



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 2, 2003

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 2, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)
[English]

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House about an ongoing municipal to municipal partnership program. Over 1,500 Canadian municipal practitioners have shared their skills, experience and expertise with colleagues in the developing world.

From my riding the town of Milton has partnered with Santa-Maria in the Philippines, focusing on economic development, environmental planning and tax and financial systems. This has been so successful that a new phase on waste management is being prepared bringing in the region of Halton. Oakville has worked with the city of Sumperk in the Czech Republic to develop local municipal management practices.

These partnerships are tremendous opportunities to lend Canadian expertise in public administration and to gain a better understanding of development challenges and issues.

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IRAQ

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on March 28 a rally was held in my hometown of Picture Butte, Alberta. The aim of the rally was to demonstrate support for the allied troops fighting in Iraq. I proudly stood shoulder to shoulder with many like-minded Canadians from across southern Alberta. They expressed disappointment and dismay that the Liberal

government has chosen not to support our traditional allies in fighting for freedom and liberation from Saddam Hussein's brutal regime.

Of the many hundreds of people who attended the rally, Jan and Todd, parents of 11 children, brought a picture of their second oldest son, Caleb. Twenty year old Caleb is serving with the 1st marine division in Iraq. Since leaving to fight for freedom in January, Jan and Todd nervously await word as to the welfare of their son.

This family relocated to southern Alberta from Virginia three years ago. They, along with many Canadians, are confused by the position the government has taken.

We want to let Caleb, all the allied troops and the Canadian men and women fighting this war know that although the Liberal government may not be behind them, the Canadian Alliance is.

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• (1405)

IRAQ

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at its meeting on February 26, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo passed the following resolution:

Whereas the threat of war in the current international situation is a concern for the residents of the region of Waterloo and for all Canadians;

Therefore be it resolved that the Regional Municipality of Waterloo urge the Government of Canada to make all possible efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to this situation;

And be it further resolved that if the Government of Canada decided to take military action against Iraq that such action would only occur under the auspices of the United Nations and according to United Nations resolutions.

The Government of Canada worked hard for a resolution that would have bridged the two solitudes on the UN Security Council and would have averted war. Unfortunately we were not successful.

We must continue our efforts to seek an alternative to the present war and redouble our efforts to strengthen the cause of multi-lateralism and the United Nations.

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DON STUART

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize Mr. Don Stuart of Midhurst, Ontario, a constituent in my riding.

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Mr. Stuart has participated as a volunteer in a number of assignments with the Canadian Executive Service Organization. Most recently he travelled to Davao City in the Philippines with CESO to assist a handloom crafts company operated by women in that community.

Mr. Stuart provided training in new weaving techniques and redesigned the looms to make work less tiring for the employees. The result will be a better working environment for the employees, an increase in production and employment of local women. Don has participated in at least six assignments with CESO and calls it an incredible program that sets Canada apart from the rest of the world.

I would like to acknowledge Don's commitment of skill and time and to thank him for his continued dedication to others in need around the world.

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FREDERICK FORREST MOAR

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to salute Frederick Forrest Moar of Miramichi who, with 14 other veterans, was honoured by the minister with the Veterans Affairs Commendation on Monday.

Fred Moar was a militia sergeant who volunteered for active service in 1940. Joining the North Shore Regiment he proceeded overseas in 1941. On D-Day, Lieutenant Moar landed at Normandy and was made company commander in August. He served in Europe until 1946 and later became commanding officer and honorary colonel of 2RNBR North Shore.

Since 1984 Colonel Moar has volunteered at least one day each week in the office of three Miramichi members of Parliament in assisting veterans and their spouses in their relationships with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We thank him for his many years of dedication and service to his country and to our Miramichi constituents. All of us could learn from this example of one of the 15 recipients of the award on Monday of this week.

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CURLING

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has two more world champion teams. Our men's and women's teams captured the world junior curling titles in Switzerland with the cheers of all Canadians behind them.

The men's team, skipped by Steve Laycock, with Chris Haichert, Michael Jantzen, Kyler Broad and Ben Hebert, was strong throughout the tournament. The women's team set a new standard by going undefeated in 11 straight games. This made it only the fourth time that both the Canadian men and women have won the world's in the same year.

The women's team was skipped by Marliese Miller, third Teejay Surik, second Janelle Lemon, lead Chelsey Bell and alternate Tammy Schneider.

Teejay Surik is the second world curling champion to come from Biggar, continuing the legacy of the great Sandra Schmirler.

I would like to thank both teams for doing Canada proud by being such wonderful ambassadors and such great champions.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to Casco and the Ontario Corn Producers' Association who have recently created a new initiative which enables producers of corn to sell their product online. E-commerce for kernels has arrived. The initiative was launched on their existing website, went live on January 20 this year and has already received tremendous support.

The "Sell Your Corn on the Web" project was designed to increase the volume of corn purchased by Casco directly from Ontario corn producers by using the Internet. It is truly an innovative and modern initiative that promises great success for our corn producers and processors alike.

Casco and the Ontario Corn Producers' Association have been working together to promote growth in agriculture and agri-food and will continue to look for opportunities that will benefit all stakeholders and ultimately our Canadian public.

Casco and the OCPA are to be commended for having taken this important step to secure a role in the promotion of a sustainable and future driven agriculture market. People in our agriculture and agri-food industry continue to use modern technology to their competitive advantage.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

MARIE-CHRISTINE SALVAS

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian tennis championships are underway in Montreal. They mark the end of the winter season for Marie-Christine Salvas, a student at polyvalente Jean Raimbault, in Drummondville.

Two weeks ago, she came second in the under-16 category at the Quebec championships, and also distinguished herself in the doubles finals.

During the winter, she participated in the Prince Cup and Junior Orange Bowl tournaments in Florida, where she qualified for the main draw for both, playing against players from around the world.

With her school administration's cooperation, Marie-Christine is able to combine studying with training and travelling for tournaments. She also relies on the experienced advice of coach François Champagne.

This day, April 2, is a special day for Marie-Christine Salvas: she is turning 15. I wish her a happy birthday, and good luck in pursuing her goals.

[English]

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take this opportunity to acknowledge the special relationship between Canada and the United States, a unique partnership that has a long and colourful history, that is always respectful of each other's jurisdictions, principles and values. I speak about that relationship today as it very much reflects how we regard each other.

Canada does 87% of its trade with the United States. We want to ensure that those economic opportunities continue. Thousands of Canadian jobs depend on the U.S., just as American jobs rely on Canadian trade and industry. We are important to each other in many other ways.

Our success as a nation is built on relations with our neighbours, with all our trading partners and with our allies, as well as our role on the world stage.

The relationship between Canada and the United States is shaped by a deep friendship and understanding. Let us not forget our closest southern neighbours and what we mean to each other.

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MERRITT MOUNTAIN MUSIC FEST

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to join with Canadians from coast to coast in congratulating the city of Merritt on earning the title of the "Country Music Capital of Canada".

Nestled in the heart of the Nicola Valley in the federal riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla is the town of Merritt. Each year tens of thousands of music fans from across Canada, the United States and the world rock to the Merritt Mountain Music Fest to enjoy some of the top names in country music.

I am asking all my colleagues in the House of Commons to join me in congratulating my constituents in Merritt and the Nicola Valley, along with the organizers for this great achievement.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you are interested in attending, the Merritt Mountain Music Fest takes place July 18, 19 and 20. More information can be obtained by logging on to merrittfest.com. That will send people on their way to the country music capital of Canada.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the developing world, poverty is widespread, as 800 million people go hungry every day. Agriculture must play a key role in improving the quality of life of people in developing countries. That is why CIDA has made it a priority.

This morning, the Minister for International Cooperation published an important CIDA policy statement entitled, "Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Through Agriculture".

CIDA will increase its total investment in agricultural programing from about \$95 million to \$300 million by 2005-06. CIDA will

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be consolidating its relationships with its partners both in Canada and in developing countries and continue to promote international partnerships to ensure its efforts are effective.

All the best on entering this golden age of international cooperation.

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[English]

MARGARET MARY SAVAGE

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of Cancer Awareness Month, it is with great sorrow that I join with all people of Dartmouth and Nova Scotia in recognizing the passage of Margaret Mary Savage who died peacefully in her home in Dartmouth on March 31, 2003.

Margaret leaves behind her dedicated husband, John, her seven children, her many grandchildren and a community deeply indebted to her sense of love and caring for humanity.

Margaret played an active role in the life of her church, the Catholic Women's League and many interfaith initiatives. Along with her husband, John, she was the driving force behind such programs as Feed Others of Dartmouth, the Dartmouth Book and Writing Awards, initiatives for literacy, and the Christmas Full of Caring program.

Margaret saw value in everyone and made everyone feel valuable. Her patience, tolerance and non-judgmental acceptance of all viewpoints and people were an inspiration to her family and friends.

Today we offer our prayers to the Savage family and we commit to redoubling our efforts to eradicate this dreadful disease for all of our families and all of humanity.

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•(1415)

[Translation]

DON CHERRY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, commentator Don Cherry is attacking Quebecers, but fortunately, Canada's public broadcaster, the CBC, has distanced itself from Cherry's statements, and I quote:

We disagree with, and dissociate ourselves from, his comments, which we consider to be inappropriate and uninformed.

This is not the first time that Don Cherry has insulted Quebecers. It is true that Quebecers oppose the war in Iraq, because we consider this war to be illegitimate and illegal.

Don Cherry should know that many Americans, especially in New York, also oppose this war and consider it unacceptable and inappropriate.

So, Quebecers are not against the Americans; they are against the war. We enjoy cordial relations with the Americans on both a personal and a business level.

Don Cherry's statements are unacceptable, erroneous and slanderous. Once again, he just does not get it.

*Oral Questions**[English]***MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since first being appointed the Minister of National Defence a little over 10 months ago, the hon. member for Markham has spoken out loudly in support of the Canadian Forces and the minister's words and actions have produced significant results for the men and women of the forces, including a pay raise, an improvement to their insurance policies and an infusion of well over \$1 billion over the next couple of years.

At a time of heightened sensitivity around the world, the Minister of National Defence has called for a more non-partisan approach to these vital issues. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition has proven that his party is more interested in name-calling than debating the issues in a constructive manner.

Actions speak louder than words, and the Minister of National Defence will be judged by his actions, not by the Leader of the Opposition's words.

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NOVA SCOTIA FLOODS

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, we have all seen the images on TV of the catastrophic flooding in Nova Scotia. In my riding of South Shore, two people have lost their lives. Businesses are destroyed, homes are ruined and 18 bridges across Nova Scotia are closed. This is the worst flooding Nova Scotia has seen in over 50 years.

Nova Scotians have always been there for our neighbours. Through ice storms, floods and even on 9/11 we stood shoulder to shoulder with other Canadians to help. This time we need some help and I would like to know if the Minister of National Defence, responsible for emergency measures, has contingency plans to help Nova Scotians, and exactly how he plans to help.

This is one time Nova Scotians need to hear from their federal government.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***CANADIAN FORCES**

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the position of our Canadian troops participating in the war in Iraq.

Article 4.A.1. of the Geneva convention states that this convention applies to "Members of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict".

The Prime Minister has told the House and Canadians, in fact he has told the world, including the Iraqi government, that we are not party to this conflict.

Has the Prime Minister bothered to tell our troops that they may not be protected by the Geneva convention?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have taken the decision after consultation and on the recommendation of our armed forces who told us that it was very important that we maintain our agreement with the different countries with which our soldiers are on exchange.

When they are in the army with another country they are covered by the rules of the army with which they are working at that moment.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we do not know that. A soldier outside the Geneva convention is defined as an unlawful combatant. That was the U.S. position in the Afghan war for captured Saudis, that their government was not part of the conflict, and the Canadian government backed that position.

Frankly, being captured by the Iraqis will probably not be as easy as being captured by the Americans.

Could the Prime Minister assure Canadians that any soldier captured by the Iraqis would not be treated as an unlawful combatant?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they are part of the British, the Australian or the American armies and they will be treated as part of those armies.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, they are serving in Canadian uniforms. We all know that having our troops in a conflict where the government said that we are not participating and that we are not a party to the conflict, is unprecedented and it is for good reason.

What authority can the Prime Minister cite to back his position that these troops are protected by the Geneva convention?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are following the conventions that have been followed by every government in these exchanges. I have not been informed that there is anything illegal about this longstanding tradition that we have exchanges with our allies. When they are part of these armies they serve under the authority of the country in which they are serving as part of an exchange.

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MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in the 1994 budget the former finance minister closed the tax loophole to Liberia but left the Barbados loophole wide open.

The minister had big holdings in Barbados through Canada Steamship Lines which brings profits into Canada tax free.

If that is not a conflict of interest, what is?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issues that are referred to were also referred to in the Auditor General's report of last December. As would always be the case with respect to such a report, we are looking closely at the Auditor General's recommendations.

A number of steps have been taken since 1992 in fact with respect to these kinds of situations. We will continue to review whether additional steps are required to be taken.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us go a little further in time.

In 1997 a panel of tax experts advised the former finance minister to close all offshore tax loopholes. He did not heed that advice, leaving Barbados open. The member for LaSalle—Émard benefited from that decision.

I will ask the question again. If that is not a conflict of interest, exactly what is?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of steps were taken subsequent to 1992, including in 1995 with the amendment of the so-called FAPI rules, foreign accrual property income rules. In 1996 foreign reporting requirements were implemented. In 1997 transfer pricing rules that were approved in Canada have the potential for cross-border shifting of income. In 2002 revised rules relating to foreign investment entities and non-resident trusts were prepared.

There were a lot of recommendations in the 1997 corporate tax review, most of which the hon. member would have advised against.

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[Translation]

IRAQ

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Pentagon confirmed that the U.S. Air Force is using cluster bombs against Iraq, but claims these do not represent any danger to civilians. Yet the reality is quite different. Cluster bombing of the village of Hindiya has left 33 dead and 310 injured. The International Red Cross Committee spokesperson in Baghdad described it as a scene of absolute horror.

Is the Prime Minister going to condemn the unjustified use of cluster bombs by pulling out the Canadian soldiers who are taking part in a war he himself terms unjustified?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we worked on drafting the treaty on antipersonnel mines, we tried to get a treaty on this type of bomb, but it was not accepted. So the U.S. forces are apparently using them. This does not contravene the international treaties on instruments of war.

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing from the Prime Minister now is total hypocrisy. Not only has he sent Canadian soldiers to wage a war in which Canada is not officially taking part, but now he has just told us that Canada condemns the use of cluster bombs.

Does the Prime Minister, that great promoter of the Ottawa Treaty as he has just told us, realize that by leaving Canadian soldiers in Iraq he is associating Canada with the use of cluster bombs against Iraqi civilians, which is contrary to his own position? That is hypocritical.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said in answer to another question, we acted in accordance with the recommendations of the armed forces, which

told us that it was very important to maintain our agreements with the countries involved in exchanges with Canada. When such exchanges take place, obviously the soldiers transferred are under the orders of the authorities where they are transferred, as are those who come to Canada on exchange. They must follow the orders they receive from their commanding authorities.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the treaty to ban landmines has not been ratified by the United States. In the context of military personnel exchange programs, we hope that Canadian soldiers will not be taking part in a war where landmines are used, for this would be contrary to the treaty and would make Canada an accomplice of the Americans.

Has the Minister of National Defence obtained such guarantees from the Americans?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, soldiers in the Canadian Forces are not allowed to use or work with such mines.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just said that Canadian soldiers were under the authority of the commanders of the combat units in which they are serving. It has even been reported that American soldiers are using landmines around their camps.

Will the minister admit that, if Canadian soldiers in American units were to use these mines, Canada would be in violation of its commitments under the Ottawa Convention on Landmines?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have just said, Canadian soldiers do not have permission to use these mines, no matter what the soldiers they work with are doing.

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[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister today seems to be hiding behind a recommendation of the Canadian armed forces themselves, responding to a recommendation of the forces. The Prime Minister knows better than anyone in the House that it is ultimately a political decision whether or not those troops are left in the gulf region.

Why on earth is the Prime Minister contaminating his own position persistently by leaving these troops in the gulf where they are participating in a war that the Prime Minister has said we are not participating in?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have always said since the beginning that if there were troops participating because they were on loan, they would be there. We have said that and we accept that. I am not trying to hide.

We took the decision to accept the recommendation of the armed forces and I am accepting the responsibility because I have accepted the recommendation.

Oral Questions

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in this House the Prime Minister assured me on March 18 that Canadian ships in the gulf region would not be participating in the war in Iraq and yet it has come to our attention that indeed they are, that if they discover Iraqi officials on ships in the gulf that these officials will be detained, for example.

Could the Prime Minister please tell us how this is consistent with his position that we are not participating in the war in Iraq? I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the Prime Minister would continue to contaminate his own very valid position on the war in Iraq by insisting on having Canadian troops involved.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are no Canadian troops involved. The ships there are doing their job in relation to the responsibilities that we have undertaken to fight terrorism in that part of the world.

A few soldiers are on an exchange program with the Americans and the British, and some of them are in Iraq. They are just respecting the contract that we have entered into with these troops. It is a well established program of exchange between the different armed forces.

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MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Canada Steamship Lines says that it moved certain operations to Barbados because of changes in Canadian tax rules in 1995. The ethics counsellor took part in meetings between CSL and its owner, the then minister of finance. The counsellor declined to tell the CBC program *Disclosure* whether the then minister had discussed the Barbados decision.

Has the ethics counsellor told the Prime Minister whether the then minister of finance discussed his company's move to Barbados? Has the Prime Minister asked the ethics counsellor? If not, will the Prime Minister ask him?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have established clearly in the House that any minister faced with a conflict of interest has to withdraw from a discussion. I have not been informed of any minister who did not follow these rules.

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, that is step forward. Will the Prime Minister confirm that he knew that Canada Steamship Lines was owned by the member for LaSalle—Émard when he named him minister of finance? Will the Prime Minister also confirm that he knew the 1994 budget closed Canadian tax loopholes with respect to Liberia and did not close loopholes with respect to Barbados?

Will he advise the House when he first learned that his former finance minister's company, Canada Steamship Lines, shut down its operations in Liberia and opened operations in Barbados or is it the Prime Minister's position that he just did not know?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained very clearly what the rules are. When he talks about changes in the laws in Canada, it is very public because they have been passed by the House of Commons. He should have known too. Everyone should know.

Yes, I have known for a long time that the member for LaSalle—Émard was the owner of Canada Steamship Lines. I visited ships in the Port of Montreal for the fun of it, before I was Prime Minister.

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HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the World Health Organization's own material on airport protocol. It states, "Screening measures recommended involve an interview with passengers departing".

If the ticket agent can ask about who packed the baggage, he can easily ask about health concerns and travel history. Why is it not being done?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we have been in constant communication with the WHO. It is fully aware of our screening procedures for outbound passengers leaving Pearson International Airport. As of 1:30 this afternoon the WHO is very satisfied with those procedures.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I just quoted from the WHO's own material. Whatever we do in Canada may be insignificant if infected passengers are coming to Canada from places like Hong Kong and Singapore.

Perhaps the minister could inform us if passengers from Hong Kong, Singapore and possibly China are being interviewed prior to departure for Canada. Are they being screened by pamphlet or interview or not at all?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday to the hon. member, we do not have jurisdiction over airlines such as Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines or others. Nor do we have jurisdiction over airports such as the one in Hong Kong. However the WHO is working very carefully with all countries that are involved in this situation.

Yesterday I indicated that I had asked my officials to ensure that the WHO was working with the Hong Kong airport and other airports in southeast Asia to ensure they had screening procedures in place for outbound passengers.

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[Translation]

IRAQ

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has been unable to tell us if there have been precedents of Canadian soldiers being sent into combat while on exchange when Canada was not officially at war, as is the case currently with Iraq. He has answered that he is still looking into that matter.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell us if his research has finally uncovered whether or not members of the Canadian military have, in the past, taken part in conflicts without Canada officially being at war?

Oral Questions

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a daily question. I can tell the member that the research continues.

I would add that the government's decision was clearly not based on such precedents, because we still do not know what these precedents are. The decision was made for other reasons that I have explained a thousand times in the House.

• (1435)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one might conclude that the officials at the Department of National Defence, or those who have worked there for years, are lacking in the requisite skills. However, I will simplify the task for the minister and narrow the question even more.

Take the American intervention in Vietnam, which took place from 1963 to 1975. During this conflict, was there an exchange in which Canadian soldiers were involved in the Vietnam war alongside American troops, for example? If so, will he table the documents?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is necessary to question the competence of our public officials. There have been all sorts of accusations in the House. It is not the fault of these officials, who are doing their job.

There appear to be anecdotal possibilities. We are continuing to research the matter but it is not certain whether or not we will uncover any cases.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was asked on February 24 if he was going to secretly back the war against Saddam Hussein through the back door. His answer was “no”. On March 17 and 18 the Prime Minister was asked repeatedly if the troops were to be involved in Iraq. Again, the Prime Minister answered “no”.

Did the Prime Minister know at that time, when he answered those questions, that our troops in fact would be involved in Iraq?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to be polite and subdued today because I am somewhat concerned as to the reaction with which the opposition might explode. The simple answer to this question is that the hon. member himself should not object to any Canadian troops being involved because he himself would like to see a far larger involvement than the government.

I do not really know what he is complaining about but the rationale for the involvement of our ships and our exchange soldiers has been explained many times in the House.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it used to mean something when a minister of the Crown gave an answer in this House. If the answer was found to be not correct, then that minister would go to great lengths to explain why the answer given was not correct. However this government does not care what its answers are any more. It does not matter if they are answering correctly or not.

Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister repeatedly stated that “our troops will not be involved in Iraq”—

The Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member for Lakeland has run out of time but perhaps there was a question in the preamble. The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand prepared to answer any question. I prefer a sensible, non-repetitive question but I am here for any question.

However if the hon. member uses up all his time saying that we do not answer their questions, he has no time for a question which I cannot therefore answer.

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[Translation]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, observers have stated that, even though Air Canada has filed for protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangements Act, it will not survive and faces certain bankruptcy, since the government has chosen not to intervene in time. Air Canada's incorporating legislation stipulates that its head office must be located in Montreal.

Can the Minister of Transport assure us that, if another airline takes over the business, its head office will remain in Montreal?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada's head office will remain in Montreal.

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the same legislation stipulates that Air Canada must respect the Official Languages Act.

Can the Minister of Transport guarantee that any airline taking its place will be bound by this same obligation?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in reply to our questions on Iraq, the Minister of National Defence said, “What is all the fuss?” Let me tell him.

The fuss is about a government that takes cover when it should be taking a stand with our allies. It is about a government that knows full well we have troops on the front lines and that claims that Canada will not support the war. That is what all the fuss is about.

I do have time for a question and I would like to ask it. How could he claim to support our troops here in the House but abandon them on the battlefield?

Oral Questions

•(1440)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I never said, "What is the fuss?" I am extremely aware that war is always a tragic event, where many people on both sides die. The idea that the hon. member should suggest that I ever intimated that there was no fuss about war, one of the most tragic events that can ever befall mankind, simply indicates that the opposition has little understanding of the fundamentals of life.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing he can talk about how tragic war is and then completely ignore it.

The government pretends to care so much about our troops, yet we find it funny because it has abandoned our 31 exchange troops in Iraq by refusing to give them political support here at home. We may need a GPS to determine what the government's position is.

I would appreciate it if the minister could get his reading right now and answer this. If we are not in this conflict, then why are our troops in Iraq? Since our troops are there, and we know it, why will he not give them the support they deserve?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated before, I refuse to engage in a debate that uses our brave troops in the Middle East as a political football. I simply will not do that.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I read today about a holocaust survivor, a 75 year old woman suffering from Alzheimer's, who presently resides in my constituency. She is under threat, unfortunately, for deportation. The officials of the department are talking about sending her back to the United States. Her husband has died and she has no friends or family to look after her but she does have two sisters here.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration do something to help in this case?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed the file today and have decided to instruct my officials to allow Ms. Dougherty to remain in Canada on compassionate grounds.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, airline workers are concerned—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Churchill has the floor and hon. members will want to be able to hear the question. It is impossible to do so if everybody is carrying on and there is a shouting match at the other end about some subject that I know not what.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: —for their health and that of their families because of the SARS epidemic. Many have asked for protective equipment, like masks and gloves, while carrying out their duties

with travellers. However Air Canada management has forbidden its employees from taking these precautions. This is risking the health and lives of airline workers and all Canadians by threatening to continue the spread of SARS through our national transportation network.

Will the government consider issuing a directive requiring airline sector workers to take these precautions for their own protection and to impede the spread of SARS?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada is a private sector employer. We have issued workplace guidelines to federal employees. Those guidelines are available and can be used by private sector employers in relation to their employees. I would obviously encourage Air Canada to work with its employees to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect those people serving the public.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the transport minister has stated that competition, deregulation and privatization were the answer to problems with Air Canada.

Privatization and competition without rules have allowed crisis after crisis in the industry. The government's failure to establish rules governing capacity on domestic routes has allowed Robert Milton's destructive management strategy to drive out competitors.

Will the minister ensure that along with changes at Air Canada there will be changes to his government's transport policy?

•(1445)

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I might remind the hon. member that the policy of the government following the merger with Canadian Airlines was supported by the New Democrats. It was supported by Reform. It was supported by the Bloc. We were all together.

Now it appears that the hon. member is reversing her stand. The fact is that Air Canada is now availing itself of a statute to reorganize and after that reorganization I would think that it will be in a better position to compete and give good service to Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, the ethics commissioner who, as we know, is an employee of the Prime Minister, stated on the CBC program *Disclosure* that, during his meetings with the directors of Canada Steamship Lines, the former Finance Minister and future Prime Minister was always very happy to hear how good business was for CSL. The blind trust agreement, however, allows for such meetings only in exceptional and extraordinary circumstances, that is, when things are going badly.

Oral Questions

Therefore, if all was going well at CSL, how does the Prime Minister justify all these meetings?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rules were already established. The Minister of Finance at the time followed the rules which had been established by the previous government, the Conservative government. Under these rules he could receive news. And if the company was running well, he would not cry.

[English]

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1992 the Department of Finance warned that income earned in a tax free haven country is brought back into Canada tax free. The Auditor General and the public accounts committee repeated this in 1993, yet the Auditor General points out that the former minister of finance introduced two special rules. He basically changed the tax rules to suit himself, meaning that dividends from Barbados could then qualify for tax free treatment in Canada.

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I heard a question mark at the end of that, but let me remind the hon. member, as I mentioned a few moments ago, that since 1992 a number of changes have been taken dealing with issues related to offshore income earned by corporations or by owners based in Canada. I itemized a number of those changes to tighten the Canadian tax base and, subsequent to the Auditor General's last report, we continue to review those provisions.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the transport minister said that cabinet is "reviewing" the fees and taxes imposed on the air industry. The review is a waste of time, time that the air industry does not have.

The issue has been studied. The transport committee has done it and has recommended broad based tax relief. The Travel Industry Cost Coalition, the Air Transport Association and air carriers have all studied this and arrived at a fact, a fact that the transport minister has not seemed to grasp: that the air industry needs broad based tax relief, tax relief that the government does not have the courage to give it.

Why will the government not cut taxes across the board for the air industry and let the air industry fly?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member would agree that every time there is an industry issue in any particular industry, we cannot respond by cutting all the taxes. It does not make any sense.

We know that in Bill C-28, which is before the House, we have proposed the reduction of the air transportation security charge by over 40%. The member's party has proposed that this bill not be dealt with for more than six months. Let us get on with things that actually can help people.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we are holding up the bill

because we do not want the tax cut, we want it eliminated completely, and the government does not seem to understand that.

It is one thing to say that the answer is not always to cut taxes, but the answer surely is not to raise taxes, which is all the government has done to the air industry year in and year out.

Given that the government was prepared to give tens of millions of dollars in corporate welfare to Air Canada, given that it had the cash on hand, why does it not take that cash and then transfer it to a broad based tax cut for the entire air industry on a level playing field? Why will the government not do that?

● (1450)

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member mistakes the case. The fact is that the government was prepared to provide a short term loan guarantee to enable Air Canada to get debtor-in-possession financing. Air Canada did not require that fully secured government loan. It has raised the money itself. I wish the hon. member would stick to the facts and then he would perhaps ask intelligent questions.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from recent media reports we have learned of workers from the Philippines being sold as domestics and child care workers for \$800. The federal government program for live-in caregivers paves the way for such situations.

Will the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration admit that the federal live-in caregiver program leads to practices which debase women?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the program is bad in itself. I do, however, feel we must be very clear on this. Using the Internet for slavery is, to my mind, totally revolting. I have asked my department to look into this. I also feel that we must not confuse the issue. One can promote a program and prevent this type of thing from recurring.

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, domestics are often victims of physical, psychological or sexual abuse. In light of the recent events, will the minister put an end to a program which paves the way for the degrading exploitation of female foreign workers, or will he at least bring in a replacement program designed to prevent the emergence of situations which are a violation of human rights?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think there is a middle ground. We can keep the home helper program, which I am told by the communities I visit is a good one. But I do believe we must work to ensure the respect of human rights. Tools must be developed to prevent abuses.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, contrast the immigration minister's treatment of a Holocaust denier versus a Holocaust survivor. The minister admits Zundel, allows him to make a refugee claim and ignores a known security threat, but the minister tries to give the boot to Helen Ann Dougherty, who has Alzheimer's.

The minister has extended every consideration to Zundel but has refused compassionate permission to Mrs. Dougherty. Why did it take a public outcry for the minister to do the right thing?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is unacceptable to use Mrs. Dougherty to try to score political points. I have announced very clearly that, on compassionate grounds, I have asked officials in my department to take the necessary steps to ensure that she can remain in Canada. Instead of trying to score points, the member should be congratulating this government for once again showing compassion.

[English]

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister has also made quite a switch on Zundel. First it was, I will not allow our system to be abused, just watch me, and now he sits by, content to let the process wind on and on. He will not use his power to end Zundel's refugee charade, but he was quite prepared to squash elderly Mrs. Dougherty. He only sprang into action when faced with public humiliation.

Why did the minister try to kick out the Holocaust survivor but shelter the Holocaust denier?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by her question I understand one thing, and that is that on their side they disagree with taking steps based on compassionate grounds, so they are against the fact that we emitted a permit for Mrs. Dougherty. Shame on them.

* * *

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned about reports that schoolyard bullying, discrimination and intolerance are on the increase nationwide. Could the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and the Status of Women tell us what her department is doing to prevent and address such discrimination and intolerance?

Hon. Jean Augustine (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, schoolyard bullying, discrimination and intolerance concern us all.

The Speaker: Order. Despite the discussions at the other end of the Chamber, there is a question and answer going on up here. I would urge hon. members who wish to continue questions that we have finished with to perhaps carry on the question and answer session in the lobby. There is a wonderful lobby at the far end that would be perfect for this kind of exchange.

In the meantime, the hon. Secretary of State for the Status of Women has the floor and all hon. members will want to hear her answer.

● (1455)

Hon. Jean Augustine: Mr. Speaker, I am responding to the question around schoolyard bullying, discrimination and intolerance. I want to tell members about a program called "Reaching Across Differences" that the multiculturalism department is supporting. It provides information and training to elementary school children in the North Okanagan Valley in British Columbia to increase their awareness of the impact of discrimination and bullying. Youth have taken the leadership and are planning all of the processes involved.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last year Canadian health officials drastically underestimated the spread of the effect of the West Nile virus, carried by water loving mosquitoes. Many were shocked at the spread of the West Nile during the prairie drought.

Once again, contamination of the blood supply proved deadly in Canada. Will the minister be able to protect the blood supply system and meet the July 1 deadline for a screening test for West Nile virus?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member should be aware, Canadian Blood Services is an independent service. I had the opportunity, however, to meet with the blood services last week and we talked about the issue of the availability of a test. They were able to reassure me, based on their information as of last week, that a test will be available in the coming months to ensure the safety of our blood system and to be able to take reasonable precautions in that regard in relation to West Nile virus.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility is always given to someone else. We have seen the deadly results of the West Nile virus in the national blood system. We saw the difficulties in screening for viruses when carriers show no symptoms.

What is the government doing to determine whether SARS can be transmitted by blood donors who otherwise appear to be symptom free?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, our scientists, who are in fact some of the world's best, are working in close co-operation with fellow scientists at the CDC, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, the WHO in Geneva, and with other researchers around the world.

Oral Questions

It would be nice if the world were as easy as the hon. member seems to suggest it is. Let me reassure every Canadian that our doctors are working as hard as they can with doctors around the world to ensure that the public's health and safety are protected.

* * *

[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec Court of Appeal has backed up the Bloc Québécois' claims by ruling that provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Minister of Justice said that he would take some time to analyze the judgment and come up with an official position.

Does the minister not think that it would be appropriate to suspend the application of the legislation while he does this analysis?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Not at all, Mr. Speaker. The act has come into force. It is now in effect and we will proceed with it. Incidentally, last year when we decided to delay its coming into force for one year, we did so based on a consensus reached around the table at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting.

That said, it is important to look at the Court of Appeal judgment as a whole. It is a reference which comments on six issues. It is important to understand that the reference confirms that when the Canadian government passed the legislation, it was acting within its jurisdiction.

* * *

SALON INTERNATIONAL DE L'ALIMENTATION

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been told that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will be speaking today at the Salon international de l'alimentation in Montreal.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary explain to the House the importance of this type of event for the agricultural sector?

Mr. Claude Duplain (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Indeed, today, the Salon international de l'alimentation, commonly referred to as the SIAL, is an extremely important event for agriculture. It is a wonderful opportunity for 700 exhibitors, including more than 370 from Canada, to showcase their know-how and promote their products. The show is expected to draw some 15,000 professional buyers from 70 different countries.

Events like the SIAL provide an excellent opportunity for Canada to increase its share of the world food market and the Government of Canada is determined to work together with the sector to reach its objectives.

Once again, the Government of Canada has done a wonderful job.

• (1500)

[English]

IRAQ

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the defence minister said he was prepared to answer questions. We will find out.

Canada is not officially a party to the war in Iraq. What evidence can the defence minister point to that Canada's exchange troops will not be regarded as unlawful combatants if captured by the Iraqis?

My question is, can he tell us with certainty that they will be covered by the Geneva convention?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already answered that question very clearly.

In terms of my answering of questions, I will acknowledge I am somewhat more reluctant to answer questions from Alliance members regarding ships and exchange soldiers. First of all, because they agree with us on these matters and then they go accusing us of not caring about our soldiers, which is ridiculous. When that fails, they resort to name calling.

That explains my reluctance to address their questions with the same seriousness that I apply to the Bloc and the NDP.

* * *

[Translation]

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, recently, Dr. Yvan Turmel, the coroner conducting the inquest into the terrible accident on route 185, concluded that the highway urgently needs to be widened to four lanes. His conclusions confirm the urgent need to invest in improving this highway.

When does the federal government plan to confirm it will pay its half to make this highway safe?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Quebec government has not yet signed the federal-provincial agreement for infrastructure funds. If that can be done, there will be enough money to improve this highway.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responsible for CIDA insisted that Canada is living up to its obligations to fight the HIV-AIDS pandemic. Based on our share of the world's wealth, Canada's pledge to the global fund over four years falls short by \$232 million.

If the CIDA minister will not respond to the UN envoy's plea for Canadian leadership, will the Prime Minister step forward and commit to our fair share of the global fund?

Government Orders

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, Canada has committed \$100 million U.S. to the global health fund and has paid its first two installments.

We have taken the HIV-AIDS file very seriously within CIDA and we are increasing our spending from \$20 million to \$80 million per year for a total of \$270 million over five years. We have invested \$50 million in the vaccine fund to find a vaccine for HIV and AIDS. Obviously Canada is taking its contributions and its role very seriously.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the 1994 budget boasted about taking measures to prevent Canadian based companies from using foreign owned affiliates to avoid paying Canadian taxes. These measures did not affect Barbados. The Auditor General estimates that Canadian direct investment in Barbados has swollen from \$628 million in 1998 to \$22.3 billion in 2001. She estimates this loophole has cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

Who decided to keep Barbados open when it closed down Liberia?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the Auditor General's recommendation and, as I have said a few times now, there were a number of measures taken over the years subsequent to 1992 with respect to tightening the Canadian tax base. We continue to consider the appropriate measures, given not only the Auditor General's comment in late 2002 but other commentary as well. The matter is under review.

* * *

SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 27 the government of Saskatchewan announced the creation of 1,200 new licensed day care spaces over the next four years as part of the provincial budget. This announcement comes two weeks after the Minister of Human Resource Development announced the federal-provincial-territorial child care agreement.

Can the minister tell the House what the Government of Canada's contribution is and what the government is doing to support child care for Canadian families?

● (1505)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see the government of Saskatchewan announce a 45% increase to its kids first program in its budget last week. This comes with the support of a \$29 million transfer from the Government of Canada to the province that will help increase the number of regulated child care spaces as well as subsidize Saskatchewan parents to access these spaces.

This is an example of good federal-provincial relations in support of our youngest citizens. I hope that we will see such announcements from other provinces in the months to come.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 81(14) to inform the House that the motion to be considered tomorrow during the consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

That the House of Commons express its regret and apologizes for offensive and inappropriate statements made against the United States of America by certain members of this House; reaffirm that the United States continues to be Canada's closest friend and ally; hope that the U.S. led coalition in Iraq is successful in removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power; and urge the Government of Canada to assist the coalition in the reconstruction of Iraq.

This motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Southwest is votable.

[Translation]

Copies of the motion are available at the table.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2003

The House resumed from April 1, 2003, consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 18, 2003, be now read the second time and referred to a committee; and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:05 p.m., the House will now proceed to the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill C-28.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

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

*(Division No. 136)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Benoit
Bergeron	Bigras
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cardin
Casson	Chatters
Comartin	Crête
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Doyle	Duceppe
Duncan	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gallant
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Goldring
Gouk	Grey
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Laurent
Lebel	Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lunnay (Nanaimo—Alberni)

Masse
McDonough
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Pankiw
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Reynolds
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Strahl
Wasylycia-Leis
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Yelich — 89

Mayfield
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Ritz
Roy
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stoffer
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
White (North Vancouver)
Williams

NAYS

Members

Adams
Assad
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Brown
Byrne
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chrétien
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Dromisky
Duplain
Eggleton
Farrar
Fontana
Goodale
Harvard
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Longfield
Mahoney
Maloney
Marcil
Matthews
McCormick
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Parrish
Peric
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Provenzano
Regan
Rock
Savoy
Sgro
Simard
St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo

Alcock
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélangier
Bennett
Binet
Bonin
Boudria
Bryden
Calder
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Copps
Cullen
DeVillers
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eyking
Finlay
Godfrey
Guarnieri
Harvey
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Lincoln
MacAulay
Malhi
Manley
Marleau
McCallum
McGuire
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peschisolido
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Shepherd
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Telegdi

Government Orders

Thibault (West Nova)	Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi	Tonks
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Wappel
Whelan	Wilfert — 134

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Bertrand
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gaudet
Graham	Macklin
Marceau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Paradis	St-Hilaire
Tremblay	Vancielief — 12

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

[English]

SEX OFFENDER INFORMATION REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-23.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the amendment now before the House, with Liberal members voting no.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will vote yes to the amendment, and add the member for Lanark—Carleton to the vote.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP who are present vote no on this motion.

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote yes to the amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I am voting against this motion.

[English]

Mr. Jim Pankiw: Mr. Speaker, I vote yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Speaker, I am voting against this motion.

Private Members' Business

● (1520)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 137)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit	Breitkreuz
Burton	Casson
Chatters	Cummins
Day	Doyle
Duncan	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Gallant
Goldring	Gouk
Grey	Hanger
Hearn	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Jaffer	Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mayfield	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Pankiw
Penson	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	Stinson
Strahl	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich — 54

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Assad	Augustine
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bagnell
Bakopanos	Barnes (London West)
Beaunier	Bélaire
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bevilacqua	Bigras
Binet	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Byrne	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chrétien
Coderre	Collenette
Comartin	Copps
Cotler	Crête
Cullen	Cuzner
Dalphond-Guiral	Davies
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Dromisky
Drouin	Duceppe
Duplain	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Fontana	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Harvard
Harvey	Hubbard
Ianno	Jackson
Jennings	Jordan

Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Laframboise	Labiberte
Lalonde	Lancôt
Lastewka	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lill	Lincoln
Longfield	MacAulay
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Manley
Marcel	Marleau
Masse	Matthews
McCallum	McCormick
McDonough	McTeague
McLellan	McGuire
Ménard	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Nault
Neville	Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paquette
Parrish	Patry
Peric	Perron
Peschisolido	Peschigrew
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pillitteri	Plamondon
Pratt	Price
Proulx	Provenzano
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Rocheleau
Rock	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savoy	Scherrer
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart
Stoffer	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tirabassi
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Wappel	Wasylcia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert — 170

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Bertrand
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gaudet
Graham	Macklin
Marceau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Paradis	St-Hilaire
Tremblay	Vanclief — 12

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-280, an act to amend the Criminal Code (selling wildlife), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-280 under private members' business.

● (1530)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 138)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bélair	Bélangier
Benoit	Bigras
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Burton	Casson
Chatters	Comartin
Cullen	Cummins
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Doyle
Dromiskiy	Duncan
Epp	Fitzpatrick
Gallant	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grey	Hanger
Hearn	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Jackson	Jaffer
Johnston	Jordan
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lebel	Lill
Lincoln	Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	Maloney
Masse	Matthews
Mayfield	McCormick
McDonough	McTeague
Meredith	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Pankiw	Penson
Peric	Pratt
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)	Reynolds
Ritz	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Steckle	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Szabo	Telegdi
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Ur
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich — 86

NAYS

Members

Adams	Assad
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bevilacqua	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Byrne	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Coderre
Collenette	Copps
Cotler	Cuzner
Dalphond-Guiral	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Drouin
Duceppe	Duplain
Easter	Eggleton
Farrah	Finlay

Privilege

Fontana	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godfrey
Goodale	Guarnieri
Guimond	Harvard
Harvey	Hubbard
Ianno	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lanctôt
LeBlanc	Lee
Mahoney	Malhi
Manley	Marcil
Marleau	McCallum
McGuire	McLellan
Ménard	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Nault	Neville
Normand	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Paquette	Parrish
Patry	Perron
Peschisolido	Pettigrew
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Price	Proulx
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Rocheleau
Rock	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savoy	Scherrer
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis
Stewart	Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi	Tonks
Torsney	Whelan
Wilfert — 121	

PAIRED

Members

Asselin	Bertrand
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gaudet
Graham	Macklin
Marceau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Paradis	St-Hilaire
Tremblay	Vanclief — 12

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of parliamentary privilege this afternoon. I would like to seek your guidance about a matter that concerns the limits and procedures concerning a member's ability to speak and carry out his or her duties in a committee.

We have a situation right now where our member for Winnipeg Centre has been compelled to speak for more than 12 hours at the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee in an effort to prevent a procedural motion from being approved that would seek to limit a member's time in discussing any clause, amendment, motion or matter before the committee.

Privilege

I know that in committees it is common practice that when we hear witnesses there is usually an agreement to limit the amount of time because we have to hear witnesses. However, in this case it is a procedural question that would limit a member discussing an aspect of a bill before a committee.

Equally of concern to us, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this matter is taking place in camera. There is nothing in the matter under discussion that could in any way be characterized or considered as an in camera matter. The matter is not dealing with personnel, property matters or security matters. It is a matter of procedure that would by tradition I believe be normal practice to be in public.

It seems very bizarre to us that a committee would operate in this way in a manner that is counterproductive to the parliamentary practice of having open and reasonable debate without unreasonable restraints.

We know that the government, for example, can bring in time allocation on a bill in the House. However, it seems that in the very nature of a committee, it is a place where members work in a way that they can speak, they can go through a bill, they can have discussion.

We are very concerned about the precedent that is being set in this matter which is now taking place.

I would ask for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, to be given to the House and committees about this matter. I would hope that you would affirm the practice to only go in camera where there is a shown necessity to do so and to affirm the right of a member to participate in a committee without imposed restraints that limit that member's ability to carry out his or her duties and responsibilities.

• (1535)

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that at page 128 of Marleau and Montpetit on the Speaker ruling on such matters at committee it states:

Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will only hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings upon presentation of a report from the committee which directly deals with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual Member.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last intervener brought an interesting point as well.

The hon. member rose on a question of privilege. I believe the first thing she raised was the fact that the hon. member was compelled, or some such, to speak for 13 hours. I have no idea who is guilty of compelling anyone to speak for 13 hours, but I hope that at least that point is investigated. It sounds like cruel and unusual punishment, as someone across the way is indicating as we speak.

More to the point and perhaps more seriously, I understand that the committee has been dealing with whatever it is it is dealing with in camera. Obviously I am not going to reveal the contents of it because it is in camera. I understand that our parliamentary procedures are such that when someone is speaking in camera and someone wants it moved out of there to be discussed otherwise, such a motion can be put before the committee.

It has not been adduced so far that such a motion was put, let alone how it was disposed of, let alone whether it was defeated by the committee. Even if all that had been done and if the committee had refused it, the committee has not yet reported to the House for the Speaker to make the determination of whether that process, which we do not know if it occurred or not, was administered properly. It is a little premature to put this point before the House.

However, I do think that on the point of someone being compelled to speak for 13 hours, that matter in itself deserves to be verified by the Speaker. Finally, if someone did commit such an act, urged or compelled by whomever, I do believe that we have precedents in the Speaker's ruling on the Blenkarn issue of some years ago and other applications thereafter, whereby the committee can also deal with such matters. In any case, I do not believe the issue has yet been reported to the House.

Surely all hon. members on that committee would not feel compelled to speak ever again for anywhere near that amount of time. I would hope that they would deal with the business that is before the committee. Several citizens are expecting us to do just that rather than being compelled to do that which was described earlier.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the openness of the government to a motion to take that committee out of in camera on what it is considering now. We hope that perhaps the committee would be open to such a motion.

The fact remains, and I think this is what you need to consider, that time allocation is not something that should take place behind closed doors. If the government majority on a committee wants to impose closure, they should be able to do that in the clear light of day where they can be accountable to the public for the way they are trying to shut down the work of that committee.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, very briefly and maybe to assist you in your decision which I am not sure even falls under your gambit here, but whether we have to listen to somebody speak for 13 hours on one hand, or whether these people feel that they have to be compelled to speak in order to get a fair ruling, perhaps this says something about what goes on in our committees.

At the present time, the modernization committee is trying to improve work in parliament generally, including trying to find ways to make committees more practical and more reasonable for members. Maybe there is an avenue where we can clarify some of the problems we are presently experiencing.

• (1540)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for having raised the matter. I also thank the hon. member for Athabasca, the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, the hon. member for St. John's West, and the government House leader for their contributions.

Privilege

Having heard all the submissions that have been made to me, my initial impression is that the question of privilege appears to raise two issues. First, whether or not the proceedings in the committee being held in camera are properly being held in camera. I think that was one of the arguments put to me if I am putting it in the correct form. Second, whether the committee had the power to adopt a motion that limited the right of members of the committee to speak on issues other than interviewing witnesses.

In both respects, in my view on its face, this is a matter over which the committee is master of its own proceedings. As the hon. member for Athabasca so ably pointed out, Speakers have consistently ruled that they do not interfere in matters that are before a committee where the committee is master of its own proceedings and has the power to make a decision on it, unless the committee makes a report to the House, and then the Speaker may or may not rule on some aspects of the report.

In this case, it seems to me that the matter at face value appears to be something that falls within the jurisdiction of the committee. It was properly raised in the committee. It should be dealt with in the committee and ruled upon by the chairman of the committee. Of course, his ruling is subject to appeal to members of the committee. Accordingly, I am of the view that on its face, this matter falls within the jurisdiction of the committee.

The hon. government House leader raised the matter of some hon. member being compelled to speak for 13 hours. I gather that was stated by the hon. member for Vancouver East. I was surprised to hear the government House leader express any surprise at that. As I recall, he was chief government whip, and I am sure had it been necessary to compel someone to speak for a period of time, maybe 20 minutes or half an hour on some matter, compellation would have been applied, but there have been more surprising things happen in the House on other occasions.

I will also look into the matter of who might have compelled the unfortunate victim of this lengthy speaking process for 13 hours. The Chair does not know where to begin to look, but I will look into the matter to see if there has been a breach of somebody's privileges. If necessary I will come back to the House on both points, but I suspect it will not be necessary.

MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question of privilege has to do with something that arose during question period.

Canadian Alliance members of Parliament represent over six million Canadians. During question period today we asked some serious questions respecting the war in Iraq and the status of Canadian soldiers who are serving in that war.

During question period the Minister of National Defence explained that it was his policy essentially to not answer questions from the Canadian Alliance for whatever reason. I assert that this undermines my ability to do my job as a member of Parliament. Canadians are deeply concerned about this issue.

I want it to be noted that when I rose to ask my question, I asked it in an extraordinarily respectful way. The ability of members of Parliament to fulfill their role as MPs is being undermined. In this

instance, especially when the matter is as serious as it is, we cannot simply say it is a minister's right to not answer a question. He specifically mentioned the Canadian Alliance by name. When he makes it clear that it is his policy to not answer questions from the official opposition, that clearly undermines not only my privileges but those of all Canadian Alliance members of Parliament.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would certainly leave it to your wisdom as to whether this is a question of privilege. I do not know the answer to that. Perhaps I can give a very brief explanation of my understanding of the facts.

First, the question had been answered by the Prime Minister and I referred the hon. member to the Prime Minister's answer.

Second, I did not say it was a policy of mine not to answer questions from the Canadian Alliance. A colleague of the hon. member had raised the matter of answering questions before and it occurred to me that, not as a policy but on this particular issue of exchange soldiers and ships, I perhaps had a tendency to treat the questions of the Bloc and the NDP somewhat more seriously than the questions from members of the Canadian Alliance. I gave three reasons for that. The first was the fact that the Canadian Alliance agreed with our position on ships and soldiers, unlike the NDP and the Bloc. Second, their argument seemed to hinge on the allegation that we cared less about our soldiers than they did, a point to which I took very strong exception. Third, all of those other arguments having failed, Canadian Alliance members seem to resort to name calling.

That was the gist of my answer.

• (1545)

The Speaker: I do not think the Chair needs to hear more on this. I know the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader is ready to quote Marleau and Montpetit to assist the Chair in the circumstances, but it sounds as though this is a grievance arising out of question period.

I must say that if the policy stated by the minister was not to answer the questions, he did get up and give a response to every question that the hon. member for Medicine Hat asked, and indeed that of all his colleagues who asked a question of the Minister of National Defence.

As the hon. member knows, it may not have been an answer he likes but it was a response and you cannot expect more in question period. That is not news to any hon. member. You get a response and that is the best you can hope for. The hon. member did get a response in this case. It may not have been one he liked but it does not then become a question of privilege. Accordingly, the Chair is not prepared to find there is a question of privilege in this case.

We will move on to the hon. member for St. Albert.

*Points of Order***POINTS OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this was also during question period. The member for York Centre asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration about one of his constituents who was facing deportation and the minister replied quoting the person's name.

I am quoting from Marleau and Montpetit from page 524 under "Reference By Name To Members of the Public". It states:

Members are discouraged from referring by name to persons who are not Members of Parliament and who do not enjoy parliamentary immunity, except in extraordinary circumstances when the national interest calls for the naming of an individual. The Speaker has ruled that Members have a responsibility to protect the innocent, not only from outright slander but from any slur directly or indirectly implied, and has stressed that Members should avoid as much as possible mentioning by name people from outside the House who are unable to reply and defend themselves against innuendo.

We are dealing with someone who is under threat of deportation. Therefore the courts and bureaucracy felt there was some serious problem with this individual who was named.

Also, on page 534 of Marleau and Montpetit, under "The *Sub Judice* Convention", it states:

During debate, restrictions are placed on the freedom of Members of Parliament to make reference to matters awaiting judicial decisions in the interests of justice and fair play. Such matters are also barred from being the subject of motions or questions in the House.

It seems to me that there was not only a breach of the rules but there was also an obvious double standard here. When there is a question from this side of the House we are rebuffed by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Minister of National Revenue and others by saying that they cannot speak about the matter because it is before the courts. However when a question is raised by that side of the House, the constituent's name is trotted out during question period to use for their own particular benefit.

We cannot therefore have the rules of the House being used for the benefit of one side of the House and being used against the other side of the House. It cannot be.

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, it seems to me the reason for this rule is clearly to protect people whose names may be brought forward in a negative way, if we are talking about someone suggesting he or she has done something wrong. That clearly is not the case here. That protection would not be necessary. We were talking about someone who the minister decided to help out obviously in this case.

Second, the member talked about this case complaining that the minister had mentioned someone by name but in fact one of his own members, I think it was the member for Edmonton North, just the other day talked about members of the Canadian military by name during question period. They are complaining about what they are doing themselves.

Finally, he complains that we should not be talking about matters that are before the courts. Clearly this is not a matter that is before the courts so I do not see at all how that can apply in this case.

● (1550)

The Speaker: Once again, I thank the hon. member for St. Albert and the parliamentary secretary for their assistance in dealing with this matter.

Clearly this is not a case, as the parliamentary secretary has stated, that was before the courts. This was a case where officials had made a determination and the minister intervened to change the determination. I do not know what the technical procedure was, whether he issued a minister's permit or how this was dealt with, but clearly instructions were issued and the minister indicated that in his answer.

It was also clear from the question that the hon. member for York Centre raised that the issue dealt with a case that was widely reported in the media this morning, including photographs of the person in question and her name in prominent locations in many papers, which the Speaker reads too from time to time without forming any opinion, of course. I did see there was a case of this person mentioned. My recollection is it was the same name that the minister, if I may say it, banded about in question period.

I find it hard to imagine that the minister, by mentioning the person by name, has breached the convention of the House respecting the use of names. I note also that there is no rule that names cannot be mentioned. Speakers discourage members of Parliament from using names in speeches if they are speaking ill of some other person because, with parliamentary privilege applying to what they say, anything said that is damaging to the reputation or to the individual, the reputation of the individual or the individual is then liable to be published with the cover of parliamentary privilege and the person is unable to bring any action in respect of those claims.

In this case I do not think there is a likelihood of that without in any way prejudging the issue. In my view the minister has not breached the conventions of the House in this case.

Asking about cases that are before the courts and asking about cases that are not are different, and sometimes elicit different responses. However that is not a matter on which the Speaker is able to render a decision. Therefore I do not find there is a point of order here.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, you just mentioned in an earlier ruling that we cannot expect much more from question period than a response. You may like to know that in New Zealand the Speaker actually has the power to determine whether the question has been answered and if not, to order the minister to answer the question.

Would you like that power here, Mr. Speaker? Should we work to get you that power?

The Speaker: The hon. member for North Vancouver knows that the Chair has no opinion in respect of what powers he or she ought to have. That is for the House to decide. The Speaker is a servant of the House and if given certain powers, will administer those powers. If they are taken away, I would not be administering them at all. I am purely a servant in this respect and the hon. member for North Vancouver appreciates the servitude under which the Speaker dwells. I thank him for his understanding on the point.

*Routine Proceedings***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During oral question period today I noticed that a question was asked by a member of the governing party. The minister or parliamentary secretary answered with the help of a sheet of paper, making it look oddly similar to a press conference.

According to tradition in this Parliament, questions are asked of ministers who answer them, but they are not supposed to be planted questions. Today it was so obvious that this was the case. I think that you should intervene to put an end to this habit. If the government needs to hold a press conference, then let it do so.

The Speaker: It is difficult for the Chair to determine if a document in the hands of a member, whether during a question or an answer, has been prepared in advance. The Standing Orders of the House require that members speak without notes, with the exception of the Minister of Finance bringing down a budget. Reading a speech or a question is, in fact, prohibited. However, as all hon. members are aware, this provision is not enforced by the Chair.

The Chair does not pay much attention to documents in the hands of an hon. parliamentary secretary or an hon. member during a speech, question or answer. From time to time, I am sure that these documents are, in fact, read in the House. It is terrible, but what can one do?

The hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour has more to say on this topic and he has the floor.

• (1555)

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the point is not whether or not a document is used, but rather the fact that questions are being planted. In this respect, I refer you to a ruling by Speaker Bosley, who prohibited these kinds of questions.

The Speaker: It is difficult for the Speaker to decide which questions are planted. Sometimes, we get the impression that it may be the case. But it is difficult to determine whether or not they are.

I think there is nothing wrong with fixing a question or answer once in a while. I have even heard stories about questions having been put to the government by a member of the opposition who had notified the minister to make sure he would get an answer and an accurate one.

This happens from time to time. Does this make it a planted question? I am not sure, and it is not up to the Speaker to decide.

So, a question was asked and answered, and I believe this matter is closed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table on behalf of the government a number of order in council appointments made recently by the government.

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2001-02 annual report to the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

* * *

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 21 petitions.

* * *

DEATH PENALTY REFERENDUM ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-425, an act to require a referendum on the restoration of the death penalty as a sentencing option and to amend the Referendum Act and the Criminal Code in consequence.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill which would require a referendum to be held so that Canadian citizens could decide if a jury should have a sentencing option to recommend to a judge the death penalty in cases of first degree murder.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADIAN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COLLEGE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Canada, I am presenting a petition requesting Parliament to recognize that the Canadian Emergency Preparedness College is essential to the training of Canadians for emergency situations, that the facilities should stay in Arnprior and that the government should upgrade the facilities to provide the necessary training to Canadians.

We are seeing the need for this right now, especially with the SARS situation.

SENATE OF CANADA

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition which states that the Canadian parliamentary system is in need of reform and that a government without adequate checks and balances on its power does not lead to good government.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to take the measures necessary for reform of the Senate of Canada so that it would be an elected and effective House of Parliament.

Government Orders

● (1600)

IRAQ

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from citizens of various communities in Ontario, including Oro Station, Orillia, Barry, Borden, Bracebridge, Wye-bridge, Elmvale and Coldwater. These citizens are concerned about the war in Iraq.

The petitioners point out that there exists no humanitarian, moral, ethical or practical grounds for participation in the war in Iraq and that there has been no broadly based public forum for the expression of the opinions of ordinary Canadians about going to war or working for peace.

They call upon Parliament to adopt a resolution: (a) opposing any direct or indirect involvement of Canada in any military assault, police action or war against the people or government of Iraq; and (b) calling for an end to all sanctions against the people of Iraq.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the pleasure to present to the House a petition from the people of Beaverton, Brechin and Woodville and areas in Brock township.

The petition draws to the attention of the House that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by a clear majority of Canadians; and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way which makes it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 170.

[Text]

Question No. 170—**Mr. Mauril Bélanger:**

In *Quigley v. Canada House of Commons*, now before the Federal Court of Appeal, Docket No. A-399-02, how much has been spent on lawyers' fees, consultation fees and all other expenditures related to the defence of the House of Commons in this matter, at the trial level and in appeal preparations, since the start of the recourse?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): The subject matter of this question falls within the responsibilities of the Speaker of the House of Commons and not the Government of Canada.

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to be so kind as to call Motion No. 21.

Motion P-21

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documentation, including reports, minutes of meeting, notes, e-mails, advertising, memos and correspondence since January 2002 within the Department of Environment that relates to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol that sets out the benefits, how the targets are to be reached and its cost to the department.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada advises that its files contain approximately 60 megabytes of material, representing approximately 244,615 pages of information corresponding to the broad range of the request.

As such, it is prohibitively expensive in labour and money to produce and would not be available in any reasonable timeframe. I therefore ask the hon. member to withdraw his motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. member for Red Deer agree to transfer the matter for debate?

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would.

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the matter is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, I wish to inform the House that because of the recorded divisions, government orders will be extended 24 minutes.

GOVERNEMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2003

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-28, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 18, 2003, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are now back to the main motion on Bill C-28. I have had an opportunity to speak to the bill so I do not intend to use my full time. However there is an aspect of the budget that I am very anxious to make mention of simply because budgets often contain numerous provisions which do not get the attention that they deserve.

About 20% of the constituents in my riding are aged Canadians. They require a great deal of care, not only by their families but by our health care system. The budget included a very important new provision, a new assist for families under the caption of compassionate care. I wanted to share this with the members because I am not sure how many members knew this item was there. I think it is important.

Government Orders

One of the most difficult times we can face is when a loved one needs palliative care and is dying or is at severe risk of dying. During these times Canadians often have to choose between caring for their loved one or staying at their job and hoping that somehow other arrangements can be made.

This is also a very important issue as it relates to women primarily because daughters are closer to their parents than sons would be.

A poll conducted in September 2002 revealed very strong support, some 81% for the Government of Canada providing some income support for working Canadians to take off work to care for a dying family member; 39% said that they had been in the situation of having to care for a gravely ill or dying family member; and 50% of Canadians who faced the situation said it conflicted with the demands of their job.

The 2003 first ministers' health accord included a commitment to introduce a compassionate care benefit to help support Canadians who required temporary absence from work when a loved one falls gravely ill.

I think this is a very important social initiative. We all will eventually face situations like this or we know someone close to us who is facing a situation like this. I think it is an initiative that is embraced by all members in this place.

Every year thousands of Canadians bear the stress of loss of income or possible job loss when they are forced to make a choice between a job and caring for a family member. We should never be forced to choose between caring for a loved one or our job. That is not the way it should be done. I am pleased the budget incorporated this new provision.

Compassionate care will be a new type of employment insurance benefit. It is estimated that 90% of individuals in paid employment, including those working part time, could potentially be eligible for this new benefit. I think that is significant. It is very important. It is estimated that 270,000 claimants will access the new benefit to care for 160,000 gravely ill family members each year, beginning in the year 2004.

On behalf of my constituents of Mississauga South, I want to acknowledge the budget provision with regard to compassionate care as an important provision for families right across Canada. It is a matter which I believe we should take to heart in terms of assessing all types of assists that we can give to ensure that families can discharge their responsibilities, not only to their employers but to their families, their children and those things that we value.

I believe this is probably a good time to move a motion. I move:

That the question be now put.

• (1605)

• (1610)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is in order.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk about the recent federal budget and give the perspective of the people in my riding of Blackstrap on why it does not work for Canadians.

The riding I represent in Saskatchewan is predominantly rural. Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy. It is an industry that has been in crisis for several years.

According to figures from Statistics Canada, last year's growing season was the worst in decades for some of the province's major crops. Spring wheat production was down 40%, barley production dropped 34% and canola production fell to nearly half its 10 year average level.

Unfortunately, this situation has continued without the federal government assuming a leadership role in finding a solution to restore profitability and stability to the national agriculture sector.

In his 2003 budget, the hon. Minister of Finance committed millions of dollars to promoting linguistic duality, billions to unspecified Kyoto initiatives and not a dime of new money to the struggling prairie producers, the primary producers of this country, the people who literally feed this nation and the world.

I question whether the present government has the capacity to understand the significance of the crisis in agriculture, much less the capacity to address it.

The legacy budget of 2003 does not lead one to believe that the government can see the critical role agriculture plays in the economy of our country.

The agriculture sector is not the only one our federal government has let down with this budget. Yesterday I met with representatives from the real estate business community to hear their thoughts and the government's approach to savings and how it affects the economy.

Although there have been minor concessions made in the realm of retirement savings, RRSPs are the only savings venue open to many Canadians, particularly the nearly 2.4 million self-employed workers in this country. Yet the government has chosen not to make this a more viable and realistic option.

The increases are incremental. If the government seems to believe in the need for an increase in limits, why not make them now? Why wait until 2006 to receive the full benefit of an increased limit? Even raising the RRSP contribution limit still leaves much room for improvement in the area of helping Canadians plan and save for their futures. The American model allows contributed money to grow tax free in retirement savings plans. What a concept: leaving Canadians money to spend how they wish; and letting people decide what they want to do with their own money instead of committing it to this irresponsible legacy budget for which generations of Canadians will be forced to pay.

The spend and tax policies of the government are hurting Canadian businesses. As a member of the Standing Committee on Transport I witness firsthand the difficult times the airline sector is facing. Air Canada went into bankruptcy protection yesterday and while it has many problems to address and restructuring to complete, the impact the government's taxation policies are having on the industry overall cannot be understated.

Government Orders

The government takes \$600 million annually from air travel consumers through airport grants, fuel surcharges and the air travellers security tax. That would be a good place to start looking to make some changes.

The government has a history of crippling the competitiveness of Canadian businesses with its burdensome taxation policies. One can promise all the new spending one wants but someone has to pay for it. Generations of Canadians are never going to see their way clear on the financial hole the government has dug for them.

When I was flying back to Ottawa on Sunday I sat next to Mr. Anthony Pollard, the president of the Hotel Association of Canada. Mr. Pollard told me that his industry generates \$10.8 billion in revenue annually, employs 239,000 people and turns back more than \$4 billion in taxes. He wrote a letter to the Prime Minister outlining his concerns about the impact the government's policies will have on his industry.

• (1615)

He wrote:

It is imperative that you take immediate action to restore confidence, friendship and mutual respect with the United States of America. The largest single customer base for the hotel industry outside of our country is the United States of America. Last year, 16,152,000 Americans came to Canada, stayed overnight and spent \$8.5 billion. Clearly Canada enjoys a very special and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States, which had been severely called into question these past few weeks with the war in Iraq. Inappropriate and overtly damaging comments have severely tried this relationship.

We are already witnessing convention and room cancellations from our largest market. The chronic and sad fact is that we could be capitalizing on the United States visitor when they would typically wish to travel here as opposed to Europe and other overseas markets in times of and following global conflict. Instead it appears as if we will miss this opportunity completely.

Mr. Prime Minister, it is never too late to build bridges and restore confidence with your best friend and ally. On behalf of the 239,000 Canadians working in the hotel industry we ask you to immediately reach out to the United States and demonstrate our support to our American friends. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anthony P. Pollard

I could give many more examples of how Canadians have been let down by this budget. I find them wherever I go, at home in my riding, at work in committee, travelling, and here in the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister may see this as his legacy budget, but for Canadians it is a legacy of burden we could all live without.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a few minutes to say that we are in no hurry to pass Bill C-28 on implementing the budget measures. Many questions raised by all the parties remain.

The Bloc Québécois, for its part, has said before and is saying again today that, when this budget was announced, the minister chose to focus on the wrong priorities. In particular, he focused on areas of provincial jurisdiction. Respecting provincial jurisdiction has always been sacred for Quebec. Furthermore, yet again, this budget is hiding an enormous surplus.

For each of the past five budgets, the Bloc Québécois has always accurately forecast the next surplus. Whether it is deliberate,

unconscious or the result of incompetence, the Minister of Finance has always been off in his forecasts, resulting in much larger than anticipated surpluses. This gives him the discretion to create last-minute programs, pay down the debt with the unexpected windfall, and infringe, mainly in areas outside his jurisdiction.

Worse still is this refusal to acknowledge the fiscal imbalance. Yet, an independent commission, the Séguin commission, was created; important experts were consulted; the amounts going to Ottawa and no longer to the provinces due to federal cuts were tallied; an undeniable conclusion was reached. The numbers all add up, and the report was unanimously accepted by the three political parties in Quebec. And here, the government dares to tell us that this fiscal imbalance does not exist and refuses to discuss it.

Yet, during the first ministers' conference, Quebec presented this report to all the Canadian provinces, and all the provinces reached the same conclusion, that this fiscal imbalance is clearly laid out in the Séguin report, and that it is hurting the provinces, particularly in terms of health care and education.

Hon. members will recall that the federal government put in 50¢ of every dollar spent in the provinces. Now it is barely 13¢ or 14¢, which is unacceptable, yet the federal government continues to collect the same taxes.

If it wants to pull out of health, no problem, but let it transfer the tax points, the GST, the taxation field, to the provinces. The provinces will then have the funds required to deliver the necessary care to their populations. But no, the government has dug in its heels on this. It is putting money into a multitude of things that are inappropriate or into areas that fall under provincial jurisdiction and are off limits.

It has always been said, and particularly since 1995, that this government has set itself a single mission: to establish national standards for everything. This is seen in health, and in education, yet it is a known fact that every time the federal government goes charging into provincial jurisdictions, it creates nothing but a huge mess by most accounts. It should stick to its jurisdiction and let the provinces stick to theirs. And it should never forget that the provinces created the federal government, and not vice versa.

With these national standards, the federal government has but a single intent, particularly in Quebec: to make it into a province like the others. The hidden agenda ever since the referendum has been to provincialize Quebec, to reduce French to a mere element of folklore, as happened in Louisiana. That is the goal of the federal government.

We have national standards in education, health and even agriculture. The Minister for International Trade now wants to be able to go to the WTO negotiating table and say "At last I no longer have those shackles around my legs, that ball and chain of the provinces with their flexibility in certain areas such as agriculture for the west, for Quebec, or the east."

Government Orders

•(1620)

No, as part of this strategic framework, the government wants to establish national standards. With these standards, it can go to the negotiating table, put supply management on the table, in part if necessary, and do whatever it likes in international negotiations, without having to consult the provinces. That is what it has in mind. That is the danger for the provinces. That is the danger when it comes to education, agriculture and health.

The government does not want to admit it, but this is the hidden trump card. We see it in every area. "National standards" is the new watchword. In the name of national standards, all provincial jurisdictions are being eliminated and the provinces turned into nothing more than villages with little village councils. That is the plan.

We see it as well in the creation of the Canadian Coordinating Office for Health Technology Assessment; in the allocation of additional funding to the Canada Student Loan Program; in the creation of the Canadian Learning Institute. What it is is interference in provincial jurisdictions, especially in Quebec in the field of education, and it is extremely serious. Back as far as Duplessis, no prime minister, no matter what his political allegiance, has ever allowed intrusion into this sector. It is sacred and off limits. Still today, even though they are in the middle of an election campaign, Quebec's three political parties condemn this state of affairs. They recognize the fiscal imbalance and are asking Ottawa to act accordingly, and not to infringe on provincial jurisdictions, especially in education.

I could go on. Speaking of fiscal imbalance, there is the issue of tax on capital. This budget also fails to create an independent employment insurance fund. In addition to interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction, the government is collecting an indirect tax from workers and small businesses. The EI surplus should be given back to those who pay the premiums: businesses and employees. However, the government has shrewdly siphoned this money away into the consolidated revenue fund. As a result, workers and small businesses are paying an indirect tax. This money should be accounted for separately. When EI runs a surplus, the premiums should be lowered, or the benefits period should be extended, or else programs should be set up to help unemployed people who are having problems. When the fund has less money, the premiums should be increased.

An inverse relationship should be applied to the EI fund, and it should have a separate account. But no, the government is robbing the money from the EI fund, and employers are being taxed twice. This is an indirect tax and it is not acceptable.

I could also raise the issue of infrastructure programs. Quebec and the provinces have been calling for these programs, but the budget contains nothing but a few scraps. Why did the government not respond to the provinces' request in this area? Jobs could have been created and the economies of many regions experiencing hard times could have been jump started. But no, the government did not.

There is also the issue of the Kyoto protocol. The budget mentions Kyoto, mentions reinvestments and allocations, but Bill C-28, the Budget Implementation Act, goes against what Quebec and the

provinces wanted. The government would have been more successful if it had listened to the provinces, if it had understood that it can look after federal jurisdictions, but that it has to respect areas of provincial jurisdiction, particularly education, health and agriculture. Quebeckers and Canadians would be much better off.

•(1625)

[English]

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-28, the budget implementation act.

It is interesting to note that every year the government tells Canadians how it is going to spend their hard earned dollars. I think Canadians are getting very concerned that the government seems to think money grows on trees. I think that Canadians have a general concern that the government, instead of reducing its spending and reducing its size, continues to grow beyond all necessity.

One of these interesting things was revealed just this week: that the executive branch of government, through the bilingual program, has grown by 20%. We are not talking about the entire workforce. We are talking about the executive branch or the bureaucracy. It is 20% more than it was two years ago. Canadians are concerned that the government, rather than reducing its spending, keeps increasing it.

The last budget that was tabled in the House calls for \$14 billion of new spending. Canadians do not mind that 40% of that spending is for health care, but they are concerned that new money is always being added instead of the money that has already been paid into the pot being redirected. Particularly now, with the war going on in Iraq, Canadians are also concerned that the budget for the Canadian armed forces was not substantially increased.

It is not a question of new money going into necessary programs, but a question of the government's priorities and of the government reducing spending rather than always increasing it. Both can happen at the same time.

There is one other issue I would like to bring up and that is the issue of the national debt. The government seems to think that the debt will go away on its own, but it will not. Last year in the budget, the government predicted surpluses of \$6.4 billion this year and up to \$10.7 billion in 2005. To give the government credit, it has paid down the debt by \$17 billion over the last six years, but the interest payment this year on the existing debt is \$37 billion. That money could go somewhere else.

This is really a question of where we think our responsibility lies. Is it our responsibility to ensure that our children and our grandchildren are not going to continually fight this huge debt? Or should this money go into new pet projects that the federal Liberal government has on the table?

Hon. Anne McLellan: Oh, health care is a pet project?

Mr. Howard Hilstrom: The gun bill.

Government Orders

Ms. Val Meredith: The Minister of Health is asking if health care is one of those pet projects. No, health care is recognized by Canadians as a serious spending project.

The point I am trying to make is that money could be garnered from other sources. I have a list here, and it is quite an interesting list. The gun registry is certainly one of them. The long gun registration program was supposed to cost \$2 million. In the year 2005, the Auditor General expects the cost to be almost \$1 billion. By the way, she could not finish her audit because of the bad paper trail of the government. It is that kind of spending I am talking about.

There is the HRDC boondoggle, in which another \$1 billion was handed out without proper management by the government. We could also talk about the EH-101 helicopter debacle or the Prime Minister buying two Challenger jets. We could talk about the GST tax fraud and the advertising and sponsorship fraud, which most of us know as the Groupaction case. There are many examples that show the government has not managed the spending of our dollars well and has wasted money. Quite frankly, Canadians did not support these programs in the first place.

• (1630)

One thing that Canadians have asked for, and which we hear about every day in our offices, is some tax relief. We heard my colleague talk about the airport security tax. We hear the marine industry talking about the taxes that it is now facing. There are transportation taxes and taxes on gasoline. They just go on and on, these taxes that the government has put on Canadians to pay for, I would suggest, programs that are not supported by the majority of Canadians.

Not only is the government putting this burden of taxation on Canadians, but it is not managing the money well. I have spent the last year sitting on the public accounts committee and let me say that every day is a new adventure in how the Liberal government is mismanaging our money. It is quite clear to me that the government is wasting literally billions of dollars through programs over which it does not have control. One example is the Groupaction case, which showed quite clearly and quite blatantly that not only did senior management in the government departments break all the rules in the book, which try to control how they spend taxpayers' money, but they had no control over where it was going.

When the government asks for another \$14 billion to continue that kind of mismanagement, one really has to be concerned. Again it comes down to the priorities. We have the gun registry, which sounded like not a bad idea to some people, although it did not work for handguns. It was supposed to cost \$2 million and now is going to be at \$1 billion by 2005. Over the last seven years, the total number of deaths from firearms averaged about 500 a year, and most were suicides, but over the same period of time, 5,000 women died each year due to breast cancer. Rather than \$1 billion, the government's commitment to breast cancer research was \$6 million. When talking about the numbers, the seriousness of the concern about deaths and tragedies—

An hon. member: Priority spending.

Ms. Val Meredith: Yes, priority spending. What is the priority of the government?

There obviously is no direct link between the problem and the money the government is willing to spend and to throw at it. I listened to my colleague from the Bloc talk about the distribution of tax dollars: that the provinces are not getting their fair share and are given the burden of providing health care and education, but the federal government takes all the tax dollars. I call it photo op politics.

It is quite clear to me that the governments that are closest to the people in delivering services are the provincial and municipal governments. The federal government is sort of on the far reaches, with foreign affairs, defence and whatnot, and does not get much exposure, so in order to get the credit for handing out money, with photo op politics and all their MPs handing out cheques, the government has to get into jurisdictions where it probably should not be and get into programs where it probably should not be so that it can be seen day to day as being active and participating. I would even say that it is close to buying votes.

These photo op politics have to stop. The government has to realize that there is a role for the federal government, that it is a limited role and that it should stick to that role. It should transfer the ability for provinces to raise more funds to pay for those things that are of provincial jurisdiction.

Other than spending more money without better management programs, the government has failed to give the Canadian taxpayer a break and to recognize that tax relief is what is going to stimulate an economy and will let us afford our health care and education systems that are so important to Canadians generally.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before moving on to debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Matapédia—Matane, Mont-Louis Wharf; hon. member for Peterborough, Health.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I again have the privilege of standing in our House of Commons representing not only the people of Elk Island but also many Canadians right across this country as we debate Bill C-28, the bungle implementation act.

It was no bungle that I used the word “bungle” instead of budget. Bill C-28 is the bungle implementation act, the Liberal bungling of the finances of Canadian taxpayers.

Government Orders

We have had a little chat in the last couple of months about trust funds and the fact that there should be a blind trust for cabinet ministers when they undertake to become managers of large amounts of money so that there would be a reduction of personal gain by doing that. We had a blind trust suggestion. It is supposed to be in the rules for cabinet ministers. We found out, of course, that the former finance minister had a blind trust that was not blind at all. In fact, it came complete with a Seeing Eye dog, I guess.

The reason I bring this up is that unknown to many taxpayers in this country their money is in a blind trust. They send it to Ottawa and the government here manages to spend it at an astounding rate. It is mostly in a blind trust because no one really can account for where it went afterwards, so it is totally blind. I should not say totally, as we know where some of it went, but a lot of it is very badly mismanaged.

Over the last 10 years that I have been a member of Parliament and even before that, when I remember my dad saying it many years ago, I have had many people say to me they did not mind paying fair taxes. My dad said that he did not mind paying fair taxes, that "It shows that I have an income and I am very happy with that and very grateful to live in a country where I can earn money to provide for my family". He used to say that he was certainly willing to pay some money for the privilege of living here and to make his contribution to the economic milieu in the country.

However, over and over in the last number of years I have heard people say that they do not mind paying a fair rate of taxation but they have two complaints. One is that the rate is not fair, that it is too high. Second, they tell me that when they send that money they are not content with the way it is mismanaged here. I had someone ask me, "How about these advertising contracts? How is it that somebody can get a contract with the government and not do any work for it but still cash the cheque?"

That is a very good question. The cabinet ministers on the front bench over there should be very concerned about the fact that they are not managing the financial affairs of this country properly and looking after the finances of the country properly. They are really mismanaging money that has been entrusted to them. It was given in trust, but they are not treating it in trust.

I want to mention something about the rate of taxation, and I do not know whether people are aware of it. I like to dabble in mathematics. There was one computation I did, although I do not remember the exact number. If all the money spent by the government of Ottawa, which over the year is around \$183 billion, were paid out of Ottawa—and of course it is not, there are huge cheques and large equalization payments and health care transfers—by putting the loonies on a conveyor belt and shipping them out of Ottawa to wherever they go, or within Ottawa, that conveyor belt would have to be going at around 630 kilometres per hour. As I recall the number, that is what it would be. That is the rate at which the loonies are flying out of here.

●(1640)

We know that the loonies are flying in from the taxpayers at an even faster rate because we have been enjoying surpluses. Some of that money has gone to reducing the debt at way too slow a rate, while program spending is going up at the rate of 20% per year. That

is not sustainable. That is another area where the government is mismanaging the money that is entrusted to it by Canadian taxpayers.

Certainly, there are programs that need more money. We have been calling for more money for the military. It is atrocious that we send a ship to attend a war that the Prime Minister says we are not in and the helicopter on board cannot fly. First there was the one that crashed on the ship and we had to bring it home. The next one went out, and when it arrived, it got a hole in the firewall and could not fly.

We are asking our servicemen and women to go out there with totally inadequate equipment and no moral or other support from the government, and yet they are putting their lives on the line.

That is an atrocious misuse of taxpayers' money as well because taxpayers are sending the money to Ottawa to, among other things, preserve the national interest. Certainly, as a nation we should be a major player when it comes to looking after the concerns of peace and fighting terrorism around the world. Yes, we would like to have more money there.

We have said since we came here that health care must be improved. I hesitate to use this example, but I will. On the day of my father's funeral just several weeks before Christmas, my mother fell and broke her hip. This happened in Saskatchewan, the province which is the home of medicare. She had to wait for 35 hours before she had attention to it and as a result missed dad's funeral. It was a pretty bad day. I guess that is an understatement.

However, for there not to be appropriate health care in a province like Saskatchewan because of lack of funding is atrocious. We know this because the federal government dried it up in 1993 and 1994 when it first took power. Afterwards the government comes here like a shining white knight saying it will fix medicare. First it gives it the fatal blow and then it tries to blow some breath back into it. Then it wants us to proclaim it a hero for doing it.

I had a phone call or an e-mail, I cannot remember which, from my daughter who lives in Regina. She told of two of her friends who had to travel out of the province in order to get needed health care because the province could not provide it. One was a mother with newborn twins. There was not a reasonable amount of equipment in Regina to look after these babies so they had to airlift this mother and her new twins in a makeshift apparatus to keep them alive until they got to Calgary so they could look after them. That is just not good enough.

We want our government to use taxpayers' money responsibly. I have said a number of times that the government would spend a billion dollars on registering duck hunters. That is a blatant waste of money. There is no proof whatsoever that even if the registry did work successfully that it would save any lives.

Government Orders

I did a little computation. A billion dollars would buy four MRIs for every riding in the country. A city of Edmonton has eight ridings, six in Edmonton and two right outside, one of them being mine. That would be 32 MRIs in the city of Edmonton. Members should ask those people what they would rather have, a registration system for their shotgun, or MRIs so that for serious medical problems they can get a proper diagnosis and receive treatment.

● (1645)

My big complaint with the budget and with Bill C-28, the bungle implementation act, is that the government is bungling the finances of the country and it is time that comes to an end.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-28, the budget implementation act.

It occurs to me that only in Canada could we have a former finance minister who owned a company that registered its ships in foreign countries to avoid paying Canadian taxes and wages. Only in Canada could we have a former finance minister who would reflag his ships in tax havens and replace them with Korean or Filipino crews because they were paid much less. Only in Canada do we allow that kind of behaviour and not hold our ministers to account. I cannot explain it, but all I know is it is completely inappropriate.

We had a new budget presented in February by a new minister. Many of us thought we would see a new course set in the new budget. What we continue to see is the same Liberal direction and the same misplaced priorities.

Canada is a trading nation. Our ranking in the world is dependent on trade. We are very dependent on trade, much more so than people in mainland China who are about 10% dependent on trade and people in the United States who are 15% dependent. Canada exports 45% of our GDP and imports 40% of our GDP, and 87% of that trade is with the U.S.

What is our most precious asset when it comes to trade? Obviously our relationship with the U.S.

We have \$2 billion a day in two-way trade across the Canada-U.S. border. Given our need to diversify export destinations while at the same time addressing concerns of our southern neighbours who have expressed great security concerns about border issues and points of entry, the budget should have spent a lot of time addressing those issues and it did not. There was \$11 million over the next two years and \$5.5 million a year to add regional offices and increase consular presence in the U.S. These are insignificant moneys and much less than what was given to a simple PR program for the softwood associations in the U.S. to affect opinion makers in the softwood lumber dispute.

I find this problematic and I want to talk about some of those misplaced priorities. For example, Canadian infrastructure is a large and current but looming problem as well. We have major problems in the air, on land, and in the sea. The budget did not address those priorities.

Everything the government has talked about in terms of improving our land infrastructure border crossing needs is reliant on a \$600

million announcement that is not going to cut it. That program was announced in 2002 and is only a start, it is not comprehensive.

The message that Canada has been sending to the U.S. on our domestic security, international security, border issues and military issues through the budget and in other ways, that we are all too familiar with in the House, is imperilling our long term trading relationship in a major way.

For example, the government collects \$5 billion in fuel taxes every year and only a slight amount is returned to transportation infrastructure. In fact, 100% of those taxes go into general revenue. Last year only 4% was returned to highways.

● (1650)

There was a recent spike in gas prices at the pumps. If that 10% increase were to sit there for 12 months, it would represent \$350 million in windfall revenue to the federal government. That little increment alone would be more than enough to pay for the spending promises for the Olympics and every other highway spending announcement in British Columbia that the government has made this year. In 2000, the federal government actually spent \$400,000 on highway infrastructure in British Columbia alone. It was one-twentieth of 1% of fuel tax revenues taken out of that province. This large increase is actually still minuscule.

What is happening is that provinces are putting 92% of provincial fuel tax revenues into transportation related infrastructure. The federal government is putting in 4%. We need a new direction on this. The provinces and municipalities are the main responsible parties for land transportation and highways. We call on the federal authority to vacate its fuel tax room to the provinces and municipalities. This is essential to our well-being as Canadians.

We have another form of land transportation and that is rail. VIA Rail has cost Canadian taxpayers \$3 billion in taxpayer subsidies over the last 10 years. That works out to \$10 million per federal constituency. If the average constituency were to think about what it could do with \$10 million, its wish list would include a lot of things before it would include subsidizing the VIA Rail network. VIA Rail has become a self-protective, self-perpetuating organization which, once again, wants to enter into competition with Rocky Mountaineer, the very route that it wanted to abandon and that Rocky Mountaineer turned into a profitable route. VIA Rail now wants to get back in with a subsidy and the Minister of Transport is buying this argument. This is opposed by communities and chambers of commerce from Kamloops to Calgary, the very route that the rail would take.

I will give another example of misplaced priorities. We have a government committed to Kyoto. We have some exciting wind and wave energy projects on the west coast. Because of a lack of commitment by the government, those projects which have been moving along nicely on the promise of federal contribution have been pulled. That is not what I call commitment to Kyoto. That is something very hypocritical.

Government Orders

•(1655)

In the few seconds left I would like to say that there is a spending side and there is a revenue side. On the revenue side, one year ago Canada Customs and Revenue Agency hired 92 auditors for my province alone to go out and get new revenue. They are beating up on all of the wrong people. That is another misplaced priority and one the government should address.

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My reputation of being able to do mathematical computations is at risk. I would like to set the record straight. I think I may have said that the government expenditures for the year is represented by loonies flying at 630 kilometres per hour. It should have been 531. I just recomputed it and I want the accurate number on the record.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to briefly address the budget implementation bill.

One of the concerns the people in my riding of Yorkton—Melville have is that the budget really has turned the surplus into a slush fund. There are a whole bunch of different programs funded by the government. There is no direction. The Liberals are buying a few votes here, buying a few votes there and creating the impression that they are doing something wonderful for society, but when it comes right down to it and we look very carefully at it, there is really no substance to it.

I will deal in a few minutes with one of those slush fund projects that really is a symbol of what is wrong in this country.

An hon. member: It wouldn't be the gun registry, would it?

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: It would be the gun registry but we will get there in a minute.

There is a lot more of a surplus than the government would have us believe. Surplus is a nice word for overtaxation. If we used that surplus to lower the taxes, we could create a lot of jobs in this country. There would be an incentive again to invest. Companies would have more. Canadians would have more money in their pockets to spend. They could buy goods and services in their local communities rather than send the money to Ottawa where it just gets lost in a big black hole.

That kind of tax reduction is desperately needed. It would help the poorest in this country. If we raised the personal tax exemption that would have a huge impact on helping poor people in this country.

The budget announced \$17.4 billion in new spending initiatives over three years, but the tax cuts were only \$2.3 billion. The Liberals talked about all the tax cuts and they were almost insignificant compared to the huge increases in spending.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Is \$100 billion insignificant?

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: This backward budget really reflects the backward Liberal promises that it contains.

The government projected another \$2 billion on Kyoto. It is probably the same as the gun registry. Where is that money going? What are we going to get for it? Has a cost benefit analysis been done? No. We have asked for a cost benefit analysis. The minister who is now replying to me was one of those people who should have

done the cost benefit analysis on the gun registry before she handed it over to the next justice minister and before he handed it over to the Solicitor General. That cost benefit analysis should be done.

Are taxpayers getting value for their money? Absolutely not, because that study which I have asked for has never been relayed to Parliament. In fact when the Auditor General brought her report out on December 3 last year, she clearly said that Parliament has been kept in the dark. That is one of the ways it has been kept in the dark. Where is the cost benefit analysis? It has never been given to Parliament. We do not know if there are any benefits at all and whether they are cost effective in saving lives and reducing crime. But I digress.

The Canadian Alliance also believes, and I really want to underline this one, that the child care options should be given to parents and not to bureaucrats. Every parent in this country deserves the opportunity to choose the kind of child care he or she wants. By limiting their choices the government is doing a disservice to parents.

One program which I think has become a symbol of what is wrong with government in this country is the whole gun registry program, or as the Liberals like to paint it, gun control. I challenge Canadians to scratch below the surface on issues. If they scratched below the surface on this issue, they would realize that the gun registry has nothing to do with gun control, yet the government is asking for more and more money. The projected cost by the end of next year that the government admits to is \$1.07 billion. It is unbelievable.

•(1700)

Last week the government released a report on priorities and spending on the gun registry program. The government filled in a few of the blanks in this report, but there were 105 blanks where it did not know what the costs were.

It is unforgivable that a government would table its spending priorities and leave all of those blanks. I call it shooting blanks. In effect the government is keeping Parliament in the dark. It is firing a bunch of missiles across here, asking Canadians to believe this is gun control when in fact it is not.

What could the government do with \$1 billion? I was listening to my colleague a few minutes ago talking about how many MRIs could be bought. MRIs in our medical clinics would really help preserve people's lives and help improve the health of this country. That is not being provided.

The government could get 238 MRIs fully installed, staffed and running for that kind of money. If those MRIs were spread out across the country we would have something that is cost effective. That is why a cost benefit analysis is so important and needs to be done. It has not been done.

When former Bill C-68 was introduced the government was spending \$16 million a year on cancer research. Think of the number of lives that could be saved if \$1 billion was put into cancer research. That is why a cost benefit analysis is needed.

Government Orders

The Liberals will always come up with the mantra that if it saves one life, it is worth it. How many lives are being lost because of the misplaced spending priorities of the government? It is unforgiveable that it would go down this road and not examine what could be better done with that money.

The Liberals are great at creating impressions. I believe this is what the budget was all about. I believe that the gun registry was simply creating an impression. Why? To get votes. The Liberals were playing politics with taxpayers' hard-earned money, creating impressions that they are somehow improving public safety, creating the impression in the budget that somehow they are improving the lot of Canadians.

If Canadians scratched below the surface, and I challenge them to do that, they would find that the opposite was true, that the Liberals are taking the hard-earned money away from Canadians and putting it into funds that really do not accomplish anything in a material way.

My colleague talked about the amount of money that is collected through gasoline taxes, almost \$5 billion a year. The government talks about its infrastructure project. If we actually scratched below the surface on that, we would see it is just a helter-skelter spending of money here, there and everywhere with no focused direction in getting our products to market and ensuring that it is helping the Canadian economy. If that was the government's purpose it would use that \$5 billion to improve the highways in this country, to put in place those things in our transportation system that will be effective and truly help Canadians.

I have to touch on one other thing. It is unforgiveable and borders on a crime for the government to not pay down the debt when we have the opportunity to do so.

An hon. member: We are paying.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: I hear them complaining about my comments on this.

This is an ethical issue. Why should our children and grandchildren be saddled with this huge debt, having to pay that for generations to come? Why do we have to support the government's habit of wasting money on a gun registry, on wasting money on all kinds of slush fund programs and not paying down the debt? That is unforgiveable.

The government should seriously look at the trust that has been placed in it by Canadians. It has to take that seriously and start doing the right thing. That would be to pay down the debt.

One of the things that has really come to the fore lately is that there will be a great leadership change within the Liberal Party. The leaders that are coming forward now have been the ones that have been signing the cheques, that have been part of the mess that has been created in this country. For us to suddenly think that this is somehow going to change if there is a change in leadership is again misleading Canadians.

• (1705)

We should remind Canadians that this firearms registry, which has become a symbol of what is wrong with this country, was funded by

a finance minister who now wants to become Prime Minister. I warn Canadians that we have to start to make substantial changes in this country or we will continue to slide downhill.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the comments made this afternoon are important to note. What they have indicated is the failure of the government to address real issues facing Canadians, as well as to address the wastage of taxpayer dollars. It was mentioned that dollars spent on advertising contracts were flippantly wasted.

I want to highlight another example where a middleman, although I would refer to him as a bookie, was used in a Health Canada contract. A company, which does car restoration, somehow acted as the middleman for someone else to do contract work on providing information related to aboriginal health. I found that one the most disturbing.

Half the first nations in Manitoba are in my riding. I know the challenges they face with health care. To see the government resort to a car restoration company to get information or to use a middleman bookie agent to get information on aboriginal health is absolutely a slap in the face and a total insult to aboriginal people in Canada, certainly in Manitoba.

What I will focus on the most today is on the duplicity of the Liberal government and the budget. I apologize to my Liberal colleagues who I know do not support some of the nasty things the government does. I know everyone is not of the same mindset that there should be wastage and duplicity. I am speaking of the duplicity of the government in its actions of talking the fine talk and never following through, of all these amazingly wonderful Liberal caucus task forces where they use their dollars, head out across the country to listen to Canadians and come back with great policy that will benefit Canadians.

The one I want to speak of right now is with regard to the 1996 Liberal task force on disability issues. I recently received a letter in my office, and I am sure a good number of members of Parliament have as well, from the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres. The subject of the letter is the \$15 million for spinal cord research in the budget. Everyone would think it is great that it is getting some money for this. I want to read some sections of the letter that the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres sent to us. It states:

It states, "In 1996 a Liberal task force on disability issues was formed to examine the role of the federal government and its responsibility to Canadians with disabilities. Members of Parliament and the disability community travelled to each and every province and territory and consulted with Canadians with disabilities, their organizations, service providers, family members, unions, businesses and other community groups. The members of Parliament involved, along with the community, tabled the report "Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act".

Government Orders

The Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres goes on to say, “We firmly and naively thought that this document would be a blueprint for action for any upcoming Liberal initiatives. Thousands of Canadians with disabilities participated and sent a very strong message back to Ottawa through this report that the federal government has a very serious role to play in the lives of Canadians with disabilities.

The task force report included 52 recommendations on what both members of Parliament and the community believed were achievable recommendations. There are only eight recommendations to date that have been acted on”.

This is since 1996. It goes on to say, “The majority of the recommendations followed through on were simply programs already in place, yet at risk of extinction”.

I say at risk of extinction under this Liberal government not following through with its commitment to disabled Canadians.

I will leave out a couple of paragraphs and go on to another key section which brings in the \$15 million. It states, “In this year’s budget there was some good news for children with disabilities and their families through the tax system. However, there was once again no new investment in programming. To everyone’s surprise, there was \$15 million dedicated to research for spinal cord injuries, sending another message to Canadians with disabilities that maybe the eradication of disability is much more important than supporting citizenship and services to the millions of people living with disabilities that want to have equal access in Canadian society”.

• (1710)

It goes on to say, “What is truly surprising is that after each and every report that has been written and supported by national, local and provincial groups, by Human Resources Development Canada and the federal Subcommittee on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, there is not one mention or recommendation that spinal cord research was a priority of the disabled community in Canada.

In fact the federal government released the report advancing the inclusion of people with disabilities on December 3, 2002 and this report included federally funded research results that identify that human and financial resources in the disability community are stretched to the limit. This is not a sustainable situation and it is a critical time to develop support to enhance the capacity of the disabled community”.

Once again the government has turned its back on Canadians of the most vulnerable nature, those with disabilities. Worse than that, the duplicity in its actions of travelling around telling people it is listening to them, that is listening to their recommendations and that it will make things work is absolutely disgusting. It does not do a damn bit of what it says it will do. This is not coming from myself as an opposition member. It is coming from disabled Canadians, the people to which the Liberal government was supposed to be listening. Even more scarier than that is the fact that I was not shocked by this.

For the past two years, we have listened time and time again to people who have told us that the government has not acted responsibly toward disabled Canadians. It put a system in place where disabled Canadians, who tried to get a tax credit, were literally

hammered at every angle. The \$50, \$75, \$100 that they should save on their taxes, they were told they had to get a medical certificate for this or that. Even though they had a disability, if they could walk 50 meters or if they could lift a spoon to their mouth, they could not get the tax credit. That is with what we have been dealing.

It should have come as no surprise that this was before us. I know the rest of my colleagues in the House will join me in calling on the government to act responsibly if ever that were possible. If it is going to spend taxpayer money, it should listen to them and follow through on their recommendations. If it is not going to do it, it should quit wasting money and quit pretending.

It is absolutely true that human and financial resources in the disability community are stretched to the limit. Taxpayer dollars are stretched to the limit and should not be wasted by the government. That is the problem here. As my colleague from the Alliance mentioned earlier, it is not that Canadians do not want to pay their fair share, they do. What they want to receive is a fair and disciplined government with those dollars, not the wastage.

Another one of my colleagues mentioned tax breaks that went to companies. It is unconscionable to think that the former finance minister tried to get around paying taxes to Canada, the country for which he supposedly running to be prime minister. There is no beating around the bush on this. If there were, we would not see the articles in the paper. Imagine the shame we would feel, if someone would try and skirt around paying his fair share of taxes in Canada and then possibly, on the vote of a bunch of Liberals, be the next prime minister. It is absolutely disgusting that any Canadian, who has the gumption to think about running for the position of prime minister or even as a member of Parliament, would skirt around paying taxes by flying a flagship of a different colour so to speak. It is unconscionable.

• (1715)

If the government can put in place little rules that hammer at the disabled community and at seniors, and not pay seniors dollars that are rightfully due them because they have filed too late, it could act responsibly and put in a fair taxation system where everybody is paying fairly. That is what we need to see.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on the motion that the question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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.

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among all parties and there is agreement, pursuant to Standing Order 45(7), to defer the recorded division until Tuesday, April 8, at 3 p.m.

● (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

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

* * *

[English]

SEX OFFENDER INFORMATION REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act respecting the registration of information relating to sex offenders, to amend the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there having been lengthy discussion and consideration of Bill C-23, I think it is an appropriate time for the following motion. I move:

That the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion is in order. We are now in debate on that the question be now put.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I must express my profound disappointment on how Bill C-23 has been handled in the House of Commons.

Having written the original bill on the national sex offender registry, I have followed the issue for a long time past, even when the government did not understand what we were trying to do with a national sex offender registry. Now it has come out and suggested that it has a great idea about a national sex offender registry and how to handle it.

One of the profound disappointments is the retroactive issue. Today we voted on an amendment to Bill C-23 that would have made sure this particular issue would be retroactive. I will go into that in detail in a moment.

However, the problem I am having is that the government does not want to make the bill retroactive. In other words, it wants to implement a national sex offender registry but it does not want to

include all those who are currently incarcerated in this country, either provincially or federally, for sex offences. That includes approximately 10,000 sex offenders who will not be registered in the registry on opening day.

I read into the House yesterday the names of some of the people who will not be registered. I asked my staff to provide me with an arbitrary list of sex offenders who were written about in the last three months. I read out the names of some of these individuals who will not be on this registry on opening day. I do not understand why the government, which has the ability to register these people, will not do it.

I do not know what to say or what to do any longer in this country where we get lip service about implementing a national sex offender registry. The government accommodates everything that I wrote in the original private member's bill, but in the last two pages it ruined the whole damn thing. It ruined it all.

How? First, after Royal Assent there will not be one soul on that registry. How they get on the registry, if we are lucky enough to get them there, is they have to get out of prison, commit another a sex offence crime, go back to prison, serve their time and then they will be put on the registry.

Has anyone ever heard anything so stupid? For the people listening to what I am saying, I do not understand at all why they would vote for those people. It is a disgrace how they are handling this situation.

An hon. member: Oh, come on.

Mr. Randy White: "Oh, come on", the minister says. What excuse does the government have for not making this retroactive? I ask the minister to give me one damn good reason. He cannot.

There are other problems that are just as bad, and counting on lawyers for some of this stuff is outrageous. Here is another reason. Registered offenders will have the right to appeal a registration order. In other words, rather than name the sex offences, upon which the offenders name would automatically enter the registry, there is an appeal process so that the offenders would have the right to appeal a registration order. Can anyone imagine the stupidity of this? It means more money in the hands of the criminal lawyers, more time in the courtroom and less time for victims.

In addition, the bill would force the crown to apply to the courts to have the offender added to the registry at time of sentencing. That is just the most stupid thing.

I have been in more sentencing hearings where individuals, for example, Armbruster is a good case with 63 prior convictions, including sexually assaulting his grandmother. He is a guy who should have had a DSO, dangerous sex offender, designation and the crown would not apply for it because it thought maybe it could not get it. This is a guy with 63 prior convictions.

● (1725)

To leave it in the hands of the lawyers in a courtroom is a ridiculous position to take. We must take the arbitrariness out of the situation and make it mandatory. When someone is convicted and sentenced for a certain sex offence then it should be automatic.

Government Orders

As if that was not bad enough, then we come to the fact that the legislation provides a loophole for sex offenders: If they can show that being added to the registry would cause them greater harm than the public good that is served by them being on the list. That would be left in the hands of judges.

I have dealt with a lot of decisions lately by judges, particularly in the area of drugs, and it boggles the mind how they make decisions any more. How can we allow a loophole in the act that would allow a judge to consider whether there would be greater harm to the sex offender by putting him on the registry than it would maybe be for the public good? How is it possible to weigh these things? Why is the government doing this? Is there no common sense left over there?

The minister, when he woke up, looked a little confused about it. What is wrong with the people over there? Do they not understand that leaving all this stuff to the discretion of judges and lawyers in the courtroom does not work?

If someone is bad enough, it is at the discretion of judges and lawyers to decide whether the person should be on the sex offender registry, although the person would not be on it anyway until the person commits another crime. I just do not understand.

This is perhaps one of the most disappointing times I have had in my 10 years in the House of Commons. After spending so much time writing the original bill and then seeing the government follow through with that bill, putting essentially everything into it that we had in the private member's bill, but allowing these three items: discretion of the judge, the discretion of the lawyers to even apply for it, and the non-retroactivity, it has ruined the whole thing.

I cannot help but think, quite frankly, that the government really does not want the bill so it has thrown three hard things into it, which will not serve victims of crime or the Canadian people very well, in the hopes that it will just die on the Order Paper somewhere.

I guess the other thing is that it places me and my colleagues in a position to vote against something we have long fought for. We have in fact basically embarrassed the government, along with the police and victims' rights groups, to put this into legislation. Now it throws these three things in, which make the legislation quite useless, and we are forced to vote against it because it does so.

I have seen this political ploy more times than enough in the House of Commons where omnibus bills are brought in and enough is thrown in it to get the opposition to vote against it. The bill before us has to be voted against because of the difficulty the government has laid before us.

There are so many sex offenders out there. The people listening and watching do not know if they are living in their community or living next to them. They would know and could know if the government had followed our original bill. However the people living next door to a sex offender will not know because the government has seen fit to virtually eliminate that information for the next five to eight years, because it will not record people who are currently in prisons.

● (1730)

I can say this about the legislation. I am profoundly disappointed in how the government has tackled these two or three items. I am deeply hurt that victims in this country will not be well served. Innocent Canadians will not be served. They will never know who is living next door. The police will not know. These three changes have, in effect, rendered the bill useless. I do not believe the government had the intention of really implementing a bill that would have been effective.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand and represent all my constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands. I want to make a few points on the sex offender registry.

It is important to make the point that on March 13, 2001, my colleague from Langley—Abbotsford brought forward an Alliance opposition supply day motion calling for a national sex offender registry. In that motion it had a timeline that the government would have this completed by January 2002. Again, that motion was discussed over two years ago and the government has taken over a year to actually get this one done. However, now that it is finally done, as my colleague just stated, I believe it is very inadequate in three main areas.

First and foremost, the most troubling aspect of the legislation is that it is not retroactive. There are literally thousands and thousands of sex offenders. There are people like Karla Homolka who will be released from jail in the coming years, if not months. She will not be on the registry. There are thousands more who are equally as bad and will not be put on a registry to protect the public.

The recidivism rate is reported as high as 50%, some at 40%, but there is no question that it is high. Some would argue that it is almost a disease. Child predators, child molesters and pedophiles do offend. They attack and prey on the most vulnerable in our society. I have to ask: who are we trying to protect? Who is our duty to? I have to believe that every member of the House would want to protect the most innocent and vulnerable in our society.

My daughter turned eight years old today and I cannot imagine for the life of me how any parent could handle anything happening to a child that is so innocent, so young and so vulnerable. It would horrify me but it does happen.

As parliamentarians we could go a long way to lessening the opportunity of that happening and, if it does happen, we could increase our opportunity to protect them before they are put in harm's way.

In my readings, where there are effective sex offender registries, if a child is abducted by a sexual predator or someone else, if the authorities can get to a database and do a search of the immediate area to find out if there are any potential sexual predators residing in either a one kilometre radius or whatever it is, the chances of success are exponentially greater of getting to that child or person before the child or person is murdered or actually put in harm's way.

Government Orders

We have to ask ourselves what the most important thing is that we are trying to do in the legislation. I question the simple fact that we have the ability to make this retroactive. I would argue that we are probably doing more to help sexual predators than harming them by putting their names on a registry. If they know they are on a registry, the ones who are borderline or may not be as severe, they may not reoffend if they know they can that easily be tracked down. We have such amazing tools now, such as DNA, yet we seem to have lost our way when we read the bill.

● (1735)

It is absolutely, completely unacceptable that the bill is not retroactive. That is the single fundamental flaw and because of that flaw alone, I cannot support the bill. There are other weaknesses in the bill, which I could support, but I cannot because of the simple fact that it is not retroactive, that there is going to be an empty database.

I urge the government to rethink this. It has just passed a motion not allowing any amendments which is incredibly unfortunate.

The bill should be retroactive. Our interests should be in protecting the most vulnerable in our society, protecting people the victims, not the sexual predators, not the offenders, not the pedophiles. Unfortunately we seem to have our priorities backwards.

There are other weaknesses in Bill C-23. They are twofold.

First, even when the bill comes into force, somebody who is convicted of a sexual offence will not go on the registry again. Forget about the retroactivity, which is so bad that we have not been able to deal with it, but if we move forward now into the future, just being convicted of a sexual offence will not put someone on the registry. The Crown will have to make an application in each and every case to have someone put on the registry. Again that is backwards. It should be automatic that once a person is convicted of a sexual offence, and we could list all the offences, that person would automatically go on the sex offender registry.

For the life of me, I have no idea why a drafter or even why the government responsible would do it this way. It absolutely makes no sense.

To top that off, there is another loophole for the sex offenders. They can make a case to be excluded from the registry if they can show that being on the registry would cause them greater harm than the public. I am at a loss for words. We are not talking about somebody who is accused or who maybe committed an offence; we are talking about a convicted sex offender. The person has been to court, has been tried and found guilty, yet somehow it would cause that individual greater harm than all society. Again we have it backwards. Again it is our children, the most vulnerable in our society. I cannot imagine a member in the House who could possibly support that, yet that is the way the bill is written.

Members stood in the House of Commons and voted for the government to create a sex offender registry and two years later, this is the best it could do. One wonders if the government is competent to govern. I mean that. When the government comes in with a piece of legislation such as this bill, one questions what its interests are.

In summary, first, it is absolutely, grossly inadequate that the bill is not retroactive. That alone is enough to not support the registry. Second, even after a person has been tried and convicted of a sex offence, that person is not put on the registry. Only if the Crown applies for that person to be put on the registry will that person be put on. It should be automatic. The default should be that the person is automatically put on the registry. Third, if the convicted sex offender can show that there would be greater harm to that individual than that of society, that person can be excluded. I would imagine that if one was on the sex offender registry, it would probably do them more good in trying to stop the recidivism.

● (1740)

I urge the government to allow an amendment to come forward to at least make the bill retroactive. Otherwise this legislation would be absolutely meaningless.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The question is on the motion that the question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The vote will be deferred until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place among the parties and there is agreement, pursuant to Standing Order 45(7), that the recorded division requested on the motion that the question be now put be deferred until Tuesday, April 8 at 3 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if I can obtain the consent of all parties to do the following.

I believe that the government is preparing to go forward with Bill C-13, as was announced. I am the next member to speak on this bill, now at third reading. I am entitled to speak for 40 minutes, but the House is scheduled to proceed to private members' business in 10 minutes. In order not to interrupt my speech, I wonder if I could obtain unanimous consent to go straight to private members' business.

• (1745)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is it agreed to see the clock 10 minutes ahead and begin private members' business?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 5:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.) moved that Bill C-398, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (food labelling), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, more than ever Canadians are interested in protecting their health by improving their diet. The Government of Canada has begun and should continue to encourage their efforts to do so.

Indeed, earlier this year the Minister of Health took a big step in this direction by ensuring that manufacturers provide full nutrition information on most foods sold in retail stores. In doing so, Canada joined the United States, Australia, Brazil, New Zealand and more recently a half dozen other developed and developing countries in obliging manufacturers to disclose the amounts of key nutrients on labels of prepackaged foods.

These regulations, which came into force in January of this year, were announced in the fall of 2000. I have been working on nutritional labelling since 1989 and I was pleased that the proposed regulations closely mirrored the bill I then had before the House. That bill had the broad support of Canadians as well as parliamentarians of all parties.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada economists estimate that the health benefits in terms of health care cost savings and productivity gains resulting from the dietary changes triggered by mandatory nutrition labelling will be 20 times the costs of modifying food labels.

It is indeed a rare occasion when we as MPs are called upon to support policies that promise that impressive amount of economic payoff. My bill simply extends the principle of mandatory nutrition labelling to more types of food so as to capture more of those economic and health benefits.

Private Members' Business

A lot of Canadians are following this debate. Support for the measures proposed in Bill C-398 extend beyond the reaches of the parliamentary precinct.

Despite the short notice for this debate, I have been receiving a steady stream of letters of support from health and citizens groups since last Friday. The list is long. I will name a few to give the House a sense of the breadth of community support. The list includes the National Pensioners' and Senior Citizens' Federation; the Community Nutritionists Council of British Columbia; the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health; the Canadian Women's Health Network; Vive, l'Union des consommateurs; the Toronto Food Policy Council; the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology; the HEAL Network of Northern British Columbia; the National Eating Disorder Information Centre; the National Retired Workers' Advisory Council; and the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, which is a non-partisan consumer health organization financially supported by over 100,000 subscribers to its Nutrition Action Healthletter.

Ensuring that consumers have ready access to useful information about the nutritional composition of food is critical to help reduce the human and economic toll of diet related disease estimated to cost \$6.3 billion in health care spending and lost productivity and cause as many as 25,000 deaths annually in Canada due to cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. If unchecked, these costs will likely increase substantially in the coming years as a result of rising pharmaceutical drug costs, the aging baby boom population and rising rates of obesity.

The World Health Organization has also recognized that diet plays a key role in disease prevention. In its October 2002 *World Health Report*, the WHO estimated that healthy life expectancy can be increased by as much as 6.5 years in countries like Canada by avoiding the top 25 preventable health risks. However, the report found that in countries like Canada, virtually all preventable deaths examined are attributable to four diet related factors: blood cholesterol, blood pressure, being overweight and low fruit and vegetable intake, as well as physical inactivity and smoking.

• (1750)

A growing body of evidence indicates that health promotion efforts can reduce medical costs and productivity losses, with studies demonstrating as much as \$4 to \$5 in savings for every \$1 invested in health promotion. A recent report of the Auditor General noted, "Preventive health activities are estimated to be 6 to 45 times more effective than dealing with health problems after the fact".

As I said, the federal government announced these very good mandatory nutrition labelling rules on January 1, 2003. The new nutrition labelling rules are predicted to lower the direct and indirect economic losses due to diet related disease by at least \$5 billion over the next two decades by reducing premature deaths and disabilities due to coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes.

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This represents an estimated twentyfold return to the economy as a whole compared to the private sector expenditures incurred to modify food labels. These predicted cost savings, although an impressive first start, constitute only 4% to 7% of the total costs of diet related disease. My bill is an effort to capture more of those economic and health benefits.

For instance, the new regulations exempted fresh meat, poultry and seafood, except ground meat, and all foods sold in restaurants. Bill C-398 is in part an attempt to close these two important loopholes.

Nutrition information is particularly important as a decision making tool for selecting meat, poultry and seafood because of variation in the nutritional composition of these types of foods, which cannot be accurately estimated by consumers using visual inspection.

For instance, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a three ounce serving of trimmed, broiled top round beefsteak has only one gram of saturated fat, while a three ounce serving of trimmed, broiled shoulder blade pork steak has four grams of saturated fat. That is a fourfold difference in saturated fat content between two cuts of meat that are the same size. It is very unlikely that consumers looking at the two would know that one has four times as much saturated fat.

Some meat industry lobbyists successfully urged the government to exempt fresh meat from nutrition labelling because, they said, they did not have reliable, representative nutrition profiles of the numerous cuts of meat. However, one organization, the Beef Information Centre, which is a division of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, supplies detailed nutrition composition information for 106 cuts of beef on its website. Others provide similar information, which appears to refute the information-poor claims of the industry.

Some of these groups are apparently working with federal government officials to calculate these figures. The bill gives those technical discussions a focus. Bill C-398 would ensure that manufacturers will have to share that information with consumers so they can in turn use it to select types of meat with amounts of saturated fat, vitamins and minerals that are acceptable to them.

Bill C-398 offers a workable adaptation of the nutrition labelling rules to be applied to chain restaurants. In the bill, restaurants with more than \$10 million in annual sales, and for all intents and purposes that means chain restaurants, would be obliged to report the amount of calories on menu boards. Restaurants with table service would be obliged to report the amounts of calories, sodium, and saturated plus trans fats on menus, where there is more space.

We are no strangers to the havoc that restaurant and fast food meals can have on our health. Our hectic schedules are more like our constituents' lives, especially those with young children, than we know. Sadly, heart disease has cut short or slowed down the work of a number of our colleagues in the House. Likewise, poor diet prematurely kills thousands of Canadians every year as a result of diet related cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Canadians spend 30% of their food budgets on restaurant and cafeteria meals, yet it is virtually impossible to find nutrition information at restaurants. To make healthful food choices,

Canadians ought to be able to see relevant health information about menu options at the point of sale. Caloric content, for instance, is at least as important as price in making product choices and it is at least as difficult as price to estimate, yet only price is displayed on menu boards.

• (1755)

We certainly would not expect consumers to check the company websites to find the price of foods, or to ask a waiter to recite the sodium and saturated fat content of all the menu choices until we found one that met our nutrition objectives. This minimum amount of information could very easily and for very little expense be provided on menus or menu boards for the standardized menu choices we see at chain restaurants. If this type of information were available, I am confident our diets would change for the better as a result.

Bill C-398 also requires packaged foods to disclose the percentage by weight of key ingredients, especially fruits, vegetables, added sugars and whole grains. This will help prevent misleading ingredient claims like we often see on products called "fruit" cocktail that are really mostly sugar and water or on products "made with whole grains" that use mostly refined flour. However, it will also help consumers choose products that have higher amounts of healthful ingredients or lower amounts of unhealthful ingredients.

There is widespread scientific agreement about the health benefits of consuming adequate amounts of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains and about the adverse health effects of consuming foods high in added sugars. For instance, scientists agree that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is associated with a lower risk of several cancers, lower rates of stroke and lower blood pressure, but about two-thirds of Canadians do not consume the recommended five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Many processed foods purporting to contain fruits and vegetables as ingredients contain only trace amounts of them without disclosing that fact on the label.

The World Health Organization issued a report in March 2003 called "Diet, Nutrition, and the Prevention of Chronic Disease", noting that many foods contribute protective or causative effects on chronic disease risk that cannot yet be reduced to the metabolic effects of particular nutrients.

The WHO report identified 14 classes of foods that are often used as ingredients in processed foods and play very important roles, protective or causative, in the causation of non-communicable chronic diseases.

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In addition to adequate breastfeeding and consumption of appropriate amounts of certain nutrients, the WHO report determined that there is convincing or probable evidence establishing links between cardiovascular disease, cancer, or type II diabetes and the following foods and ingredients: the protective foods, such as fruits; vegetables, excluding tubers; whole grain cereals; legumes; fish and fish oils; and unsalted nuts, provided that the caloric intake is not exceeded; and the causative foods, such as foods and drinks rich in added or free sugars; unfiltered boiled coffee; some forms of salted or fermented fish; high temperature foods; preserved meats such as sausage, salami, bacon and ham; and salted meats, pickles and other foods.

The five classes of ingredients identified in Bill C-398, namely fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and added sugars, constitute a practical subset of the 14 classes of ingredients the WHO expert report determined to be related to the risk for chronic diseases.

In closing, disease prevention is the most direct way of alleviating financial pressure on the health care system because it involves both decreasing the need for health care services by Canadians and, at the same time, increasing the ability of Canadians to help finance health care through increased labour productivity by contributing to the other side of the health care ledger.

Meaningful information can help consumers to make decisions that promote disease prevention. An informed consumer is an educated consumer. An educated consumer is a healthful consumer, one who will contribute to minimizing the increasing health care budget by preventing disease with educated consumption. This fact is what lead to mandatory nutritional labelling, which came into force on January 1, 2003. My bill closes a few loopholes left by omissions in the regulations. Its passage will benefit all of us directly in contributing to more beneficial dietary habits, and as a country, by helping prevent rather than treat numerous diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, cancer and diabetes. I ask all colleagues to support the bill.

● (1800)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to speak on this private member's bill, Bill C-398, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, a bill which would require mandatory nutrition labelling in French and English for imported or packaged meat, poultry or seafood for retail sale, applying to businesses with gross annual revenues of more than \$500,000. It would require that food sold for immediate consumption, for example, in restaurants, hotels and vending machines, include posted nutritional information such as caloric and fat content, applying to business with gross annual revenues of more than \$10 million. It would require that prepackaged, multi-ingredient foods show the percentage, by weight, of important and "emphasized" ingredients.

The intent of the bill is a noble one: to provide Canadians with more information about the foods they consume. Who would not welcome the prospect of more information about what we put into our bodies every day to give us energy and keep us alive?

We are now living in an age when Canadians are taking more and more responsibility for their health. I even heard on the radio this

morning that the longest lived Canadians come from British Columbia. I am so proud of that, because that is where I am from. I think it has a lot to do with people taking personal responsibility for their health and for disease prevention.

Health Canada estimates the health burden of poor diet in Canada at \$6.3 billion annually, including direct health care costs of \$1.8 billion. Yet when it comes to translating the noble goal of providing or requiring more health information into practice, it is not always easy. We know this from the debate over the labelling of foods containing GMOs.

The Canadian Alliance has a number of concerns about this legislation. I would like to address some of my concerns in my remarks today.

Health Canada announced new regulations for prepackaged food on January 1, 2003. These are Health Canada regulations that can be contrasted with this private member's bill. The new regulations require most food labels to carry a mandatory nutrition facts table listing calories and 13 key nutrients. Foods exempted include fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh unground meat and poultry, and food sold in restaurants. Bill C-398 would close the exemptions for meat products and restaurant foods. Undoubtedly there are good reasons why Health Canada exempted meat products and restaurant foods from the new regulations. We have a good sense of why and I will get to that shortly.

It should be noted that Health Canada is giving companies up to three years to implement the changes, and five years for small businesses. Bill C-398 that is before us today would take effect after two years. I do not know the reason for that discrepancy.

I will go on to some of my specific concerns. If passed, Bill C-398 would likely have its largest impact on Canadian restaurants and on the customers that patronize them. If passed, the bill would require chain restaurants to provide the calorie content of their products on menu boards and fat and sodium content on menus. The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association says this proposal would be "highly impractical and unworkable for food service operators".

An obvious concern for the CRFA is the fact that many restaurants have menus that continually change and dishes that are sold in countless combinations. The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association also notes, "The magnitude and permutation of ingredients used by most restaurants reach staggering proportions".

● (1805)

I can illustrate this with a quote from the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association:

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The make-up of a sandwich consisting of just 5 items or toppings (such as bread, meat, cheese, lettuce and tomato) can be ordered in 120 ways. A sub comprised of 10 items or toppings could provide 3,628,800 combinations. When the items for a sub are expanded to 15, then 1.3 trillion combinations are possible, making it virtually impossible to accurately communicate calorie or fat content on a menu or menu board for the vast majority of restaurant menu items.

An important consideration identified by the CRFA is that national restaurant chains and franchises operate thousands of different locations, each one being the equivalent of a small business. Many of these operators rely on regional suppliers creating significant differences in the ingredients of similar menu items.

This incredibly complicates the whole issue. It should be noted that most restaurant chains already have nutritional information about their products available on request. This information may include details such as diabetic or allergy concerns that may be more important than the provisions announced in the bill. I have a daughter with a potentially lethal allergy to peanuts. I know how careful people must be regarding many of these allergies.

That outlines some of the impact of Bill C-398 on quick service restaurant chains. The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association notes that the proposed legislation would also apply to full service restaurant chains and hotel food service where the selection of menu items is much broader, menu items change frequently, and daily specials are common.

The laboratory analysis mentioned that is required to determine the nutritional content of just one menu item can cost in excess of \$150 and generally takes a minimum of two weeks. This is unworkable and we can be sure that such costs will be passed on to the consumer.

The Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association says that from a cost and timing perspective, it would be impossible for the vast majority of large and small restaurant and food service operators to meet the requirements of this private member's bill.

I want to talk about the provisions in the bill on emphasized ingredients and raise some concerns about the bill's provisions. This is found in the bill's suggested amendments to section 5.3 of the Food and Drugs Act. Bill C-398 specifies that where ingredients:

...are emphasized on a food label by words or pictures, the label shall indicate the percentage by weight of the emphasized ingredients (a) beside the emphasized words or pictures, or (b) beside the common name of the food, in characters at least 50 percent the size of those employed in the common name of the food.

These provisions are complex and confusing. Who will decide whether ingredients are emphasized and how will they decide this? This formula is unworkable. Health Canada's proposed labelling standards are more feasible.

In conclusion, the intent of this bill is commendable. I hope I have demonstrated that some of the provisions of the bill are cumbersome, confusing or simply impractical. We should not impose an unnecessary regulatory burden on food processors, importers and restaurant chains. We must consider what the financial impact will be on these same food importers, processors, restaurants and of course, the consumer. I will be opposing the bill.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, very quickly, since this comes under private members' business and, therefore, is a free vote, I would like to suggest that my colleagues vote in favour of this bill.

I must admit that I had a few reservations in the past about the bill presented by the member for Scarborough Southwest. However, this time, it makes sense.

The House tends to be cautious when it comes to mandatory labelling. I remember that, when the Standing Committee on Health was debating what information should be included on cigarette packages, the tobacco companies appeared before the committee. They said, "This will be the end of the tobacco industry. There will be layoffs. We will never be able to pay for the mandatory labelling costs". Health Canada had asked the major cigarette manufacturers to include the mandatory warnings and to periodically change them during the year so people would not get used to them.

I was a member of the Standing Committee on Health which studied the regulations. If we had listened to the Canadian Alliance, we would never have gone ahead.

Certainly, when labelling and consumer information is changed, there are costs to the adjustment. That is not what the legislators need to be worried about. The question they need to ask is whether it is in the consumer's interest.

It is, in my opinion, in the consumer's interest to have information on key nutrients, and with that information we hope to see greater attention paid to the factors that determine health. The most important of these is diet.

Our colleague from the government majority has reminded us that it is, of course, important to save money in the health system and that the most serious problems at this time are the major diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

This is a positive bill, and one that invites us to provide key nutrient information on retail labelling and as well as making it available for restaurant meals. This should bring about changes in eating habits.

I am very much attuned to the argument that \$6.3 billion in health care costs may be linked to what we eat, and any incentive to change our eating habits should be seen as a something positive.

I can also understand that our colleague has the support of major consumer associations, as well as associations of health professionals. Once again, let us keep in mind what happened with the cigarette manufacturers when we looked into the tobacco regulations.

I do not want to take up more of the time of the House. I can assure our colleague that he can count on me to actively promote his bill to my colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois.

• (1815)

[English]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in today's debate on Bill C-398, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act relating to food labelling. I wish to thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for initiating this debate and presenting the House with an important issue that ought to be pursued in great detail and given serious consideration.

As members of Parliament, we have become used to debating important health issues that affect Canadians from coast to coast to coast and we are used to debating those issues during private members' hour. At least we give some consideration to important issues, but unfortunately that reflects the fact that the government has failed to show the leadership that Canadians expect by introducing such changes through governmental proposals.

It sometimes appears as if the government believes that health promotion is not worth pursuing if it somehow impacts on someone's profit margins. It is as if these issues are either seen as minor and insignificant, or that they are to be avoided because they get in the way of some Industry Canada agenda.

We have encountered this kind of scenario on a number of occasions. I want to refer briefly to the struggle we have had in this place trying to convince the Government of Canada to address seriously the issue of mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods. That has been a matter that has been before the House in numerous different ways, through private members' initiatives and committee work, yet to this day the government has resisted allowing Parliament to have a vote, to make a decision, and to make recommendations.

I also want to reference the issue of labelling in terms of alcohol beverage containers. Members will know that it is a matter which I presented to the House and received overwhelming support from members of all parties. However, the matter of informing pregnant women about the dangers of drinking when expecting a baby has yet to be pursued in concrete terms by the government of the day.

It is important that we keep raising these issues of health promotion and health protection, and hope the government will act at some point on the wishes of parliamentarians and Canadians.

The central issue of the bill before us deals with the question of providing Canadian consumers with health information. That is a very important matter. Let us reference the report released last month by the World Health Organization entitled "Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Disease". That report detailed in part the scientific evidence concerning the relationship between diet and disease. It urged the global community to design strategies to address these serious problems. The findings of that report cry out for innovative measures and for proactive positions by the Government of Canada. That is why the bill before us is so important.

Let us also put it in the context of the recently released Romanow report, which identified the need to tackle disease prevention much

more aggressively. In his final report, Commissioner Romanow reminded us that more than 90% of adult onset diabetes and 80% of coronary heart disease could be prevented through an improved diet in combination with exercise and not smoking. Diet plays a significant role in the development and treatment of many chronic diseases. Heart disease, stroke, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some forms of cancer wreak havoc on tens of thousands of Canadians and their families every year.

As many as 25,000 Canadians die each year from cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes alone. The toll is great in terms of human cost and in the loss of surviving family members and loved ones.

• (1820)

Of course we have to remember that there is considerable financial cost, not only to individuals but to our entire system. These costs are incurred because of the poor dietary choices, often ill-informed choices, that we make.

My colleague, the member for Churchill, wanted me to mention in today's debate that for a person like herself who has high cholesterol, it makes a big difference to have appropriate information and labelling details so she can make informed decisions to avoid relying on very high cost cholesterol drugs. That point should never be forgotten in this debate.

Canada loses an estimated \$6.3 billion per year in health care spending and lost productivity through diet related disease. Mr. Romanow in his report pointed out that in the single year of 1997 obesity cost Canadians \$1.8 billion in medical costs. These figures continue to mount. According to the government's own calculations, 15.2% were obese in 2001. We are now more likely to be obese than adults in most other OECD countries.

The tragedy of all of this is that diet related diseases are preventable. The irony is that the government has finally acknowledged the importance of identifying problems associated with diet and has taken some responsibility in terms of nutritional labelling. However it has refused to go the extra step to ensure that we have taken advantage of every opportunity to inform consumers about diet and about cholerics content.

That is why we have to give very serious consideration to the bill. The bill before us may not be perfect. There may be some issues that can be dealt with at committee but it is in overall terms a very important contribution to the debate. It ought to be approved and forwarded to a standing committee for further deliberations and to hear from various witnesses.

We know the hotel and restaurant association has expressed concerns. We know there are questions around how this would be enforced and implemented and what the cost would be. Those are issues that ought to be pursued at the committee which would receive the legislation. Under no circumstances should those concerns be the barrier to further deliberations by the House on this very serious legislative proposal.

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Bill C-398 attempts to do a fairly simple thing. It insists that all foods sold in Canadian retail stores and at least large restaurant chains be required to disclose the amounts of nutrients that are important from a public health perspective. In the end Canadians will have to make up their own minds about what foods to choose for their families and themselves when they do their grocery shopping or order a restaurant meal.

Canadians today spend 30% of their food budgets on restaurant and cafeteria meals and that percentage is rising. Yet very few restaurants provide point of purchase nutrition information.

What we support today is the idea that there should be access to this fundamental information in to make healthy choices without having to be professional nutrition experts. Fast food restaurants and food marketers generally recognize that Canadians want healthy options. We see all sorts of promotions, whether salads or subs, but we are still here today fighting for the right to know whether these products live up to their claims.

Food and health are two, yet the same issue. Canadians deserve to determine their future health by more than guess work, and guess work is what the government has been offering so far. We have with this bill a constructive proposition to address this serious matter. We have a proposal that deserves consideration by parliamentarians in this chamber and at the committee level.

I would urge members to consider the value of the work and the contribution by the member for Scarborough Southwest and to give support for this legislative proposal to go the next step.

• (1825)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for this thoughtful bill. The bill is to amend the Food and Drugs Act, food labelling. Specifically, it would do some of the things I think all of us would like to see done.

A little later on I will go into some of the problems of the bill because there are always problems with any legislation initiated in the House, whether a government bill or a private member's bill. We are here to intelligently debate the bill, to point out some of the flaws and deficiencies and also to support the bill. What the member is attempting to do would be very difficult to argue against.

There are a few things the member is attempting to do with the bill.

First, the bill would require large chain restaurants to post the number of calories in menu items beside the corresponding price on menu boards, and, where menus are used, also the amounts of saturated fat plus trans fat and sodium per serving.

Second, it would require that full nutritional information on all fresh meat, poultry and seafood, not just ground meat, sold in retail stores be disclosed. This nutrition information already is required for most other foods by new regulations finalized January 1, 2003.

Third, the bill would require that prepackaged multi-ingredient foods show the percentage by weight of key ingredients, especially those relevant to health such as added sugar, fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

The member has tremendous support across the country for this and I just want to list some of the supporters. It is basically a partial list of supporters for this initiative. They include: National Pensioners' and Senior Citizens' Federation; Community Nutritionists Council of British Columbia; the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health; the Canadian Women's Health Network; the Toronto Food Policy Council; the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology; the National Eating Disorder Information Centre; the National Retired Workers' Advocacy Council, and so on. I also received a letter also from the Centre for Science in the Public Interest.

There is clearly support for this type of legislation. This is an interesting day for this to be debated in the House. I would mention to the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest that I just left a committee meeting where the witness was Mr. Roy Romanow, former premier and author of the Romanow report, which we debated in this House and the government responded to not too many weeks ago in terms of an accord for the provinces, the funding issues and generally I guess the state of health care in Canada.

Today in questions and answers one of the questions put to Mr. Romanow by another member had to do with healthy living and the benefits that were derived in our society with healthy living. He came under slight criticism for not addressing that as much as the member thought he should have in his report to Parliament, which was tabled in the House in November.

I guess the point the member is trying to make is there is a huge cost in our society for not maintaining a standard of healthy living. A lot of that has to do with lack of exercise, but more important not knowing what we are eating.

This gets back to the member's bill which we are discussing now. In relation to that is the cost. This point was brought across today in health committee when we were speaking to Mr. Romanow. These were some of the numbers that were used. The cost of dietary related disease is \$6.3 billion in health care spending and lost productivity every year in Canada.

• (1830)

If unchecked, these costs will likely increase substantially in the coming years as a result of rising pharmaceutical drug costs, the rising rates of obesity and the aging baby boomer population, which includes at least myself and possibly the member for Scarborough Southwest. We are talking about dollars but dollars do not tell us the whole thing. There is a human cost. As many as 25,000 deaths annually in Canada are due to cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, and that number is growing as the population continues to age.

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Those are the types of things that have to be considered when we look at a bill like this. The point that we have to speak on is the cost to industry. There is a way that we can get around this. Some of the ideas can be fleshed out at committee. I support moving the bill to the next stage so we can flesh out some of the details that could make a bill like this a reality.

I will quote from a letter I received yesterday from the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. This letter was signed by Joyce Reynolds, the Senior Vice President of Government Affairs. In the third paragraph the letter says:

This simplistic proposal would be highly impractical and unworkable for food service operators. It would affect food served in a wide variety of settings including full service restaurants, quick service restaurants, hotel dining and banquet rooms, catered functions in institutional cafeterias, schools, clubs, hospitals, airplanes, trains and boats.

They are all in there.

The letter then goes on to talk about the multitude of choices that are available in a restaurant and the problems in attempting to comply with the bill if those multitude of choices had to be considered in adapting the restaurant industry to fit the details of the bill.

There are some problems. I do not want to read this letter in its entirety because it becomes a bit mind boggling. However it goes on to say:

The multitude of choices available to customers ordering a simple sandwich, illustrates the complexity of mandatory menu labelling. The make-up of a sandwich consisting of just five items or toppings (such as bread, meat, cheese, lettuce, and tomato) can be ordered in 120 ways. A sub comprised of 10 items or toppings could provide 3,628,800 combinations. When the items for a sub are expanded to 15, then 1.3 trillion combinations are possible...

In other words, she is trying to say that it is virtually impossible to communicate that kind of information to the consumer.

In all practical terms there is a way this can be overcome. I want to be as generous as I can. This is something we have to consider. We are concerned with the health of Canadians. They have a right to know what they are eating. It would serve the purposes of a lot of people in Canada if we could find a way to adopt this legislation. Details have to be fleshed out in committee. We support moving Bill C-398 on to the next logical step.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are here to discuss a private member's bill. As you already know, I am referring to Bill C-398. This bill proposes amendments to the Food and Drugs Act that would make it mandatory to provide labelling of nutritional information for raw meat, poultry, fish and seafood.

More specifically, Bill C-398 would prohibit the importing or packaging of meat, poultry, fish or seafood for retail sale unless the labelling indicates, in both official languages, and in the manner stipulated, portion size, the number of calories, and the quantities of 13 nutritional elements that are found in the nutrition information panel.

I would like to make a few comments regarding the enormous amount of work that has been done in the area of food labelling.

On January 1 of this year, changes to food and drug regulations came into force. The new regulations require that most labels for prepackaged foods provide a nutrition information panel containing information on calories and the 13 essential nutritional elements contained in a specific portion size.

January 1, 2003, also marked the culmination of a four-year process as a result of the recommendations contained in the National Plan of Action for Nutrition. The purpose of this plan was to improve the effectiveness of nutritional labelling by providing more nutritional information and providing more information to the public as to how to use it.

An external advisory board was responsible for the process, which included research into consumer needs, as well as in-depth consultations with all sectors, including consumers and the health and food industry sectors. It was a massive undertaking.

The nutrition information panel is an important way to help Canadians learn more about the foods they consume. This is important. The current nutritional labelling, combined with effective information, provides a significant opportunity to improve the nutritional health and welfare of Canadians.

This measure will allow Canadians to compare products more easily, to evaluate the nutritional value of a greater number of products and, finally, to better manage specific diets.

The new nutritional labelling will be easy to find, easy to read and easy to use. The nutrition information panel will only be a useful tool to help consumers make healthy nutritional choices if they know how to use the information. That is fairly obvious.

That is why Health Canada is committed to launching a large-scale education program. The Minister of Health recently launched an information package on nutrition labelling, as you are no doubt already aware, Madam Speaker.

This information package was specially designed for dietitians and other health providers to help them inform Canadians about nutrition labelling. It was sent to 8,300 dietitians, diabetes experts, provincial nutritionists and other essential partners in the area of nutrition across Canada.

The new regulations represent an enormous challenge for many sectors of the food industry, because certain foods must be tested and new labels must be produced.

These sectors need time to adjust. While some can spring into action very quickly to add the nutrition labelling format on their labels, others will need all the time provided under the regulations that will come into force.

For each product, the nutrition labelling format provides information on the nutrient content of food at the point of sale. The nutrient content of most foods varies for any number of reasons, and it is not possible to test a sample of each food before it is sold.

It is therefore necessary to provide for some exemptions, to accommodate situations where it would be difficult, and perhaps even impossible, to list nutrition facts for a variety of reasons.

Adjournment Debate

Ensuring that a nutrition label contains valid information requires the testing of many samples of each food over time to take into account factors related to variability. These factors include the time of year, climatic conditions, soils and the feed given to animals.

• (1835)

The data do not exist for all products at this time. Because of the lack of information on nutritional composition, an exemption from including a nutrition information panel has been granted with respect to raw, single ingredient meats that are not ground, meat by-products, poultry meats, poultry meat by-products, and raw, single ingredient marine or freshwater animal products. That is the reason.

Bill C-398 further proposes that information on calories and nutritional composition may come from an independent chemical analysis of the product or from representative nutrition composition data recognized by the Department of Health.

During the public consultations that led to the new regulations on nutritional labelling, consumers and dietitians told Health Canada that the quantities of nutrients shown on the nutrition information panel should be accurate.

Industry wants to analyze these products in order to be able to provide consumers with nutrition information. However, there are many cuts of meat, and fat content varies significantly according to the grade of beef or the season in which seafood is harvested. Taking these factors and other variables into account, an unrealistic number of samples would have to be analyzed in order to obtain standardized data for nutritional labelling. Such analysis is expensive and time-consuming.

This change would obviously create precedents; moreover, the repercussions on all categories of products regulated by the act and the constitutionality of such a change have not been evaluated.

In conclusion, the intent of Bill C-398 is clearly to provide consumers with more information about the nutritional value of the foods they eat. However, the current lack of representative data on meats, poultry and raw fish and seafood creates a risk that it might become mandatory to provide consumers with inaccurate information. That is not what we want to do. The information provided must be correct and that is what the dietitians told us.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are here today to discuss a very important bill, Bill C-398, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

However, in realizing that health is important in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt we have had a devastating occurrence. We talk about the war in Iraq, but I want to talk about what is happening in my part of the world.

Scarborough Grace Hospital is ground zero for the war against SARS. I call it the war against SARS because we are in an area where on a day to day basis we constantly have to be vigilant and we have to make sure that the public is healthy. One of my staff members was voluntarily quarantined because that individual had visited Scarborough Grace Hospital.

One thing I am pleased to talk about is that the Government of Canada, after a phone call to the Minister of Human Resources Development, automatically moved to recognize that this is an important issue. If working Canadians who provide for their families on a day to day basis need to have support, EI will kick in immediately. I want to elaborate on this for the benefit of all of my colleagues here as well as the Canadian public.

Under employment insurance there is a two week waiting period before people can qualify to collect benefits. The minister has moved very rapidly to forgo the waiting period and immediately kick in support for people who are voluntarily or mandatorily quarantined. If an employer recognizes for one day that an employee is sick and that employee receives benefits for the one day from that employer, employment insurance will automatically kick in immediately after that.

This is very important as we talk about health and see what is happening around the globe. Gone are the days when it would take two or three months for people to travel from England to Canada. Gone are the days when it would take four months for people to travel from Hong Kong to Vancouver. Today a flight takes 16 hours. People can contract SARS before getting on the flight and by the time they arrive in Canada it has been incubated and is ready to spread.

We have to do whatever we can to battle this disease that has hit our population. This disease is not confined to Canada. It is a global situation. A lot of people have said that we should not allow people from a particular country into Canada. I for one, being in ground zero and working with people, do not sympathize with those views. I do not even agree with those views. This disease does not affect just one person or one country. It affects the whole world.

• (1845)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Order. The member will have another seven minutes on the subject the next time it comes before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

MONT-LOUIS WHARF

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to repeat the question asked in this House during oral question period on March 24. Naturally, it concerned the wharf belonging to Fisheries and Oceans Canada at Mont-Louis. As I said at the time, this wharf is in terrible disrepair. The breakwater and the front of the Fisheries and Oceans wharf are in need of major repairs.

The parliamentary secretary—who is here this evening and who will answer me shortly—told me at the time that the small craft harbours program for this year had not yet been announced, but that it would be forthcoming quite soon, it being that time of year.

Currently, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is considering the department's budgets. I noticed that the small craft harbours program budget was decreasing each year. Even though the government had increased the overall budget by \$20 million per year, and this money was starting to be invested—fortunately for all fishing regions—the department's small craft harbour program budget was decreasing.

I want to point out that the Mont-Louis wharf is connected to a plant, a seafood processing plant named Cuisimer. The wharf is essential to the operations of that plant. It is very important, because that plant creates jobs for residents of Mont-Louis.

Mont-Louis is located in the Gaspé, not far from Murdochville. Following the crisis that occurred in Murdochville with the closure of its main business, many people were laid off, not only residents of Murdochville, but also Mont-Louis.

So, as the president of the corporation said, if we do not repair the Mont-Louis wharf rather quickly, the plant will have to move, because it will not be profitable to transfer port operations elsewhere and to transport by trucks the seafood products that the company wants to process in Mont-Louis.

Moreover, as the president of the corporation also pointed out, another seafood processing plant located in Matane, the Matane shrimp plant, is interested in using the Mont-Louis wharf, and the reason is very simple.

As we know, and the parliamentary secretary knows it as well as I do, in the Gaspé, there is a very high concentration of northern shrimp not far off the coast of Mont-Louis and Rivière-Madeleine. Therefore, the Mont-Louis wharf is the closest facility and it would help ensure the safety of fishermen, while making it possible to continue to adequately supply the Cuisimer plant.

In a letter that he sent on March 21 to Mr. Malouin, the director of Fisheries and Oceans in Gaspé, Mr. Normand insisted that the Mont-Louis wharf should not only be repaired quickly, but urgently, adding that the work should be done, if at all possible, this summer. In fact, the work should begin this spring because, as I pointed out, there is a processing plant adjacent to the wharf.

In his letter of March 21, which was addressed to all the stakeholders involved in small craft harbours, Mr. Normand also adds that this is a safety issue for shrimp fishermen.

Mr. Georges Farrah (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Matapédia—Matane, for his comments and for raising this debate here in the House, during what we call the late show. This is an issue that is very important for the community of Mont-Louis in the Gaspé and in his riding.

The minister and the department are very conscious, as am I, of the importance of port infrastructure for communities like Mont-Louis and others in eastern Quebec. The same is true for my riding,

Adjournment Debate

where there are a great number of these facilities, as well as in the maritime provinces and in western Canada.

Already last year, the member and even the fisheries committee, of which he and I are both members, had raised the issue of the situation regarding small craft harbours across the country.

For the benefit of my colleagues in the House, I would like to point out that the small craft harbours program is responsible for approximately 1,400 fishing harbours in Canada. In all, these facilities accommodate and serve close to 30,000 fishing vessels and 20,000 pleasure craft.

The department is also responsible for more than 4,700 different structures, including wharfs, breakwaters, boat ramps and channels in fishing harbours.

So it will be understood that, as far as assets are concerned, we have a fairly considerable number, which translates into enormous pressure on the departmental budget.

As the hon. member has also said, that is why the government, in its 2001 budget, showed sensitivity to the situation of small craft harbours by investing, or adding, \$100 million over five years to the present budget, over and above the regular small craft harbours budget, precisely so as speed up construction or repair to these wharves so that fishers and fish processing companies would have access to quality facilities.

As I had already indicated to the hon. member when he asked me a question in the House of Commons a few weeks ago, Mont-Louis is definitely one of the ports to which the department attaches importance. In fact, the departmental planning is based on a determination of the relative importance of ports, based on economic activity.

However, as the member has pointed out, the wharf at Mont-Louis is vital to maintaining the economic activity of that community. Consequently, I can assure the member that the department, the minister and myself are very much aware of the situation there.

At this time, as I said in my response in the House, it is still too soon to inform the member, or to announce a definite decision, since departmental programming for the 2003-04 budget in terms of small craft harbour investment is not yet known. In light of the importance of this issue, however, and the work required, I can assure the member that the department will be doing its utmost to be able to meet the needs of the people of Mont-Louis, particularly the fishers and the fish processing companies.

• (1850)

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary and I assure him of my full cooperation on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to settle the issue of the Mont-Louis wharf. In my opinion, and in the opinion of the industry and of the fishermen who use it, this is an urgent situation. It is absolutely essential that the work begin in 2003.

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Georges Farrah: Madam Speaker, I too will be very brief. I think we agree on the need for or the importance of the small craft harbour at Mont-Louis.

As regards the studies that are currently being done concerning the department's priorities, including for Quebec—because the money for this port must come from the budget allocated to Quebec—we will ensure, as we have done in the past, that we can adequately respond to the desire of the public and meet the needs expressed.

This is not just a question of what people want, but of what the department must do, given the importance of the small craft harbour at Mont-Louis and the work that needs to be done.

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I asked a question on SARS on March 18 and followed with the more general question that we are following up on tonight. I thank the minister for replying to both.

The second question dealt with infectious disease control in general and specifically how the federal government works with local authorities that inevitably have to deal with an outbreak. I deliberately introduced my question by comparing our system for coping with disease among animals, for example, hoof and mouth disease or TB, with that for human diseases, for example, SARS and West Nile virus.

I did this for three reasons, the first being that I have been working for a long time on how to keep our food safe and how best to protect citizens, animals and plants from deliberately or accidentally introduced diseases or poisons. I am very interested in how the Canadian Food Inspection Agency works and how to make it more effective, and I am interested in making Health Canada's and Agriculture Canada's protective systems more effective.

Second, health care workers, farmers, people involved in emergency preparedness and a distinguished veterinarian in my riding have persistently raised these matters with me.

Third, I raised these topics because food safety and animal and human health are highly interrelated. The link between mad cow disease and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is one example of this. That between SARS and the use of acutely ill animals for food in China is another. The link between birds, horses and West Nile virus is yet another rather different example of the same thing.

The reality is that in this tiny modern world we need both powerful checks and controls at the national level and powerful, effective, local agencies with truly effective communication, with linkages between the two levels.

At the national level, this involves Health Canada, Agriculture Canada, the armed forces, including emergency preparedness, and others. At the local level, among other things we need effective public health bodies, emergency preparedness groups, well informed farm organizations and a well informed public.

At the national level, I urge that CFIA and relevant parts of Health Canada and Agriculture Canada be studied and reformed. Once this is done, the agencies concerned should be well funded and staffed in

recognition of the urgency of infectious disease and food poisoning risks.

At the local level, we need to put resources in the hands of local authorities, such as, for example, a symptom surveillance system that could give early warning of a new outbreak. These authorities need adequate resources and full knowledge of the national support they will receive in the case of an emergency.

I urge that the CFIA and Health Canada parts of this be given special attention. I look forward to the comments of the parliamentary secretary, who is particularly well qualified to respond on such matters.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for raising an important point.

It must be understood that communication about how services are provided across the country is very often poor. Sometimes we realize that, rather than making clarifications in this House on such matters, people try to throw curve balls. As a result, Canadians do not benefit. I would therefore like to cast some light on this.

Health Canada has worked in conjunction with our provincial and territorial partners in order to ensure that the resources are in place to respond as required to local, provincial or territorial emergencies and outbreaks. This cooperation is—and I stress this point—essential to any intervention during health emergencies. That must be understood. Action cannot be limited to one province, one municipality, or to this level of government; we must work together.

When there is an outbreak of an infectious disease, local municipal health authorities are the first to intervene. If they need assistance, they call upon provincial health authorities. If the province needs more support, it will call upon Health Canada for assistance and such assistance will be immediately forthcoming.

The role of Health Canada in the case of a disease outbreak is, in fact, twofold. First, Health Canada provides proactive assistance to ensure that there is a maximum level of emergency preparedness, both at a provincial and local level.

This is done through a variety of activities, including: ongoing monitoring of diseases, which allows officials to play a role in updating vaccines, planning programs and developing guidelines; training emergency doctors to help them recognize, diagnose and treat biological and chemical agents; developing general guidelines to take charge of the diagnostic and logistic aspects of outbreaks; maintaining lines of communication and an effective planning network with the provinces and territories to ensure that the guidelines are developed together and that there is an honest and ongoing exchange of information.

Health Canada also has stockpiles of drugs, vaccines and other emergency supplies in various locations throughout the country, which can be shipped on request in a matter of hours.

Adjournment Debate

Finally, Health Canada can provide additional support if requested, in order to assist provinces and municipalities or communities to manage the most difficult situations.

Health Canada can provide assistance in many ways, such as offering laboratory diagnostic services at the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg; delivering emergency medical supplies, and all the provinces and territories can have direct access to these emergency supplies with a simple phone call; mobilizing federal specialists to help contain an outbreak or trace it back to its source; liaising with the provinces, which might be experiencing similar outbreaks; and coordinating a nation-wide response.

Health Canada also calls upon other departments and non-governmental agencies, when the need arises. Our role is not necessarily to be the first on the scene, but it is important to ensure that those who are the first are prepared to deal with health emergencies. Consequently, cooperation is essential. When provincial health authorities ask us for help, Health Canada does everything in its power to assist.

In particular, Health Canada can mobilize the National Office of Health Emergency Response Teams, or NOHERT, if the provinces so request. NOHERT's all hazards approach encompasses emergency medical response to natural disasters, explosions, or to major chemical, biological or radio-nuclear incidents.

• (1900)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Adams: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank Tom Gastle, Garry Humphreys and the Peterborough City-County Health Unit, Rod Manley and his emergency preparedness colleagues, farm and health care groups in the Peterborough riding, and the Havelock—

Belmont—Methuen and Peterborough county councils for their input.

I send my sympathies to everyone affected by these terrible diseases and to the families of those affected, and my thanks go to all those who help with outbreaks. These people risk their health and lives to keep us safe.

I believe we need a full public debate on these matters of infectious disease among humans and animals, and food safety. I thank the parliamentary secretary for his thoughtful remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Madam Speaker, I was trying to demonstrate the importance of working together, and I believe that we are now experiencing a particular reality given the SARS situation in Canada.

Local authorities, assisted by the provinces and the federal government, are working around the clock. There are many unknowns at the present time. This situation must be closely monitored; it is essential to collect information as it becomes available and ensure everything is under control.

By cooperating and working together, we will succeed. Fighting and pointing fingers will accomplish nothing; that is not the right approach.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1)

(The House adjourned at 7:04 p.m.)

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