyone else now in Denmark is a career diplomat who has come up through the ranks, and I believe that what they saw is not likely to incite them to change their practice.

For all intents and purposes, Mr. Gagliano was fired and subsequently promoted to a position as ambassador.

As is the case for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and other committees, we are informed of appointments. Since we have 30 days to send for people, I used my parliamentary privilege but I had to introduce a motion for that purpose in committee. A majority of members could have refused to hear Mr. Gagliano, but the committee agreed. I was happy, considering the current wording, inadequate in my view, of Standing Order 111, which reads:

(2) The committee, if it should call an appointee or nominee to appear pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall examine the qualifications and competence of the appointee or nominee to perform the duties of the post to which he or she has been appointed or nominated.

As I recall, and this is a rather painful memory for me, when ambassador Gagliano appeared before the committee, opposition members were for all intents and purposes—this is what happened—prevented from exercising their right under Standing Order 111(2), which I just read.

We were prohibited from asking questions about the minister's experience and background. All this former minister had to say before us about his experience related to his political career, plus the fact that he was a chartered general accountant. We were forbidden to use all the information we had received—and there was plenty of it—on how he ran his department.

•(1230)

We were therefore prevented from exercising our rights under the Standing Orders.

This is an extremely serious matter for public opinion in general and for those who follow politics and care about it. We are talking about a person who was removed from office for obvious reasons, and all political observers commented on this. This person is then

appointed to a prestigious position, an appointment considered as a reward.

If the elected parliamentarians, opposition members and members on the government side as well, who sit on the committee do not or cannot perform their role of ensuring transparency, ascertaining the accuracy of the qualifications of appointees and making sure they did not receive political favours and will be able to represent not only the country, the Liberal government, but the nation, and if ordinary citizens are not sure that their Parliament can guarantee this, there is something terribly wrong.

In this case, even if the government House leader got all hot under the collar about the fact that I succeeded in having former minister Gagliano appear before the committee—I still do not understand why he was so proud of that—it is not unusual. I only tried to exercise my right. I could have run against the committee majority with my motion to have minister Gagliano appear before us. It did not happen, but I ran against the committee majority when I tried to exercise my right under Standing Order 111.

Things are rather vague; indeed I was told that all the appointments made since the end of the previous session and the beginning of the new one cannot be reviewed by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs or any other committee.

For instance, we might have liked to hear the testimony of Ms. Pamela Wallin, who was appointed Canada's consul general to New York. She is a distinguished person, a cancer survivor, but I understand that she does not speak French at all, which is somewhat of a problem for Canada's consul general to New York.

All this would be changed and corrected by the Bloc Québécois' amendment, especially with regard to the meaning of the word "consideration".

I would like to move an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by adding after the word "referred" the following:

"before confirmation of the said appointments".

For such consideration to be meaningful, it must be possible for it to rectify anything that might appear in the course of genuine consideration by a committee to be an error on the part of the government.

This supply day is important and I hope it will have an impact.

•(1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you to examine the relevance of the amendment to the motion itself. It appears not to be relevant.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): That is exactly what the Chair was planning to do.

[*Translation*]

I declare the amendment in order.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, this morning, the government House leader expressed his satisfaction with the way things work in general here in Ottawa, particularly with the way committees do their job. He even went as far as to say that my colleague from Mercier was also very pleased with the way things work, quoting her as stating that many witnesses were invited to appear at her request or at the committee's request. Yet I have the feeling that my colleague is not as pleased as he claimed she was. I would like her to explain to us the kind of reservations that she has with regard to Standing Orders 110 and 111, which deal with the work of committees and calling on appointees to appear.

I understand that the amendment that she proposed earlier is aimed at improving the situation. I would like to hear her comments on this.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I did not hear the Leader of the Government in the House who apparently said, this morning, that I was satisfied. It must be the result of some sort of amnesia. Those members who followed what happened will know that I was glad that Mr. Gagliano could appear before the committee, but disappointed that I could not exercise my right. As our motion says, government appointments should be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration. That means we make sure that the candidates have the required qualifications, experience and ability to perform the duties to which they are being appointed. The committee, the opposition and members of the government, whether they like it or not, must be able to exercise that right.

Anyone reading the blues of the committee will know that that was not the case. First, we will have to rewrite all this and make sure genuine consideration is possible. Second, we must make sure that such consideration takes place even during periods when the House is not sitting, especially when such periods can end with a prorogation as we have seen recently. During that time, numerous appointments were made and we could not even bring the individuals before the committee and make sure, as I said before, that we examined their credentials, their qualifications and their skills. It is ridiculous. It is not serious and it means that, in Canada, democracy ends once the Prime Minister is elected. From that point on, everything depends on him and his goodwill.

• (1240)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I could have asked the member for Mercier about the merits of today's motion in amendment, but I will use my allotted time to speak in support of the amendment.

This morning, the government House leader spoke to the motion introduced by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. I congratulate the hon. member on having introduced this motion and also on his speech on this matter. He made an eloquent plea. Using his obvious legal background and his increasing political experience, he made the right political arguments in favour of greater democracy. I congratulate him on this initiative.

The government House leader forgot to talk about a key word in the motion, and that is the word "automatically". He said we could use Standing Order 111 in particular to hear appointees before a parliamentary committee. We may hear them, but if those people are already appointed, it becomes difficult to change the decision. In

Supply

order to demonstrate their incompetence, a certain number of facts have to be proven to have the appointment process reversed.

There is also quite rightly the argument submitted by my colleague from Mercier, who said that a member of the opposition might submit that, but that there would always be the issue of the government majority. Nothing being secret and the Liberal government being a majority government, it could have used its majority to make its members toe to the party line and not summon former minister Gagliano who is now ambassador to Denmark. Why did the government majority agree to hear him? It did so because of the public pressure and the considerable number of articles by commentators of all sorts demanding that he be sent for. This was the topic of the day, with the circumstances which led Prime Minister to replace Mr. Gagliano. Of course, in order to save appearances, the Liberal majority allowed us to hear Mr. Gagliano and ask him questions. Predictably, once this exercise was completed, the Liberal majority decided that former minister Gagliano could continue in his position as ambassador, a position which he still holds today.

The amendment moved by the hon. member for Mercier to the motion by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is extremely important. The Chair has ruled the amendment in order. The amendment specifies "before confirmation of the said appointments". Obviously, appointments should be considered before they are confirmed. If the decisions have already been made, it would be a situation similar to the one we had when the Prime Minister allowed the House to have a debate on the situation in Iraq. On the second day of the present session, the Prime Minister was presented with an award in New York, after which the American media asked for his opinion. He almost gave his unconditional approval to President Bush when a debate was being held in the House.

• (1245)

It is fine to have people appear before committees in certain situations, but the hon. member for Mercier just mentioned that Parliament is not always in session. It does not sit during the summer or the holiday season. I pointed this out myself. The government often makes appointments at such times, especially during the summer, knowing that people are vacationing, that the media are less interested in politics, that the members are not sitting, and that committees are not busy working. Incidentally, many committees are not sitting right now, because chairs and vice-chairs have not been elected. And all the while, the thirty days are in effect. This is democracy the Canadian way.

I am a member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights. Canada is trying to protect its good reputation. Through its officials, including ambassadors, elected members of Parliament and ministers, Canada condemns human rights violations in various countries, but here we are almost witnessing a rejection of the laws governing democracy.

Supply

We find ourselves in a situation where the Prime Minister enjoys a majority in the House. He is not elected directly, as is the case in most western countries. For example, before sending troops or taking any military action, the President of the U.S. must obtain a resolution from both houses, as is the case elsewhere. But the Prime Minister is elected by the members of the Liberal Party. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard has been silent on this issue. If he becomes Prime Minister, he will find himself in the same situation and he will be able to appoint whoever he wants. There are 3,500 positions, including those of Governor General, lieutenant-governors, senators, justices, heads of Crown corporations, members of boards such as those of the Quebec City port, the Quebec City airport and the commission that deals with the Plains of Abraham. I am giving specific examples from the Quebec City area, but the Prime Minister appoints people everywhere in Canada, personally or through the governor in council, which is in fact his cabinet.

He also appoints ministers, and they are warned. They must not contradict the Prime Minister, who is the person with the most power, considering the size and the relative weight of Canada in the world. Of course, he does not have the same financial capacity as the President of the U.S. or of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, but the Prime Minister of Canada currently holds most of the powers in his hands. One simply has to watch members opposite. They almost feel like saying, “Yes, the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière is right”. This evening, they will vote on the amendment and the motion. Those who support the former Minister of Finance will have a dilemma. The former minister agrees with this proposal, since he suggested it 15 days ago. We will see if he comes to vote this evening and how he will vote. One would normally expect those who will support him in the coming leadership race to be logical and support one of his proposals. I hope that these members will vote according to their position and will not support the position defended this morning by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who was playing on words when he used the term *may*, which does not mean automatically.

As I said before, during the summer recess and other periods when the House is not sitting and when issues or appointments go unnoticed and do not generate controversy, editorials, public protest or petitions, if nothing is changed, the Liberal majority will be able to continue doing exactly what the Prime Minister wants, because it is its future which is at stake.

• (1250)

Indeed, these people could be appointed parliamentary secretaries one day. They could become, like certain defeated Liberal candidates, associates of or assistants to Crown corporation presidents appointed by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière for his excellent speech. He was with me in the House this morning to witness the little play that the government House leader put on stage for us. He played on words, to a certain extent, talking about the so-called automatic character of the referral to committee process.

Now, I know that my colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière is deeply attached to the French language and that he

knows his grammar very well. Standing Order 111 (2), to which the leader was referring, says, and I quote:

The committee, if it should call an appointee—

Could he tell us whether he thinks that something can be at the same time automatic and conditional with the use of the word *if*? Does he not agree also that, when the word *if* is used in the Standing Orders, it makes things conditional and not automatic, which would destroy the argument presented by the government House leader this morning?

Mr. Antoine Dubé: On the face of it, the member is absolutely right on this issue. We cannot say that something is automatic and conditional at the same time. An automatic transmission does not involve gear changes.

The member is absolutely right. This gives me the opportunity to remind the House of the two *ifs* in question. If an opposition member or even a government member has to ask for something—but we know that a government will not ask, at present—and if the Liberal majority is in agreement, what is automatic? Nothing, of course. Instead, the automatic process is reversed. If no one notices it or raises it, if no one asks for it and if the Liberal majority notices that nothing is happening in the country, in the newspapers, in demonstrations or in petitions, and what not, it is all these *ifs* put together that might be discussed.

But what is even worse is that, even if the person in question is called before the committee, all the other *ifs* that applied before remain. If the committee thinks at some point that things are starting to get hot or that they might get hot, the majority can say at any time that there has been enough talking and that they have to move on to something else.

So, in the end, what is the point of calling people? You will perhaps think that this is a light answer, but there is a maxim that says that there are two definitions of democracy: there is one where everything is forbidden, where someone has no right to do anything, as we see in some dictatorships; and there is the other one, the Canadian one, which is typical of the current Prime Minister, something like, “You can say whatever you want”, nothing will change.

• (1255)

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my friend from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. What caught my attention mostly was when he outlined the Prime Minister's powers, starting with commander in chief all the way down the ladder. This reminded me that we are not very far from a dictatorship, even though we live in a country where we have all the elements necessary to make a very good dictatorship. But this is not my point.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about free votes in the House. I would like him to tell me what would be, what are or what could be the reasons for asking for such votes.

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madame Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In terms of free votes, we really have to be careful about a few points.

Free votes are allowed in certain countries. However, free votes without restriction can lead to excesses. For instance, observers in the United States deplore the fact that votes are freer in that country. However, this can lead to more interference on the part of lobbyists or people who are bent on imposing their point of view. This in turn leads to a higher risk of bribery. In countries where there are no free votes and where everything is decided ahead of time, only the PMO might be tempted by that. But this is not the point of his question.

I would be in favour of more free votes, especially on matters of personal values and so on. However, there would need to be limits. We must push ahead on this, nonetheless. What we see currently—a case in point being the Liberals refusing to have committee chairs elected by secret ballot—is that the people across the way are not free to do what they want even when it comes to votes regarding committees.

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for York West.

The motion calls upon the government to refer most appointments to Commons committees for detailed scrutiny. At first glance the proposal does seem attractive. After all, which of us does not want to remove even the slightest hint of patronage or cronyism in the appointment process? Which of us would not support the extension of greater democracy or expanding the powers of MPs in committees?

However, as they say, the devil is in the details, and so it is with this motion.

The motion that originally was brought forward would actually weaken our standing orders concerning government appointments. Our standing orders require that all non-judicial order in council appointments be tabled in the House so that committees can review the person's qualifications and competencies if they choose to do so. This applies to all deputy ministers, ambassadors, consul generals and the heads of crown corporations and most regulatory boards such as the CRTC.

By the way, we have for the first time in the history of the CRTC an aboriginal person by the name of Ron Williams sitting on the board. He is a Métis and a former entrepreneur who owned a cable company. He has all the competencies needed and required to be totally qualified to sit on the CRTC. That created a balance that was needed on that regulatory board. We have tried to achieve that with all of the others. I highly recommend the process.

Appointments to the National Energy Board, the Canadian Transportation Agency and even some quasi-judicial appointments are tabled in the House on the basis of House precedent, such as the appointments to the Immigration and Refugee Board.

I want to talk about the regulatory boards. I come from an area steeped in resource development. We have great need for the work of these regulatory boards. We need those appointments to be made efficiently and quickly because industry does not wait for the government system or machinery to come into place or the bodies to fall into place in order to do what they have to do. I will give an example.

Supply

On the land and water boards and the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board we have the capacity to do what is needed for many of the industry partners that want to move ahead with development. One example is the huge move in the diamond resource development area. Two mines went through an environmental process and they needed to do that in concert with those regulatory boards. The land and water boards issue water licences. They cannot wait for us to go through a machinery of government process here to appoint people to do the work they need to do. They also issue land permits. They cannot wait for that purpose either.

We have been able to achieve a certain balance in gender and regional appointments, including those target groups that would never otherwise get a chance: aboriginal people, minorities, and women. We also have to create a balance so that we do not have a board totally full of lawyers or scientists. This is the way in which we see the process bear out the facts of what is needed.

The standing orders are more comprehensive than what the Bloc proposed in its motion yesterday. The Bloc motion does not include the appointments of deputy ministers or any quasi-judicial bodies. The Bloc motion put on notice yesterday did not go as far as others on the opposition's side might wish. For example, it did not recommend requiring parliamentary review of judicial appointments nor did it require parliamentary approval of appointments.

I have concerns with such proposals as they could result in an American-style approach to reviewing appointments; basically a witch hunt, a muckraking process mired in irrelevant, unnecessary details, and investigations of those unnecessary details.

I want to ask members of the House if this is what they want, especially having spent any time at all watching the nomination hearings in the United States that often are used simply to score political points. It is very politically driven.

• (1300)

Sadly, such hearings send important messages to ordinary citizens, but not the ones legislators might wish. The main message is this: Let a person's name stand for an important appointment and the person and his or her family may suffer public humiliation and embarrassment in front of millions of fellow citizens for wanting to do a public service, for wanting to contribute to one's country and its citizens. These are well-intended motives. As a result, many highly qualified candidates are discouraged from letting their names stand for consideration. What a terrible loss of potential talent.

I ask the House, is this what we want in our country? Of course I am not the first to ask this question. It was studied in some detail by the McGrath committee, which investigated ways of increasing the involvement of MPs in the appointment process.

Supply

At the time, the committee took a long, hard look at the American experience and found problems with it. There was considerable variation from committee to committee in the intensity and thoroughness of the review that existed. It was very arbitrary. There were almost no written standards. There was a wide variation in the documentation required for a nomination and the staff resources available to study it. The committee found that while a large number of appointments potentially could be subjected to public hearings and scrutiny, the reality was that committees often devoted most of their time to those nominations most likely to garner the greatest publicity.

We must think of that. That is abhorrent. In effect, the system was weighted in favour of media circuses, high profile media circuses that can take on a life of their own and where we lose the essence of what the process is all about in the first place.

For these reasons and many more, the committee recommended that we not follow the U.S. example. We are a country. We have our own ways.

Instead, smaller steps were recommended, some of which have found their way into our Standing Orders. As a result, MPs and committees now have wider powers to examine appointments and nominations of interest to them. For example, Standing Order 110 requires that all non-judicial order in council appointments be tabled within five sitting days following their appearance in the *Canada Gazette*, and appointments are deemed to have been referred to the appropriate standing committee for review. Standing Order 111 gives committees up to 30 sitting days to review the “qualifications and competence” of appointees or nominees and requires ministers to provide to committee members the curriculum vitae, that is, the CVs or resumé, of the appointees should they be requested.

As members can see, the House of Commons already has many procedures in place allowing MPs to undertake detailed scrutiny of appointments.

Finally, we need to ask ourselves why we should fix a system that is not broken: “it ain't broke, don't fix it”. After all, the reality is that Canada's system for making appointments has worked admirably, by anyone's standards. In this regard we would do well to note the comments of Transparency International, the world's leading international organization dedicated to rooting out corruption in government and business.

Since issuing its first report in 1995, it has ranked Canada as the G-8 nation with the lowest level of perceived corruption, and among the seven best in the world. Clearly we are doing something right, so we need to ask ourselves if this is the time to take an entirely new and unnecessary approach. I think not. This is particularly true of judicial appointments, which would run the risk of degenerating into fiascos if we followed the U.S. approach.

What would this do to our system of justice and the respect it is held in by Canadians for its impartiality? Would it improve the already high quality of persons serving on our highest court? Would it expose nominees to cheap political shots that would discourage those well-qualified individuals unable to stomach the thought of a public inquisition, which is so unnecessary? Of course, we could probably make some improvements to our current procedure. After

all, democracy is a work in progress. Members should work with the government so that we can make existing procedures work even better.

• (1305)

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, oddly enough, the member who just spoke is a member of cabinet and she just asked a whole series of questions.

All through her speech, she spoke about the American system. I was wondering if she could say the same thing knowing that she would be heard by the U.S. government.

I will talk about something else. She repeated the position stated this morning by the government House leader that the motion brought forward by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is almost identical to one of the suggestions made by the member for LaSalle—Émard, a leadership candidate, a contender for the job of Prime Minister.

Can the member tell me whether or not she thinks that the member for LaSalle—Émard is wrong when he says that he wants to bring in parliamentary reforms, particularly with regard to committees?

Can she tell me whether or not the member for LaSalle—Émard is right? Can she state her position on that? Is he right, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Madam Speaker, I think was very clear in the position that I put forward. I used the American example only to show where we should not go and what we should not do. I did not in any way consider the fact that I was promoting those views.

In fact what we have already works. The procedures and the information that we have gathered have worked their way into the Standing Orders and they work very well.

I will not get into the kind of political mischiefousness that appears to be occurring over there right now. We have the serious business at hand of dealing with those appointments, and I have stated the reasons why.

My riding is one that is steeped in development and it depends on having those people in place. We cannot wait for or waste time on cheap political shots like that to get the process in place that we need to deliver the goods. For 25 years we have been doing billions of dollars worth of development in my area, which depends on these regulatory boards. We do not need this kind of nonsense.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am extremely surprised to see a minister of the Crown rise in the House to say that debating democracy in this country is a waste of time, that it is not an important issue. It blows me away.

It seems that her speech was already written and she did not change it as a result of the amendment proposed by my colleague from Mercier. So I want to ask her a question.

Does she agree that committees should review appointments made by the Prime Minister before these appointments are confirmed? Is she willing, yes or no, to allow committees to have their say before the appointments are made?

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Madam Speaker, in Standing Order 111 we have a process there. Standing Order 110, for example, requires that all non-judicial order in council appointments be tabled within five sitting days. That is one provision. The other provision is Standing Order 111. It gives committees up to 30 days to review the qualifications.

An hon. member: That's after.

• (1310)

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: On the one hand, the members are talking about expanding democracy with members—

An hon. member: What about before the appointments?

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I would ask the House to show the same courtesy to the member who has the floor. When people are shouting, the Chair cannot hear the answer being given.

[English]

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew: Madam Speaker, on the one hand the hon. members are suggesting that MPs have more powers and that we have more expanded democracy in our parliamentary system. On the other hand, they talk about the kind of process that they think is right for everyone. We have something in there that the committees will deal with, that the House will deal with in terms of a parliamentary review. Is that not what they want? Is that not what they are suggesting?

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on the motion originally put forward this morning by the Bloc, which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

I understand that the motion has had an amendment moved to it which was accepted this morning and which would have the appointments referred before they are made final. Regardless of the amendment, as the hon. House leader explained earlier today, the Bloc's motion would actually weaken the Standing Orders, as it would exclude a number of appointments from being considered in Parliament.

Today's debate allows us to highlight these important procedures in the Standing Orders, as these procedures support our role as parliamentarians in holding our governments to account.

As was mentioned earlier today, these rules in the Standing Orders originated with the McGrath report of 1985. As hon. members are aware, the McGrath committee was an excellent all party committee that proposed substantial changes for the House of Commons. Many of the recommendations of the McGrath report have been adopted, to the benefit of all members of the House.

Supply

With respect to the scrutiny of government appointments, the procedures under our current Standing Orders are consistent with the recommendations of the McGrath report. The McGrath committee clearly struggled with this issue, as it noted that this issue was by far the most difficult of all the subjects the committee considered. The committee noted that during its hearings it asked many witnesses about scrutinizing order in council appointments. The report stated:

All agreed it was a difficult problem for both members and ministers, but none came up with any positive suggestions as to how we might proceed.

The McGrath committee set out four principles that guided its recommendations on the role of Parliament with government appointments: that the primary purpose of a nomination procedure is to seek the best possible people; that it is important that the public see appointments as more than simply political patronage; that there are good reasons for excluding certain appointments from any political scrutiny; and, that some appointments warrant different degrees of scrutiny.

I believe that these are very sound principles and that they are as relevant today as they were in 1985. The McGrath committee also rejected adopting the American model, where Senate confirmations are used for appointments. The committee rejected this approach since it has the potential of becoming a media and partisan circus and some qualified candidates would be discouraged from accepting public office because of the confirmation process.

For those members who are calling for the American model to be adopted in Canada, I would ask them to be cautious with such an approach, just as the McGrath committee was, as we do not wish to politicize our senior government appointments.

Turning back to the McGrath report, the committee focused on the following types of appointments: deputy ministers, heads of crown corporations, heads of regulatory agencies, House of Commons officers, and agents of Parliament such as the Auditor General or the privacy commissioner. In all cases and for all appointments, the recommendations of the McGrath committee were consistent: that appointments are to be tabled in the House of Commons, providing committees the authority to review the appointments. The one recommendation that was slightly different concerned the appointments to regulatory agencies. The committee noted that there was little executive control over these agencies and a certain amount of distance between the agencies and the ministers was necessary. The committee recommended that only appointments of nominees to the following agencies should be tabled: the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the Canadian Transportation Agency and the National Energy Board.

As the House is aware, the Standing Orders we currently have are consistent with the recommendations of the McGrath committee. These reforms recommended by the McGrath committee were consistent as well with the other recommendations on empowering members of Parliament.

Supply

•(1315)

Today's motion put forward by the Bloc is consistent with the intent of the recommendations of the McGrath committee. The Bloc's motion is also consistent with the current Standing Orders. Fortunately our Standing Orders are even more comprehensive than what the Bloc has proposed today, but today's debate at least allows us to highlight this important feature of our parliamentary procedure which supports the role of the House in holding the government to account. The Standing Orders already cover appointments and the Bloc motion is not acceptable as it would politicize the system even more.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech given by the hon. member. Certainly the government is prepared to justify the way it makes appointments. Nobody would criticize the government making appointments if the government did it fairly and squarely, and appointed people who were competent and had the trust of everybody else in the House. However we have seen what the government does. The Prime Minister said on July 19, 1997:

You appoint people of your party. I'm not going to name people who are not Liberals.

Many times we do not know who these people are. There are many qualified independent people out there who could serve on boards. The government should immediately place a moratorium on political appointments for a period of two months. In these two months we could establish the necessary parliamentary structures. Once these structures are in place then the candidates who are appointed to high office would be appointed not only with the consent of government, but with the support of the House and the people of the country.

I ask the member to comment on that because it is not my statement. It is from the government House leader in February 1985.

Ms. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. I am not sure that I understand the point that he was trying to make. All of us who are in government, regardless of party, always attempt to ensure that the best people possible are appointed to fill important jobs.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am always a bit surprised when a member argues that asking parliamentarians to review appointments would politicize the process. Quite the opposite, it would depoliticize it, since what we have right now is a political process, with only one person, the Prime Minister, making the appointments. My question, however, is more specific than that.

The member and some of her colleagues must be using the same standard speech, because she mentioned, as they did, Standing Orders 110 and 111. Earlier this morning, the government House leader told us that appointments were automatically reviewed by committees. Let me ask the member the following question: If that is so, how does she explain the fact that Standing Order 111(2) states that "the committee, if it should call an appointee—" The provision is in the conditional. How does she explain the fact that the conditional is used in the provision being referred to by the

government members, who argue that appointments are automatically reviewed? How does she reconcile the two?

•(1320)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the question. We are all trying to ensure that the government is held accountable and that the best people possible are receiving appointments to these important agencies. The work that the modernization committee has done to which the House leader referred to this morning is continuing to move us in that direction.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the member. Aside from the appointments that are listed in the Bloc motion, we know the Prime Minister, regardless of who the Prime Minister is, appoints the Senate, the cabinet and Supreme Court justices. The three branches of government are almost, indirectly or directly, appointed by the Prime Minister. Is the member comfortable, again regardless of which party is in power, with one person having so many powers of appointment in a democratic nation?

Ms. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I have had two occasions on the standing committees on which I have sat. Currently we have the ability to review appointments if a committee chooses to do that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Châteauguay.

It is a real pleasure to speak to the motion moved by my colleague, which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

Earlier my colleague, the member for Mercier, moved an amendment that you ruled in order, to have consideration of appointments take place, naturally, before they are confirmed.

I believe it is normal for a new government, that was elected on a given platform, to appoint people who are of the same political persuasion so as to implement the said platform.

For my part, I do not see much wrong with the Liberal government trying to appoint Liberals or the Conservative government seeking to appoint Conservatives, but on one condition: that the appointees have beyond any doubt the competence necessary to carry out the duties they are being considered for.

Last week I read in a paper that the Prime Minister in answer to a journalist said, "The first question I asked the member from Prince Edward Island was: Do you have brothers and sisters? And he said: no." And he added that since he had no brothers or sisters, he was qualified to be a minister.

It is somewhat ridiculous to limit someone's skills to whether or not this individual has siblings. However, this is what the Prime Minister said. As long as he had no brothers or sisters, there would be no problem in terms of ethics. Therefore, he could be appointed minister.

If the Prime Minister is that flippant about appointing ministers, we can only guess how he proceeds when it comes to low-ranking officials. He must appoint around 3,500 people. They will necessarily be of the same political stripe as his party since they will owe their appointment to a minister who will have recommended them to the Prime Minister.

In this area, there is a lot of work to do to make sure we have more democracy in Canada, not less.

According to the hon. member for York West, just now, this motion was not necessary because there were already standing orders stipulating exactly the same thing. Standing Order 111(1) reads as follows:

The committee specified pursuant to Standing Orders 32(6) and 110, during the period of thirty sitting days provided...shall if it deems it appropriate, call—

The important words here are “shall if it deems it appropriate”. This is of vital importance.

First, the committee needs to deem it appropriate. If this is the case, it means that the majority of the government, which comprises the majority of all committees, must deem it appropriate. Thus, even if all members of the opposition were to deem it appropriate to meet the person whose appointment is contemplated, for example to the position of Commissioner of Official Languages or head of the CBC or the CRTC, or whatever, if the government majority did not deem this appropriate, the committee would never meet that individual.

•(1325)

What our proposal does is make this automatic before the appointment takes place. The important word here is “before”. It is to be done before the appointment is confirmed. There may well be prospects but these should be submitted for consideration by the committee members.

There is reference to examining candidates. This is another important term in our proposal. It must be possible to have nominees undergo a kind of oral examination to determine whether he or she has the necessary qualifications.

When Mr. Gagliano was posted as ambassador to Denmark, the committee members were denied the opportunity of examining his qualifications. Yet he appears to have had such qualifications, because the Prime Minister had selected him as ambassador. It was not sufficient to be a Liberal and to need to be distanced from possible problems related to some sponsorships. The government made sure that he was far away and could not tell us too much. But that was not what we wanted to examine him on. We wanted to examine him on his qualifications to occupy a position as ambassador and we were denied that opportunity.

Let us review Standing Order 111(2). My hon. colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier mentioned it earlier to the hon. member for York West. It reads as follows:

Supply

The committee, if it should call an appointee or nominee to appear pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, shall examine the qualifications and competence of the appointee or nominee to perform the duties of the post to which he or she has been appointed or nominated.

Very little would need to be changed in this section to bring it into conformity with the motion we have put forward. It could read “The committee shall call a government nominee to appear pursuant to section (1) of this Standing Order, and shall examine the qualifications and competence of this person to perform the duties of the post to which he or she has been nominated”.

This would make things automatic. We could really look seriously into whether the government nominee meets more than just the qualification requirements. We can always assume that the qualification requirements are met. We are all pretty much good material. People who are not normally do not hold important positions in society. Any person considered by the government for an ambassador's position for instance would automatically appear before the committee. The government could include others, if it saw fit, but we would first be allowed to meet them to examine their competence to perform the duties awaiting them in their posting.

There are democracies, such as the United States, that have a specific system. I have no desire to imitate them. But this morning, I watched the news and saw that Lula, the new president of Brazil, was today going to appoint 50 people to put together the transition government that will take office on January 1. There are indeed other approaches besides the ones we have here, which are very obscure. There are new approaches which could, in all transparency and legitimacy, provide the public with a better picture of who is being entrusted with running important organizations that represent us, such as embassies and consulates, or chairing crown corporations, which are also important in our society.

I do hope that the government will take the time to consider the real impact of the absolutely terrific motion put forward by my colleague. We will see later this afternoon whether or not this government supports transparency.

•(1330)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis on her enthusiastic speech, particularly because she was able to look at the key words, such as the term automatically. Liberal Party members are trying to tell us that this is what is being done right now.

I wonder if the hon. member could elaborate on this issue, particularly as regards everything that goes on before an appointment is confirmed.

Finally, at present, a member can ask, when an appointment is the object of petitions and a topic of current interest in the media, that the persons involved be called for a hearing. Of course, under the current process, it might be possible to have these people appear, but since they have already been appointed, we are before a fait accompli.

I wonder if the hon. member could tell us more about her views on this issue.

Supply

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Madam Speaker, I think that my colleague from Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière really picked up the substance of my speech in outlining the important words.

When the member for York West refers to Standing Orders, when the government leader refers to Standing Orders, he says that our proposal is somewhat outdated and that we do not need it. Essentially, they did not take the time to look at it.

Through our motion today, we are seeking to have people, before being officially appointed and before learning, for example, that they have to buy a ticket for Denmark, pass the test before a committee.

Being called before a committee is nothing to be ashamed of. In the United States, they even televise the committee proceedings, and people can see the nominee being interviewed.

We are not asking for much. We are asking that they at least appear before the committee comprised of MPs. We are the representatives of the people, and the people give us the mandate to appoint people who rise to the challenge and are not only members of the Liberal Party, of the Progressive Conservative Party or, perhaps one day, of the Canadian Alliance, that their main asset, credit card or diploma, is not belonging to the right party or being of the right stripe.

So, this must take place before appointments are made. This needs to take place automatically, and we need to have the power to examine qualifications and competence.

• (1335)

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by the hon. member. I find it interesting that the Bloc Québécois did not choose to talk about the Kyoto protocol today or other issues that have consistently come up during question period recently, or issues of particular interest to Quebec.

How is it that sovereignists have decided that it would be possible to improve the workings of the federation, of Canada, of the House of Commons, of Parliament? Does that not show their confidence in Canada and in our institutions? Apparently yes.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister must be very sorry that he has to wait until December 31 to make changes to the parliamentary secretary roster, because it must not be easy to work with someone so out of touch with reality.

The parliamentary secretary does not understand the purpose of our motion. He should know that we are here to learn how to run a country. We are not ashamed of that. We are learning how to run a country because, one day, we will have our own country in Quebec. Being here today, because we have been democratically chosen by the people to represent them here, gives us the opportunity to learn how to run a country and, one day, we will show him that he does not know how it is done.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, as you know, our motion today—with the amendment moved by our colleague, the hon. member for Mercier, of course—is very comprehensive, but it is quite different from what we are hearing from the members opposite.

It is essentially designed to enforce a legislative mechanism that recognizes our role as parliamentarians here in the House. Accordingly, the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois, as well as the amendments, clearly reaffirm the mandate that we have been given by the citizens of Quebec and Canada.

We believe that such a review process will result in an enhanced appreciation of our role here, on behalf of the constituents in our ridings.

It has become obvious, and urgent, specifically since scandals keep popping up, that we must act with transparency in order to win over the confidence the population. We are not talking about reinventing the wheel, simply letting it be known that cronies and political friends can no longer call all the shots.

We are talking about transparency in how the government operates. We remain cautious. We have seen some people now calling for increased transparency; yet a few years ago, these same people voted against a similar motion to designate an independent ethics counsellor. How are people supposed to believe in a government that makes no bones about rewarding its friends on our tab?

What is the current procedure for order in council appointments? It is up to the governor in council, upon the recommendation of the Privy Council, to make the aforementioned appointments. There are close to 3,500 positions that are filled this way.

Among these are positions of federal judges, heads of posts abroad, deputy ministers, directors and members of organizations, chief executive officers and directors of Crown corporations, and returning officers.

Their varied responsibilities range from quasi-legal decisions to the administration of large corporations, to recommendations on socio-economic development.

The recommendations for appointments come from a number of sources, including the worlds of politics, business, academia, the senior public service and interest groups. In addition, for most of the term appointments, competent candidates are recruited through public notices appearing in the *Canada Gazette*.

The head of the organization concerned, the minister's office, the department itself, the Director of Appointments in the PMO, the Management Priorities and Senior Personnel Secretariat, the Office of the Ethics Counsellor, the Assistant Clerk of the Privy Council, all have a part to play in Governor in Council appointments.

The heads of organizations or chairmen of the board in the case of crown corporations, consult the minister responsible on the appointments required within their organization, and share with him or her their opinion on the desired qualifications for the future members.

In addition, these administrators make recommendations on appointment renewals for outgoing members. I must also point out that they also present the minister responsible with a list of requirements for positions that are vacant or about to become vacant.

Given that these heads of organizations are responsible for the efficient running of their organization, they have a duty to keep the minister responsible reformed of all changes that occur in their membership as the result of resignations.

They must also inform the minister responsible of any situation liable to become sensitive or controversial in connection with Governor in Council appointments within their organization. Finally, they are required to assess the performance of appointees.

The staff of the designated department support the minister in formulating appointment recommendations by preparing the necessary documentation for submission to the Governor in Council.

● (1340)

The appointment director gives political advice to the Prime Minister concerning appointments. Ministers consult the office of the director to draft recommendations in this respect.

Those appointed by order in council must carry out their duties in the public best interest. Their impartiality must be beyond reproach.

The Standing Orders of the House of Commons provide that the House of Commons standing committees, which are made up of members from every political party, have the power to review every non-judicial appointment made by the government of Canada. As we saw, this is not done automatically. It only happens when a committee decides to do it.

However, it is important to note that the tabling of an order in council does not prevent an appointee from assuming his or her responsibilities in the organization to which he or she was appointed. The committee does not have a veto over these appointments.

Asking that some of these appointments be reviewed by the appropriate House committee is normal and highly desirable. It is the broader problem of the government's transparency which led us to move this motion and of course the amendment too. It must be remembered that democracy becomes meaningless and powerless when it lacks transparency.

Through this motion, the Bloc Québécois is proposing specific goals to make the government transparent.

First, committee review ensures transparency. Thus, parliamentarians will exercise their mandate openly and publicly, in turn helping to establish a clear and non-partisan approach.

Second, the purpose of committee review is to allow Parliament to have a say. This has to do with our role as elected representatives. We were all elected. This means that we have a mandate as representatives before a legislative assembly. We are trying here to fulfill our mandate with regard to visibility.

Third, there are committee reviews so that the appointees know that they owe their position not only to the Prime Minister, but to all Canadians and Quebecers.

Supply

Fourth, there are committee reviews to make sure that appointments are not used to reward past members and former friends. This goal is also aimed at retired elected officials or those who served the Prime Minister well.

Fifth, committee reviews send the message that there is indeed a democratic deficit in the Parliament of Canada.

Last, with committee reviews we will see whether certain people who are promoting the same ideas will be true to their words. I will not name any name, but I think we all know whom I am talking about.

There is a temptation, of course, to hide behind a veil of secrecy, which makes it easier to act more freely without the need for explanations. We have to remember, however, that we live in a democracy which is rooted in freedom.

Freedom implicitly and explicitly includes knowledge. We have the right to know about the appointment process and the qualifications of those who will eventually be chosen to carry out the duties the public assigns to them.

Ensuring transparency does not mean violating the rights of the candidates, but it does involve reviewing their appointments. The process must be crystal clear. If it is, then appointees will be selected according to their qualifications and experience, and not their political connections.

The public is right to demand transparency. As the Auditor General stated when he tabled his report on February 6, 2001:

Crown corporations account for a significant portion of government activity and play a key role in achieving public policy. It is critical that, as public sector bodies, they be governed well if taxpayers' money is to be well spent.

People take a cynical view of what happens here and we have the obligation and duty to correct a situation which has gone on for too long.

● (1345)

Questionable appointments should not be considered normal. This has to stop. As parliamentarians, we need to act and implement specific measures to put things right again.

What we have to look for from now on is qualified appointees. This would help to boost the image of parliamentarians and justify today's debate.

I see that my time has run out.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Châteauguay for the excellent speech he just made. We see that his training as a lawyer serves him well. He has done a good job of covering all the aspects of the issue.

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However, when we use the legal terminology, we can sometimes confuse people who are not used to these issues. I think here about the terms that we often use, such as the governor in council. I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to explain that the position of governor in council is controlled by a person. I would like him to tell me who this person is.

I would also like him to indicate to me whether he thinks that it is right and democratic, as other colleagues of the Bloc Québécois think, that this person has way too many powers in his hands. In fact, this person has the power to appoint indirectly and directly—because he is the one with the authority—3,500 people.

I would simply like to point out something that just happened at noon, that is a few hours ago, I believe. The Board of Internal Economy has finally agreed with the proposal of holding a secret vote for chairs and vice-chairs of committees, and I am happy about this.

● (1350)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: Mr. Speaker, of course I want to thank the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière. It is very important that people clearly understand the issue.

Earlier, I explained the appointment process for the governor in council, where those who are appointed to certain positions come from and who gives advice to ministers. I also explained how all this takes place. However, the decision is made—as we know—in the Prime Minister's office. It is the Prime Minister himself who decides. We are talking here about 3,500 positions.

Imagine the number of important people appointed to such prestigious positions as heads of crown corporations, embassies and so on. I listed several of them earlier. This is unbelievable. A number of administrators are also appointed to head foundations.

Imagine all the important positions for which these people practically do not have to demonstrate their competence and experience to a transparent House committee made up of members representing Parliament.

Voters absolutely want to know what appointees do. The best example is the case of the current Ambassador to Denmark, Mr. Gagliano. It is unbelievable that, after the sponsorship scandal that we condemned in this House, he was appointed Ambassador to Denmark, so that he would no longer be accountable. His answers were obviously very vague and, often, the answers came from other people. So, this individual was appointed Ambassador to Denmark without our being able to consider his qualifications

This is just an example and people took note of this situation. It became a public matter and the media talked about it. In fact, we are still talking about it, because the problems relating to the sponsorship program are not resolved. We are still looking at a number of dubious aspects of this program and of the contracts that were awarded.

This is but one position and we are talking about 3,500 positions. As regards the motion of the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, and the amendment of the hon. member for Mercier, we must, before an appointment can take effect, be able to take a

look at the competence and experience of those whom we want to appoint to key and very influential positions all across Canada.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Châteauguay is a highly skilled lawyer, a member of the Barreau du Québec. He knows full well that the legislator does not talk needlessly.

This morning, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons was saying that the motion moved this morning by the Bloc was redundant because appearance before a committee was automatic. He referred us, among other things, to Standing Order 111. However, when we look at Standing Order 111, we see that “the committee shall if it deems appropriate, call”. In section (2), it says: “if it should call an appointee”, thus including the conditional in the Standing Order.

What does my colleague think about the government House leader's argument that this is automatic, when the Standing Order makes it conditional? Does the government House leader's argument make sense?

● (1355)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt: Madam Speaker, it does not make any sense. My colleague just read it. One does not need a master's degree in law to know that the conditional is about conditions. Hence, as a condition, we say that, if something happens, “we will do this”. This is not necessary and automatic.

It is thus urgent and important that there be immediate transparency on an issue such as this one. We are talking about 3,500 high level positions. It is not simply the Prime Minister of Canada who should decide about these positions. There must absolutely be some transparency for democracy and freedom to exist in this country. The decision about such influential positions must be removed from the Prime Minister's hands.

What I want to say to my colleague is that the response given by the government House leader shows one thing: either he has not read the motion and the amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois, or he does not know verbs in the conditional or the definition of the word “condition”. When we say that all this must—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but we must now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last night in Toronto, the Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Prize for theatre was awarded to Montreal dramaturge Carole Fréchette.

This prestigious award goes along with a cheque for \$75,000 for Ms. Fréchette and another for \$25,000 for her protégée, the dramaturge Geneviève Billette.

The award was designed to be divided in this way by its founders, in order to recognize the great importance of mentoring.

[English]

We should applaud this support for mentoring and we should rejoice in the breadth and depth of the exceptional playwrights we have gracing the cultural life of our country; playwrights like Carole Fréchette.

I would also like to congratulate three of my constituents: Don Hannah, Daniel MacIvor and Jason Sherman, on being nominated for this award this year.

I also extend my congratulations to the creators of this fine prize. In particular let me salute Mrs. Elizabeth Comper who chairs the founder's committee.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians with modest or middle level incomes are increasingly challenged to help finance their children's higher education. Steep tuition increases have greatly outstripped wage growth in the past decade and has resulted in more and more qualified students being unable to get a post-secondary education. This is a loss we cannot afford.

We live in a knowledge based economy. Canada needs more graduates equipped with cutting edge skills and learning vital to the growth of our domestic economy and to the success of Canadian business in the global marketplace.

Today students need larger loans to cover tuition fee increases and the impact of inflation on their cost of living. We must reduce the financial barriers to post-secondary education. To this end, I urge the government to increase the Canada student loan program maximum weekly loan limit and provide new debt reducing mechanisms to help students shoulder the burden of increased debt.

* * *

KIDS FOR A CURE

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and honour the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's first Kids for a Cure Day here on Parliament Hill.

Today 40 children from across Canada living with Type I juvenile diabetes will meet with members of Parliament to share their experiences as well as their hopes for a cure. These youngsters will explain how their reliance upon insulin affects their lives and will stress the need for decision makers to support innovative research advances, allowing the opportunity for research that could potentially lead to a cure.

Diabetes is a very serious disease, as we all know, and a leading cause of death in Canada. Juvenile diabetes affects more than 200,000 Canadians who require daily insulin injections just to live.

I ask all members to join with me and the Kids for a Cure in calling upon Parliament to support research such as the Edmonton protocol and beta cell replacement, so that we may finally vanquish this disease.

[Translation]

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SAINT-HYACINTHE FACULTY OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was informed this past April by students in my riding of a serious problem being experienced by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the Université de Montréal, located in Saint-Hyacinthe.

At a Quebec caucus last spring, I brought this to the attention of my colleagues and also wrote all Liberal MPs to inform them of the situation, since it is likely to occur in the three other faculties of veterinary medicine before long.

I wrote to several ministers to request their prompt intervention. In August, I met with Faculty Dean Dr. Raymond Roy, who fears the worst for his faculty. The clock is ticking. December 2003 is the deadline and he has not yet obtained the financial support to guarantee continuation of the accreditation of his faculty.

Given the urgency of reinvestment, I am begging the government to act with all possible haste in this matter. Food safety, the health of Canadians, and our world reputation are at stake. We must avoid a repetition of the crisis that has been experienced by European farmers and consumers.

* * *

● (1400)

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, there will always be a debate over where taxpayer money is best spent. That said, it has become obvious to me, my colleagues on this side of the House and now even members of the government's own benches that the Canadian Forces need more money. Everyone but the Prime Minister agrees.

It is that simple message which was reinforced today at a press conference by Corrie Adolph, president of Canadians for Military Preparedness. She heads a grassroots organization of regular Canadians fighting for increased funding for our troops. Their goal is to change government policy by informing Canadians about the issues and by explaining how the problems facing the military affect us all.

They have started a petition calling for increased funding to the military, with a goal of one million signatories. Canadians will sign this petition because the government is putting our troops in danger. The government is letting down our allies and is putting the safety of ordinary Canadians at risk.

* * *

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, contrary to what the Kyoto naysayers may think, it is Mother Nature who will have the final say on Kyoto. Alberta Environment Minister Taylor and Premier Klein may come to understand this obvious point if they consulted their own experts.

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On October 24 Premier Klein received a letter from Professor David Schindler, Canada's most eminent water ecologist, and 56 other Albertan scientists inviting the premier to attend a Kyoto 101 briefing. The roaring silence that has ensued suggests that the province prefers its policy of not consulting its own experts or its own citizens, preferring instead to spend money, public money, attacking the protocol.

This do-nothing strategy will ensure that the impacts of climate change costs to Alberta will be massive. The costs of climate change are not simply regional in scope, they are pan-Canadian and they are global.

Action must be taken now. A lesson from Premier Klein's most qualified experts would teach him this.

* * *

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, October is Women's History Month. This year's theme is Women and Sport—Champions Forever. I would like to take this opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Nancy Greene Raine, declared Canada's female athlete of the 20th century.

Nancy Greene participated in three winter Olympics in Alpine skiing's slalom and giant slalom events and won gold and silver medals in 1968 in Grenoble, France. Her success continued as she won the World Cup title two years consecutively in 1967 and 1968. In fact, Nancy Greene was the inspiration for one personally disastrous attempt at downhill skiing, which I shall never forget.

Not only a great athlete, Nancy helped to develop the Nancy Greene ski league and entry level racing program for young children and has made significant contributions to the development of amateur sport in Canada.

Nancy and her husband, Al, have been instrumental in the development of the Whistler Blackcomb ski resort and are currently helping to develop the Sun Peaks ski resort in British Columbia.

I would like to congratulate Nancy Greene on her great accomplishments as an athlete, coach, businesswoman and mother.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOCIAL HOUSING

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, the Front populaire en réaménagement urbain de Montréal, in conjunction with the Canadian networks, is holding a rally on Parliament Hill, calling for an appropriate response to the urgent social housing needs of the population.

It is clear that the federal government is continuing to drive the people of Canada, and the people of Quebec in particular, into poverty by providing blatantly inadequate funding to meet glaring housing needs.

Now that the government is investing again in affordable housing, the Bloc Québécois believes it is imperative that it deal with the issue of social housing, which concerns the most disadvantaged families.

The Bloc Québécois joins all the representatives in demanding further investment, and reminds the federal government of its duty, responsibility and commitments to combat poverty and to meet the basic housing needs of the public.

* * *

• (1405)

[*English*]

QUEENS'S JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last night I had the honour of presenting 20 of my constituents, from former politicians to local business leaders, from volunteers to veterans, with a much deserved Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Presenting these 20 community leaders with this special award was an opportunity to thank them for their years of service and contributions to our community and to Canada.

The medal recipients were: Mr. Al Bouwers; Mr. Paul Bradley; Major Deanna Marie Brasseur; Mr. Thomas Brownley; Mr. Thomas Jordan Clark; Ms. Iris Craig; Mr. Jules Deschenes; Mr. Ben Franklin; former MP Beryl Gaffney; Master Tae Eun Lee; Major Richard K. Malott; Mrs. Vera Mitchell; Mr. Thomas O'Neill; Mr. Peter Partner; Mrs. Margitha Partner; Mr. James Peaker; Mrs. Katherine Pitcher; Mr. E. Franklin Pope; Mr. Edward Smith; and former MP Bill Tupper.

I congratulate all these community leaders and thank them once again on behalf of the people of Nepean—Carleton.

* * *

CHINESE CANADIANS

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, today there was a rally by citizens who feel that the federal government has ignored their calls for a just acknowledgment of past wrongs. These citizens will be calling for an acknowledgment that the imposition of punitive payments, referred to as Chinese head taxes, from 1885 to 1923 was wrong.

We must recognize the contributions of Chinese Canadians in building our nation since before the time of Confederation, particularly in the creation of my home province of British Columbia.

We must also recognize that the introduction and imposition of Chinese head taxes was unjust. They caused a great deal of particular economic and human harm to Chinese Canadians, families and communities. They were also contrary to the Canadian value and ethic of equality before the law.

The wrongs of the past, as much as the great accomplishments that we share, are part of our common history. Thus, I encourage the government to recognize the wrongs of the past so that the Chinese community and all Canadians can have a prosperous and united future together.

HEALTH

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, the Minister of Health, *Chatelaine* magazine, and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, I would like to invite all members to participate in an On the Move Walking Club on Parliament Hill, Wednesday, October 30 at 1:15 p.m.

This two kilometre walk will begin and end at the Centennial Flame and seeks to raise awareness of On the Move Walking Clubs which encourage women to walk for fitness and improve their health. Walking remains a popular and practical activity among Canadian women, and the combination of physical activity and proper nutrition can result in enormous health benefits and reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, stroke, depression and colon cancer.

On the Move Walking Clubs are a timely and valuable health initiative and we encourage all to join in. We hope to see a large turnout tomorrow.

* * *

BRAZIL

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday the people of Brazil elected Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as their president.

The election of Lula, a democratic socialist and leader of the PT or Workers' Party in the fifth largest democracy in the world of 175 million people, gives great hope to the poor, landless and marginalized people of Brazil. Lula has pledged to build a country that has more justice, brotherhood and solidarity. He has put fighting poverty at the top of his agenda. His party, along with social movements, held a people's plebiscite last month in which 10 million people voted 85% against the FTAA. Lula faces huge challenges as the first left wing president in Brazil's history.

My colleagues and I in the New Democratic Party wish to congratulate him and his party on this historic victory. As Lula said "hope won over fear". Agora é Lula. Lula lá.

* * *

[Translation]

AGROPUR PLANT IN CHAMBORD

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since yesterday, workers and citizens of Chambord have been occupying the Agropur plant to prevent this business that has closed from dismantling plant equipment.

Until recently, this plant was processing millions of litres of locally produced milk. As a result of an administrative decision, all processing activities were transferred outside the Lac-Saint-Jean region.

A region such as ours relies for its existence on its capacity to process locally the raw materials it produces. What Agropur did in the case of the Chambord plant shows that resource regions are being gutted to benefit large centres.

S. O. 31

Enough is enough. The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean will not fall once again victim to a company which, following a takeover, will take milk produced in our region and process it elsewhere.

I wholeheartedly support the people who are occupying the Agropur plant in Chambord. Agropur must not be allowed to take away from us what is ours.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

DIABETES

Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and ask the House to join me in recognizing the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's Kids for a Cure Lobby Day on Parliament Hill and the need for government policies that will cure juvenile diabetes. Forty children with juvenile Type 1 diabetes, from all regions of Canada, will meet with members of Parliament to share their experiences.

This morning I met with three of these young people, Zachary McCaskill, Mark Hosak and Logan Wright, who explained to me how their reliance upon insulin affects their lives. They stressed the need for decision-makers to support innovative research advances.

Juvenile diabetes is a serious disease affecting more than 200,000 Canadians who require daily insulin injections to live. Diabetes is the leading cause of kidney failure, non-traumatic amputations, adult blindness, stroke, heart attacks and a leading cause of death in Canada. Over 2 million Canadians suffer from diabetes.

I ask the House to join me in sharing our hope and excitement that ongoing support for research will discover a cure for diabetes.

* * *

DIABETES

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to add our voice of support for the more than 200,000 Canadians who live with juvenile diabetes, a disease that requires them to take insulin. As a nation we need to facilitate the efforts of medical practitioners and researchers in their efforts to find a cure. The pain and suffering of patients with both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes cannot be overstated. The work of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation as well as the Canadian Diabetes Foundation puts a human face on these statistics.

Today, along with the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, over 40 children from across the country are here in Ottawa to meet with MPs, sharing their experiences of living with this disease. The foundation's Kids for a Cure will help encourage members of all parties to engage in this cause and work collectively. The Edmonton protocol, from the University of Alberta, as well as the work being done at McGill University, has provided hope for medical breakthroughs.

Oral Questions

On behalf of my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and all members, I wish to express a welcome and our support for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

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[Translation]

MAN BOOKER PRIZE

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Yann Martel for winning the coveted Man Booker Prize on October 24 for his book *Life of Pi*. The prize is awarded for the best work of fiction. It is one of the most prestigious literary prizes in the world and symbolizes the ultimate recognition of a work.

After having travelled for several years throughout Europe and Canada, Yann Martel studied philosophy at Trent University and began writing. His second novel, *Life of Pi*, is a story of adventure and a reflection on religion and the nature of animals, the two-footed, and the four-footed kind. According to Martel, "it is a story that will make you believe in God, or question your lack of faith".

Canada remains a force to be contended with in the field of literature throughout the world. We are proud of our authors and of all of our artists.

* * *

[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the South Asians in Ontario Association I rise today to extend my personal invitation to all members of the House to attend the Diwali celebration tonight on Parliament Hill in Room 200, West Block.

The Diwali festival of lights is celebrated by many members of the South Asian community around the world. It commemorates the return of Lord Rama to his kingdom after completing 14 years in exile. Streets and homes are lighted with rows of lights. The festival symbolizes the victory of righteousness over evil and of light over darkness. Hindus and others join their families and friends in celebrating it with prayers, sweets, exchanges of gifts and fireworks. This occasion also marks the beginning of the Hindu new year.

The event is being celebrated in Room 200, West Block, tonight at 6:30 or right after the votes. I encourage all members to attend this celebration with our Diwali friends.

* * *

[Translation]

FATHER LINDSAY

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the entire Lanaudière region will be watching full of pride on Friday, when Father Lindsay receives the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, during the ceremony for Governor General's Performing Arts Awards.

Appointed head of the Jeunesses musicales de Joliette in 1957, a founder of the Festival-Concours de musique de Lanaudière in 1961, he founded the Lanaudière musical camp six years later. That same

year, he created the Centre culturel de Joliette, which won the ADISQ award that year for broadcasting. In 1978, he founded the famous Festival d'été de Lanaudière, of which he is artistic director.

For almost half a century, a great many young and not so young people from Lanaudière and Quebec have become hooked on classical music, thanks to him.

Father Lindsay, the musical and artistic communities of Lanaudière and all of Quebec congratulate you, and thank you.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the men and women of our Coast Guard from the west coast, the east coast, and out of the central and Arctic divisions.

Ever since the Coast Guard merged with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans we have seen nothing but disaster after disaster happen to our Coast Guard facilities across this country, from destaffing of lighthouses to decommissioning buoys across the waterways and navigable waters, as well as the tying up of ships.

The reality of the situation is that we simply cannot defend our coastlines from illegal fishing, environmental pollution, illegal immigration and so on. The men and women of our Coast Guard deserve a lot better from the government.

I encourage the government through the minister of DFO to put the resources into DFO to ensure that our Coast Guard is a viable operation now and in the future.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, at yesterday's federal-provincial meeting all provinces rejected the federal PowerPoint presentation on the Kyoto accord as totally inadequate. The provinces all expect to have major impacts on their economies and they are calling for a first ministers' conference before ratification of the accord.

Why will the Prime Minister not work cooperatively with the provinces, develop a real plan, and agree to a first ministers' conference before ratification?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the provinces for years on this file. In fact we started to talk about climate change in 1990 and we are in 2002 today.

My ministers have been involved in many federal-provincial conferences over the years. There was one yesterday. They made progress and there will be another one three weeks from now. We should let the ministers work.

However, a lot of people would like us to delay and delay, and that is not the plan of the government. The time has come for us to make up our minds.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government did nothing for five years on the Kyoto accord. It can now take the time to do things right.

After five years the government has no clear targets, no specific actions, and no comprehensive set of cost estimates. This accord will also have an impact on provincial jurisdiction. Without a first ministers' conference there will be no provincial cooperation.

Can the Prime Minister explain to us, how can the federal government possibly implement the Kyoto accord without provincial consent and cooperation?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the same situation for the provincial government and the federal government. We must respect our international obligations and we must respect the desire of Canadians to do something about climate change.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this party says we do not have to accept the Kyoto accord; we will do the made in Canada plan here. We will not accept this international obligation.

The government continues to talk about ratification of Kyoto with no implementation plan and now without even provincial consent for an implementation plan. The federal government, acting alone, has very limited options.

Will the Prime Minister admit to the House that for the federal government acting alone on Kyoto this will require major tax increases on energy consumption?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made a lot of progress on Kyoto since 1990. The provincial governments, municipalities and federal government have made a lot of changes and more changes will come. New technology will come. In the past Canada has met some reductions on pollution problems because Canadians want to have clean energy and a clean situation in Canada.

I know that we will achieve the goal of Kyoto by 2012. We have 10 years to develop the final plan. We are not about to die tomorrow.

• (1420)

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the chaos within the government is obvious. The natural resources minister has stated that nuclear generated electricity requires a serious look in the fight on climate change. The environment minister has said nuclear energy will not be considered.

Which minister's position is the Prime Minister supporting?

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts correct.

What I have said is that in the long term, in order to deal with climate change, we need to deal with all forms of energy. In the long term, in terms of nuclear, we should keep the door open on that option. Whenever we can create energy without creating greenhouse

gas emissions we need to look at all our options as we move into the future.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have not seen chaos and drifting in a government like this since the meltdown of the Pearson government.

While the government's own ministers fight for supremacy on the Kyoto file, the government continues to ask Canadians for their blind faith. In light of the government's contradictions which we have just seen, with the revolt of the provinces, and national skepticism from the people of Canada, why is the Prime Minister refusing to hold a first ministers' conference on Kyoto?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been discussing this with the provinces for a long time. The ministers are meeting again. The bureaucrats are meeting in the next few weeks. There will be another meeting in November.

Some people only have one goal in mind and that is to postpone and postpone. It is not what we said to Canadians in the Speech from the Throne. We made a clear commitment that there would be ratification before Christmas.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration and former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport says that he did not recommend any company to organize his tour on sports, a contract worth \$500,000. However, in addition to the E-mail specifying that he wanted to hire Everest, a second document indicates that Canadian Heritage also recommended Everest.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us why her department recommended Everest, or for whom?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again to repeat the facts of this matter, the contract was required by the Department of Canadian Heritage. The decision to award the contract to a particular company was made by officials within the Department of Public Works. The company that was selected, Groupe Everest, was in fact on a pre-qualified suppliers list available to both Canadian Heritage and the Department of Public Works and that list was established through a competitive process.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his E-mail dated in March 2000, the head of the task force on sport wrote "Everest is the firm that the secretary of state wants to hire". He added "I do not have more information. I would like to meet them ... to see what expertise they can provide".

How does the minister explain that her officials recommended a firm whose expertise they did not know anything about, if it is not because there was political interference?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whatever a requisitioning department may suggest or recommend, and it is that department's prerogative to make recommendations and suggestions, the selection is made by officials in the Department of Public Works. That is what transpired in this particular case.

With respect to the expertise of the firm, by all accounts the consultation process was very successful.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that when Groupe Everest was hired to organize the tour of the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, Canadian Heritage officials did not know anything about the expertise of that firm, but they nevertheless recommended that it be hired.

Since these officials did not know about the firm's qualifications, it must be concluded that this recommendation was the result of political interference. My question to the minister is: Did this political interference come from her or from the secretary of state?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the very best of my knowledge, neither the Minister of Canadian Heritage nor the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport made any representations to officials in my department. It was officials in my department who made the decision.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on May 27, the secretary of state said to the journalists who were questioning him to find out who had awarded the half a million dollar contract to Everest, "Well, the question must be put to Canadian Heritage, because this comes under the purview of Canadian Heritage".

I would like an answer from the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Why did she recommend that Everest be hired to organize the tour of the secretary of state?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again while my department welcomes the input of other departments and takes their views into account, the selection decision is not made by those other departments. The selection decision is made according to the views of officials within the Department of Public Works and Government Services.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it outrageous that breaking the law should be tax deductible for any

taxpayer, personal or corporate. Yet we continue to allow companies to write off fines as a business expense. Presumably Acres International will be able to write off the fine it just got for bribing the Government of Lesotho.

I ask the government, what possible justification could there be for continuing to allow businesses to deduct fines and penalties as tax write-offs?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to clarify the issue which I am sure is of great concern to the hon. member.

Fines and penalties imposed under the Income Tax Act are not deductible. According to a Supreme Court of Canada decision however, other fines may be deductible but only if they are legitimate business expenses.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court in 1999 ruled that fines and penalties can be deductible and since then, businesses have been deducting fines and penalties. The government's own lawyers argued against this. They argued that it is contrary to public policy to allow fines and penalties as tax deductions, but they lost that argument in the Supreme Court. The government did not waste any time cracking down on the disability tax credit. Yet since 1999 it has known that this tax loophole for its buddies exists and has failed to take any action.

I ask the minister again, will the government take action within this tax year to clarify the Income Tax Act so that businesses cannot deduct fines and penalties?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will of course monitor the effects of the case under discussion to ensure that fines for serious infractions are not deductible.

I do want to clarify something else that the hon. member mentioned in reference to disability. I want the hon. member to know that the government increased by 70% the funding for disabled Canadians and has done amazing work, particularly led by the hon. member for Fredericton.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, in his speech Friday, the Minister of National Defence criticized government policy in three areas. He opposes the current over-stretching of military personnel. He opposes the current practice of raiding the capital budget to address other problems. He opposes current plans to limit defence budget increases to \$5 million over the next five years.

I ask the Prime Minister, was he or his office made aware in advance of the contents of the defence minister's speech, or does he now allow ministers to oppose government policy?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not approve all the speeches of my ministers before they make them. We have some freedom on this side. Perhaps it was the case when he was the minister of foreign affairs that he had to check every word with the leader of that day, but that is not the case today.

The Minister of National Defence, like any other minister, has the right to look at his department and to make some comments on that department. We permit a dialogue with the public, a dialogue within the caucus and a dialogue with the House of Commons for members of cabinet.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Guide for Ministers notes, and I quote, “Ministers cannot dissociate themselves from or repudiate the decisions of their Cabinet colleagues unless... they resign from the Cabinet”.

Yet, the Minister of National Defence clearly dissociated himself from his government's policies on defence funding.

With a leadership race approaching, could the Prime Minister tell us whether the other ministers are equally free to ignore the basic principles of ministerial responsibility?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a minister like the Minister of National Defence may discuss problems he has identified in his department as well as the possibility of improving it. Nothing is absolutely perfect in any department. There is always room for improvement.

If the minister said he wanted to make improvements to his department, good for him. I hope he will make good improvements. If he is successful, he will be a good minister; if not, he will be in trouble.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a clear answer about what the government's plan is for health care. Will the government rearrange its priorities, or will Canadians pay more taxes?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the government has been very clear that we are committed to working with the provinces and the territories and all Canadians to ensure that we have a high quality, accessible, publicly financed system. As Minister of Health, I have indicated that in fact new dollars will be required. Upon determining what the quantum of those new dollars will be, the federal government will be at the table to do its fair share.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the health minister said, “My preference is always to look at the surplus dollars or reallocation from within”. What is it going to be, reallocation or more taxes?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think our main priority at this point, and certainly mine as Minister of Health, is to work with my provincial and territorial colleagues to ensure that we have a plan for the renewal of our health care system.

There is no one, I would hope, either in the chamber or in the country, who believes that we will be able to renew and sustain our health care system by simply putting more money into it. Will new money be required? Yes. Will we be there to do our fair share? Yes, but let us focus on the renewal of our health care system.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works has answered that, in the case of the contract awarded to Everest, neither the Minister of Canadian Heritage nor the former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport interfered.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage not find it unusual for departmental officials to make decisions on their own concerning the recommendation of a company when they do not know it or its qualifications to fulfill a contract? She is the one responsible for these officials. I would like to hear from her whether it is normal for departmental employees to act in this way without her knowledge?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, I have no way of knowing the basis upon which a particular department makes a recommendation. Often when the department requisitions a call-up against a list of pre-qualified suppliers, they make a suggestion or a recommendation. It is not unusual. Again, I would emphasize that it is not up to that department to make the decision. It is up to the Department of Public Works to make the decision and that is what happened in this case.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the former Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, and present Minister of Immigration, tells us that he did not intervene in the choice of Everest.

Yet senior departmental officials at Heritage are saying the opposite: that he suggested to them that Everest was the firm he wanted. One or the other is not telling the truth.

I am asking the Minister of Heritage, who is responsible for her department until proven otherwise, whether she has summoned her senior officials in order to ask why they are laying falsehoods at the door of the secretary of state. If the Minister of Immigration is not the one who lied, then they must be the ones who did.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I think the hon. gentleman is directing his attention in the wrong place. Departments can make whatever recommendations they wish to make. Obviously that is valued input into the process but the final decision is taken by the Department of Public Works which has the contracting authority.

Oral Questions

I would also point out that under the direction of the Prime Minister, the President of the Treasury Board has been working on a set of new recommendations about the governance framework for advertising to make sure that in the future the system is accountable, transparent and achieves value for the taxpayers' money in every case.

* * *

• (1435)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister seems very confused. Over the past several months he said in response to questions that the military is getting all the money it needs. Then in his speech last Friday, the minister said that the military has been starved so badly that it cannot protect the safety of our citizens and the sovereignty of our nation. That is what he said.

Could the minister explain how the government can spend enough money and not enough money all in the same week?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion the confusion is more on that side of the House. What I said in my speech was very clear, that yes, the government had invested \$5 billion in future years into the military and yes, the government at the end of the day will be deciding on the priorities. However, in my humble opinion I submit respectfully that more resources for the military might be one matter the government might consider.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, speaking of confusion, the minister does not know Vimy from Vichy. He does not know that Canadians fought and died at Dieppe. He is the minister who wants to sell the tanks and keep the generals. Now the minister said that the military has enough money and not enough money and he said it all in the same week.

How can Canadians believe anything that comes from the mouth of the minister?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that particularly in this post-September 11 world, in a dangerous world, we are dealing with important subjects when it comes to the military and equipping our men and women to go into harm's way. Cheap shots from the gentleman across the way do not really help the cause.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we first started questioning the government about its aid package for the victims of the softwood lumber crisis, it was not the Minister for International Trade who answered, but the Minister of Industry.

Now that the weakness of this aid package is becoming clear and the Liberal leadership campaign is getting underway, the Minister of Industry will not answer.

My question is simple. Does the Minister of Industry intend to take steps to help the softwood lumber industry, by granting loan guarantees among other things?

[English]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already made commitments to the industry on two occasions. We invested in terms of looking for new markets. We looked at investing in research and development and investing to make sure we have a strong advocacy program. We also announced \$240 million recently. This is more than \$340 million to help the forest industry.

I want to tell the hon. member that we will stand behind our industry and our workers in the forest industry. We will make sure that the Americans do not bankrupt them and we will be there again if they need more support.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Minister of Industry for not rising to defend the indefensible. Does the Minister of Industry plan to tell workers and companies that, after having been hit by arbitrary duties by the Americans, they are about to fall victim to the Liberal Party's leadership race?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been very proud of working together with my colleagues, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister for International Trade and the Minister of Finance, to develop efficient measures not only to help the communities but also to make our forest industries more competitive.

We are going to keep working together for our industry, here in Canada.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, only a short while ago the Minister of National Defence was deriding additional defence spending as buying "toys for the boys", but this past weekend he seems to have had a Damascus road experience of sorts and says that he will call for additional funding now for the Canadian Forces.

I realize that Hallowe'en is in the air but this sudden morphing of the minister is nothing short of spooktacular.

Would the real minister please stand up and just simply admit that his government has been just plain wrong in its decisions?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of all the people in the House I am surprised that the hon. member speaks of roads to Damascus because, of all the people in the House, she took the greatest road to Damascus in Canadian history when she went from no pension to pension.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I might admit that I am certainly not the only one in here. The government has talked about 25% cuts.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Order, please. I realize the hon. member for Edmonton North is a very popular member but we have to be able to hear the question and when members cheer for her it is very difficult for the Chair to hear the question. The hon. member for Edmonton North has the floor.

Miss Deborah Grey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a tremendous cheerleader you are.

Since 1993 the Liberal government has slashed the defence budget by 25% in real terms. It will brag that it has invested \$5 billion but it is such small amounts going to such specific operations it leaves next to nothing to address the huge shortfall in defence budgets.

Given the government's abysmal record, we are pretty much assured the minister will walk away from the cabinet table with an empty loot bag.

When it comes to budget time, what will be the fate of our forces, trick or treat?

• (1440)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not my decision but I very much hope it will be treat.

As for the cuts since 1993, the hon. member should realize that just about every department in government had major cuts post-1993 because the government was determined to eliminate the \$42 billion deficit that we inherited from the fifth party.

Now that we have had several years in a row of surpluses we are rebuilding the investment in selective areas. I hope it will be time for treat for defence but only time will tell.

* * *

CURRENCY

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions.

A growing number of businesses are refusing to accept \$100 bills and even \$50 bills even though these bills are legal tender. In one case in particular that was brought to my attention, the refusal was from a postal outlet, an agent of a crown corporation, from the same government issuing these legal bills.

My question is simple. What is being done to put an end to this aggravating situation?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current legislation provides flexibility for merchants and consumers. Neither party is required to accept any particular denomination notes.

I understand that some merchants are not accepting \$50 and \$100 notes because they would bear the loss of course if the bills are counterfeit.

Customers can choose the merchants with whom they want to deal and merchants may lose customers if their practices are unreasonable. I would also note that it would be unfair to require small merchants to accept a large bill for small purchases.

Oral Questions

I do want to make it very clear though that one isolated counterfeit operation involving \$100—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Palliser.

* * *

STUDENT LOANS

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, four years ago the government introduced a debt reduction repayment program to assist individuals who had attended post-secondary institutions and incurred unmanageable debt levels.

Intended to benefit 12,000 such borrowers every year, it has been a monumental failure, even by HRDC standards, with fewer than 1,000 Canadians actually helped.

Would the minister please inform us when she will scrap this disastrous plan and replace it with one that will actually work for Canadians overwhelmed by student debtload?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to be preoccupied with the question of access to post-secondary education. As I have said before, it is the provinces that set tuition fees.

However the government has not been slow in responding to the needs of Canadian students. I remind the hon. member that every year 350,000 Canadians receive Canada student loans to the value of \$1.6 billion. In 2001-02, 90,000 bursaries worth \$285 million were issued through the millennium scholarship fund. Our Canada study grants, particularly for those Canadians with disabilities, have been improved as of the last budget, and there is more.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that her government is preoccupied by student debt but I can tell her that her government has done absolutely nothing to relieve that student debt.

Not only are students getting a raw deal in debt reduction, but graduate students are facing tuition fee increases almost three times higher than the general average. To make matters worse, money that is given in the form of scholarships is being taken away in taxes. They lose again. It is not good enough to slough this off as a provincial responsibility. This is a federal responsibility.

What will the minister do to ensure financial accessibility—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will continue with my list in response to this second question.

I would remind the hon. member that through the registered education savings program and the Canadian education savings grants program, we have paid \$1.2 billion in grants to date to approximately 1.6 million children so that they have income to help them when they continue on with their post-secondary education.

In addition, we have had an increase in interest relief, an extended repayment period and a debt reduction program for borrowers. In addition to that, we continue to work with the provinces to look at the whole student loan process and will—

Oral Questions

•(1445)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

* * *

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, this summer the finance minister encouraged the Bank of Montreal and Scotiabank to discuss a potential merger. Two weeks ago the Prime Minister stopped these merger talks by telling the banks that he would be opposed to any merger prior to his retirement in 2004. One week later the finance minister asked the House of Commons finance committee to change the rules for bank mergers. This request led to bank shares gaining 3% in one day of trading.

When the Minister of Finance made that request, was he aware of the Prime Minister's ban on bank mergers?

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not comment on speculation about alleged discussions.

The hon. member is a very active member of the finance committee and he knows quite well that the banks, if they decide to propose a merger, would have to go through the Competition Bureau and OSFI, as well as hearings for the public interest assessment with the Senate banking committee and the finance committee.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have a finance minister saying one thing, a Prime Minister saying something else and now we have the junior finance minister having a third opinion.

The Liberals are playing politics with the Canadian banking system. The finance minister said yes to the bank merger this summer. The Prime Minister said no to bank mergers this fall.

Why did the Prime Minister contradict his Minister of Finance on this important public policy issue? Who is speaking on behalf of the government, the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member asked me a question about authority. The Minister of Finance has all the authority under the Bank Act.

* * *

STUDENT LOANS PROGRAM

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was certainly enlightening.

Here is another example of how poorly the government safeguards our social insurance number. Brenda Pederson's 17 year old disabled son recently received a threatening letter that said that because he had defaulted on his student loan the government would seize all his future tax refunds, credits and benefits. However it was all a government screw up. Brenda's son had never applied for a student loan. The government had input the wrong social insurance number.

Harassed Canadians want to know why there are no safeguards in place when applying for benefits to ensure that their name is matched up to their social insurance number?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for drawing

this particular and specific case to my attention. I will be glad to work with him to make sure that we have it fully rectified.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister misses the point. We are not just talking about a specific case. We are talking about the lack of safeguards in the department.

Mrs. Pederson calls the whole situation quite terrifying. The Auditor General thinks it is terrifying. We know that administration is not this minister's strong point but this is a pretty basic issue.

When billions of dollars and the public's peace of mind is at stake, why has the minister failed to put in place the most basic safeguards to ensure that government screw ups do not turn into harassment of people like Brenda Pederson and her son?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): From that diatribe, Mr. Speaker, I would assume that the hon. member would be supportive of the changes that we have recently put in place to increase the integrity of the social insurance number.

We will be accepting only original documents. We will be marking those 900 series cards with an expiry date. We are also ensuring that increased training is provided to my staff because it is important to make sure that reference document is secure.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question I asked him yesterday, the Minister of National Defence acknowledged that he would seek increased funding for the armed forces, but that he had yet to specify what for exactly.

Does the Minister of National Defence understand that, if he hopes to have any success in his undertaking, he is first going to have to tell us to what this increased funding is for?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of reports from the Senate, from the House, reports written by experts, and others. We know quite well that the Canadian Forces are under tremendous pressure. We know what to do. We do not have all of the details right now, but we have a very good idea of the direction.

•(1450)

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the minister has a good idea, but that he does not want to share it with us., and that is the problem right now.

The defence minister has a strange way of going about things. He is calling for substantial increases in funding for the armed forces, without specifying exactly where the money will be used.

Will the minister acknowledge that the only sensible way to approach this issue is to first debate the future role of the armed forces, before increasing their budget? When can we expect a new national defence policy?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already answered this question. Perhaps I will simply say that this is a good time to be the Minister of National Defence. Before, we only had retired generals to support us. Now, we have good Liberals like Tom Axworthy, Lloyd Axworthy, and a good Liberal paper like the *Toronto Star*.

[English]

It is a great time to be Minister of Defence, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Segregation has a human cost, Mr. Speaker. It hurts aboriginal people and it is hurting the community of Lynn Lake, Manitoba.

The government has committed \$44 million to the relocation of aboriginal families from a shared community to a separate new reserve. The cost of this project is more than \$600,000 per family.

How does the government justify the enormous cost of this segregation strategy?

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member unfortunately has dealt with this issue from the perspective of trying to suggest that people of course are being relocated. This community has never had its home territory as part of its community.

The objective of the Government of Canada is to build a community and a future for these people.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. Let us look at the facts. It cost \$44 million to build a brand new separate reserve 10 miles away from a town that has underutilized infrastructure, a half empty hospital, a big half empty school and where we can buy a three bedroom house for \$6,000, not \$600,000.

Natives and non-natives have lived together in Lynn Lake for over 30 years. Could the minister explain what he is trying to accomplish by separating them now?

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member is suggesting that he has changed the policy of the Alliance Party by agreeing to urban reserves, I am quite intrigued by that because so far that party has opposed every urban reserve creation that the government has attempted.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Health.

Today I and other members of the House met with a very special group of people. We met with children who live with type 1 diabetes.

We were all touched with how these beautiful children cope with this disease. They and their parents are here to tell members of Parliament that the government should invest more resources on type 1 diabetes. Over 200,000 Canadians suffer from type 1 diabetes.

Would the Minister of Health please tell the House what the government is doing to deal with a serious disease that affects many children?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, let me acknowledge the very brave and courageous young people who are here today with their families. They unfortunately just had to leave the gallery.

I also want to thank members from all sides of the House who met with these young people today and who brought their courageous stories to each one of us, in terms of the struggle they face in living with type 1 diabetes. Their purpose here today is to make us all aware of the differences between type 1 and type 2 diabetes. There is no cure for type 1 diabetes, from which these people suffer, and it is not preventable. That is why the Government of Canada is spending millions of dollars on research—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Provencher.

* * *

• (1455)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Sunday in Toronto a gunman opened fire in crowds, killing four men and wounding five others in less than 90 minutes. Violent gun crimes continue to escalate across Canada.

When will the government admit that the \$1 billion wasted on the gun registry could have been better spent by putting more police officers on the street and more criminals behind bars?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the gun registration system, I disagree strongly with the member of Parliament. We have said many times, on this side of the House, that we will keep fighting for a strong and secure society. The policy that we put in place is all about that.

When we look at the two stages, the licensing process is over and the registration is underway and will end at the beginning of the next year. It is going very well. When we look at the statistics and the polls, they show that we have a safer and more secure society. We will keep working for that.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, violent crime continues to rise. The murder rate is down only because of timely medical intervention. In Toronto, in 1998, 23% of the murders involved firearms. By last year, the number of murders caused by firearms in Toronto had more than doubled to 52%.

Why does the government continue to strip police of resources, while pumping money into an ineffective gun registry that does not reduce violent crime or keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, when we look at the previous registration system compared to the existing registration system, the level of cancellation with regard to the refusal of the demand has increased by something like 50%.

Oral Questions

Second, we live in a global marketplace and a global economy. We live in a society where we must ensure that we provide people with a safe society. If we compare Canada with the United States, the crime rate—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mercier.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a forestry worker from Pohenegamook, in Témiscouata, has gone to jail for neglecting to declare a gas purchase made at the U.S. border. He is liable to be in until Christmas, and the people back home are concerned.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs plan to step up his pressure on the U.S. authorities in order to ensure that Michel Jalbert receives fair treatment in this matter?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have obviously requested diplomatic access to this person. It is a most unfortunate incident. The American authorities are, of course, free to do whatever they feel is necessary to ensure security on their territory. Naturally, we always defend the interests of Canadians, and we will do so in this case also as we do in all cases involving Canadians in the United States.

* * *

[English]

REGULATORY SYSTEM

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the OECD recently completed a comprehensive review of Canada's regulatory system. The title of the report, "Regulatory Reform in Canada: Maintaining Leadership through Innovation", suggests that the OECD's assessment was very positive.

Could the government House leader tell us how Canada's regulatory system measures up, according to the OECD.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each year the OECD releases reports reviewing member countries and their ability to provide high quality regulation. This year Canada was acknowledged as not just a regulatory reform pioneer, and we all know that, but more important, "a consistent leader and vigorous innovator in regulatory reform". With the Prime Minister's smart regulation agenda, it will get even better.

* * *

• (1500)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the government is wasting \$44 million to move a small band of Indians from Lynn Lake, Manitoba, where they already live, and build a brand new town for them just down the road. It should be noted for the record that the NDP member for Churchill, whose riding encompasses that area, has publicly indicated support and has endorsed this outrageous waste of money.

Why waste \$44 million to build a brand new Indian only town just because the band does not like its current non-Indian neighbours?

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate and I can understand why even the Alliance does not want that member in its caucus. The facts are these. Over the last number of years we have attempted that process, as the members have asked today, of whether this first nation and the community members, the non-native members of Lynn Lake, would want to look at an urban reserve creation. There was no agreement of that process so we had to move on with the other alternative, which is to build a community down the road.

* * *

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, during the Thanksgiving break I was helping my brother harvest his canola crop in the Peace River region of our riding. Unfortunately he, like many other farmers, cannot deliver his grain to the local elevator because it is full, due to the lockout at the port of Vancouver.

This labour dispute leaves those farmers fortunate enough to have a crop unable to continue harvesting. Grain stopped moving through Vancouver on August 25. Will the Minister of Labour intercede today on behalf of farmers and impose final offer selection arbitration to end this lockout?

Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no provision in the Canadian Labour Code which would force parties to use final offer selection to settle a dispute. However the parties to a labour dispute may voluntarily agree to use final offer selection or any other form of binding arbitration. Final offer selection does not work effectively when there are complex issues in disputes such as work rules or job security.

* * *

[Translation]

CHINESE COMMUNITIES

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from 1885 to 1923, newcomers from China had to pay \$23 million in head taxes to get into Canada.

The federal government then used this cheap labour to build its railway system. Today, about 100 protesters representing Chinese communities from Quebec and Canada are in Ottawa to condemn this injustice.

Will the Minister of Immigration pledge to recognize this mistake and repair the injustices done to these communities?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will be meeting at 3 p.m. with that group. We hope to have a discussion on reconciliation as regards these historical events that truly hurt all Canadians.

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order, please. I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Georges Rawiri, President of the Senate in the Gabonese Republic and his delegation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

[English]

The Speaker: The Chair received notice that there would be further submissions in respect of a question of privilege raised the other day by the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, from the Minister of National Defence.

* * *

● (1505)

PRIVILEGE

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make the following statement in response to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on a question of privilege that she raised yesterday in the House.

The hon. member raised a question of privilege in relation to a response provided by the parliamentary secretary for national defence on the future of the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior, Ontario.

This statement is intended to provide clarification on this issue.

The hon. member stated yesterday:

—either the department offered false information to the parliamentary secretary, who inadvertently offered false information to the House, or the department advised the parliamentary secretary of the decision, in which case the charge of contempt should be laid against the member.

The parliamentary secretary for national defence provided an accurate response to the hon. member on Friday, October 25 based on advice provided to him by the Department of National Defence. In his response the parliamentary secretary for national defence stated the following:

—the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College is expanding its training program. The December budget allocated significant funds for this purpose. Much work has been done, but no final decision has yet been made. We are considering all possible options.

Let me clear, Mr. Speaker. The decision on the future of Emergency Preparedness College has yet to be made. I ultimately must direct the Department of National Defence, through the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, to choose the location to permit the expansion of the college.

I recognize that departmental officials are presently recommending to my office and officials of the department of public works that the college be relocated based on an options analysis and business case that has been completed.

I had an opportunity to discuss this issue with my associate deputy minister responsible for advising me on this issue yesterday. I have directed my officials to contact and meet with local representatives in the Arnprior area as soon as possible to discuss the department's

Privilege

recommendations for the college. My understanding is that this meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 30.

After being informed of the department's recommendations, I intend to wait for this meeting to be held with local representatives before making a final decision on the future of the college. It is however my intention to make a decision shortly.

In summary, the parliamentary secretary for national defence responded accurately and appropriately to the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on Friday, October 25.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I of course was unavoidably absent from the House yesterday when the statement was made in *Hansard* that I deliberately misled the House. I find it unfortunate that the member would stoop that low when in fact the high road could have been taken.

My response was quite clear that with the new security environment, the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College would be expanding its training program and that a final decision had not been made yet. That was my answer, it is my answer today and it would have been my answer at any other time.

I wonder why the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who has never mentioned and never asked the question in the House before about the college, now finds it her job to bring my reputation into dispute over some frivolous thing for which she has not cared. I would ask that she withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. As I indicated yesterday when the matter was first raised, I will take the matter under advisement and get back to the House with a ruling on this point promptly. I became aware that the minister wanted to make submissions on this, and the parliamentary secretary of course was unable to be here yesterday when the original comments were made, so I thought it appropriate that he have some intervention on the matter, which he has now had.

Does the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke wish to add more to this before I make a ruling?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I would never dispute the parliamentary secretary's reputation. Second, today I will be tabling the internal memo, dated October 15, which states:

The Canadian Emergency Preparedness College... will relocate to the Federal Study Centre at 1495 Heron Road in Ottawa. The projected relocation date is March 2003.

This verifies that the decision has indeed already been made.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Speaker: There is no agreement.

The hon. minister is rising with respect to this memorandum.

Supply

• (1510)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, under our parliamentary system, ministers decide and officials carry out those decisions. To the extent that officials produced a document indicating a decision had been made, I would say that in that particular case they were slightly ahead of their time because I have not made a decision yet.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek unanimous consent to return to presenting reports from committees. By way of explanation, it has to do with presenting the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to presentation of committee reports?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning conducting committee elections by secret ballot.

Mr. John Reynolds: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to seek unanimous consent for the House to concur in the report.

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast is seeking leave to move a motion for concurrence in the report. Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois motion before the House today reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

First of all, I wish to say that this motion is redundant. I say this because this topic is already covered in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. Parliamentary committees already have the

power, after any appointment, to ask the appointee to appear before them.

Not only is this proposal redundant, but it does not include persons appointed by order in council. If we look at the current provisions of the Standing Orders, the government tables the following appointments: deputy ministers, for example, which are not part of the Bloc motion, ambassadors, consuls general, all heads of Crown corporations, heads of regulatory bodies such as the CRTC, the NEB, the Canadian Transportation Agency. There are also certain appointments to quasi-judiciary bodies, in particular the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

As we see, not only is the motion incomplete and redundant, but we do more under the current Standing Orders than what is requested in the motion.

The government supports the Bloc's motion, even if it is incomplete. Our Standing Orders already deal with appointments, and the motion refers only to the appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations.

We support the motion, but we do have a problem with the amendment put forward by a member of the Bloc. Why?

First, the Bloc amended the motion to request that all government appointments be tabled in the House of Commons before they become final. There are several problems with that.

The Bloc amendment would prevent appointments being made when the House has adjourned for a long period or prorogued. For instance, in the summertime, what do we do after June goes by if there are ambassador or consul general positions that need to be filled? What should the government do? Should it wait for the House to resume before appointing a Canadian representative to some country? It does not make any sense. Lastly, it is not a good amendment.

We will have a problem if the government has to take specific measures to appoint a deputy minister or a judge—although judges are not included in the motion.

• (1515)

[English]

While the thrust of the proposition by itself is not complete, the government supports the motion, simply put, because the motion is covered under Standing Orders as it is. As I clearly stated a little earlier, the amendment is problematic because it really cuffs the hands of the government when it comes to appointments.

Supply

Also there is another element here, that is, we want to have efficiency in government. We want the government to be able to run its operation in the most efficient fashion. So let us imagine, out of 4,300 appointments, if we were to wait for a committee or committees of the House to examine each and every one of them before those appointments could take place. Imagine the many distinguished Canadians who might decide not to allow their names to be put forward if they were to be subjected to questioning or scrutiny by a committee of Parliament that is highly political to a large extent. Many of those people would prefer not to submit their names if they could not be sure that their names would be accepted by the government. Who would want to put up with all of this nonsense that takes place from time to time before committees?

There is a case in point. I do not want to belabour the issue, but I want to provide one example of a situation where a committee of the House was supposed to look into an issue and passed a unanimous motion, by resolution, to hold all of its hearings in camera to interview an individual. After this committee met in camera, after passing the resolution unanimously, the individual appeared before the committee and gave his presentation, trusting that the committee would respect its own resolution, trusting the fact that all the hearings and questioning would remain in camera for a period of time.

Guess what happened afterward? Members of the opposition on that committee were exceptionally quick to leave the committee meeting, go right into the glare of the cameras outside the committee meeting and blurt out most of the stuff that had taken place inside the committee. Not only did they undermine the credibility of the committee itself, but at the same time they put this witness in jeopardy and broke what I would call, in a sense, one of the most fundamental rules of the House, which is respect for the rules themselves.

If we take what happened in that particular committee, transform it and pass it on to other committees we will have a recipe for disaster, whereby every single person who may have some sort of trust in the system will lose confidence in the system and it will not work. There is nothing wrong with what we have before us because as it is right now the committees have a right within their mandate to call for any one of those 4,300 appointments that the government makes from time to time.

I might suggest that by and large the absolute vast majority of those appointments are done with the best interests of the public at heart. These are highly qualified people who serve their nation exceptionally well, many of whom do it on a voluntary basis, many of whom donate endless numbers of hours to serve this great country of ours.

The committees have that within their mandate. They have up to 30 days to call any witness they want.

Some of the committees in the House, in particular the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, have exercised this authority. I remember that one of my colleagues from the Bloc in fact called on one of the appointees to appear before the committee. A number of questions were asked of that particular appointee. The system worked. But to tell me that we want to subject every single one of those appointments not only to scrutiny but to

scrutiny before an appointment takes place, I submit that it will not serve democracy well. It will not serve this country well. This country's system works. In fact it was ranked among the best in the world by Transparency International, which is a not for profit organization that looks at countries and nations and decides whether or not the system is transparent.

• (1520)

The system is transparent and it works. If we really want to be fair to ourselves, we have to simplify the system and not make it more cumbersome. We want to have a proper debate in terms of how we can make the system work, not how we can make the system not work.

Not long ago members voted for over five days continuously, 24 hours a day. Approximately 3,000 motions were put before the House. We voted hour in and hour out. My colleagues on both sides of the House were tired at the end. Why did we have to do that if we really have the interests of Parliament and the public at heart? What did we achieve? Nothing. All we did was frustrate democracy.

If we were to move with this proposed system, in particular the amendment, we would be frustrating democracy. We would be putting partisan politics ahead of the public interest. We should not do that.

We have a system that works. We have a government that gets elected by the people. Ultimately the cabinet and the House of Commons are responsible to the people. The Prime Minister is responsible to the people. Every four or five years, sometimes three and a half years, the people of Canada pass their judgment on the government of the day and whether or not it is doing its job.

The system works, but we need proper parliamentary reform. The government House leader, in consultation with the opposition House leaders, is working on proper reform. People are crying out for reasonable, tangible, real reform. We do not want a reform that when we talk about the issues we seem to come forward with some sort of a resolution, and suddenly because some people do not get their way, they block the whole process. That is what has taken place in the past, in particular when we talk about private members' bills.

Many of my colleagues, including some on this side of the House, have been frustrated by this issue for quite some time. I have been frustrated with this. I have firsthand experience which to a large extent has lessened my trust in the parliamentary reform that has taken place up to this point in time because it is tainted with partisanship and it should not be.

The government House leader has continuously said, "Let us put partisan politics aside. Let us talk about real reform". I put forward a private member's bill dealing with an issue which is very important not only to me but to millions of Canadians, dealing with the definition of a child and whether or not a law of this land should call a child illegitimate. I thought it was a very legitimate proposition. It went through the process. My proposition got to a subcommittee and the report came back to Parliament that no, the House should not deal with the issue and it should not vote on it.

Supply

I was frustrated as a member of Parliament and many of my colleagues and constituents were frustrated. My faith in the system was reduced. However, when I saw the House leaders moving forward with propositions for real reform, I got re-energized. I have a lot more confidence now than I did a few months ago.

I believe that we now have a proper platform in order to bring about real reform. We have to put aside the partisan politics when we talk about real parliamentary reform. We have to move forward with real parliamentary reform. As it is, for our part we will be voting for the main motion, but not for the amendment to the motion because it renders the system inefficient. It does not help the system by itself, in a sense, because it makes the government not function properly.

As I said earlier, what would we do if an ambassador's term ended and the ambassador did not want to extend it? Would we wait until the House was back in session? Would we call the committee back into session? What would we do in that type of situation? Why is it not fair or right for the government to make those appointments and then allow the committees, as is the law now, to examine those appointments? What is wrong with that? I do not see anything wrong with that aspect of it.

We must not miss the point. Parliamentary reform has to be parliamentary reform and an amendment to the standing orders has to be a real amendment. As I said, while we will vote for the motion as it is, certainly the amendment by itself does not meet the objective. In introducing that amendment to the House, I hope my colleague did not mean what it has meant.

● (1525)

A lot has taken place. I recall when we were in opposition back in 1988. Things were a lot more difficult. We have come a long way. Since the government came to power, it has allowed more votes on private members' bills than any other government in the history of the country. More private members' bills have been adopted by the House than ever before. Our colleagues are entitled to stand up and vote freely on private members' bills.

I would suggest the same is not happening on the other side. When the official opposition party was first elected, its members continually said that its members of Parliament were here to vote according to what their constituents asked of them.

As time passed, we observed how often members of the official opposition voted independently. As the days and months moved along, those times started to shrink and shrink and eventually they moved to a block vote. Why? Because they know full well that the system as it is works, although it needs a lot of reform. We live in a democracy which is based on the British system. The official opposition has a role, as does the government.

We cannot be at the mercy of special interests where a group of individuals in a constituency gang up and send a petition with 2,000 to 3,000 names on it because they want to take a stand that fits their specific needs. The member of Parliament finds himself at the mercy of 1,500 to 2,000 constituents who want one thing when probably the vast majority of people in the rest of the constituencies do not want it. The member in this situation votes accordingly because the member believes that is what his constituents want.

In the parliamentary system we have, we follow the party line. We vote according to the party line. It works. It has proven over and over again to be a superior system to the American system where each senator has his own right to stand up and vote. A result of that is that senators and members of congress are at the mercy of special interests.

Take the softwood lumber issue for example, just to point out the difference between the two systems. We cannot Americanize our system. We have to improve and fine tune what we have because it is good.

In the United States, members of congress or members of the senate who come from areas where there are a lot of producers of wood are more likely to be on the side of those who produce the wood rather than those who consume the wood who might be in urban settings but might be in rural settings for that matter. Simply put, those members are bound to follow special interests a lot more than we do here.

I am exceptionally honoured to be a member of the House of Commons and a member of a government that has a wonderful record on all fronts, the economic front, the social front, and the reform front. It has done more for the country than any other government has done in the past. I am honoured to be serving with a Prime Minister who is the finest the country has ever seen. He has brought dignity back to Parliament. He has brought justice to the people of Canada. He has reformed government. He has made government more transparent. He has responded to the needs of Canadians over and over again.

That is the kind of government the country deserves. That is the kind of government Canadians will elect over and over again. We will continue to provide responsible government and a fiscally balanced approach to governing. We are a conscientious government that is always looking out for the best interests of Canadians, not the interests of those who can take care of themselves, but we defend the interests of those who cannot take care of themselves. That is the kind of government the Prime Minister has provided us with.

While the main motion of the Bloc is not perfect, we can live with it. With regard to the amendment however, it is my hope that the hon. member who proposed it will withdraw the amendment so we can move on with the business of the House.

● (1530)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what a plea for the status quo we just heard. What a plea for the concentration of all powers in the hands of the Prime Minister. This is not at all in line with the speech made by the member for LaSalle—Émard at Osgoode Hall last week.

His colleague from LaSalle—Émard, who will probably be the next Prime Minister of this country in February 2004, made a harsh assessment of the way the House of Commons and this government work.

I am asking him a very simple and straightforward question: does he agree, yes or no, with the assessment made by the member for LaSalle—Émard? Does he agree, yes or no, with the proposals for reform suggested by the member for LaSalle—Émard? If the answer is yes, he should say so and withdraw his passionate plea. If the answer is no, he should indicate on which issues he disagrees with his future leader.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, as I clearly indicated earlier, the chairs of House committees have already had consultations with the leaders of the opposition parties in the House. There is already a climate of cooperation, a cordial atmosphere. They are looking at ways to modernize the House. They are discussing the adoption of effective Standing Orders.

As regards the issue of votes in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister himself has said on several occasions that we should have electronic voting. We have been discussing this issue for over seven years. Why are we not getting positive results? Can the hon. member tell me? Is it because the Leader of the Government in the House is opposed, or is it because someone from the opposition is stalling?

We have already improved the situation, as I said earlier. We already have proposals on the table. Discussions are continuing.

Finally, I encourage opposition members. If we are truly serious in our desire for democratic reforms in the House, let us work in a non partisan way with the Leader of the Government in the House, and I can guarantee that, at the end of the day, we will have positive results.

It is not a matter of commenting on someone else's remarks. This is a much more fundamental issue. The idea is to discuss what members of Parliament and leaders in the House of Commons can do to have a true reform that will produce tangible results which, in turn, will finally benefit the public.

How can the hon. member say that we can improve things when an amendment such as this one is proposed, and I quote:

That the motion be amended by adding after the word "referred" the following: "before confirmation of the said appointments".

What are they trying to accomplish by saying that, whenever the government proposes someone's name, it must submit it to a committee, before the appointment is confirmed? How is this efficient? That is what we are discussing today. That is what is of interest to me.

I do not understand why opposition members do not see things in a non partisan way. We must look at things in a non partisan fashion. If we are really serious about reforms in this House, we must absolutely cooperate.

Now, we are seeing some cooperation, but not enough. We must begin to go forward, not backward.

• (1535)

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

This was a nice try on the part of the hon. member for Ottawa Centre, but he should have gone a little further in his reflection when he said that we should leave partisanship aside. Today, the purpose

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of the motion by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is precisely to ensure that we will have a true debate free from any partisanship. In fact, it is following the plea made by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard that the Bloc Québécois brought forward this motion today, so that Liberal members might also have the opportunity to take part in this most important debate. We want to talk about transparency, effectiveness, improved management and also fairness in the appointment process. We also want to ensure that these appointments are not made on the basis of friendship with a party, whether it is the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Canadian Alliance or whichever party may be in office. Today, it is the Liberal Party, and it has a long track record regarding appointments.

This evening, when the time comes to vote, we will see if this is turned into a partisanship issue. The members who should take an interest in this debate are the ones who will support the next Prime Minister of Canada, probably the former Minister of Finance, who also raised the issue of how things are done in the House of Commons regarding appointments, and the lack of democracy in Parliament.

What do members have to do when they sit on committees and government members are asked to block amendments to a bill or to gag a committee? This way of doing things does not bring much to the debate and does not often do justice to the thinking that is done in the various committees, because there is a degree of partisanship. Quite often, the members who show up to vote did not hear witnesses, they did not hear what was said and they did not bring any contribution to the work of the various committees. These same members sit on other committees or they pursue other interests and they only come to block the vote of opposition parties.

We now have before the House a motion brought forward by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. By the way, I want to congratulate him for putting this motion forward.

This morning, the government House leader, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, was rather mean when he said that the Bloc Québécois has nothing to propose, that we should be debating other issues like health and provincial transfers and that we were wasting our time today.

I do not believe that we are wasting time here. We are only considering, like everyone elected to this House should do, the way to make a fair contribution to parliamentary debate and to question the way things are done here. I thought the member was rather mean, especially since he had to be replaced as public works minister after violating the ethics guidelines. We all remember how sad he was at the time, how close to tears he was. The Prime Minister had to find him a new portfolio to save him from any further embarrassment. But this morning, he joked that the Bloc Québécois was not taking part in any debate.

I remind the House that, yesterday afternoon, we had a take note debate on a government motion concerning health care. Where was the health minister? If she had wanted to take part in the debate, she would have shown up in the House.

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I only raise this issue because the government House leader talked about it at length this morning when he attacked the opposition and said that we were not being serious.

Let me come back to the issue now before the House. We all know that the Prime Minister is responsible for appointing 3,500 senior officials of Crown corporations and other officials.

• (1540)

Of these 3,500 positions, there are 1,000 federal judges, 100 heads of missions abroad, ambassadors, 1,500 people who work part time as directors, for Crown corporations and so on, and another 500 people who work full time.

So, that makes for a lot of people to appoint. Who does the Prime Minister think of? Friends of the party, people who helped him out. We have a pretty extensive list of people who were named directors at the CBC, for example.

While I am on this subject, given that I sit on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, I would like to mention a few people, like Guylaine Saucier, who is Chair of the board of directors; she is a member of the Council for Canadian Unity.

Roy L Heenan, chairman and senior partner of Heenan Blaikie, has been on the board of the CBC a number of times since 1974. He has received millions of dollars from the CBC to represent it in its conflicts related to human resources. Heenan Blaikie continues to represent the CBC. Mr. Heenan is also a member of the corporation's labour relations committee. So, we know the sponsorship controversy quite well. We have seen how the friends of the party are rewarded handsomely.

James S. Palmer, lawyer and chairman of Burnet, Duckworth & Palmer, who is also a member of the Council for Canadian Unity.

Mr. Champion, who is also a member of the committee, organized a golf tournament to raise money for the Liberal Party of Canada; the entry fees for the tournament were between \$500 and \$5,000.

Mr. Thomas R. Wilson, president and CEO of Oceanic Adventures Inc, was the president of the Liberal association for the federal riding of Rosedale.

L. Richard O'Hagan, who worked with Lester B. Pearson as special adviser to the Leader of the Opposition, from 1961 to 1963, and then as press secretary to the Prime Minister after the federal election of 1963. He was named special adviser to the Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau in communications. He is also a member of the Council for Canadian Unity.

Jane Heffelfinger, who also has ties to the Liberal Party.

Robert Rabinovich and Claridge Inc. and Claridge Investments are two associates fully owned by the Charles Bronfman trust.

This is the way it is with a number of Crown corporations, and we can see that friends of the Liberal Party are generously rewarded for their years of service.

So, on the issue of effectiveness, when people have ties with a party, do they all have the knowledge and the qualifications to sit on the certain boards of directors or certain Crown corporations?

It is the taxpayers who pay for the operation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Why is it that parliamentarians here in this House, who have been elected by the people, could not take part in the election of some senior officials in the whole of government operations?

It is sad to see how some Liberal Party members and ministers, because their hands are tied, are dealing with this opposition day and the Bloc Quebecois. If it were not for the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier today, the government would certainly not have had the courage to deal with a very important issue for democracy.

There have been several scandals and we know very well how in committee one can impede the serious work that has to be carried out to find out what damage has been done. We only have to think about the case of Ambassador Gagliano, who was shipped off to Denmark, and whom the government no longer talks about, as well as all the scandals that happened with respect to sponsorships.

• (1545)

There must be transparency and equity toward the people who have some qualifications. We could also have pointed out many appointments that were made to this immigration committee. Many people sit on it. They have absolutely no qualifications to sit on this committee. There are other people from the civil society, who are perhaps not close to the Liberal Party, but who would also have more qualifications to sit on it. So it is basically the fundamental issue that is raised in this motion: are we in favour of more equity, of more transparency—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by the comments and the speeches made by Bloc members.

I have had the privilege of sitting in two legislative assemblies: the National Assembly and this House. In the National Assembly, there are parliamentary committees. Appointees can be invited to appear before the municipal commission or any other parapublic commission at any time. However, only the presidents of public corporations are invited to appear before a parliamentary committee, contrary to what we have here in the House of Commons committees.

Even Bloc members used Standing Orders 110 and 111 on two occasions to invite people in order to find out about their qualifications and so on.

Virtually all those who are appointed to a position outside the country are invited to appear before the foreign affairs committee. They are questioned.

An hon. member: This is not true.

Mr. Serge Marcil: Mr. Speaker, it is a fact. I fail to understand how these people can question a system—

An hon. member: Like Mr. Gagliano. Talk to us about Mr. Gagliano.

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Mr. Serge Marci: Shut up, I am talking. How can they use a system every day and then say that it is not valid? Earlier, the member talked about the Immigration and Refugee Board. All those who want to be appointed to the board must go through a process. There is a written exam as well as an oral exam.

These appointments are not made casually. Committees can invite practically any government appointee to question them.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my colleague from the Liberal Party is dealing with this issue. We know very well what happens in committee, for example, how opposition members can be muzzled when the time comes to ask embarrassing questions.

We know very well how the Liberals can shorten some sittings. I know this because I also sit on a committee. The chair, who is a Liberal, is quite friendly, but when I ask questions that are somewhat embarrassing for the friends of the party, we are told that it is not the time to ask certain questions.

We know very well that the sitting was shortened when Mr. Gagliano came before a committee. The Liberals used the Standing Orders and we know that they can use the Standing Orders. Finally, we know very well how opposition parties can be muzzled in committee. We do not have the opportunity to ask all the questions and we are often called to order.

When a motion to muzzle the committee members is moved, the Liberal members come out of their office—we had never seen them before—come to vote and that is that. The witness leaves, and we have not been able to ask the questions that we wanted to ask. The Liberals are fiddling with the truth here. They only say what they really want to understand.

• (1550)

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one after the other, the Liberal members mentioned Standing Order 110 and 111 concerning the operation of the House.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the other members all repeated this little pitch; they said that the people appointed automatically appear before the committee.

However, how can the member for Québec, whom I congratulate for her speech, explain to the people opposite that there is an inconsistency between saying, on the one hand, that this is automatic and, on the other hand, that Standing Orders 111(1) and 111(2) use the conditional tense, which makes it non automatic?

How does she explain that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has used these Standing Orders, if not to give us smoke and mirrors and to distort the true meaning of the Standing Orders of the House?

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, we are all well aware that the use of the conditional makes things other than self-evident.

Standing Order 111 reads as follows:

The committee specified pursuant to Standing Orders 32(6) and 110, ... shall if it deems it appropriate, call—

To a careful reader, this is not self-evident. We are very well aware how it can in fact be deemed that something is inappropriate. We

know very well that the Liberal majority controls committees as far as voting goes. We know very well that, even if there are two Liberal members on a committee, they bring on five or six more to vote. They are summoned, told “There’s a vote and you need to come on over and vote, so that we can block the opposition motion. We do not want to see dear old party friend or colleague in a tight spot”. That is that.

The second paragraph reads:

The committee, if it should call an appointee or nominee to appear—

We know just how undemocratic the committees are.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to again congratulate my colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier on the appropriateness of the motion he is putting forward today, given the way this government is evolving.

For the benefit of those listening to us, I will read the motion, which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

I will point out that there are 3,500 such appointments, virtually arbitrary appointments, by the Prime Minister and his apparatchiks, in this fine democracy that is Canadian democracy. I would, however, like to focus my speech particularly on a number of heads of Crown corporations and agencies that are of great importance, both the agency and the individual. I am thinking particularly of Jean Pelletier.

Jean Pelletier is a former mayor of Quebec City, a man of strong personality and a former executive assistant to the Prime Minister. He certainly has the right high profile to head up VIA Rail; we have no doubts about his competence, but no one has ever had to prove it, even though it is obvious. Without challenging the individual himself, we do want to focus on the appointment process.

The same goes for André Ouellet, a nice young man. I spoke with him again last month, on a very sensitive issue, because it is not always very clear with Canada Post. However, he is very skilled with people, this is part of his abilities. He is a former Liberal minister. Apart from the fact that he was a Liberal minister, nothing proves his expertise. Once again, the PMO decided that, from now on, André Ouellet would act as president of Canada Post.

It is possible to make several dozen appointments like this. In my opinion, on many aspects, and we will try to demonstrate this in the few minutes that we have here, Canada is a fine, modern and sophisticated banana republic that knows how to present things, how to do things on a large scale so they do not show too much. However, they end up showing.

Supply

It is a little bit like Mexico. The PRI, that is, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, has been in power for 73 years, probably because it appointed a good number of friends. Over the years, the number of friends adds up, especially with friends of friends. As long as the people do not protest, the PRI remains there. However, when citizens get upset, they kick it out as was the case recently. The PRI had been in power for 73 consecutive years.

In the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, it is 69 years—that is close to the PRI—69 years during the last century. That means that a lot of friends were appointed. That means that, between 1900 and 2000, particularly the latter part from the 1960s on with Trudeau, Turner and the present member for Saint-Maurice, many friends of the Liberals were appointed. We saw it in Shawinigan, and we see it everywhere, from coast to coast. Often times, it is for political reasons. Their skills are not taken into account; they are irrelevant. It is the whole appointment process that comes into question.

What I find irritating is the appointment of directors of Crown corporations, as well as of returning officers. This concerns us all, from coast to coast.

The chief electoral officer of Canada has been denouncing this situation publicly for a long time, saying that he should be the one who appoints these people as part of an appointment process that would be as unarbitrary as possible. We need not look far; we have only to follow Quebec's example. The member for Beauharnois—Quebec spoke a little while ago about Quebec. We can talk about Quebec.

Where the appointment of returning officers is concerned, Quebec is a model. Of course, let us face it, nothing is perfect in this world of ours, but we should set benchmarks to ensure some kind of neutrality, if we want a non-partisan and objective appointment process. As things now stand, if you are not a Liberal, you do not stand a chance of being appointed as a returning officer, which means that the democratic process has been tainted.

Personal acquaintances can sometimes be blamed when mistakes are made. How many friends does a returning officer have in the Liberal Party who have some influence over the election process? To whom would they naturally turn to?

• (1555)

Let us say that funds were misappropriated or there was an attitude problem and a complaint was filed. At present, the chief electoral officer cannot fire a returning officer, because he did not hire him. It has happened. The chief electoral officer cannot fire someone he did not hire.

The chief electoral officer plays a key role in making this great big country a democratic country. He has a key role that is being tarnished because of the lack of an objective, unbiased and professional process for appointing returning officers.

Therefore, we do not have a democracy. I talk about a banana republic, and that comparison can take us very far. A banana republic is a country that hates referendums and that will have nothing to do with the kind of democracy we have in Quebec democracy, where we are constantly wondering if a referendum should not be held.

No referendum was held on the Confederation, in 1867; no referendum was held on the patriation of the Constitution, in 1982; no referendum was held on the social union agreement, in 1999.

There was never any referendum to deny the existence of the Quebec people. Aboriginals are recognized in this great big country, but not the Quebec people, which is not even recognized as a distinct society. Everyone knows that it is an empty shell. There never was a referendum. The public was not consulted, except on a few occasions.

We did it and were rebuffed every time. It sure does not make us enthusiastic. We were rebuffed at the time of the Constitution and we were rebuffed again in 1992, when English Canada said no and Quebecers said no, but for fundamentally different reasons. However, everyone said no to the policy designed here in Ottawa. So, this is a strange model of democracy.

I personally saw, from another angle, just how serious it is when people talk about banana republics. You will recall, Mr. Speaker—you were no doubt here—the debate on family trusts, when Mr. Desautels, the Auditor General at the time, had the courage to criticize this government's attitude in siding with a big Canadian family at the expense of the poor, which cost the Canadian tax system some \$400 million to \$700 million. What happened?

At the time, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Finance. Bay Street came to Parliament Hill. The great manipulators, the great taxation strategists were denounced by the Auditor General. The folks from Bay Street, the professional accountants came to Ottawa to reproach the Auditor General for having discovered their secret; they told him that he had violated one of the great principles of Canadian taxation, the secret, since it was possible to identify a person or family with the information that he had made public.

Instead of congratulating the Auditor General, we in this sophisticated banana republic of ours, shunned him, starting with the chair at the time, who is still a member today, who attacked him as chair, refusing to let any of his Liberal colleagues ask questions, using his background in finance as an excuse. He asked excessively detailed questions to the Auditor General, from his most recent positions on the taxation system to make him look bad, in an attempt to discredit the Auditor General.

I remember this as though it were yesterday, because that is how it was, and this exemplifies this nice, modern banana republic we live in. Those were very dark days, in my opinion, for the pretentious image of democracy that this country reflects, particularly abroad, in using Quebec, in trying to pass Canada off as a bilingual and binational country, when in fact we know quite well, as I said earlier, that in reality, the Quebec people is not recognized within Canada.

• (1600)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I would like to remind the hon. members that they must try to stick to the subject on the Orders of the Day as much as possible.

Hon. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment. First I want to congratulate my colleague on his remarks. Someone who rises to express his or her views on something always deserves constructive comments. However, I understand that he may be a little upset because the Bloc Québécois, which is normally very concerned about important issues, has proposed today a motion on which we will have an opportunity to vote. They have been told that what the motion on which we will vote is calling for already exists in the House of Commons. This is obviously very disappointing. I understand why my colleague from Trois-Rivières is upset, but even though one is upset, one must not stop being rational and objective.

Talking about referendums, there were referendums on amalgamations in Quebec. Did the PQ government respect that? They should tell us about that experience. What I would like to ask the member is if he thinks that the motion before us today is productive. What the motion is calling for already exists. Standing Orders 110 and 111 have enabled the Bloc Québécois to invite witnesses to appear.

Second, can he tell me if parliamentary commissions in the Quebec National Assembly have as much freedom when they hold hearings on appointments that were made?

Mr. Yves Rocheleau: Mr. Speaker, we will start with the last question on partisan appointments by the Quebec government. If the statement made by my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord were true, knowing the Quebec press and how hard it is on the government, and how closely it follows the debates, I think the government would end up getting hassled about every one of its appointments. As far as I know, there are guidelines, there are mechanisms which lead to the recommendation of certain candidates for this or that position and the executive makes the decision on the appointment, because that is its responsibility.

As for the municipal amalgamations, the example I have in mind when I hear about this is Mont-Tremblant. On the one hand, we have all the development of the mountain with astronomical investments, and on the other the nearby villages which benefit less.

In its wisdom, the government said that it would form a new entity and that everyone would benefit from the riches. It is too easy to say “No, the mountain belongs to me and I am keeping it for myself,” as some people wanted to do in certain areas of the Montreal region, particularly in the west island. The idea of municipal mergers is a new way to redistribute wealth, and I think that it will bear fruit. Those who were opposed to the mergers are now beginning to realize that people are generally very satisfied one year later. Imagine what it will be like once the mergers gain full steam and they really start to pay off. They will benefit all of Quebec's economy and true democracy.

Finally, I would like to give today's example. In philosophy, there is comprehension and there is extension. It is possible to get to the same place using different approaches.

The sensitive issue of sponsorships is a good example of bogus democracy. There are new elements in this affair. We know that there may have been fraud involved. There was certainly propaganda. We

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saw big “Canada” signs on the ice at the Forum, costing \$500,000 a piece.

Then, there are the contributions to the Liberal Party of Canada. When we ask questions of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, we get the impression that there are government agreements. The government answers in its own way without being accountable to the public. A minister answers that he does not really understand the question for whatever reason. He gives whatever answer he wants, and as the opposition, we are forced to live with that. This demonstrates my little thesis that Canada is a democracy that is in very bad shape.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the motion that the House is dealing with has been used very generously as a proxy to talk about the broader subject of parliamentary reform in a number of aspects.

With regard, however, to the specifics of the motion and particularly with regard to appointments, clearly a substantial number of appointments are made by a government. I do not know the precise number. I think it is something in the neighbourhood of some 4,300 appointments. This motion is specifically referring to matters such as ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and crown corporations.

I do not think that there would be any disagreement with regard to the spirit of the main motion. Indeed, many if not most of these appointments actually do get referred to committee under the existing Standing Orders. I have been at committee where we have reviewed the appointment of an ambassador. I have been to a meeting where we reviewed the appointment of the current privacy commissioner and had an opportunity to pose questions and to get an understanding of the work going on there. So this happens, and I think that I probably will be supporting the main motion, unamended.

If I could use a little latitude to talk more broadly about what may be the underpinning intent of the motion, it is, I believe, that parliamentary reform in a number of aspects is something that members in this place would like to see. This aspect has to do with more independence and more empowerment of committees. It means that committees will have this opportunity.

Having been a parliamentarian for some nine years, I can reflect on my work on committee, whether it be the finance committee, the health committee, the transport committee, estimates of government operations, or industry. I have had a broad experience. I also have had the opportunity to sit in for other members to do their committee work for them and I have watched how committees operate

I think it is terribly noble to say that committees should be empowered, should be more independent and should have this authority, but when we get these rights to do things that also carries with it the fact that we have responsibilities. We have to do the job properly. Are committees doing the job properly now in all respects? I think most members here would agree: no.

Supply

For example, let us simply look at the review of estimates. We have in our Standing Orders that the estimates are referred to committee automatically. If a committee does not review the estimates, they are deemed to have been reported back to the House. Therefore committees really do not have to do anything. What is the experience of the House? It is that 80% of committees do not review the estimates or report them back to the House. They are deemed to be reported back.

How can we suggest that we need more responsibility when in fact we are actually not taking care of probably one of the most important aspects of committee work, that being the review of the estimates and the performance reports? This is extremely important. Therefore to suggest that as a right we want to be able to do this has to also incorporate the concept that there is a responsibility to do the committee work that is being asked for and that is being required under the Standing Orders.

There have been other suggestions that committees should have greater autonomy to do certain things. There have been concerns expressed that a majority government, for instance, has the majority of members on a committee and therefore by virtue of mathematics tends to be able to control the agenda and in fact the results of virtually every vote. That is the peculiarity of a majority government. We could talk about the merits of having majorities or somehow releasing members of Parliament so that everyone can go their own ways. However, I can only assume that members will continue to want to represent the views of a party, of their platform, et cetera.

● (1610)

It would be very difficult to say "Let us just release members and we will trust them to be partisan in their activities". The reality of this place is that it is a partisan House. The reality of this place is that members, as they discharge their responsibilities, also have other responsibilities, needs and wants. At the same time, if an opportunity should present itself in committee "I'll give you this if you give that" is something I have seen a lot.

We cannot suggest that this one item should be seen as simply a major improvement in the process. I think the spirit of the linear idea of reviewing appointments is important, but there have been some questions about whether or not those appointments should be reviewed. Or is it that we would like not only to review them but to have the decision making as to who in fact gets the job? On that purview of who gets the final appointment and where the approval process is, I do not think that at this point it has been suggested that it be changed to the committees. The motion before us does not suggest that the committees would make the appointment. They would not vote on the appointments. They would prepare reports and report on the referral to committee of an appointment.

There is precedent in parliamentary history that appointments not be politicized, not put into that purview, such as they might be in the United States where there are public hearings. There have been some quite public and quite damning episodes where people of integrity have been trashed in public. It is not the Canadian way. It is not the parliamentary way. I do not think I could support that, but I certainly do support the committees having this kind of latitude.

In this broader discussion about committees reviewing appointments and the other responsibilities they have if they want more

rights, what happens with, for instance, referral of bills before second reading? They can go to the committee and the committee can do some work, but the fact of the matter is that once a bill is printed it has been developed by the departmental officials with whatever consultation they have done and it has cabinet sign-off. Once it is printed at first reading, as far as I am concerned that is a fixed position against which parliamentarians have to work. Even if it goes to committee before second reading, there will have to be some pretty serious work done to make changes. We have seen that on bills like Bill C-5, the species at risk bill, and some other bills. We have that authority to refer. We already do. It is not used very often but we do that already. It has not made the difference that I think people had hoped it would.

Maybe for public consumption it is nice to say as a generality that we have to empower committees, but the reality is that committees are in a partisan environment. They are subject to the ebb and flow of other things that happen in the House, to party discipline, to party platforms and to all the things that we experience throughout our parliamentary careers. It is idealistic to suggest that somehow we will simplistically change this unless one could demonstrate that in the Parliament of Canada it could operate in virtually all facets in a non-partisan fashion.

I believe that as long as we have parties running in an election with their own leaders, their own platforms and their own philosophies, partisanship always will be part of this place, and we have to work within the reality of this place. That is why I am happy that the motion before us does not go that one step farther and state that it will be the committee. I have seen committees stacked by members. If the appointed members do not seem able to wrap their support around a particular item, I see those people replaced all the time. If we want something to happen at committee, parties can make it happen. It is part of the partisan process. We have seen it. We have seen it with the drug patent legislation and other stories I have heard here.

● (1615)

I think that what we really want and the proxy that the motion brings to this place is that members of Parliament want to earn the respect of the Canadian public. I think that there is a serious concern about the attitude that Canadians have expressed toward parliamentarians from time to time. It has become almost a national pastime to bash politicians, yet I know most of the members in the House reasonably well and I know that 85% of them come from backgrounds where they have significant community service records, where they have done an enormous amount of work on behalf of their communities and therefore on behalf of Canada on a totally voluntary basis. They do come with credentials and that is the reason why they were elected. They were elected not because they promised to do things. They were elected because they had shown what they could do.

Supply

In this place there are changes that we can make to earn back that respect. I think that things like standing up in this place and reading a speech is actually contrary to parliamentary policy or parliamentary tradition. I do not think that members should stand up here and read a speech. Members should stand up here and look another member in the face and tell them how they really feel. If members do not know what they are talking about then they might as well sit down, because it is really important that we speak to each other about what we know. If members do not know, then they should sit down and not say anything because I do not want to hear somebody read a speech to me. I would rather that they send it to me and then sit down.

We need to have people talk about things that they know about. If they do not know about the subject, we do not need to have them stand up and give a speech. That is an example of something we can do in this place. It is a matter of credibility. It is a matter of integrity. It is a matter of talking about the culture of Parliament. We should talk about how we do things here. We have been playing with private members' business for a long time. I have often wondered about this as we play with issues of parliamentary reform, whether it be committees or whatever. It has been suggested as well, for instance, that private members' bills could go to committees after first reading, that we could let them all go, that the lottery process is ridiculous.

There are 301 members of Parliament. If we assume that half of them, about 150, would be interested in participating in the private members' process, they could not all get their bills dealt with by a committee within a session, so we would still have to rely on a lottery process of some sort. Somebody has to go first. It is maybe disingenuous to suggest somehow referring it to committee. Actually I could see that it might very well grind Parliament to a halt simply by virtue of the fact that committees would be burdened with private members' bills to which they would have to give due consideration. Every member is going to want to appear before committee. They are going to want to call witnesses. Most of them will go to the justice and finance committees. I wonder how the justice and finance committees are going to do their work if suddenly they are seized by private members' business and they have to do it.

We have to get our priorities straight. Reform of Parliament is an important aspect of this, but I think that reforming the culture of Parliament and reforming our attitudinal postures in this place are very important. We have to live with the reality, however, that this is a partisan environment. Our elections were partisan. We become members of a partisan party, a partisan group and a partisan government and we come here. But when we do not do our jobs properly, we do so at our own peril. Unfortunately we know that members of Parliament are often elected not for themselves but because of the party that they are with, their party platform or the region they come from, et cetera. These are the realities of this place.

Let us look at history. We know that this mix does change. It changed significantly enough that a government went from a majority down to two seats. It can change in one region from a majority of seats to a handful of seats or no seats. It has happened. As I have said, governments do not do their jobs properly at their own peril.

It is very important as we look at these aspects of how we empower committees or members of Parliament themselves that we

are realistic about the environment in which we live. We have to be respectful of each other. We have to do our jobs. We have to know our subject matter. I think that the best starting point for us in this place is to make sure that people who participate in debates on issues in this place are those people who have done the work and know the issues and have something to contribute. I believe that the whole quality of the debate and the challenge to other members of Parliament would be to raise the game up to that level, to make it relevant and to make sure that we do not have the partisan bickering on matters of importance that transcend partisan activities.

• (1620)

We have just had a debate on the future of the health care system. We are awaiting the Romanow report. We want to ensure that Canadians have a health care system which provides for the medically necessary needs of Canadians. We want to ensure that it is properly funded, universal, accessible, publicly funded and portable so that Canadians have that security.

However it continues to be undermined. Today when I looked at the news I saw an advertisement on behalf of the premiers of the provinces saying that the provinces pay 86% of health care; it used to be 50% but now the federal government is only paying 14%. We all know the reason is that the dollars are not only in cash. They are in tax points. The federal government is the sole funder of aboriginal health care and all of the health protection issues. The direct spending that the federal government puts into health spending changes those numbers.

Those are the partisan games that are played. Those are the partisan issues that tend to influence Canadians because the optics make it appear that something is wrong. People will be influenced when we rely upon newspapers and television ads to make the case rather than sit down and look at what contributions are being made. If the provinces are not going to give credit for the tax points, there is a simple solution for that. Responsible parliamentarians say we should just undo it, let the federal government take those tax points back and make it all cash. The government could do that.

We have this motion and we agree with the premise but the motion was made with a broader point in mind. It was a demand to start talking about parliamentary reform in a way which would make this place function in a manner in which parliamentarians could feel proud about what they are doing and represent properly the interests of their constituents.

However if we do not accept the reality of being in a partisan environment, I do not believe we will fool anyone about any kind of reform. There will always be trade-offs.

Supply

For example, we have adopted the rule of applying votes. With the unanimous consent of the House we can have a vote on one issue, then apply the vote so we can get out of here quicker. The whip stands and says “with Liberal members voting yea”. If people look at parliamentarians as a bunch of sheep because we all vote the same way, this could not be a more dramatic example of that. Someone stands up and says we are all voting one way, and every other party does the same thing.

Why is that? We did that in reaction to people who wanted to demonstrate against a bill. They would put in a large number of amendments which would take the House days to vote. Therefore to get over that we decided to apply votes. However it does require unanimous consent.

There will come a day when a member will get sufficiently cynical about this place and will start denying unanimous consent on everything. This place will grind to a halt because we have accommodated that cynicism.

We must be realistic about this place and we must work together. It does not mean that we have to abandon the partisanship that is part of the environment we are a part of through the election process and which we bring to government. It does mean that we must work together in the best interests of all Canadians and at the same time have the freedom to represent the interests of our constituents, and debate openly and freely on motions, whether they be brought by the opposition, or on other matters that come before this place.

I hope that as we move forward on this overall theme of parliamentary reform and renewal that members will build on some of the points that I have raised.

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I listened to what the member had to say. According to our colleague, things could not be better. The Liberal Party and the current government are apparently perfect and getting better all the time, when we know that no other government in the history of Canada has been more corrupt and more plagued by scandals than the current Liberal government since it has come into office.

I have been a member of this House for 18 years and I have seen what happened to members and ministers under the Conservative government, as did the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. We have seen Liberals get in a lather and demand that ministers step down because of some minor mistakes they had made. Four or five Conservative ministers had to resign, most of them because of minor mistakes.

Nowadays, ministers are taking part in propaganda campaigns; they seek contributions for the Liberal Party coffers; they award contracts to their friends. They are appointed for political reasons only and not because of their qualifications, but, according to the member, everything is fine.

I would like to ask him a question. In accordance with their party's philosophy, should the parliamentary secretary not recommend to the justice minister that he amend the Criminal Code in order to punish those who waste the taxpayers' money? He could recommend that

the legislation be amended so that judges can send these people to prison or appoint them ambassadors, as was the case with a certain gentleman.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, my case has been proven. There is the partisanship coming through, without reference to the motion that is before us.

Notwithstanding allegations of giving contracts to friends and lining the pockets of relatives, and in fact there are potential lawsuits over that, here is a member whose decision was to leave one party, the Conservative Party, and go to another. In that particular party there were some 36 ministers who had to resign for a variety of reasons.

We are not perfect but I can only reflect on the former solicitor general who left cabinet because the ethics counsellor felt he should not have made representations with regard to funding to Holland College where his brother happened to be the president. There is no question that his brother could not have personally benefited but being an honourable gentleman, he stepped down and will try to defend his honour.

I guess that is part of the partisanship that is here. I have tried to work with members on all sides because eventually we will all need each other's support on something that is important not only to ourselves but, most important, to our constituents.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: I just want to say one thing to the parliamentary secretary. He spoke about the scandals of the former government, the Progressive Conservative government. Yes, I was a member of that party but when I saw the partisanship and the scandals, I had the courage to get out of the party so I would not be an accomplice to those dishonest activities and those patronage appointments.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member probably made a difficult decision for himself and I respect his decision. It is difficult for members to do this.

This is the kind of honesty and sincerity that we would like Canadians to appreciate. There is more good in this place than bad. There are occasions when things occur which should not have occurred and people have paid the price for it.

The member well knows and will concede, and I do not know if there is a member in the House who would not concede, that the talent in this place, the credentials and credibility are enormous. I have seen members on committees work together on a non-partisan ad hoc committee and do some extraordinary work. It has led to good legislation or changes to legislation which have improved legislation. Those are the kinds of things that we do not get enough credit for.

The member says I must make a decision. We make decisions every day about whether or not we are going to abuse the system by overplaying the partisan card or whether we are going to work within the system to make a better Canada.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate my colleague on his speech. He is always very respectful of his colleagues who, just like him, were elected in various ridings.

I will refrain from speaking about generalities because we all know there is almost unanimity on the main motion. There is no problem since what is proposed is already being done.

So I forgive them for presenting a motion requesting something that is already being done within the Canadian Parliament, but not in all legislative assemblies.

Yesterday evening, I listened to the leader of the Bloc Québécois on TV. He said, and please correct me if I am wrong, that the take note debate on health was a waste of time.

I think that take the note debates which have been proposed by the government, with the approval of opposition parties, are definitely good occasions to give all members of all parties the time to express their views on important issues, such as regional development, the environment, international policies or our foreign policy, all issues that we have had an opportunity to discuss.

Could my colleague explain the importance of the take note debates proposed by the government over the past few months?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, as long as I have been a member of Parliament health care has been the number one issue on the minds of Canadians and an issue of concern. It has been addressed in legislation and in budgets virtually every year. This attention comes as a result of the input of Canadians ostensibly through their members of Parliament. The take note debates certainly are a part of that process. Should a member decide that these are a waste of time, it is only a waste of time if a member of Parliament decides not to participate or tries to somehow use it for other purposes.

We have many tools. There is more than one way to discharge our responsibilities. A large number of members of Parliament spoke yesterday on health care. They have spoken on the ethics package and on Iraq in take note debates. These are important not only in terms of trying to influence policy, but also in terms of educating the Canadian public.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on the motion presented by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. First, I want to point out that I will share my time with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. Just mentioning the name of her riding takes close to a minute of my time.

In the last little while, a number of hon. members, particularly those who sit across the floor, have said that the motion of the Bloc Québécois and the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Mercier were pointless. We were just told that this already exists under the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

I think there is a failure to understand the motion before us and I think that members opposite are changing the content of the motion slightly. What is the purpose of the motion presented by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier? It is very clear.

I will repeat the motion, so that members opposite clearly understand. The motion reads, and I quote:

That... government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

I have the relevant standing orders and I will get back to them later on.

The hon. member for Mercier added a very important amendment asking that appointments be “referred before confirmation of the said appointments”.

Once an appointment has been confirmed, even if we call the appointee to appear before the committee and ask him all kinds of questions, that person has already been appointed and nothing will change. This is what the Bloc Québécois wants people to understand with this motion. It wants people to realize that there is a very important lack of democracy in this process and, as others have mentioned, we are not talking about one or two appointments.

We are talking about 3,500 positions, about order in council appointments, which include some 1,000 judges, some 100 heads of missions abroad, including ambassadors, senior public servants, 500 full time employees and 1,900 other part-time employees in all sorts of organizations, commissions, committees and so on, created by the government.

This brings me to the democracy in which we live. I would like to talk, among other things, about the standing committees of the House of Commons, to which the Standing Orders refer. It is said that appointments should be referred to these committees.

Even in the committees there is a democratic deficit. We are very much aware that the government always has a majority on these committees. Once that majority is questioned by an opposition MP, as my colleague for Québec has just said, the members are automatically called back, as they are often absent—which I ought not to mention—they are called back urgently to stop the opposition motion from getting through.

When the committees are sitting and there are public hearings, people ask us “What is the point of appearing before a committee if our position is opposed to that of the government majority? We won't get heard anyway or, if we are, it won't be taken into account”. I think we have had some fine examples of that in recent years.

My colleague from Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques is here to confirm that, but I did not want to revisit the business of the unanimity on the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development. All members had called for major changes to the Employment Insurance Act. What happened next? The government totally thumbed its nose at them; it ignored the recommendations of its own MPs.

Supply

We have seen this in other areas as well, and I have had personal experience with it on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

● (1640)

Last spring, a unanimous report was tabled by all members of Parliament, those in the government majority as well as those in the three opposition parties. We adopted a unanimous report so that an important fisheries-related issue might be settled. What good did it do? The government did not take it into consideration.

As citizens, the question we must ask ourselves is the following: do we still live in a democracy or in an apparent democracy? I think that we live in a partial democracy, but there is a vast part of government that is neither accountable, nor transparent.

People wonder why citizens these days are losing interest in democracy. One only has to look at voter turnout in the last election to see this. We wonder why citizens are not getting involved in our democracy. This is dangerous, because, as people gradually lose interest in our parliamentary system, as they gradually stop going to the polls, as there are fewer and fewer of them to exercise their rights, our democracy becomes threatened. I think we need to think about this.

The motion moved by my colleague from Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier is very specific, even though it only refers to appointments. When I say only, I should be careful. When we are talking about 3,500 positions, all of the government is involved. There are a great many decisions involved that have a direct impact on citizens.

My colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières, spoke of the appointments of returning officers in every riding, but we could just as well mention—because my colleague, the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques may well talk about it briefly—the appointment of those who, for example, preside over employment insurance cases at the Tax Court of Canada.

Again, these are political appointments. These are people who know quite well that they were appointed by the majority, and who are aware that they must respect government orders from on high. This does not do justice to taxpayers, to the citizens who are called to appear before the courts and who no longer believe in justice. As a result, they lose faith in the impartiality of the courts. Given that the judges are political appointees, people have severe doubts regarding the impartiality of the courts in which they must appear.

We could also have a look at the way board members of crown corporations are appointed. Here again, when private citizens have to deal with crown corporations like Canada Post, they are bound to think that decisions will not be free of bias. There is always some bias because the role of the executives is to defend the government policies. These people are appointed as directors or chairmen of the board precisely in order to uphold the policy of the government in office.

The motion before us raises the question of whether we are in a democracy and why we elect governments. Why do citizens elect a Parliament and form governments?

I think the primary role of the government is to serve all citizens and to redistribute services and wealth fairly. That is why we are a democracy, and not a dictatorship where a small group has total control of the government. We vote for members throughout the country, in Quebec as well as in Canada, so that they can speak for us, and express our ideals and our vision of our society.

To conclude, I think the way this government works and the way preceding governments have worked, for this has been going on for some time, is very dangerous for democracy. The manner of appointments and an increasingly secretive government are dangerous for democracy.

● (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been following the debate since this morning on the government appointments motion by the opposition.

We are fortunate to live in a country like Canada which gives members of Parliament or citizens the right to participate within a system and come to the House with the intention of separating a province from the country. That is our system and we cannot deny that.

If one does not appreciate the democracy we have here, all one has to do is step one foot outside this country to appreciate what we have in this country. However that is a matter of perception.

There is an expression, Mr. Speaker, do not do as I do, do as I tell you to do. The hon. member for the last 10 minutes spoke against our system and the federal government. We all know he is a member of the Bloc Québécois and Bloc Québécois' twin organization, Parti Québécois which has ruled Quebec for the last 10 to 15 years. Basically they are two sides of the same coin.

On the smart idea that the member brought forward in the last 10 minutes, is it the same as the Parti Québécois does in the province of Quebec? I know the Parti Québécois appoints officers overseas to what it calls Quebec House and it asks them to be Parti Québécois members. If it can do that for them, why can it not do that for us? I cannot figure that out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Speaker, I will not respond to the last part of the statements made by the member for Brampton Centre because I think that it would be pointless. However, I will say that Quebecers as a whole are very well informed as to what goes on in Quebec. They are very much aware of what goes on in Quebec; in terms of democracy, it is superior to what goes on here. I hope that my answer is clear, that he heard it well and understood it well. I will repeat it if necessary.

He said at the outset that getting out of the country makes one realize how good things are here. In Quebec, things are good also. We have a great democracy in Quebec. That does not mean that Canadian democracy is not good. However, there is a danger, for example, in believing that it cannot be improved and that it cannot change for the better. It is very dangerous to think that democracy can be taken for granted in a country such as this one where more and more decisions are made secretly in the backrooms without consulting the public and without informing the public.

[English]

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we should rise above partisan politics and look at this issue in a very good light. Some of the opinions expressed by my colleagues across the way have merit.

The one difficulty I have is that the motion would require that before any appointments were finalized they would have to be tabled in the House of Commons and be scrutinized by us. I have absolutely no difficulty with more scrutiny by the House on many of the appointments. It does not matter if the appointments are made by this party, the previous party or if they are made in Quebec or made in Alberta, sometimes they are slipped through in covert operations.

As a humble suggestion, would my colleagues across the way want to change their motion to read that when the House does not sit that appointments made will be looked upon when the House comes back? We would like to give the power to the government to function. Not only do we want the government to function but we also as parliamentarians must scrutinize what happens.

Would the Bloc members alter the motion so that appointments would be allowed to go through when the House is not in session but that they would be dealt with when the House returns?

• (1650)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Mr. Speaker, if my colleague wants to propose a motion or an amendment to that effect, he is free to do so. We will discuss it. We are not here to discuss a possible amendment that he could propose to the motion before us, to which an amendment has already been proposed.

I would like to come back to what I was saying earlier and would like to add that democracy must never be taken for granted. We must never forget that anything done secretly, anything that prevents the public from being informed is dangerous for democracy.

The fact that we live in a democratic society does not mean that democracy can be taken for granted. Democracy can never be taken for granted.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to take part in this debate on a motion introduced by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier. As far as I am concerned, this motion is quite relevant and deserves all the consideration of the House. I would like to read this motion, which says:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for

Supply

consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

The member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier introduced this motion this morning to see whether we could not, in this House, improve the situation on the whole issue of patronage appointments, on the whole issue of transparency, truth, justice and also the appearance of justice. This is a debate that was raised by the member for LaSalle—Émard, who has several supporters on the other side of the House who are saying that they agree with him in the speeches that are made outside this House. But today we have not seen many members of the Liberal majority agree to have a debate on this issue.

To go a bit further, the government House leader said in his remarks this morning that this motion is just a confirmation of what is already being done.

First of all, we have shown this is not the case. Under Standing Order 110, the majority of members on a committee can decide whether or not they will summon somebody who has just been appointed to examine the merits of the appointment.

What we are suggesting is that appointees should be examined to counterbalance the very broad power wielded by the Prime Minister, who can abuse this power and even appoint people like former minister Gagliano.

We are giving a certain amount of leeway to Mr. Gagliano by saying the facts have not been completely proven because there has been no public inquiry, something the government refused. There was at least the appearance of injustice because the minister was appointed as an ambassador mere days after the situation in which he was involved came to light.

By this motion, we want to restore some order and close loopholes so that appointments will be screened and partisan appointments weeded out.

When the government House leader said in the House “That is exactly what we are doing. They should be asking instead that the appointments be referred before confirmation of the said appointments”, we took him at his word. The member for Mercier came up with an amendment. That is what parliamentary debates are all about. We brought forward the amendment and, since then, the Liberal majority has been arguing that it can no longer support our position to plug all the loopholes and make our system much more efficient than what we have now.

I used Mr. Gagliano as an example, but I could talk about lesser known officials, in more ordinary positions, like the members of the EI board of referees. Some appointees are honest people who are entitled to their political opinions, but others are appointed only because of partisan considerations, and that is unacceptable.

We have to ensure that there are more qualified candidates for these positions. The decisions made by these people have an impact on our constituents. We have seen the impact some immigration decisions have had; they caused major complications. It also happens with the employment insurance legislation and in other areas, like with our embassies.

Supply

We know that, normally, foreign service career people advance slowly, depending on their skills and assignments. When someone without a background in this field has just been appointed, it would be a good thing to look at their CV to see what they have done, to make sure they are qualified for the job.

In committee, the hon. member for Mercier wanted to question Mr. Gagliano on his experience, and the committee chair systematically prevented her from doing so. This is the kind of situation we do not want to see repeated in similar circumstances.

● (1655)

That is why making the review automatic is important. There needs to be a process guaranteeing there will automatically be a review, a control, some counterbalancing of the power of the Prime Minister who can always recommend those he feels are appropriate. This way, we will be able to attain an objective like the one in place in the American-style presidential system, which goes a lot farther.

In our British parliamentary system, however, this tool is not currently available to us. It is not sufficiently present in any satisfactory form. I therefore find today's contribution by the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, calling for such a decision, a worthwhile undertaking.

It would also be to the advantage of the appointees, because it would enhance their credibility. According to the public opinion of the day, many people who have been appointed come with a reputation of having been appointed because of their partisan choices or their ties to the Liberal Party of Canada in the current government. This was equally true of Progressive Conservative appointees in the past.

If there were a provision for such a systematic inquiry, the matter would finally be settled. Once appointees have gone through the process, we on both sides of the House would have the guarantee that the opportunity was provided to people to express themselves, that we had the opportunity to express our opinion and to ask questions, so that public opinion could make a decision.

As I was saying this morning to the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, if the House supported this motion and if the government implemented it, in a few years, we would notice an improvement in the quality of the appointees.

Before the government could say, "It will be this person or that person, because we know him in the Prime Minister's Office; we will appoint him to this position", there would be a watchdog saying, "Yes, but before appointing that person, we must make sure that he is a good choice and that he is competent; therefore, that person will have to go through a test to check his qualifications". This is not being done right now. Such a process would avoid having appointments such as those that we have had and that were more or less acceptable and desirable.

This evening, we will vote on this fundamental issue. This will be a vote which will give us an idea of the type of decisions that will be made in the future by the government, if the member for LaSalle—Émard becomes the leader of the Liberal Party.

If there is a debate in this House and if, when the time comes to vote, the Liberal majority toes the party line, we can be assured that

they will behave in the same fashion when they form the next government. We will be faced with the same reality. The leader will have changed, but the spirit, the philosophy and the results will remain the same. This is unacceptable.

The Liberal majority that will vote today cannot invoke the fact that the party line has been imposed by the current Prime Minister. Liberal members will have to assume the responsibility, individually, of toeing the party line, rather than endorsing the position advocated by the person whom they see as their next leader.

The vote on this issue should signal a change in this regard, because this is an issue that should be above these matters, an issue that should make every member of Parliament think about what he believes in, about what he represents and about how he wants these things to be done in the future.

When we go back to our ridings, it may not be the first question that our constituents ask us. However, it is a question that always underlies our mandate as elected representatives. Are we acting with enough appearance of justice? Are we the same as those who have come before us? Do the appointments only serve to oil the machine, as was the case in the past?

For all of these reasons, we have debated a motion all day, a motion that is an interesting proposal. I urge every member of the House to support the motion moved by the member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier and amended by the member for Mercier because in the end, we could end up with a better quality of life and better appointments made by the government.

● (1700)

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. member, particularly his comments regarding the statements made by the member for LaSalle—Émard last week. I do not think he perhaps was listening to those statements carefully. I have heard this all day about the member for LaSalle—Émard.

It seems to me that the Bloc has ignored some of the things that member for LaSalle—Émard said. For example, he said that it was necessary to determine which of the many thousands of appointments made annually would merit public review. He referred to the need to review appointments perhaps of the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada. He then said that to determine which other senior appointments should also be subject to mandatory review in advance, we should turn to a parliamentary committee for direction.

He was not in favour of doing it in this kind of piecemeal manner, as the Bloc has suggested. Why is it ignoring what he actually said?

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Madam Speaker, I interpreted the comments made by the member for LaSalle—Émard as meaning that, fundamentally, the current system does not work. It is a system in which the power is concentrated in the office of the Prime Minister. I am sure that that is what the member for LaSalle—Émard said, that we have a system where the decision-making power is concentrated in the office of the Prime Minister, which means, in the end, that who you know at the PMO is more important than your skills in the sector where you are being asked to work.

When it comes to this, things absolutely must be shaken up and we must make significant changes. That is why I said that if the Liberal members voted tonight against our motion as amended, they will have made a decision to continue to bow to the old system. They may make statements outside the House, but when it comes down to a vote in the House, they keep the old system, because that is what they stand for: unabashed partisan politics.

This is what the current Liberal government advocates. This is the system that was condemned by the member for LaSalle—Émard, and I hope that each member of the Liberal majority will decide to vote according to his or her own conscience, so that we can change this system.

Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is just so much you can do with empty rhetoric.

I can understand why my colleague is disappointed. First, the Bloc members are disappointed because what they are proposing in their motion is already in place. It is disappointing. What is suggested in the motion can be fully implemented. They are also disappointed because they got elected in 1993 by making their constituents believe that they would have real power here.

Unfortunately, when a government is elected, it has to take its responsibilities and carry out its agenda. In fact, on the issues raised by the hon. member, significant measures have been taken. However, members cannot tell all in the House and not be consistent when they meet their constituents in their ridings.

This is a member who fights for roads and wharves. But when it came time to vote on Bill C-49 to allocate money for such projects, he voted against it.

I will just ask the following little question: his leader in the House, the member for Roberval, was correct in saying the following on March 21, 2001—not a century ago:

Of course there are rules so that the government can govern—and it is ultimately the objective pursued—but there are also rules allowing the opposition to slow down the government in its decision making process. When we feel that a decision is bad, we can slow down the government, we can make things more complicated for it, we can even question some bills on which there is no consensus, particularly when opposition parties work together and pool their resources.

With this statement, I find that the leader of the Bloc Québécois in the House has shown absolutely impeccable judgment. I would like to ask my colleague whether he feels that his leader was right in saying that the government is elected to assume its responsibilities. I feel it has made considerable progress in improving the way it listens to the opposition parties.

Take note debates allow all members to express their views. I know that his leader called it a waste of time yesterday. I wonder if more time is not being wasted today than was wasted yesterday in the take note debate on health.

• (1705)

Mr. Paul Crête: Madam Speaker, there is a fundamental difference between the two debates. As far as the one on health is concerned, we have known for years that it was a problem, that there are solutions and that governments are not proposing them.

In this case, it is a proposal by an opposition member, because we are indeed here to improve the system. We all know what the status quo and the old way of doing things mean. We all know the consequences of that. We have Ambassador Gagliano representing Canada while we cannot even guarantee his integrity. This model has to be changed. This should not be allowed to happen again.

The member says that the motion corresponds to the present reality and I invite you to read it again because there are two important elements in this motion.

The motion says that consultation should be automatic and also that it should be done before these people take up their duties. It seems to be two different things.

I would like to add one last thing to the declarations made by my leader. I think that, yes, he was talking about the parliamentary activity. We are here to improve the situation and we are here to hold constructive debates like the one that has been proposed today.

We will see tonight if the Liberal majority sings two different tunes: one outside the House, to try to be chosen as a leader, and the other one, based on reality, for those moments when a vote is called in this House. We will see the difference between the two.

[*English*]

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Bloc motion which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

The motion itself has been amended to include the caveat that the reference to committee should be made before the appointment is finalized. I will return to that amendment later.

When I first received notice of this motion, I was quite surprised because the standing orders already require that all order in council appointments be tabled in Parliament. They are then referred to standing committees for review where necessary, when the committees decide to review them. The current standing orders are more comprehensive than what the Bloc is proposing for us today. I do not understand why the Bloc is advocating changes to the standing orders that would weaken parliamentary scrutiny of appointments.

The sections of the standing orders dealing with government appointments can be found, as we have heard several times today, in Standing Orders 110 and 111.

Supply

Standing Order 110 requires that all non-judicial order in council appointments must be tabled within five sitting days after the order is published in the *Canada Gazette*. Under the standing order, the appointments are automatically deemed to be referred to the appropriate standing committee for review.

Standing Order 111 goes on to specify that committees have up to 30 sitting days to review the qualifications and competence of the appointee or nominee. Standing Order 111 also requires ministers to provide the curriculum vitae of the appointee to the committee.

As we can see, the House of Commons has procedures in place already to allow government appointments to receive parliamentary scrutiny. In fact approximately 4,300 appointments have been tabled since the government was elected in 1993. Parliamentary committees have been free to scrutinize any and all of these appointments.

Let me return to the motion itself which proposes amendments to the standing orders. I would like to give one reason that demonstrates why this motion would weaken our standing orders.

Under our current practice all appointments of deputy ministers are tabled in the House. The appropriate committee has the opportunity to review the appointment. This is an effective tool for committees as deputy ministers of course provide important advice to ministers and have significant influence over the direction and operation of their departments.

This in fact was identified in the McGrath committee report which led to the procedure for parliamentary review of government appointments. The McGrath report stated:

Although deputy ministers have great power, they can be closely scrutinized by their ministers who are accountable to Parliament. Nevertheless, most deputy ministers exercise wide discretion, and their predisposition to administer in a given way will affect the direction of their departments. Given the expanded role of standing committees in examining government operations, the appointment of a new deputy minister is a significant event, the implications of which should be subject to question by the appropriate standing committee.

Today's motion put forward by the Bloc would not allow parliamentary review of deputy minister appointments. I do not understand why the Bloc would want to do that. I do not understand why the Bloc would propose that the role of the House should be diminished in this way. It makes no sense.

I believe that parliamentary scrutiny supports the transparent selection of qualified candidates for senior government positions. The government supports the parliamentary scrutiny requirement provided under the standing order. It is an important requirement. It makes sense to have that requirement in the standing orders.

The government has taken additional measures to improve the appointment process. For example, professional human resources management techniques are being used to assist in the selection of candidates for many full time, fixed term positions. Since November 1993 134 advertisements have been placed in the *Canada Gazette* and/or other publications.

The McGrath report noted that parliamentary scrutiny of government appointments "was by far the most difficult" of all the subjects the committee considered.

●(1710)

The committee conducted an extensive review of this matter, which was part of a broader review of parliamentary reform. Of course among us who work on Parliament Hill the review is quite famous. We are all familiar with the McGrath committee's report.

Proposals to significantly change these procedures should be subject to similar scrutiny and review and should not be done in a piecemeal manner, as is being proposed today. They should be done as a part of a review just like the McGrath committee. We have seen other committees like that. More recently there has been the committee on modernization of the House which put forward and brought to us some significant important improvements to the way the work of this House is conducted.

Members should understand that these matters should not be entered into lightly. Like many other members on all sides of the House, I have tremendous respect for this institution and its rules. Those rules are based on almost 800 years of parliamentary history. Changes to them need to be considered carefully.

I would think that what the Bloc proposes is an idea that could be discussed by an all party modernization committee, as is being considered these days. As I understand it, the possibility of further modernization committees is one this side is open to. I hope we will see one coming forward in the near term.

I reiterate that a piecemeal system of change is not the way for anyone to go. If the objection from any quarter is the concentration of power in one place or another, then it must be the culture that has to change.

As for the amendment proposed by our colleagues across the way, it was an admission of defeat of sorts. The Bloc has been forced to amend its own motion mostly because it realizes that as it stood, the point was moot. We already have that rule, so what is the point of it? In its haste to make the debate relevant again, the Bloc has walked into a notion that was already the subject of public debate.

The issue of what appointments should be reviewed and by whom is one that has to be considered in a broader context, by a broader committee. For example, what would happen during long recess periods like January and the summer months? Would the government not be permitted to replace people who had left boards? If someone was deceased or his or her term expired, we would not be able to replace them. That does not make much sense because there is important work on these boards that has to go on.

It is important questions like these that need consideration, that need study by a group of MPs, by a parliamentary review committee. We need a broader study than one supply day motion. This is not the way to do it.

Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Yukon.

In conclusion, today's motion by the Bloc would actually weaken parliamentary scrutiny of appointments. This would be unfortunate since scrutiny of government appointments is an important function of this House, an important mechanism for members of Parliament to hold the government accountable. Therefore, I do not support the motion.

Supply

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to raise two points. First, how can the Parliamentary Secretary of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons say that Standing Orders 110 and 111 already cover those two points. While the motion by the Bloc refers to automatic referrals, Standing Orders 111(1) and (2) use the conditional. It cannot be automatic on one side and conditional on the other, as it is in subsection 111(1), which reads, referring to committees, “If it deems it appropriate”, or subsection 111(2) which reads, “If it should call an appointee”. There is nothing automatic there. It is all conditional.

Second, I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell us, if this House is the best of all possible worlds, and if the system is transparent and works well, why his colleague from LaSalle—Émard propose—it cannot be said that I did not read the speech, because I have it here in front of me—in which he said that, at present, to solve problems in this House, one had to answer only one question, “Who do you know in the PMO?”

How does the hon. member justify his position, according to which everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, when his colleague from LaSalle—Émard talks about the necessity of a democratic and institutional renewal?

[*English*]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, we have seen that the Bloc has had it wrong all day long. We have been hearing all day long about the comments of the member for LaSalle—Émard. Members have been picking out a few of his comments and have been ignoring the rest. They have ignored the fact that he talked about the need to turn to a parliamentary committee for direction on the matter being proposed in today's motion and not do it piecemeal.

As I have set out in my comments, it is important that we do this in a proper way with a committee reviewing the rules in total, not just one at a time. That is what he is recommending in relation to this issue. I do not know why the Bloc is refusing to recognize that fact and is trying to pick a little here and there of what the hon. former finance minister had to say about this topic. It baffles me.

On the question of the motion, I have to wonder whether the Bloc is really suggesting that we scrutinize the hundreds and hundreds of people a year who are appointed to boards. I talked earlier about the fact that since 1993, 4,300 appointments have gone through the House. Committees could have reviewed them but chose not to. Is the member really suggesting that committees meet with every single one of them and spend the time that will be required for that?

I think that the standing orders already cover this provision, as I have said. They cover the kinds of things that the Bloc is looking for in today's motion. The motion really is redundant.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as usual the hon. member made a fantastic presentation on this point. It is obvious from the debate over the course of the day that the opposition will be joining forces against the government in voting on this motion.

Can the member confirm if former premier of Quebec Lucien Bouchard was appointed as ambassador by the then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney? Did former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appoint Stephen Lewis as Canadian ambassador to the UN? Did our Prime Minister appoint former Prime Minister Kim Campbell as consul general to Los Angeles? Did they use the same regulations as are used today regarding the nominations and appointments of consuls general or ambassadors? The question is, have we changed the rules?

Mr. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I am going to try to provide an accurate reply.

It is certainly an interesting combination of appointees. I think most Canadians would probably have a more favourable view of the last two than the first one.

On the question of when the rules changed, other members here may recall exactly, but I have in my mind that the McGrath committee report came out in 1989. There were changes that followed, but by the time the Liberals came into government in 1993 the changes were already made. They would have applied certainly to the appointment of Kim Campbell. I think they would have applied to Stephen Lewis as well, but I do not think they would have applied when Brian Mulroney appointed Lucien Bouchard as ambassador to France. That is my understanding.

•(1720)

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first I would like to congratulate my colleague from Halifax West. I agree with a lot of the things he said. It was an excellent submission, especially the point about the 800 years in developing a parliamentary procedure and that we should be careful in what changes we make.

I would like to muse on the strategy the opposition parties have come up with for opposition days this fall. Last week we debated a motion from the Alliance when members explained they would like to debate “a new idea” from the member for LaSalle—Émard. Rather than debate one of their own ideas, they wanted to debate another Liberal new idea. Today we see that Bloc members once again have made a great point all day that they would like to debate “another new idea” of the Liberals, an idea from the member for LaSalle—Émard.

Most of the motions coming from a majority government are Liberal ideas which we promote and debate, but now the opposition has decided to give their days back. In the time that they have to promote their ideas of how they will be a government in waiting, we also get to debate new Liberal ideas. It is devastating.

In the spirit of collegiality I encourage my cher collègues to keep coming up with good ideas so that the opposition can press forward with this strategy right to the bitter end.

I would like to talk about today's motion but first I will read it into the record.

[*Translation*]

The motion reads:

Supply

That, in the opinion of this House, government appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to the appropriate committee of the House of Commons for consideration, and that the relevant Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be amended accordingly.

[English]

On December 5, 1984, the special committee on the reform of the House of Commons, the McGrath committee, was appointed to examine the powers, procedures, practices, organizations and facilities of the House of Commons. Among the recommendations it ultimately came up with was that committees should be authorized to review non-judicial order in council appointments or in some cases nominations for appointment.

As a result, under Standing Orders 110 and 111 of the House of Commons, non-judicial order in council appointments are automatically referred to the appropriate standing committee within five days for consideration. The committee may call the nominee or appointee before it during the subsequent 30-day period to review his or her qualifications for the post. The committee may report recommendations to the House, but in keeping with the recommendations of the McGrath committee it does not have the power to confirm or reject the appointment.

In essence, the resolution today is confirming that procedure and reinforcing it. I do not have a problem with that. That is confirmed in a statement made on February 19, 2002, by the member for Mercier:

[Translation]

In the case of any political appointment, the committee may ask to give its approval regarding the experience and expertise of the appointee to perform the duties of his job.

This is an article from the *Canadian Press*.

• (1725)

[English]

I have no problem in supporting the motion and the system that basically is in place.

The Standing Orders currently allow for a review of order in council appointments. Since 1994 there have been over 4,300 such appointments and the committee has rarely used this power except when there was significant publicity. I would like to commend the former members of Parliament for using this power judiciously, for not having the types of circuses that occasionally occur in American congressional hearings that go on and on, and which do not serve the purposes that a rational review is meant to accomplish.

While we are talking about appointments, I want to make a clarification on another bill we are reviewing, Bill C-2. There was an issue related to appointments to a board in that particular bill. One of the members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition was concerned that there might be problems with these government appointments because of the significant major powers of this board.

The member may have had some bad experiences in the past related to this and so has concerns. For clarification, and I said this on CBC radio last night as well, this particular board has only seven members and only one is appointed by the minister free and clear. The rest are nominated by other organizations. That may be a generic debate related to boards totally appointed by the Government of

Canada. In this particular case it is not relevant because only one in seven of the members is appointed by the government.

A number of members from all the parties today have talked about various aspects of government reform that have been discussed in the House. I want to talk about private members' bills because there are a number of members who have been concerned about various aspects of it. I probably have a different view than many members. In promoting private members' business and making it more successful, we must increase the respect that parliamentarians have for the people who work in the departments and vice versa. They must also increase their respect for us so that we can get good policy into private members' bills.

If I come up with an idea in an area in which I am not an expert, I go to the experts who have spent careers on that particular area. Some members do this and that is great. The experts have checked out various legislation in other countries that is similar. They have checked the pros and cons, and consulted people. They have done legal checks. They have done all sorts of research on a particular area and if members can say that they have dealt with it, consulted on it and looked at it, then people would give more credibility to the initiatives.

On the other side, the people in the departments too have to respect that every member in the House is a representative of the people. They have been elected by the people to put forward the wishes of the people. When members, no matter which party they are from, come up with ideas or suggestions which more often than not probably emanated from the people, then the people who have designed the bill should be able to answer the questions. They should be able to come up with the reasons why the bill should stay as it is or make appropriate changes.

We need to increase that dialogue. Everyone would have more respect and more confidence in the product that comes out. Perhaps we could have more progress in private members' business.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Madam Speaker, it has been said numerous times that our political party misunderstood the ideas of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. I will read them in full and ask my colleague to comment on them. They go as follows, and I quote:

Fifth, the process for government appointments has to be reformed. The unfettered powers of appointment enjoyed by a prime minister are too great. From ambassadors and consuls-general to regulatory agencies to museum boards and the list goes on. Such authority must be checked by reasonable scrutiny conducted by Parliament in a transparent fashion. Some senior government appointments should undergo public review. The decision should continue to rest finally with the government so that the process does not drag out. Nevertheless, qualifications of the candidates should be examined by the responsible standing committee before the appointments are confirmed.

These are the exact words of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. So, does the member for Yukon agree with the proposals I have just quoted made by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard? Yes or no?

Supply

● (1730)

[English]

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the excellent and thoughtful question. My understanding though is in relation to the suggestions from the member for LaSalle—Émard and as I said at the beginning, I am delighted we are discussing Liberal suggestions.

The six suggestions that came out were put forward to be discussed at further length. They were ideas that had come forward from all sides of the House, but they were not the final, cast in stone decisions of these serious matters.

As the member from Halifax West said, when we are dealing with procedures, some that have been in place for 800 years, we must be careful to ensure what would work as opposed to in one afternoon's discussion change them. I am not opposed to a discussion to look at all the ramifications and a committee analysis to see where it leads.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, the hon. member congratulated the member from Halifax for his speech. I wonder if he agrees with the member from Halifax that we cannot fix some of the weaknesses in Parliament piecemeal, that it has to be done in one giant move. That is one of the most ridiculous statements I have heard, especially from a parliamentary secretary to the House leader in many a day.

This place only changes piecemeal and incrementally. The proposal we have today talks, at least in theory, about the necessity to balance the power of the PMO with the balance of parliamentarians. However, the first amendment to the Standing Orders by the government in this Parliament was to restrict the ability of opposition members to bring amendments at report stage. A single amendment to the Standing Orders that it forced through, not a holistic change to how we handle legislation, simply a move to restrict the power of the opposition, and strengthen the hand of the government. It was one move in isolation that had one purpose only, to strengthen the government and weaken the opposition.

Does the member believe that the member from Halifax was right, that we cannot change things around here until we change everything or does he believe, as I do and most parliamentarians should, that we should make changes incrementally or do not make changes at all?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, I do not necessarily agree with the member that the only way of making changes is incremental or not making them at all. The points we must consider are the various ramifications on the other elements of the system when a particular change is made. For example, if a new part for a car is invented, it is related to the workings of the rest of the car and it has to fit in. When we make a change, whether it is for good or bad, there are also changes made one by one on certain other things. I am hopeful that members of Parliament will give careful consideration to the effects and ramifications on the other parts of the system when they make such changes.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, the member made reference to the McGrath report. It recommended that the government make appointments but that they would be held up to scrutiny. How can an appointment be scrutinized or anything be scrutinized if we are working in a committee where the chair is appointed by the Prime Minister to do as the Prime Minister wishes?

● (1735)

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Madam Speaker, the chair does not make the decisions of the committee, the whole committee does. If the committee, as an instrument of Parliament, has a majority of members from one party on it, it is because the people elected a majority of people from that party so it is just another expression of the will of the people.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

Today we have an interesting debate. I had wished that the debate today would have revolved around, not just the specifics of the motion, which is important enough, but around the actual balance of power that members on all sides of the House think there should be between the Prime Minister's Office, the executive branch of government and the rest of Parliament. In other words, what is the proper role for parliamentarians, for the executive and for the Prime Minister and his office, and how do we bring those into balance?

I would argue that the motion today is an effort to bring back into balance what the member for LaSalle—Émard properly said is a problem, a democratic deficit here in the House of Commons, which is who do you know in the PMO, to give the cute little phrase that the member for LaSalle—Émard will probably try to campaign on. In reality, what we are trying to debate here today and what we should be getting at I hope in the long run is finding the proper balance.

I would argue that the role of parliamentarians is to ride herd on the executive branch and specifically on the leader of the country. Members of Parliament are not sent here simply to pare at the party line, to vote when they are told to or to go to committee and do as the whip bids. They are here to exercise their judgment and balance off the large amount of power that is given to the Prime Minister and cabinet, and to do so in a way that represents their constituents' wishes. Also, this takes away any of the excesses and takes any of kind of extreme position out of what the government might do and brings it back into something that would be palatable to all parts of the country and every riding.

What we have here today is a motion that says that before government appointments are confirmed, such as ambassadors, consul generals, heads of regulatory bodies and so on, the nominees should be checked by a committee of peers here in the House of Commons to make sure they pass mustard.

What we would have then have, I hope, is a balance between the government's ability to govern and its necessity to move in and fill positions allowing it to put managers and leadership in place to get through its important work in all parts of the country. Hopefully, on our part, we would check those appointments to make sure they were based on merit and on the good of the country, not based on paying somebody off, helping a friend or putting a family member into a position of authority. I do not see anything wrong with that if that is what our job is, and certainly it is at least that in part.

Supply

Therefore I see nothing wrong with the motion and the amendment which directs that before appointments are confirmed they should go through a committee and the committee should be able to recommend to Parliament whether it thinks it is an appropriate appointment or not. This is not revolutionary. It follows a theme that many members on both sides of the House have tried to develop over, I would say, the last four or five years especially.

For example, the 51st report of the procedure and House affairs committee was a report that dealt with the business of supply, the business of how much money is being spent and the way that we as parliamentarians can ride herd on that to make sure it is spent properly. The 51st report suggested that we should have a balance. The government proposes a budget. The government must get a budget through because it is a business of supply. It pays the bills and it pays the pension cheques. It is the supply of money for all government services and goods. However we in parliament also have a role to make sure it is spent properly and in the the best way possible.

The 51st report of the procedure and House affairs committee suggested that the way to do that was to allow parliamentarians to move money around within departments. For example, if there is an envelope of money for advanced education we may ask to see more of it put into perhaps the construction of universities or some such thing. Other members may want it to go more toward student loans.

The 51st report says that government should allow members of Parliament to bring their expertise to bear and move the money within the department to make it a better budgetary proposal than the government had by itself.

● (1740)

All parties agreed to that but what happened? The government would not allow that to come forth. The former minister of finance is mum on this. Is that not where the real power is? Is it not in the ability to control spending, to move it around and to say to the government that it does not have the only word on it? It may have the final word but we in Parliament want to make recommendations that will allow parliamentarians to have a meaningful role in how this country is governed.

Another example is the 66th report of the standing committee dealing with private members' bills. It says that we should not be beholden to the government to okay which of the bills it thinks is a nice one, a good one and one on which it is willing to vote. It should be up to the House to decide.

All members of the House on both sides came up with an all party unanimous report called the 66th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The members said that the government should not be allowed to finagle this, that it should be something for members decide. What happened to that report? It did not pass because the government in the front bench, not the backbenchers who are here listening to this today, the front bench on which there are none, did not want to see it because it would take it out of the hands of—

Mr. Geoff Regan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps you may want to remind the hon. member that we do not refer to the absence or presence of members in the Chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sure the hon. member for Fraser Valley is aware of that rule since he has been in the House long enough.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Madam Speaker, I thought when I referred to all of them together I could get away with that but I see I cannot.

Let me continue with the 66th report. This should also tell people something. A lot of reports come out of this Parliament and every parliament. The 66th report, which means a few have come and gone before it, is a unanimous all party report on private members' bills, but what happened? The government front bench would not allow it to go forward because it would level the playing field.

It was interesting to hear what the member for LaSalle—Émard had to say about that report during his democratic deficit speech which he started to muse about. He said “We cannot have a system where members are basically told how to vote by the government. That is preposterous, especially for private members' business, especially when it comes to the business of money”. What did he do? On the 27 private members' bills that dealt with the Department of Finance, he voted against 24 of them when he was the minister of finance.

In other words, the front bench, including the former front bench, is not really interested in balancing the power between the executive and the rest of us, and yet that is what the debate should really be about tonight. The rest of us were sent here not to bleat like sheep or vote like machines. We were sent here to balance the power and ride herd on the executive so Canadians have the best possible government.

The motion before us today is a step in the right direction but it is only one of many things that should be done.

We put out two documents called Building Trust and Building Trust II. I get a bit of a lark from the member over there who says that all these good ideas came from the Liberal side of the House. I invite him to read Building Trust II. Building Trust is a document put out by the Canadian Alliance that describes many points that would improve the House of Commons. When they were brought forward, the member will be happy to know or perhaps he forgets it, the House leader stood up and said “Preposterous, ridiculous ideas that could not possibly be implemented in the House of Commons”. These are the good ideas that the hon. member is now endorsing.

There are about 10 suggestions in the document and 3 of them have now come to pass, three preposterous, ridiculous ideas that the Alliance put forward. A fourth one was approved today, which is the secret ballot election of committee chairs. It was a ridiculous, preposterous idea but it has now come to pass. Why? Maybe there was dissension in the ranks on that side. It is a poor reason but we are happy to see it because we are seeing some parliamentary reform for the first time. For the first time we are seeing that there is not enough fear of the front bench to keep the back bench in line. Now we have secret ballot elections of committee chairs which was something we have asked for it for years.

If we pass the motion today it would be number five. It would be right in line with what the member for LaSalle—Émard wants to have by the way, which is a committee review of government appointments before they are confirmed and finalized. I say to the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, right on. He is barking up the right tree because that is right in the document, Building Trust, brought in by the Canadian Alliance.

Canadians will only get the full Building Trust complement of ideas when they elect a Canadian Alliance government committed, not in the midst of a leadership campaign, but in its policy books since the creation of the party to bring forward true parliamentary reform for all Canadians, to rebalance the federation and rebalance Parliament between the power of the front bench and the rest of parliamentarians who deserve to have a proper role in the House of Commons.

• (1745)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is good to see the member back on his feet again participating in the debate. It is always interesting. I think his closing comment, which he repeated a couple of times, was about balancing the power on the front bench with the rest of us.

That statement ignores the reality of parliamentary democracy, which is that there is a partisan dimension to it. During the member's speech, and maybe he would like to comment on this, he suggested somehow that committees needed more power but member knows very well that 80% of the committees of the Parliament of Canada do not review the estimates and do not report them back to the House. They are deemed to be reported back and that Parliament, by its actions, including that party, have abandoned probably 50% of its responsibilities.

Committees have rights and responsibilities and it is not simply electing a chair. The member knows very well that in a parliamentary democracy parties run in elections. They have platforms, leaders and philosophies, and, by their very nature, bring to this place a partisan environment. The member, who has been on the procedure and House affairs committee in the past, knows very well that there is a lot of negotiating, a lot of trade-offs, a lot of leveraging and a lot of other activities, like instead of those committees dealing with the estimates, they deal with them during question period and try to grill a minister rather than to address the estimates.

Maybe the member should comment on the realities of partisanship and comment on whether or not the committees now in fact have earned the right to take on more responsibility when it is clear that the committees have been used as an instrument of partisanship all along.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Madam Speaker, I am not sure exactly what the question is but I invite the member to read the speech, which is not a bad speech, by the member for LaSalle—Émard.

The member for LaSalle—Émard said "legislation is sent to committees after the cement has set". On private members' business he said "the existing system is so weak that it is laughable". He also said "standing committees should be overhauled because they need more independence and expanded authority". Why is that? It is because now they do not have it.

Supply

Why do members not use their existing powers to review the business of supply? What is the point? We get tired of it. It is like whack a gopher at the fair. When we stick our head up after the ninth, tenth or fifteenth time of having it beat down into the ground we have to say ourselves that it is not very productive. The government does not allow us to move a single dollar. Not one dollar can be moved from one part of the department to the next. If we bring it back to the House, what happens? The entire bunch of them over there get up on their hind legs and say whatever the minister wants and then reverts it all back to the original.

That member over there is one of the worst because he will lobby us behind the scenes and then vote with the government when he gets a chance.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I do not think we have to take any lessons on bolting from the member for Fraser Valley.

I do admit that the Canadian Alliance Party has brought forward some interesting reforms and ideas, and some should be adopted. One of them was the question of recall. In other words, if members violated their own oath and some of the promises that they made as party members and members of Parliament they would be recalled, pulled back into the constituencies and no longer be members of Parliament.

Is he willing to do that on the pension issue that he ran against? Why do they not talk about recall where every one of them swallowed themselves whole and did a double backflip on the pension issue? Let us talk about recall if we are talking about reforming this House. Will he stand by his word to be recalled as a member of Parliament on the pension issue?

• (1750)

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to note that the member likes to get on his high horse about this issue of recall. What is interesting is that I have absolutely no problem with the position on recall. If citizens want to initiate a recall, we should let them do it.

With regard to the pension issue that the member keeps bringing up, I did go to my people. I commissioned a pole in my riding. I had a public meeting in my riding. I had consultations with my membership. Even after all of that, if there was a move to recall, I think all members should be subjected to that if necessary.

A was document brought forward at the assembly of the member's party which held in Edmonton. It was something I had a chance to help create. His party was in favour of recall until it got to the party's convention and then it backed down. That is a shame.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I compliment the Bloc Québécois for its motion. Let us talk about the reality in Canada today and why this motion came about.

Supply

The expectations of Canadians when they elect a member of Parliament, they expect that person to come to the House and be free to intervene, implement legislation, affect legislation and fight for their concerns.

The reality is that we have a prime ministerial autocracy, an elected dictatorship. Parliament is controlled by the Prime Minister and the people in the Prime Minister's Office. Even the frontbench is powerless and is more like a collective focus group than individuals who can use their individual and collective talents to fight for the concerns of Canadians and their particular ministries. That is really sad.

The situation has become worse because there is no so-called democracy anywhere else in the world that has as much power centralized in one office, the Prime Minister's Office; not in Great Britain, the United States, nowhere. We have a Prime Minister that has powers more in keeping with a president without the internal checks and balances that a presidential system has. That makes Canada one sick democracy.

We need to change that. If we do not, then the ability for Canadians to vote for people who they want to send to the House to fight for their concerns will be gone. That is the situation we have today where the MPs do not have the power to represent their constituents. Even if they are in cabinet, the Prime Minister controls what happens in cabinet, tells the ministers what to say, what to do and when to do it. It is one person and a group of unelected people.

Part of this has to do with the way we select our Prime Minister. The prime minister is not selected by the members within the party. The person is selected by a small group within the party to become the leader of the party. The prime minister is not chosen by the people of our country.

The other point is the interface between the public and legislation. Personally I find this extremely disturbing and utterly disheartening. When we sit in committee, where the public has a chance to interact with members of Parliament and put forth constructive suggestions to change legislation, what happens is a sham. I will explain why.

When we attend committees, we deal with legislation or study issues. Members of the public who are learned, intent and focused come up with some fantastic suggestions and hopefully we adopt some of those suggestions for the public good. What is the reality? The reality is that we spend a lot of time, a lot of money and a lot of effort putting together documents with constructive suggestions that can help the public. Those studies get one day of press, then they are tossed into some warehouse to collect dust, never to be seen or heard from again, never to be implemented.

I will give some examples. We all know that the Kirby commission and the Romanow commission, supported by the Prime Minister, have been tasked to look for solutions to deal with the most important issue affecting Canadians; our health care system. However remember that in 1995 the Prime Minister put together a blue ribbon panel to address health care. Whatever became of that report? Whatever became of the solutions from that blue ribbon panel? Absolutely nothing.

Whatever came of the \$60 million royal commission on aboriginal affairs, a thick document with umpteen good suggestions that could

have addressed one of the most underprivileged and most needy groups within Canada, who desperately need our help? That document had solutions which needed to be implemented years ago for the betterment of these people? They are crying out for help. It is being used as little more than a doorstop in certain people's offices or is sitting in a room somewhere.

• (1755)

The bottom line is these reports, which cost the Canadian taxpayer millions of dollars and thousands of hours of time for people in the House and staff who work very hard to put these documents together, go absolutely nowhere because the Prime Minister's office is not concerned with the public good. It is concerned with polls.

The bottom line in Canadian politics is a structure controlled by the Prime Minister's office and the unelected people within that office, individuals who are primarily concerned with where they are in the polls and not with the public good. Where is the public good in all this? They prefer to study issues rather than deal with them. I call that one of the greatest diseases we have in the House, "study-itis".

We have problems in Canada, some small, some large, some that are relatively benign, some that effect the lives of people and some that will cost the lives of people through our inaction.

There are solutions. A lot of this is not rocket science. Are those solutions implemented? No, they are not. The public wonders why. The ultimate legislative agenda has everything to do with where people are in the polls, specifically the government, and less to do with public policy. That is why important issues affecting Canadians are not dealt with.

When MPs are elected, they come to the House with great desire to do things for their constituents and indeed for their country. Yet they find once in the House that they are told to shut up, to do what they are told or else. That goes from top to bottom. Those who try to innovate are labelled as renegades or rebels and relegated to some place out in left field. Certainly they will not be used by leadership.

What we need is a transformation of leadership one which will use people with different viewpoints and use the House as a place where there is vigorous and aggressive debate and challenges each of us to bring forth the best solutions to address the problems of our nation. Ultimately the best solutions will percolate to the top so that they can be applied for the people of our country. It is sad to say that does not occur.

I hope in our lifetimes, whether inside the House or outside, that we will come to the day when MPs will have true free votes in the House. I hope we will have electronic voting in the House which will be an asset in voting freely across party lines. I hope committees will be at arm's length from the political masters and will have the ability to deal with legislation first so the public can have creative input into that legislation before it goes to the House, rather than being an institution where legislation is rubber stamped.

We also need a to take away the ability of the Prime Minister to make appointments. The public would be interested to know that the Prime Minister appoints cabinet, the deputy ministers, the assistants to the ministers, which is very important, the Senate, the Supreme Court and the heads of Crown corporations. We have one individual who has a whole swath of people controlling the major central organizations which are beholden to that person. That is not a democracy.

The Bloc is saying is this, and I think members across party lines would agree. Members on the other side know full well, too, if they look into their hearts, that they need this as much as we do. They need to democratize the House as much as we do, because they cannot do their jobs for their constituents and neither can we.

Would it not be healthier if we listened to the motion of the Bloc Quebecois and adopted it right away? It is very important that this happens. I would challenge members on the other side to work with us across party lines to institute the changes on how appointments are made and how committees are structured and that there are reforms to private members' business and other things. If we do that, then Canada will be a democracy and not the autocracy that we have today. We will get rid of this elected dictatorship that is a blight and a pox on all our houses.

• (1800)

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the current system of order in council appointments can be improved. Anything can be improved around here, but after listening to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, I do not want to go backwards. I do not want to make things worse.

Let us look at the amendment to the motion. What does the amendment call for? It calls for order in council appointees, before the process is finalized, to be brought before House of Commons committees to be raked over the coals. That is exactly what would happen. They would be raked over the coals by the opposition, which would be looking for any possible thing with which to denigrate the appointees. Someone might have been in a car accident 30 years ago. Heaven knows, somebody might have had a baby out of wedlock. Somebody might have smoked a joint sometime in the past and the opposition would turn it into a scandal.

Look at what has happened in Congress. About 10 years ago, we had the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas fiasco in the Senate. As well, former president Clinton tried to appoint a particular woman for attorney-general. It turned out she did not pay for some unemployment insurance premiums for a babysitter and down she went. She had to be disapproved. Then of course the Democrats got into a tit-for-tat situation. It was payback time. When Bush tried to appoint a particular woman for labour secretary she had to be blown away by the Democrats. Again I think it was because she did not pay some unemployment insurance premiums.

That is the kind of situation we would have if we had order in council appointees brought before committees. In other words, the system would be politicized, and the last thing we need around here is even more politics. We have to give the administration some facility, some room, to do the job properly.

Supply

I defy anyone to suggest that our deputy ministers are any worse than their counterparts in the United States, that our judges are any worse than their counterparts in the United States, and in fact, as far as I am concerned, than in any country around the world. The last thing we need is this kind of politicization.

Mr. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, if the Prime Minister having the power to appoint every single deputy minister and minister is not politicization, then what is?

What we are trying to do is enable the people of this country, through their elected officials, to have some vetting procedure. Rather than having one person in the Prime Minister's Office appoint all these people in all of these important positions across the land, we are just saying to please put some faith into the House, for crying out loud. We suggest that all of us should have some input into these extremely important positions so that the cream will rise to the top and we will have an apolitical process whereby individuals will be chosen on the basis of merit.

We have fine deputy ministers in the country and very fine Supreme Court judges. I am sure that those people would also be selected by a two-thirds majority of the House. That is a lot fairer than having one person select those people without any accountability and without any transparency.

• (1805)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, after that last question I just have to make a comment on the extraordinary frustration from the hon. member that we should have openness in our system of appointments. He suggested that inappropriate questions might be asked in the course of questioning a person as to whether or not he or she is suitable for some government appointment.

If a question that is asked is inappropriate and is beyond the pale of what the public will accept, then the person who asked the question, who raised the point from the past of the potential appointee, will suffer the consequences in public opinion. I think there is a natural mechanism to protect us from going too far and that mechanism is the wisdom of the Canadian people who will not tolerate too much inappropriate probing into the pasts of individuals.

I do think that if one takes a look at the process by which potential appointments are reviewed in the United States and elsewhere, one would find that on the whole the questions are very practical and policy oriented. They do not get as much coverage as the examples the hon. member has mentioned, but I think we do find that on the whole openness in appointments leads to a superior quality of appointments.

It is not a spectacular process and that is why the member is not aware of these many examples. Nonetheless, I think it does produce a better quality of appointed official.

Mr. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. friend. The fact of the matter is that he is absolutely right. Any of us who are behaving in a manner that is going to be harmful to the process will be raked over the coals back in our own ridings. We should be putting more faith in the Canadian public that they have the wisdom to keep an eye on us to make sure we are doing our job. If we are trying to make cheap political points at the expense of the public good they will turf us out of office.

Supply

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way talked about cheap political tactics. I am just wondering whatever happened to the Reform/Alliance, when every member was going to be free to vote. They came here and we have seen what happened: the whip stood up and asked that anyone who wanted to vote otherwise. They even got rid of that. I am just wondering who is here and how dare they talk about cheap political process when they actually practise it.

Mr. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, there is only one political party that has taken a leadership role in democratizing and reforming the House and that was the Reform Party and is the Canadian Alliance. We are the party that stood up and came to power in 1993 to bring forth documents like "Building Trust II" to be able to implement and proffer solutions that would make Canada more democratic.

We have never heard anything from that side over there, any suggestions whatsoever, to democratize this House. We have heard promises but there has been no action. For crying out loud, the member should take a look at what we have offered in this party to democratize the House and he should be thankful that we are here to make sure that he can do his job because he certainly cannot do it himself.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my views on this motion. I find it surprising that the Bloc would use its allotted day to ask for changes that have already been made in our Standing Orders.

The fundamental question being asked today is how should governments go about appointing the many people who are needed to ensure the proper administration of the country and ensuring that candidates are chosen for their qualifications and not out of whim or patronage? In this kind of debate, I think it is impossible to please everybody.

In the 1980s, I was a journalist. We had a Progressive-Conservative government in Ottawa then, and the debates were the same. Naturally, it is easy for the Bloc to ask for anything and everything, because it will never hold power.

We answered these questions when we amended the Standing Orders, our rules in this House.

Extensive consultations were held to find a mechanism that would allow for a more active participation in the examination of appointments. Several recommendations were made and were included in the Standing Orders of the House. Thus, the ability of members of Parliament to examine many of the appointments mentioned in today's motion was increased.

For example, in accordance with the current Standing Orders:

A Minister of the Crown shall lay upon the Table a certified copy of an Order in Council, stating that a certain individual has been appointed to a... non-judicial post, not later than five sitting days after the Order in Council is published in the Canada Gazette. The same shall be deemed to have been referred to a standing committee specified at the time of tabling, pursuant to Standing Order 32(6), for its consideration during a period not exceeding thirty sitting days.

During this period, the minister may be asked to provide the resume of the appointee, to show his or her ability to carry out the duties.

Committee members may ask that the appointee or the nominee appears before them to answer their questions on the subject.

Where the Government intends to appoint an Officer of Parliament, the Clerk of the House or the Parliamentary Librarian, the name of the proposed appointee shall be deemed referred to the appropriate standing committee... not more than thirty days following the tabling of a document concerning the proposed appointment.

The committee then has thirty days to make a motion to ratify this person's appointment.

The purpose of the Bloc Quebecois motion is, therefore, met by the Standing Orders we already have. The Standing Orders are, in fact, even more complete than the Bloc motion, in that they apply not only to the appointments listed in the motion, but to all order in council appointments.

Since this government came to power in 1993, it has proposed some 4,300 appointments. I strongly recommend that any members unfamiliar with the procedure take the time to get familiar with *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by clerks Marleau and Montpetit.

As I have already pointed out, the wording of the Bloc Quebecois motion is still more limited than the Standing Orders. I would like to stress that point and also to make a detailed comparison.

The motion proposes that the appointments of ambassadors, consuls general and heads of regulatory bodies and Crown corporations should automatically be referred to committees. The Standing Orders provide for this, but as well includes all Deputy Minister appointments, which the Bloc Quebecois motion does not specify. The Standing Orders do.

The motion also refers to administrators of regulatory bodies such as the CRTC, the Canadian Transportation Agency and the National Energy Board.

● (1810)

Some quasi-judiciary appointments are proposed based on House precedent, namely appointments to the Employment Insurance Board of Referees, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission. There is no mention of these whatsoever in this motion.

The present Standing Orders are, therefore, in line with the motion presented today. They are, however, more thorough, because they do not apply only to the appointments listed in the motion, but to all appointments by order in council.

Why are we being asked to address this motion today? We also need to ask ourselves whether we want to adopt an American-style system, which will politicize the appointment process and lead us to the media frenzies my colleagues have already mentioned.

The McGrath committee, which proposed changes to the Standing Orders, analyzed this system. They told us it was not desirable in Canada—

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Unfortunately, there is no time left for the member to finish her speech.

It being 6.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The vote is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Call in the members.

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

(Division No. 11)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Benoit
Bergeron	Borotsik
Bourgeois	Brien
Burton	Cadman
Cardin	Casey
Chatters	Clark
Crête	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Doyle	Dubé
Duceppe	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Forseth
Fournier	Gagnon (Québec)
Gallant	Gauthier
Godin	Goldring
Gouk	Grewal
Grey	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Harper	Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom	Hinton
Jaffer	Johnston
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lanctôt
Lill	Loubier
Lunn (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	Lunny (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Marceau

Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

Adams
Allard
Augustine
Beaumont
Bellemare
Bertrand
Binet
Bonwick
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Collenette
Coppes
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duplain
Efford
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Harvard
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Malhi
Marcil
Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Parrish
Peric
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Rock
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard

Supply

Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Ménard
Merrifield
Obhrai
Plamondon
Rajotte
Reynolds
Robinson
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stoffer
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NAYS

Members

Alcock
Assadourian
Bagnell
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Bryden
Byrne
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eggleton
Farrah
Folco
Frulla
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Harb
Harvey
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keys
Knutson
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Maloney
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhon
Patry
Peschisolido
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Price
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller

Supply

St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Wood— 141

St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan

PAIRED

Members

Anderson (Victoria)
Bigras
Cannis
Gagnon (Champlain)
Paquette
Perron

Barnes (London West)
Bradshaw
Charbonneau
Girard-Bujold
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St-Hilaire— 12

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the amendment lost.

The question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

• (1845)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the yeas have it.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

NUCLEAR SAFETY AND CONTROL ACT

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to amend the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee; and on the motion that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-4.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I think you would find consent that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House with the Liberal members voting yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Madam Speaker, the Canadian Alliance members will be voting yea.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Brien: Madam Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote no on this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, the members of the NDP will vote no on this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Madam Speaker, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party vote yes to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Madam Speaker, I will vote in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 12*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Alcock
Anders
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bertrand
Binet
Bonwick
Boudria
Bryden
Burton
Cadman
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Clark
Collenette
Copps
Day
Dion
Dromisky
Duncan
Easter
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Fitzpatrick
Fontana
Frulla
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Graham
Grey
Guarnieri
Harb
Harvard
Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Ianno
Jaffer
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee

Adams
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Augustine
Bailey
Beaumier
Bellemare
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Brown
Bulte
Byrne
Calder
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chatters
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
DeVillers
Doyle
Drouin
Duplain
Efford
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Folco
Forseth
Fry
Galloway
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal
Grose
Hanger
Harper
Harvey
Hill (MacLeod)
Hilstrom
Hubbard
Jackson
Jennings
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung

Lincoln
Lunn (Saanchi—Gulf Islands)
MacAulay
Macklin
Maloney
Mark
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peschisolido
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Price
Provenzano
Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Scott
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Torsney
Valeri
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams
Yelich — 203

Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Marcil
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Obhrai
Pacetti
Parrish
Peric
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Rock
Savoy
Schmidt
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
St-Julien
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Whelan
White (North Vancouver)
Wood

NAYS

Members

Asselin
Bergeron
Brien
Crête
Davies
Desrochers
Duceppe
Gagnon (Québec)
Godin
Guimond
Lalonde
Lill
Marceau
Ménard
Plamondon
Robinson
Roy
Stoffer

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bourgeois
Cardin
Dalphond-Guiral
Desjarlais
Dubé
Fournier
Gauthier
Guay
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Loubier
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Tremblay— 36

PAIRED

Members

Anderson (Victoria)
Bigras
Cannis
Gagnon (Champlain)
Paquette
Perron

Barnes (London West)
Bradshaw
Charbonneau
Girard-Bujold
Paradis
St-Hilaire— 12

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried.

• (1850)

The next question is on the main motion.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I think you will find consent in the House that the vote on the previous motion be applied to the motion now before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 13)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Alcock
Anders
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélangier
Bennett
Bertrand
Binet
Bonwick
Boudria
Bryden
Burton
Cadman
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Clark
Collenette
Copps
Day
Dion
Dromisky
Duncan
Easter
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Fitzpatrick
Fontana
Frulla
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Graham
Grey
Guarnieri
Harb
Harvard
Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Jackson
Jennings
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keys
Knutson
Lastewka
Lee
Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Marcil
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)

Adams
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Augustine
Bailey
Beaumier
Bellemare
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Brown
Bulte
Byrne
Calder
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chatters
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
DeVilliers
Doyle
Drouin
Duplain
Efford
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Folco
Forseath
Fry
Galloway
Goldring
Gouk
Grewal
Grose
Hanger
Harper
Harvey
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Ianno
Jaffer
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Lunn (Saanchi—Gulf Islands)
MacAulay
Macklin
Maloney
Mark
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)

Supply

Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Obhrai
Pacetti
Parrish
Peric
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Rock
Savoy
Schmidt
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
St-Julien
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Whelan
White (North Vancouver)
Wood

McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peschisolido
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Price
Provenzano
Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Scott
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Torsney
Valeri
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams
Yelich — 200

NAYS

Members

Asselin
Bergeron
Brien
Crête
Davies
Desrochers
Duceppe
Gagnon (Québec)
Godin
Guimond
Kraft Sloan
Lalonde
Lill
Loubier
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Picard (Drummond)
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Tremblay — 39

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bourgeois
Cardin
Dalphond-Guiral
Desjarlais
Dubé
Fournier
Gauthier
Guay
Hubbard
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Lincoln
Marceau
Ménard
Plamondon
Robinson
Roy
Stoffer

PAIRED

Members

Anderson (Victoria)
Bigras
Cannis
Gagnon (Champlain)
Paquette
Perron

Barnes (London West)
Bradshaw
Charbonneau
Girard-Bujold
Paradis
St-Hilaire — 12

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan: Madam Speaker, on the main motion for Bill C-4 where it is being recorded as being sent to committee after second reading, I would like to vote against that.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Madam Speaker, I vote against it as well.

Mr. Charles Hubbard: Madam Speaker, I would vote against second reading.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The House will now proceed to the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-3. The question is on the motion.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I think you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House with the Liberal members voting yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Madam Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will oppose this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien: Madam Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are in favour of this motion.

[English]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Madam Speaker, the NDP members will say no to this motion.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: Madam Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote yes for this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Madam Speaker, I will vote in favour of this motion.

[English]

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

(Division No. 14)

YEAS

Members

Adams
Allard
Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bertrand
Binet
Bonwick
Boudria
Brien

Alcock
Assadourian
Augustine
Bagnell
Beaumier
Bellemare
Bergeron
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bourgeois
Brown

Bryden
Byrne
Caplan
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Clark
Collenette
Coppes
Crête
Desrochers
Dion
Dromisky
Dubé
Duplain
Efford
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Frulla
Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier
Goodale
Grose
Guay
Harb
Harvey
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karyiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Laliberte
Lancôt
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
MacAulay
Macklin
Maloney
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Ménard
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Parrish
Peric
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Rocheleau
Roy
Sauvageau
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tonks
Tremblay
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan

Bulte
Calder
Cardin
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cotler
Dalphond-Guiral
DeVillers
Doyle
Drouin
Duceppe
Easter
Eggleton
Farrah
Folco
Fournier
Fry
Galloway
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Guimond
Harvard
Hearn
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Knutson
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Malhi
Marceau
Mark
Matthews
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patri
Peschisolido
Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon
Price
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Rock
Saada
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Wood— 178

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)

Anders
Bailey

Benoit
Cadman
Davies
Desjarlais
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Gallant
Goldring
Grewal
Hanger
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lunn (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stoffér
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich— 61

Supply

Burton
Chatters
Day
Duncan
Epp
Forseth
Godin
Gouk
Grey
Harper
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Johnston
Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Merrifield
Obhrai
Rajotte
Reynolds
Robinson
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Strahl
Toews
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Anderson (Victoria)
Bigras
Cannis
Gagnon (Champlain)
Paquette
Perron

Barnes (London West)
Bradshaw
Charbonneau
Girard-Bujold
Paradis
St-Hilaire— 12

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

● (1855)

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—KYOTO PROTOCOL

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply. The question is on the motion.

* * *

● (1900)

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

(Division No. 15)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Alcock
Anders
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)

Adams
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Augustine
Bailey
Beaumier

Supply

Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bertrand
 Binet
 Bonwick
 Boudria
 Bryden
 Burton
 Cadman
 Caplan
 Carroll
 Castonguay
 Cauchon
 Clark
 Collette
 Coppins
 Day
 Dion
 Dromisky
 Duncan
 Easter
 Eggleton
 Epp
 Farrah
 Fitzpatrick
 Fontana
 Frulla
 Gallant
 Godfrey
 Goodale
 Graham
 Grey
 Guarnieri
 Harb
 Harvard
 Heam
 Hill (MacLeod)
 Hinton
 Ianno
 Jaffer
 Johnston
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
 Kraft Sloan
 Lastewka
 Lee
 Lincoln
 Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 MacAulay
 Macklin
 Maloney
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCallum
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Meredith
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Mitchell
 Nault
 Normand
 O'Reilly
 Owen
 Pagtakhan
 Patry
 Peschisolido
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Price
 Provenzano

Bellemare
 Benoit
 Bevilacqua
 Blondin-Andrew
 Borotsik
 Brown
 Bulte
 Byrne
 Calder
 Carignan
 Casey
 Catterall
 Chatters
 Coderre
 Comuzzi
 Cotler
 DeVillers
 Doyle
 Drouin
 Duplain
 Efford
 Elley
 Eyking
 Finlay
 Folco
 Forseth
 Fry
 Gallaway
 Goldring
 Gouk
 Grewal
 Grose
 Hanger
 Harper
 Harvey
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Hilstrom
 Hubbard
 Jackson
 Jennings
 Jordan
 Karygiannis
 Keyes
 Knutson
 Laliberte
 LeBlanc
 Leung
 Longfield
 Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Malhi
 Marcil
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 Matthews
 McCormick
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McTeague
 Merrifield
 Mills (Toronto—Danforth)
 Myers
 Neville
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Obhrai
 Pacetti
 Parrish
 Peric
 Phinney
 Pratt
 Proulx
 Rajotte

Redman
 Regan
 Reynolds
 Robillard
 Saada
 Scherrer
 Scott
 Sgro
 Simard
 Solberg
 Speller
 St-Jacques
 St. Denis
 Coderre
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Telegdi
 Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Thompson
 Toews
 Torsney
 Valeri
 Vellacott
 Wappel
 White (North Vancouver)
 Williams
 Yelich— 203

Reed (Halton)
 Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
 Ritz
 Rock
 Savoy
 Schmidt
 Serré
 Shepherd
 Skelton
 Sorenson
 Spencer
 St-Julien
 Steckle
 Stinson
 Szabo
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Tirabassi
 Tonks
 Ur
 Vanclief
 Volpe
 Whelan
 White (Langley—Abbotsford)
 Wood

*NAYS**Members*

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 Dalphond-Guiral
 Desjarlais
 Dubé
 Fournier
 Gauthier
 Guay
 Laframboise
 Lanctôt
 Loubier
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Picard (Drummond)
 Proctor
 Rocheleau
 Sauvageau
 Tremblay— 36

*PAIRED**Members*

Anderson (Victoria)
 Bigras
 Cannis
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Paquette
 Perron

Barnes (London West)
 Bradshaw
 Charbonneau
 Girard-Bujold
 Paradis
 St-Hilaire— 12

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried.

It being 7:03 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:04 p.m.)

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Mr. Crête	1030
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National Defence	
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