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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, April 28, 2003**  
**Part A**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 28, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*Translation*]

### SOCIAL CONDITION

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should add “social condition” to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, allow me first to thank the House for this opportunity to introduce this motion. I will again be expressing my thanks when it is passed, I promise.

By way of introduction, I would point out that the 1997 Canadian Human Rights Commission report stressed the lack of protection for the poor provided by the federal law. It makes no mention whatsoever of poverty, and social situation is not among the prohibited grounds of discrimination.

A number of bills have been introduced in order to get social situation included in the prohibited grounds for discrimination. On December 10, 1997, Senator Cohen introduced Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act, in order to add “social condition” as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The bill was intended to amend sections 2 and 3(1) of the act, adding “social condition” but not defining the expression.

On April 13, 1999, my Bloc Québécois colleague, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, introduced Bill C-491, the anti-poverty bill, which proposed to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act; to prohibit financial institutions from refusing to provide financial services on the basis of inadequate income; and to ask the Canadian Human Rights Commission to prepare a report annually on poverty in Canada. This bill died on the Order Paper in September 1999.

In March 2001, the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve was back again with Bill C-326, which was identical to the former C-491. Recently my colleague introduced Bill C-228 on the same subject, the battle against poverty and social exclusion. Not being votable, it

did not get past second reading, which took place on February 4 this year.

My motion, M-392, today is in the same vein. It reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should add “social condition” to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Canada has always been a world leader in the promotion and protection of human rights. A Canadian was one of the architects of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, often called the “Magna Carta of the World”.

This declaration includes the right to social security and to realization of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for an individual's dignity and the free development of the individual's personality.

Also in 1976, Canada ratified the International Covenant on International and Civil Rights, the most comprehensive international document on social and economic rights.

But Canada is not respecting its international obligations and has failed to fully implement its international commitments to promote and protect social and economic rights.

More and more Canadians and Quebecers live in poverty. The Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibits discrimination based on “social condition”. Interestingly enough, Quebec recently passed legislation to fight poverty and social exclusion. In December 2002, the National Assembly passed Bill 112.

Article 2 of Bill 112 defines poverty as follows:

—the condition of a human being who is deprived of the resources, means, choices and power necessary to acquire and maintain economic self-sufficiency or to facilitate integration and participation in society.

Women, especially single parents, but also young families, children, seniors living in isolation, visible minorities and first nations are particularly affected by such poverty. There are considerable immediate and long-term costs associated with this poverty for Quebec society as a whole.

On October 17, 2000, during the World March of Women to combat poverty and violence against women, the Quebec Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse noted that, despite difficulties or variations in measuring poverty, it has remained an important phenomenon that affects a large number of individuals and households in Quebec.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1110)

The National Council of Welfare, in a document published in July 2002, entitled *Poverty Profile 1999*, indicated that even though Canada's gross domestic product increased by almost 5% in fiscal 1998-99, income disparity between Canadians increased or stayed the same as in the 1990s. Even though poverty rates dipped slightly between 1997 and 1999, they remained higher than rates prior to the 1991 and 1992 recession.

When it comes to families on social assistance, the situation is even worse. In its *Welfare Incomes 2002* report, published April 10, 2003, the council noted that there was a considerable gap between the poverty line and welfare income, which remained practically unchanged in 2002.

According to the document, people on social assistance receive as little as one fifth of the amount that is equal to the poverty line. What is worse is that because social assistance income is not indexed to inflation, recipients have become poorer than ever before.

Despite a steady increase in poverty in Canada and Quebec, the courts are hesitant when it comes to recognizing social and economic rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Recognizing social and economic rights would mean that banks could no longer refuse to open a bank account because of a poor credit record, for example.

In 1998, the National Council of Welfare prepared a comprehensive report on banking services and poor people. The report states that Canadian banks and financial institutions do not adequately meet the needs of low income people. The council recommended that one of the first issues that banks and other financial institutions deal with is that of identification required by poor people to open a bank account or cash a cheque.

The fact that many banks today continue to close branch offices for the sake of efficiency, especially in low income communities, is definitive proof that they care little about providing services to the poor. The amazing number of fringe banks popping up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is more proof. These companies provide a variety of financial services including loans, cheque cashing and money orders, with high fees for low income people or people in precarious situations who do not have access to a bank in their neighbourhood or who have little experience with banks.

In addition, bank service charges may create considerable personal indebtedness and cause social and psychological stress in the lives of the poor. Poor people, it seems, face similar problems in the area of communications.

Before I continue speaking about the banking issues that most of the complaints refer to, I would like to make a small digression and give examples of telecommunications problems.

Some people have had trouble with Bell Canada. For seniors living alone and in poor health, the telephone is their only link to the outside world and, moreover, it is used for emergencies. Just the fear of having their service cut off adds to their stress and health problems. Some have considered suicide. One even had to delay paying the electricity bill to be able to pay Bell.

In order to avoid having the telephone cut off, people will accept heavy repayment schedules over just a few months, to comply with Bell's very strict requirements, but this leads to other problems. For example, they will delay paying their rent or other monthly bills, such as electricity, to try to make ends meet. During this time, their credit rating takes a beating and they never get out of the vicious circle. Today, the telephone is an essential service.

But let us return to banking. For a number of years, the financial institutions have been denounced by consumers associations in Quebec. It seems that the banks and caisses populaires are choosing their clients or members more and more selectively. Even though they have agreed to change some of their practices, it appears that they still refuse access to basic services to a large number of consumers.

•(1115)

For more than 10 years, Quebec consumer associations have been speaking out against the financial institutions, which have been trying to get rid of what they consider to be a non-profitable client segment by increasing the obstacles to opening a bank account or cashing a cheque, using as their pretext bad credit, the need of an appointment, which is never immediate, freezing deposits for 10 days and so on.

People without bank accounts cannot cash pay cheques or government cheques, nor make use of direct deposit. They cannot make rent or other payments by cheque or automatic withdrawal, nor can they use a debit card. As a result, these people who have no accounts are condemned by the banks to a still more marginal existence. A bank account is a right.

In September 1998, the Task Force on the Future of the Canadian Financial Services Sector tabled, in the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Finance, what was to become known as the fabled MacKay report, which addressed in large part the excessive requirement for ID. It also addressed the matter of putting holds on government cheques and basic service packages.

At the time, the Standing Committee on Finance agreed with these recommendations and recommended that the government immediately implement the MacKay report, namely recommendations 88 to 92, all of which addressed the difficulty in accessing financial services and aimed to ensure that such services were provided at reasonable rates and under reasonable conditions.

On the strength of the banks' seeming good faith, the committee's preference was for access problems to be resolved by a cooperative effort, with legal recourse a last resort.

*Private Members' Business*

Today, it is clear that the obstacles faced by underprivileged individuals and groups have not only not disappeared but are taking new forms. There is now a whole new series of banking practices, which have effectively restricted access to basic services: banks refuse to open accounts; accounts are closed without good reason; new customers have their credit checked, along with their income; there are fewer personalized banking services; access is being reduced or the less profitable branches are being closed. The use of automatic tellers is also encouraged. In short, the most profitable customers are being chosen, meaning those able to consume financial products and make investments, but above all those who can help increase the billions in net profits made by banks and financial institutions.

I even heard that one bank branch in Montreal set up a waiting line with one bank teller for people on social assistance to cash their cheques on the first of the month. There was a separate line for the other clients, with two tellers serving it. With a special line for people on social assistance, not only are these people treated differently and labelled, but they are also discriminated against because of their social status.

A bank account is a necessity. The banks have too much discretionary power and this leaves room for abuse.

This is why the motion I am moving this morning is so important. I am asking all of my colleagues, from all parties, to demonstrate their interest in social justice by voting for this motion, which reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should add "social condition" to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

• (1120)

[*English*]

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present the government's position to the House on behalf of my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, on the motion.

The motion seeks the opinion of the House on the addition of the phrase "social condition" to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination contained in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The motion poses something of a quandary for me, and, I suspect, for many other members of the House, because the intended purposes and effects of the amendments proposed by the motion are not clear. It is difficult to determine what precisely we are being asked to agree with and therefore it is hard to know whether one should support it.

Is the motion motivated by a desire to protect individuals in Canada from being subjected to discrimination based on the fact that they occupy disadvantaged positions in our society? Assuming that it is, then certainly the government and I would share such a desire.

However, taking the motion at face value, as we must, we have to look at the actual wording of the motion. It is by no means clear that this is in fact the underlying purpose of the amendments it proposes or that the amendments would have this effect in any event.

Before returning to this issue and discussing the motion in more detail, I wish to assure the hon. member for Sherbrooke that the

government is fully committed to protecting individuals occupying disadvantaged positions in our society from experiencing discrimination on the basis of their social position or status. Such discrimination can too often compound the difficulties and challenges faced by these vulnerable individuals.

The progress made by the government on these fronts is significant and includes previous initiatives to strengthen the protection provided by the Canadian Human Rights Act. As well, the government has introduced several important new policies that seek to address the root causes of poverty, focusing particularly on the situations of low income children, families and aboriginal communities. I think right away of the national child benefit which is an important program that I have long supported and one that is very important in our country.

While the government is proud of its accomplishments in this area, we realize we must be ever vigilant in ensuring that the human rights of individuals in Canada are protected to the fullest extent possible. There is always work to be done in this area and the government will not shirk from this responsibility.

I am pleased to report to my hon. colleagues that Department of Justice officials have been working on a comprehensive and careful review of the Canadian Human Rights Act with a view to identifying areas where this legislative scheme can be updated and improved. As part of this ongoing work, the Minister of Justice is always interested in hearing suggestions about how human rights legislation in Canada can be improved, such as the suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Sherbrooke. I welcome the opportunity the motion provides to debate the issues involved in such an important matter.

I am sure the hon. member will be pleased to hear that as part of the aforementioned review and consideration of possible Canadian Human Rights Act amendments and reforms, Department of Justice officials are engaged in an indepth analysis of the question of including social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. I should point out that this is just one possible reform among several others also being considered.

At the same time, I must state that the government is not in the business of making rushed, ad hoc or piecemeal changes to any legislation, let alone a statute as important as the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Even where legislative changes are proposed with the best of intentions, inattention to detail or to the specific language used can often lead to unforeseen and unintended legal and social consequences even to the extent of setting back the goal that is aimed for, in this case the very important goal of improved human rights protection.

While I commend my hon. colleague for what I have to assume are good intentions behind the motion, I must point out that the motion does not offer any definition of the term "social condition" nor does it provide any clarification or guidance as to how these words should be interpreted. Those are very important points, and they are important omissions in the motion.

*Private Members' Business*

The motion does not explain what is intended to be covered by these words and what is not intended to be covered. The motion also does not explain how the inclusion of these words in the act is intended to affect existing social programs and legislative schemes that benefit low income Canadians.

• (1125)

This degree of vagueness in the language used in the motion causes me considerable concern and, unfortunately, makes it difficult for me to support the motion at this time. In fact, due to the lack of detail contained in the motion, I believe it is unclear exactly what the House is being asked to agree with if we were to approve the motion.

Perhaps the hon. member could shed some light on this for us. For instance, I would be interested to know whether the hon. member for Sherbrooke has given thought to the possibility that his proposed amendments to the act might have the effect of allowing those whose social condition is that of being wealthy to challenge government programs and initiatives that treat them differently, for instance, progressive marginal rates of taxation and eligibility requirements for social assistance. In other words, a person who is rich could decide that he is being discriminated against because of his social condition. Surely we would not want that to be the case.

Surely the hon. member intends that the proposed amendments would apply only to lower income individuals. If so, how would the hon. member ensure that the amendment's effect would in fact be limited in this way without saying so?

I would also be interested in any thoughts my hon. colleague has about whether the phrase "social condition" is intended to refer only to one's degree of wealth and level of income, or would the notion also include other factors that might go toward a broader concept of an individual's social status.

How does the hon. member envision how an individual's social status would be determined by those interpreting the Canadian Human Rights Act? Would objective or subjective factors be used to determine social condition or would both kinds of factors be considered? Would only an individual's present circumstances be considered, or would his or her family background and origins be considered as well?

Is it the hon. member's intention that temporary forms of social status, such as being unemployed or being a full time student, also be caught by the phrase "social condition"?

What about prisoners in federal correctional institutions or those suffering from drug or alcohol addiction? Would, in the view of the hon. member, discrimination on the basis of these forms of social condition be prohibited by the proposed amendment?

Has the hon. member considered how his proposed amendment would affect the assessment of credit worthiness or the conducting of security or background checks?

Has my hon. colleague considered how his proposal would affect existing government programs? Would parole and conditional release programs be affected? What about criteria used by Canadian immigration officials?

Does the hon. member foresee how the inclusion of this new ground in the motion would affect the operation of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the resources it needs to function as it must and fulfill its mandate?

The answers to these and other important questions will greatly affect the nature and scope of the proposed new prohibited ground of discrimination. I invite my hon. colleague from Sherbrooke, as well as other members of the House, to share their views about the precise intended effect and scope of such a change.

However I must note that the actual motion presently before the House for consideration in no way addresses or clarifies any of these questions. Thus, I am afraid that I cannot support the motion, which is so vague and uncertain in its potential outcome and effect, no matter how much I might agree with the general objective of protecting individuals from being discriminated against because they are perceived to be of lower socio-economic status. That is something I agree with totally. I like the intent of the motion but it has to be better worded. We have to look at these important questions in detail.

Without a clear definition of the meaning of "social condition", without any measures to limit the possible unintended and undesirable costs and consequences and without any provisions for safeguards to protect our valued social programs, I believe it would be irresponsible to vote in favour of the motion as it stands.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):**

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to rise this morning on behalf of the residents of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on Motion No. 392 being put forward by the hon. member for Sherbrooke. I commend the member for his thoughtfulness on this issue.

The motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should add "social condition" to the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This is not the first time that the House has considered the possibility of adding social condition as a prohibited ground for discrimination under the Canadian Human Rights Act. In the 36th Parliament, Bill S-11 proposed to do exactly the same thing but after passing the Senate it was defeated here in the Commons.

I suppose the first question to consider is what we mean by social condition. It is tempting to equate social condition with poverty, however, the term social condition conveys much more, including disadvantages that are associated with, though not synonymous with, poverty. This could include occupation, literacy, type of employment or even unemployment. It may also include culture, to the extent that one's social station is conveyed by dress, language or mannerisms.

Quebec's definition of social condition has been evolving and includes one's rank, place or position occupied within society, or the class in which they belong. The Quebec courts and tribunals have found social condition to include temporary conditions, such as pregnancy and unemployment. Further, social condition is considered distinct from social origin.

*Private Members' Business*

Quebec is the only province that currently includes social condition as a prohibited ground for discrimination in its human rights legislation. However all the other provinces, with the exception of New Brunswick, include various grounds encompassed by the term social condition. For instance, Nova Scotia, Alberta, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island prohibit discrimination on source of income. Similarly, Ontario and Saskatchewan protect receipt of public assistance as an enumerated ground in their codes. Newfoundland prohibits discrimination on the basis of social origin.

Canada has always been a leader on the international stage in terms of the promotion and protection of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, often referred to as the Magna Carta of humankind, was co-written by a Canadian. The declaration includes the right to social security and to the realization of social and economic rights indispensable for a person's dignity and the free development of his or her personality.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was ratified by Canada in 1976. It guarantees the right to social security and social insurance and the right to an adequate standard of living.

Human rights are both entrenched in the Constitution and protected in provincial and territorial human rights acts across the country. However an argument can be made that Canada has fallen short of its international obligations by failing to fully implement its international commitments to promote and protect social and economic rights.

The recent general economic condition in Canada has been one of slowly increasing average real incomes. Yet, this improvement has been taking place simultaneously with signs of increasing disparities. There is a growing underclass of people homeless or with precarious shelter. Also there is a growing contingent of labour force that relies upon non-standard employment: part time, temporary or seasonal employment. This employment tends to provide incomes that will not meet a family's basic needs.

•(1130)

According to Statistics Canada, the net worth of the richest 20% of Canadian families increased by 39% between 1984 and 1999, from about \$290,000 to about \$400,000. In the same time period the net worth of the poorest 20% decreased by \$600.

In 1999 the top 50% of families in Canada had 94.4% of the wealth while the other 50% had the remaining 5.6% of the wealth. The gap between the richest 20% of families and the poorest 20% of families is a cool \$1 million.

In a 2002 report the National Council of Welfare pointed out that although Canada's gross domestic product had grown considerably inequality among Canadians either widened or stayed steady throughout the 1990s.

Households with young children, especially those headed by a single parent mother, suffered the most chronic poverty between 1980 and 1999. While the gap between the rich and the poor has been growing ever wider, particularly in the past decade, members on the opposite side have done little or nothing.

If the taxation proposals of the Canadian Alliance were listened to and followed by the government many of the poorest families would

be much better off. We in the Canadian Alliance believe the threshold for paying taxes should be raised. More money should be put back into the pockets of Canadians so that they can address their real life needs.

The fact is many Canadians have incomes that are inadequate to meet their minimum needs. Poverty restricts the lives of many Canadians. It limits choices in food, clothing and shelter. For children, it denies what other Canadians take for granted, for example, recreation, holidays and school field trips. Poverty also has impacts on health, education and children's subsequent income.

Many disadvantaged Canadians are subject to prejudice, that is, preconceived notions that low income people are lazy or uncaring parents. That is unfortunate. This further restricts the choices available to low income Canadians.

The most recent United Nations human development report contrasts Canada's 3rd place ranking in terms of human development with its 12th place ranking with respect to poverty.

Some questions have been raised about the feasibility of inserting social conditions as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. It is argued that many of the cases alleging discrimination in this area have involved rental of accommodation, an area that is of minimal relevance to federally controlled issues.

•(1135)

However, anti-poverty organizations feel that social condition must be inserted into the federal human rights act in order to address issues of discrimination faced by poor people with regard to federally regulated services like banking and telecommunications.

The Association coopérative d'économie familiale du centre de Montreal prepared a report for Industry Canada in 1996 entitled "The highs and lows of access to banking services in Canada". The report emphasized that the major barriers in accessing banking services were the large number of identification documents required and the attitudes of bank employees. Besides identification issues for poor people who wish to open an account or cash a cheque, many banks continued to close down branches, in the name of efficiency, mostly in low income communities.

The so-called fringe banks that have moved into low income neighbourhoods provide a variety of financial services, including loans, cheque cashing and money orders, at high costs to low income and financially distressed individuals who either have no access to a bank in their area or lack of experience with the banking system.

A recent study found that while most people being serviced by fringe financial services would rather have a bank account, the costs of transportation to a bank, the lack of proper identification, limited banking hours and previous credit difficulties have pushed them into fringe banks. Yet, the financial costs for services with these banks can lead to a substantial personal debt. They add stress and other psychological components.

*Private Members' Business*

One of the most serious practical concerns is the fact that the Canadian Human Rights Commission has limited resources and an existing backlog of cases. Adding social condition to this definition would further drain the resources as well as increase the backlog of the cases it is dealing with. Therefore, I rest my case here.

● (1140)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak in support of the motion put forward by the member of the Bloc from Sherbrooke. As a member of the NDP I too have a motion, almost exactly the same in terms of its wording, to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

When I was elected in 1997, it was one of the first motions that I put forward. I would agree with my colleague from the Alliance in recalling that we also had a motion that came to the House from the Senate that was based on the same amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act. The federal NDP supports the amendment and believes it is an important amendment that should take place.

I listened with interest to the debate today and it has changed a little bit. I recall in earlier days when we debated a similar motion that the government was not willing to consider the idea of amending the act to include social condition. What we heard from the government today is that based on the Canadian Human Rights Commission's review of this question, the government is now holding discussions as to whether or not it may look at including social condition.

I was disappointed to hear the government representative say that it could not be supported because it was too vague. Liberals were concerned that somehow this would be applied to rich people. Every single time this issue has come up, and certainly today it was stated by the member from Sherbrooke, it has been clear that when we are talking about social condition we are talking about poverty and the people who face discrimination because they are poor. The government member is being very flippant with what is a serious question to somehow dismiss this because he cannot understand whether it would apply to people who are wealthy and who are worried about paying their taxes.

I would say to the member who spoke for the government and to the government itself that it is ironic because if the motion had been more specific, I know that the government would have said "we cannot agree with it because it is too specific". It seems to me that the intent and the principle of the motion is clear in addressing social condition and income inequality in this country. The onus is on the government to show responsibility that it understands that principle and is willing to address it. That is not what we heard from the government today.

I was disappointed to hear the government's response. I would go further than that because the issue of social condition and being a prohibited grounds of discrimination is important as it applies to federally regulated businesses, services and programs. We have heard that many provinces already have some aspect, and certainly Quebec has led the way in including social condition. It is something that has worked so we actually have a precedence. There are some important elements that need to be looked at.

I do want to make the point in this debate that when we look at social condition and at discrimination against poor people, the greatest problem that we see is actually discrimination by government itself. The greatest barrier for poor people, the greatest discrimination, comes from public policy. One only has to look at the latest report of the National Council of Welfare which looked at the statistics across Canada to see what happens to people when they are on income assistance and how they are living so far below the poverty line and to note for example that still today in 2003, that the child tax benefit is not afforded to the poorest of the poor and that is people on welfare. That is discrimination based on social condition.

That is government policy. That has come from our federal government. It has been agreed to by provincial governments except for the provinces of New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador which do pass on the child tax benefit.

● (1145)

When we are debating this issue, we are not just talking about banks, businesses, and the real discrimination that poor people face, we are talking about public policy and the discrimination that has come about as a result of public policy being developed by the federal government.

One thing that I would like to bring to the attention of members is that we are now on the brink of changing the way we measure poverty. For years we have used the low income cutoff developed by Statistics Canada. It is a measure that allows us to look at the wealth and the poverty in our society based on a relative scale. That is important because we can actually see how people who are at the bottom of the socio-economic scale are doing in relation to average incomes, and so on.

As a result of government announcements, we know that this is now about to be changed and that government is embarking on something it calls the market basket measure, which will by the stroke of a pen probably reduce poverty by one-third. However, it will not have changed the living standard or status of a single child, a single family or a single person who is living in poverty. If that is not discrimination based on public policy, I do not know what it is.

It is scandalous that this major change in public policy is about to take place with virtually no public debate and no assessment of the impact. This particular strategy of the market basket approach to measure poverty has been peddled for years by the Fraser Institute. It has campaigned for years to change the LICOs and the way we measure poverty. It seems that the federal government has capitulated to this, and I say shame on the government.

I feel angry that this change is about to take place and there has been no consultation or debate about it. If we were to move to the market basket approach the government, by redefinition, would be able to stand up and say it has reduced poverty by a third, but it would not have helped anybody who in reality is living in poverty.

*Private Members' Business*

It is important that we support this motion. I heard the government member saying that the government cares about the rights of poor people and is committed to dealing with discrimination. If the government were genuine about that principle then why would it not support this motion? Why would it not say that this motion should be approved and it should go to committee for further study so that we can sit down and spell out what we mean in terms of definitions around social condition as it relates to low income and poor people? We could look at the experience in Quebec and other provinces, and advance this debate. We could do something positive and progressive instead of just saying we do not want people discriminated against, but we will shoot down this motion.

There is an opportunity today, as there has been in the past, to support this motion and to support the Canadian Human Rights Commission in its recommendation to ensure that the Canadian Human Rights Act includes social conditions. My party fully supports that and we want to get on with this debate. We want to have that discussion to ensure that people, just because they are poor, do not face discrimination by banks, other institutions or the federal government itself.

• (1150)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the member for Sherbrooke for bringing forward this motion, which we solidly support. There cannot be any excuse for discrimination in Canada. All too often those less fortunate or those of a different ethnic origin are left to fend for themselves. We as a people must do all we can to ensure that discrimination is eliminated in Canada.

While the motion is not a comprehensive plan to eliminate discrimination in all its facets, it is an excellent first start, which would have a deep impact upon the federal civil service and organizations that fall under federal legislation.

The Canadian Human Rights Act governs employment and the provision of goods and services by the federal government and federally regulated businesses. These organizations employ about 11% of the workforce. The vast majority of small businesses, schools and religious or cultural organizations fall under provincial or territorial laws which would not be affected by the addition of social condition to the prohibited grounds of discrimination.

Section 3(1) of the act lays out the definition of discrimination, which includes discrimination based upon race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted. The motion would see social condition added to the definition.

There are a number of important issues to consider when dealing with what would essentially be an amendment to the act, the first of which deals with the definition of social condition.

In 1999, the Minister of Justice established an independent panel to review the Canadian Human Rights Act. This was the first review of the act since its inception in 1977. That is a period of 22 years.

The panel's mandate was to determine if the law had kept pace with the evolution of human rights and equality principles, both at home and abroad. In June, 2000, the panel released its report,

"Promoting Equality: A New Vision", in which it made 165 recommendations. Among those recommendations was the addition of social condition to section 3 of the act. That is why it is so surprising that, having had such a thorough review over such a long period of time to try to bring the act into modern day language, we find government basically saying no, it cannot do it.

Currently the only other Canadian human rights act to include social condition in regard to human rights legislation is in the Province of Quebec. However, several other provincial and territorial governments do include narrower grounds that fall within the area of social condition such as, for example, source of income, receipt of public assistance and social origin. Some attempts have been made provincially to address this extremely serious issue.

During its consultations, the panel heard more about poverty than any other single issue. That brings forth very clearly how important this issue is in the country. It concluded that protecting the most destitute in Canadian society against discrimination was essential. According to the panel, like other grounds for discrimination, poverty is often unavoidable for those affected and is often beyond their control. Moreover, characteristics such as poverty and low level of education have historically been associated with patterns of disadvantage.

In its review, the panel put together areas of federal jurisdiction which discriminate based upon social condition. These areas include the banking industry, the telecommunications industry and housing on Indian reserves. According to the panel, discrimination in these areas could be eliminated if social condition were added to the act.

The Liberal government made child poverty a priority when it took office in the early 1990s. Like so many other Liberal promises, a solution to the problem went unfulfilled. Despite years of economic growth, Canada's child poverty rate is largely unchanged and those who are poor are in fact getting poorer.

• (1155)

A study by the Canadian Council on Social Development outlined the increasing gap between Canada's rich and poor. Wealth is defined as a family's assets minus its debts, with assets including such items as houses, cars, stocks and bonds. The wealth of the poorest 20% of couples with children under 18 went down by 51.4% between 1984 and 1999, whereas that of the wealthiest 20% of couples increased by 42.7%. With such a staggering gap between lower and higher income levels it becomes incumbent upon government to recognize the problem in the context of discrimination.

Race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or social condition should not be the grounds upon which discrimination is based. This is definitely a motion the Progressive Conservative Party can support.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know I do not have much time to convey the opinions of the various ACEFs in my riding. An ACEF, or Association coopérative d'économie familiale, defends the rights of consumers, the disadvantaged and the poor. Nevertheless, I want to express, on their behalf and my own, all the dismay I feel with regard to the governing party, which refuses to support this motion that would, essentially, right a wrong.

It is a wrong that poor and disadvantaged people have had to live with for many years, possibly more than 20, but especially since the MacKay report made its recommendations. These recommendations were made in 1998 and accepted by the House Standing Committee on Finance. The committee not only accepted but promoted these recommendations, which were aimed at recognizing that poor people have trouble getting recognition in our society, particularly from banks and telecommunications agencies.

It is appalling that members are playing on the fact that they do not know what the motion means when it refers to "social condition". Everyone knows what this term means. There is no way to quibble about the specific purpose of this motion, because everyone agrees that poor people do not have access to telecommunications services like everyone else. They are being denied the right to have bank accounts. But we are going to quibble about words. It is shameful.

A bank account is a form of social recognition—a recognition of social condition; it is a right. We must respect people who have problems. Mr. Speaker, if you had a child with impaired mobility, if you were a single mother with a young baby and a sick child, and you had to get to a bank to cash your social assistance cheque, you might find that difficult. If you were alone, disabled, receiving an income supplement from Quebec or a province, and you had to go somewhere to cash your federal government cheque—which should be good—and they ask you for a deposit and freeze a certain amount of money for 10 days in order to guarantee this cheque, would you not find this shameful? That is what people are living through every day.

People simply used the wording of the motion to condemn the federal government's lack of action. Back then, it was the Minister of Finance, who is running for the Liberal leadership, who did not do his job. The Liberal Party has not done its job and has forced people to make a detour and move a motion to recognize social condition as a ground, because the government has not recognized it. The government has failed to recognize that there are poor people who need protection. It is shameful.

On behalf of all of Quebec's ACEFs, the ACEF in East Montreal, the ACEF in North Montreal, the south west ACEF, the ACEF on the south shore, the ACEF on Île-Jésus, the ACEF in the Basses-Laurentides and all of the organizations that these ACEFs represent, I say to the current Liberal federal government that it has demonstrated no concern or compassion for people who live in poverty.

• (1200)

Contrary to what my colleague from the Liberal Party said earlier, social condition has been clearly defined by committees of this

House, and on numerous occasions. Human rights are entrenched in the Constitution and protected by other legislation at the provincial and territorial level across the country.

We are arguing that even if social and economic rights are not clearly defined, governments must prevent them from being abused, for example, discrimination based on one's social condition. As for those who say they do not know what social condition means, that is simply a way to skirt the issue, and it is shameful.

I would like to thank my colleagues from Vancouver East and St. John's West for their support. This shows that they are close to their constituents. I find it hard to believe that there is even one member of this House who would vote against this motion, who would not accept it. I am sure that every single member has, on at least one occasion, heard from a disadvantaged person, a poor person who has had problems making ends meet and was not able to open a bank account, to make withdrawals or to use an automatic teller.

Do you know what this ends up costing? The fringe banks referred to charge \$1.25, if not \$1.50, to withdraw money and if anyone wants to cash a cheque the charges amount to usury.

The bank chooses its customers to an increasing extent. As my colleague from Sherbrooke has said, they have to investigate, and the people without a bank account are told, "You are not a profitable proposition for us, do you have \$5 to open an account?" Even then, they will get no service. They are told, "Go elsewhere if you want service". That is awful.

And how much does it cost these people to cash a government cheque? How much does it cost seniors who receive the guaranteed income supplement—if they manage to get it—to cash their cheque if they have no account? How else can they cash it?

I would not wish it on anyone here to get so disabled or sick that they are unable to get to a bank, because they will have problems cashing cheques. How can a person cash a cheque if they have no bank account? At an ATM? Not everyone can use those machines, for instance seniors who do not see well. What about a single mother with four children who goes with them to the bank to try to get her cheque cashed but has no account. How will she manage?

I see that my colleagues over there are nodding their heads. Are they going to be able to support this motion in a while? They are nodding yes. And will they? I hope so.

I just wanted to speak to this issue because I find it shameful to be debating wording without paying any attention to people's social condition.

• (1205)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The hour 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.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### PENSION ACT

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-31, an act to amend the Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today and commend to the House Bill C-31, an act to amend the Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, which was introduced April 10.

I trust all colleagues will agree with me on the importance of this legislation and grant it their speedy and unanimous approval.

Bill C-31 would give members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP greater assurance when sent to special missions in areas of elevated risk that they and their families will be cared for should harm come their way. It sends the message to them that their government cares and appreciates, that their country is with them and their families in their hour of need.

Members may ask, "Why these proposed amendments now?" Before I go into the detail of this bill, I want to ensure: one, that I bring members of the House up to date on the current status of departmental benefits, specifically to those who deal with Canadian Forces members' accessibility to disability pensions and the related programs my department provides; and two, that I provide colleagues with the proper context regarding the intent behind the proposal.

In making these undertakings I am aware of the expertise of some members of the House on matters related to veterans issues, in particular among those members who serve on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. They are very familiar with veterans issues and concerns. I, like my predecessors in the portfolio, have sought and taken their excellent advice. They know very well the programs of my department. Hence, some of the information that I will provide will be quite familiar to them. I therefore ask them to bear with me when I review the background that has brought us to today's debate.

Members of Canada's military may apply for a disability pension if they become injured or ill in the line of duty. Survivor benefits are available for dependants in the case of death of a member or veteran due to his or her service. These pension disability benefits have been available to eligible members or veterans whether they serve or have served their nation in times of war and times of peace, here at home or abroad.

Disability pension payouts comprise by far the largest expenditure my department disburses, amounting to approximately \$1.5 billion a year. Close to 165,000 clients are presently receiving disability pension payments. Of those, more than 5,000, about 3%, are currently serving Canadian Forces personnel. It is to this latter group, currently serving Canadian Forces members, and to the RCMP members as well that Bill C-31 speaks.

The bill would provide them with the most comprehensive disability pension coverage possible, including enhanced health care

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services needed for the disability incurred from the moment they are deployed and when such deployment exposes them to conditions of elevated risk.

Deployment could be to any part of the world, including here at home, and the scope of deployment could encompass disaster relief, rescue operations, peacekeeping or peacemaking.

Under the existing legislation, if members incur a disability or illness while not serving in a special duty area, they are covered but there is a burden of proof. The burden of proof is intended to satisfy the requirement that the disability be shown to have arisen out of or was directly connected to service.

However by giving the members in a special duty area the 24/7, 24 hours a day, seven days a week coverage, the burden of proof requirement is removed. They will only need to show that such a condition arose during the time of service. Therefore the need for detailed medical and service evidence is simplified. Thus an award of the pension, if required, can be more easily rendered.

• (1210)

The amendments proposed in Bill C-31 have two main components. I wish to deal first with the aspect of service in special duty areas or SDAs.

In 1964 Parliament enacted the special duty area legislation. It stipulates that special pension provisions would apply to serving members operating in certain areas outside Canada when those areas have been designated by the governor in council as special duty areas. Technically, SDAs are identified by geographic coordinates and by definition they must be outside Canada.

Since 1949, for more than half a century now, members of the Canadian Forces have served in areas outside Canada in various roles on behalf of the United Nations and in other trucekeeping and peacekeeping operations. It has been recognized that service in these areas has often meant participation in active combat operations and exposure to hazardous conditions not normally associated with peacetime service.

Specifically, the special pension provisions deem a member serving in a special duty area to be on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for pension act purposes. That is from the moment the member arrives in a special duty area up to and including the moment the member departs from that area. This means that any death or any disability other than a disability caused by the improper conduct of the member that occurs while serving in a special duty area is governed by these special pension provisions.

The fact is Canada and its service men and women have been in the forefront of support to peacekeeping missions in special duty areas in countless hot spots around the world. More than 100 individuals to date have paid the price with their lives. Many more have paid the price in the form of accidents and injuries.

I am pleased to tell hon. members that the bill will improve SDA coverage in two important ways.

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First, the process of declaring an SDA will be speeded up or streamlined. With the passage of this legislation, under the pension act, the Minister of National Defence, who seconded the bill, or the Solicitor General in consultation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, will be able to declare an SDA and have it apply in a much faster time frame. That means it will be possible for departing members and their families to be assured of their rightful 24 hour, seven days a week coverage and as a result, have greater peace of mind.

Bill C-31 is intended to address more than peace of mind considerations. The bill would increase the length of time covered by an SDA, beginning on the day of actual deployment and covering training for the deployment, travel to and from the SDA, and authorized leave of absence from the SDA.

The second component to this legislation reflects the new times in which we are living. The events of September 11 changed the world. They changed the sense of security we all have felt in our country, and this is true for many other countries as well. They marked the beginning of a new era of violence by extremist organizations that created a need for rapid response by the community of nations. Indeed, we live in a world where new threats can happen at any given moment, anywhere.

It is becoming more difficult to define geographically a theatre of operations. In today's operations of elevated risk, there may be troops on the ground in a specific designated area, yet many others stationed elsewhere working in support of that operation. Although not confined to the same specific area, they are nonetheless also exposed to elevated risk conditions.

The key feature here is exposure to elevated risk, meaning a level of risk higher than that normally associated with peacetime service, regardless of the form it takes, search and rescue, disaster relief, anti-terrorism activities and armed conflict.

• (1215)

Thus the bill proposes to add an additional designation called the special duty operation, or SDO. Unlike SDAs, SDOs could exist at home or abroad. For example, domestic SDOs could include search and rescue and disaster relief operations. Overseas SDOs could apply to a naval deployment not confined to a specific geographic area or region, but on a mission where elevated risk is apparent.

Because of the bill, members deployed to SDOs will benefit from the same insurance principle as those deployed to SDAs, with 24 hour, 7 day a week coverage. As will be the case with SDAs, the Minister of National Defence will be able to declare a special duty operation. This new service type and associated coverage will provide Canadians in uniform the added recognition and security they deserve for putting themselves in harm's way.

Increasingly, members of the RCMP are also being asked to take on assignments of elevated risk. The bill proposes to give the Solicitor General similar authorities, under the RCMP Superannuation Act, for equivalent situations. The Solicitor General will be able to designate areas of operations outside Canada as SDAs or SDOs. In addition, the commissioner for the RCMP will be able to deploy RCMP members to such operations as designated by the Minister of National Defence.

The proposed amendments to our disability pension legislation reinforce Canada's long-standing reputation as a leader in providing the men and women who serve our nation with one of the most comprehensive coverage packages of benefits and services in the world.

When it comes to providing the best legislation for our military and the RCMP, we must be able to adapt to the conditions under which we ask them to serve. World conditions have changed drastically over the past few years, as has the type of deployment we ask of our men and women in uniform, our troops and our national police.

While this type of legislation will always be a work in progress, the process we are engaged in today will give them a better product in the form of legislation that provides servicemen and service-women and their families with broader and more timely coverage. It will provide more coverage to Canadian Forces and RCMP members placed in harm's way, no matter where in the world or in Canada. It will provide for greater peace of mind, not only for those leaving on deployment but also for family members who are awaiting their safe arrival home.

Let us take this very important piece of legislation into our statute books as a reflection of Canada's gratitude to our military and RCMP, whom we call upon to uphold our values of peace, freedom and justice in dangerous places around the world and at home.

These amendments will establish a more responsive framework in keeping with the changing nature of Canadian Forces and RCMP operations. Thus, I seek the support of all colleagues in the House. Let us respond to the challenge and unanimously adopt Bill C-31 with speed.

• (1220)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the minister's comments. It might be said that the bill brings us up to date. It brings us into a new millennium and a new military era. The bill itself is designed to be a millennium bill. Not only is it designed for today, but I believe it is designed for the future. I commend it and I will certainly be supporting this bill.

I might point out in contrast that next week on May 4 we will have the Battle of the Atlantic parade, or we were to have it. In that battle, one-eighth of all those involved gave their lives. Today it would be considered a high designated area. We did not have that then. We were not used to terrorism. We were not dealing with modern techniques. We were not dealing with modern weapons. The weapons at that time were very crude. Therefore, what this bill does is give real meaning to what is here before us today and which I believe will be here for us well into the future.

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We have come through a period of debating what constitutes a legal war. This bill will give a wider meaning to what actually constitutes war in designating special areas or special operations, but it is all in defence of our nation and the security of our nation. It takes on a brand new meaning. We cannot help but disagree with those who say that a nation can never be at war unless it is attacked or invaded. If that is what legal war is, I am sorry if any veterans are listening in, because over 100,000 Canadians let their blood flow in some 21 countries around the world. Canada is proud of that fact and we have lived better because of that even though we were not invaded.

In World War II, not too far off the coast of Canada in Canadian waters we lost hundreds of lives. Those people did not wear uniforms and they did not have guns, but they were delivering goods to supply a war in a foreign continent. This idea of what constitutes a legal war is nonsense. A war is constituted when a nation is threatened by any means, be it here on our soil or somewhere else.

After the Twin Towers went down, people began to think differently. They began to think that the new type of warfare that we will face now and into the future will be different. This bill addresses that.

I might point out one other thing. Not too long ago, a young man came to my office who had done some research on what was probably the last major battle of World War I, Cagnicourt. I hope we get something going; I am excited about this and I will tell everyone why. The only sitting member of Parliament ever to win a Victoria Cross was at Cagnicourt. This fall, on September 2 or somewhere around there, Canadians are going to be recognized by having a town square named after one of the VC winners from Calgary, the remnants of what was left two months before the Armistice was signed. It was at Cagnicourt that Kaiser Wilhelm said the war was over.

I want everyone to think about this. I want everyone to think about what special forces can do. The special forces on that day said this. Instead of having the slaughter of a lot of British, Australians and New Zealanders, the Canadians went over and the war came to an end on November 11, 1918, not on March 11 or April 11 of another year. By designating areas, as the minister has announced, and by designating the rapid deployment, by speeding up the process, we are indeed into the new century.

• (1225)

Some people ask me, "How come you are critic for veterans affairs? Why would you not be critic in some more important role?" That really bothers me. It really does. What is more important in this country than to take a look at the thousands of people, as the minister has said, who are on benefits and the hundreds of people and their kinfolk, their spouses and so on, who are still being cared for by the government? Can we think of anything more important than that? I cannot. I am very proud to represent my party as critic in this particular area.

The purpose of the bill, as the minister has said, is to be more responsive: bang, bang. Do we remember how long this used to take? It used to take from six months up to a year to designate something. I would have quite a beard by that time. Now it can be

done almost immediately. It is in keeping with what is surrounding us today.

Therefore the bill is to be more responsive in providing comprehensive coverage to members of the Canadian Forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who serve in dangerous operations areas and in conditions of elevated risk. These provisions are good provisions. They are good because they meet modern day requirements. They are good because we can declare a designated area within 24 hours. They are good because those people who are being deployed know that they have this coverage. Canadian troops have never known that before, not to this extent.

I just finished a trip visiting long term care for vets and I reminded my colleagues who travelled with me that Newfoundland was a designated area. Do members know why? It was considered overseas in World War II. They still get extra pay for serving overseas. I tip my hat to Newfoundland, because they were a very special people.

Under this pension act, there are two types of coverage, as the minister has announced. It is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a difference that has to be explained. It is not just if one is on a specific duty. Let us say a person was in Kosovo and was sent out to take a look at a particular function. That would be a police duty. Let us say that something happened after the person came back from that duty and the person was wounded while sleeping. There is still coverage under the bill, which makes it entirely different from any piece of legislation we have had before.

About three years ago at the annual chamber of commerce meeting in Moosomin, Saskatchewan, there was a young RCMP officer who had served in Kosovo. Listening to the graphic details of what a Canadian policeman had to go through while living there made one feel proud that we had people like that in a high risk area. That was only a few years ago. We could not tell them then that they had this extra insurance, but it is there today.

Canadian vets are the pride of the country. I know that a lot of people will say, "Yes, but there are not many left and why do we want to spend a bunch of money?" But these vets and these people serving are the pride of the country because of their acts and sacrifices and their heroism in the defence of their country.

There are so many things we can do. For instance, I got a call the other day about the condition of an 89 year old vet who had fought almost five full years in World War II. He came out of it unscathed, without a scratch. But because of the conditions in which he was living I had to call somebody and get that vet out of there. I finally worked through the Royal Canadian Legion and we are going to get some action. Vets care for vets and the government should care for vets as well.

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•(1230)

I was thrilled to be with the minister and the committee when we visited Dieppe last summer on the 60th anniversary. There are many Canadians who take the opportunity to dwell always in the negative about the military. Terence Robinson wrote a book called *The Shame and The Glory: Dieppe*. To go to Dieppe and to Pourville where the South Saskatchewan Regiment was, a regiment which was organized in Weyburn, Saskatchewan and to see the grave of a deceased Canadian soldier from the South Saskatchewan Regiment who did not have a name, it brought me to a standstill.

All of this made me realize what had happened. Perhaps it was ill planned. Nevertheless we will deal with a more prominent issue of the day which is we will be called upon and make no mistake about it.

Bill C-31 will ensure that veterans receive full access to all benefits and allowances due to them.

I was also with the group that spent a day at the Veterans Affairs office in Charlottetown. The office deals with many problems. I am somewhat relieved to see the manner in which the Veterans Affairs office attacks a problem, particularly if a person comes in for benefits and so on. I am satisfied that the bill, along with an increase in attention to veterans affairs will reduce the red tape. It will reduce the time spent on waiting lists. Then veterans can appeal and receive what is due to them immediately.

Bill C-31 provides compensation to Canadian Forces and also to the RCMP who are injured or disabled as a result of their service or while they are in a special duty area or a special duty operation. This is while they are there. It could be while they are eating supper but they are in a dangerous area. This is a big change.

Bill C-31 which has been brought forward by the government is not asking for additional money. I repeat that the bill is not asking for additional funding. It is not the same as another minister who fined 16-year-old hockey players and their teams. Then after they were done raping Saskatchewan they quit the survey. The bill is not asking for additional funds.

The Minister of National Defence or the Solicitor General, with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, would be able to declare an SDA just like that, whereas under our old system it would have taken up to a year.

What will Bill C-31 bring to the families, to the mothers and dads at home and to the boyfriends, girlfriends and so on? The bill will bring something which I think will be elevated and that is peace of mind.

The Canadian Alliance is pleased to support Bill C-31. When a member serves on a committee he or she is not always happy with everything. There are others items which I will not mention at this time that need to be supported. I do want to say to the government that this is good legislation. It is meaningful and up to date legislation. As situations develop, hopefully not for the worst, this piece of legislation being there will make it much easier to handle the situation in a better way than we have ever done before.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-31, an act to amend the Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act.

First, I want to say that the Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill C-31. We recognize the commendable work done by our veterans and RCMP officers. Their commitment goes far beyond their job requirements, and we are grateful to them for this.

The purpose of Bill C-31 is to make the necessary amendments to the aforementioned legislation so that members of the armed forces or the RCMP who have taken part in special service operations, particularly ones under the Charter of the United Nations or search and rescue operations would, from this day forward, be entitled to a pension. So, this change recognizes the high risk of such operations.

Both these groups have impressive records. Since the Korean War, the largest deployment of military personnel abroad took place in 1999 with over 4,400 members of the armed forces, mostly on peace support operations.

These interventions are predicated on our legal and constitutional role. Thus, cabinet usually makes special orders allowing troop deployments for UN operations.

Of course, cabinet must inform Parliament of such decisions and it is up to parliamentarians to support or reject these decisions. The nature and scope of these deployments are significant elements in any government decision. We must also point out that in some cases the participation of armed forces or the RCMP in foreign operations moves rapidly beyond the control of the central government, as in the case of a United Nations operation.

In other words, the central government loses its right to act independently and becomes solely a service provider.

The Bloc Québécois position has always been that such operations should be subject to debate in the House. Thus, on April 19, 1999, a motion by the Bloc Québécois was debated. That motion concerned the armed conflict in Kosovo and the Balkans. The Bloc's intention was that any deployment of soldiers who may be involved in military or peacekeeping operations should be subject to a debate.

Our position was that the information about this involvement was seriously deficient. The motion was voted down on the pretext that it concerned a purely hypothetical situation. Since then, we have seen over and over that there was nothing hypothetical about it and that the Bloc Québécois request was clearly justified.

We can regret the fact that, because of the government's refusal, members of our military and RCMP must deal with precarious situations and impossible deadlines, making their activities extremely risky. We must remember that certain missions have been more like military operations than peacekeeping or humanitarian activities, and that is disappointing.

Thus, it is appropriate to meet the needs of those who go on such missions by granting them commensurate pensions.

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Canada has taken part in many wars since the Boer War in 1899. In 1918, more than 4,000 men were sent to Siberia during the Russian Civil War. In 1950, during the Korean War, Canada agreed to send troops only if the UN decided it was useful. We should mention that Canada's participation in that conflict was not dependent on a declaration of war.

The same thing happened during the gulf war in 1991. On August 6, 1990, the United Nations adopted resolution 661, which required members to impose sanctions against Iraq. Now, the federal government has invoked the United Nations Act, which states that only after the next session commences shall the orders and regulations made under this act be laid before Parliament. On October 23, 1990, the House of Commons adopted a motion to send troops to the gulf. However, it was not until November 29, 1990, that the United Nations adopted resolution 678 authorizing armed intervention in Iraq.

●(1235)

I find it somewhat ironic that, back then, there was no mention of any hypothetical situation.

Although the House of Commons adopted a motion authorizing the sending of troops to the Arabian Peninsula, the government thought it appropriate to hold an emergency debate to confirm this military support. The opposition questioned the need for such an aggressive reaction, because the UN had not taken such action during other similar conflicts. This entire debate ended when the United States began its armed aggression the following day.

On December 3, 1992, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 794 to establish a peace support mission in Somalia. In this resolution, the UN approved the use of force.

At the time, the opposition had asked that a debate be held before the federal government made any decisions. The government responded that it would make its decision first and only then would there be a debate. Furthermore, the government indicated that making such decisions was its responsibility and prerogative. Nevertheless, there was a special debate on the issue.

It was not until 1998 that parliamentarians again raised the need to hold a debate before any decisions were made about Canada's taking part in armed intervention abroad.

On September 30, 1998, a motion was passed in the House of Commons calling upon the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to negotiate a peaceful solution and expressing profound dismay and sorrow concerning the atrocities being suffered by the civilian population in Kosovo. Only a week later did the central government deign to hold a take note debate on this matter, once again relegating parliamentarians to the role of bystanders.

Finally, the war in Iraq has allowed us an opportunity to stress the essential role parliamentarians must play in making decisions that in any way involve participation by Canada in armed interventions.

Once again, the decision-making role of parliamentarians has been shunted aside and the central government has decided to just do as it

pleases, which we find regrettable. Our involvement as parliamentarians must be active rather than passive when it comes to making decisions with such impact on the public. I wish to make it clear that the participation by the people of Quebec has been exemplary. Our demonstration in support of peace most certainly played its part.

In addition to combat interventions, we must also think of our involvement in peacekeeping operations. These have become riskier and more complex than before, if not downright dangerous.

Once again, the scope and nature of the situation are significant, but we must add the human side. The duration only complicates matters.

Since 1945 Canada has taken part in more than 40 peace operations or related missions. While the UN charter does not oblige Canada to participate, we have nonetheless established a custom of peacekeeping we want to maintain that dates back to 1954, after the Korean war, when Canada took part in three surveillance missions.

Toward the end of 1954, Canada took part in the Suez Canal peacekeeping mission, and it was only four days after the government made its decision that a special sitting was held.

In February 1964 Canada made a commitment to take part in the peacekeeping mission in Cyprus when Parliament was not sitting. However, the motion authorizing the deployment of troops was not passed until March 13, 1964.

Canada then agreed to act as an observer in Vietnam, reserving the right to send troops before any vote in the House, however. Canadian military personnel were deployed on January 27, 1973 despite the fact that the matter was not debated in the House until February 1, 1973.

●(1240)

The following year, Canada deployed forces to the Golan Heights as part of a United Nations operation. As mentioned before, Canada took part in the gulf war of 1991, but it had also participated in the implementation of the embargo prior to that. There was only one vote to support the UN resolution and no vote on the matter of sending Canadian troops.

In 1992, Canada sent 1,300 troops to Somalia under UNITAF and 750 soldiers under UNOSOM. There was only a partial debate in the House.

Since 1993, more than 2,000 peacekeeping soldiers have been deployed in the former Yugoslavia under the UN or NATO. These missions have been debated in the House of Commons. There was also the matter of Canada's participation in operations in Haiti and Rwanda.

The result of these debates was that Canada must be more careful in evaluating its participation, because of the costs and resources involved.

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On February 9, 1998, there was a debate in the House on the issue of military action in light of Iraq's refusal to allow weapons inspections by the UN. The Prime Minister gave the assurance at that time that Canada would not make a decision without a public debate. However, the United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, announced Canada's participation in this operation the day before that debate was to be held.

In conclusion, it is easy to understand that these kinds of interventions in foreign countries are complex and delicate issues, but the fact remains that Canadian troops and RCMP members who take part in these operations should not have to suffer the consequences unjustifiably.

Our peacekeeping missions are commendable, despite the risks involved. However, we must show our gratitude and our appreciation to members of the armed forces and of the RCMP.

Throughout my speech, I mentioned the flagrant lack of debate concerning our participation in military operations or peacekeeping missions. It is clear that parliamentarians and, as a result, those who elected them, are excluded from the process. This is inconceivable. Our role must not be limited to approving executive decisions. We are the voice of our constituents.

We need to debate any issue that affects Quebeckers and Canadians. We are elected representatives and we take our role very seriously. The deployment of troops is a serious issue. We must change our bad habits and be accountable to our constituents.

In closing, I will say that members of the armed forces and of the RCMP who fulfill their mission deserve our appreciation, and so do our constituents. Obviously, we support the principle of this bill.

• (1245)

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the NDP I would like to indicate our support for the bill at second reading. We support much of what we see in the bill. The extension of benefits to the RCMP and the Canadian armed forces personnel operating in special duty areas or specially designated areas of operation is a good idea and long overdue. It is something that recognizes emerging realities. We commend the government for bringing the legislation forward.

I listened with care to the Alliance Veterans Affairs critic and I share with him the view that being the Veterans Affairs critic is not a minor role in the caucus of any particular party in the House. I am very proud, as well as being the parliamentary leader of the NDP, to also be the Veterans Affairs critic, which I am now and have been on occasion in previous parliaments. I say that as someone who is the grandson of a veteran. My grandfather, Robert Blaikie, was a founding member of the Great War Veterans Association in 1926, I believe, coming out of the first world war. My father, Robert Blaikie Jr., is a veteran on the basis of his service in the Royal Canadian Navy during the second world war. I myself have been a full member of the Royal Canadian Legion for over 30 years as a result of my own service in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in Winnipeg.

I mention that because, again referring to the speech by the Canadian Alliance Veterans Affairs critic, he spoke of being at Dieppe and, in particular, of being at the beach at Pourville in Dieppe. He mentioned that it was the beach on which the South Saskatchewan Regiment landed. However I would hasten to add that it was also the beach on which the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Winnipeg landed. Both groups had the distinction of advancing farther than anyone else that day. However many of them were taken prisoner.

I knew some of the people who were taken prisoner that day at Pourville. One of them was Pipe Major Alec Graham, one of the people who taught me how to play the bagpipes. He was actually one of the pipers who stood and played his pipes on the bow of one of the barges that landed on the beaches of Dieppe. There were other pipers. I think there were four from the Camerons that day. I know only three out of four of them because the fourth, Charlie Gunn, who was an uncle of a friend of mine, was killed on that day. I had occasion to visit his grave at the Dieppe cemetery and play the lament on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Dieppe in 1992.

The Canadian Alliance Veterans Affairs critic also talked about extending benefits to people in areas of elevated risk. This is progress if we consider, as the Canadian Alliance member referred to, the fact that for decades we fought to have benefits extended to members of the merchant marine who were clearly a special duty operation or in a special area of elevated risk, and in fact were at great risk. It took decades for various governments and various parliaments to finally recognize the danger they were in, the risks they took, the many lives that were lost and the benefits that should have been extended to them a long time ago and were finally extended to them.

I am very proud of the fact that I personally was involved in that struggle for justice for the merchant marine, as was the NDP caucus with many other members of Parliament.

• (1250)

Let us call it progress that today we recognize that RCMP officers and others who may be in areas of elevated risk should have benefits extended to them regardless of their particular status. I hope we would never again be in a situation where we have to fight for long periods of time for benefits that obviously should be extended to people who are in theatres of elevated risk.

*Government Orders*

I listened with care to the member from the Bloc Québécois who spoke to this. He gave us a rather lengthy history of the role that Parliament has or has not played in various decisions to deploy Canadian troops. I agree with him. The role of Parliament has not been what it should be when it comes to the deploying of Canadian troops. The history record is mixed but certainly there is a great gap between the behaviour of this Liberal government, elected in 1993, and the behaviour of the government prior to that, the Conservative government, when it came to the deploying of troops. There is a big difference between what was done during the first gulf war and what it appeared the Liberals were willing to do in the second gulf war, if in fact Canada had decided to participate. The government decided not to participate, but we could not get a commitment out of the government that we would actually have a full debate in the House and a vote on it. Eventually we had that but we had it as a result of other political manoeuvrings which resulted in the government feeling the need to put down a motion and have it debated. However that was long after the fact and it did not happen in the way that it should have. In fact, if Parliament had conducted itself properly and if the government had permitted Parliament to conduct itself properly, the government itself, and I think the whole country, might have benefited from a timely debate and a timely vote here in the House of Commons. Different positions could have been put, various parties could have expressed themselves on the matter, Parliament could have expressed itself on the matter and it would have all been done in a much more dignified way than what rolled out as a result of the refusal of the Liberal government to allow Parliament to play its proper role.

Therefore I want to agree with my colleague from the Bloc Québécois. That is a potential flaw in the bill. I do not think it is something that should stand in the way of it being passed here today and going to committee and eventually being passed, but there was an opportunity here to do something that the government has not done and that is to insert a role for Parliament in the designating of these areas.

I am not surprised that the Liberal government did not do that. In fact what it has done is make the designating of these areas even easier. There might be some merit in that, taking it away from the cabinet and giving it to various ministers, either to the Solicitor General or to the Minister of National Defence. That might be quicker and more efficient. If we are not going to involve Parliament, we might as well have it efficient. However the underlying debate is whether there should be some role for Parliament in this. Perhaps this is something that can be explored a bit in committee.

Having said that, I certainly want to indicate our support for the bill at second reading. We look forward to having the bill in committee and considering it further at that time.

•(1255)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-31, the RCMP and military pensions act, special duty operations.

The member from the NDP who just spoke did so quite well. I agree with him and the Minister of Veterans Affairs should remember the length of time that it took to recognize the merchant navy personnel in this country, the fact that it was only in recent

years that it came to the House and we actually recognized the merchant navy.

I can remember as a kid the discussion years ago in my own household. My father, who was a veteran of World War II, just absolutely, totally turned away from the government, and from the legion at the time because they would not allow merchant navy veterans to be members. As someone who had served a lot of time in the coastal communities in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland where they actually picked up survivors and the bodies from the U-boat attacks, my father could never understand the fact that the Canadian government never recognized merchant marines as veterans of World War II. It was absolutely incredible.

Before I begin my full comments on Bill C-31, I would also remind the minister that it seems to be a continuing theme within the government ranks. The minister himself has refused, at least up to this point, to support the veterans of the Korean war who are asking for the privilege and the right to wear the Republic of Korea service medal which was given to them in 1951. The Canadian government has never recognized that medal. It had issued its own. Other governments have recognized it, including most of the Commonwealth countries and the United States, yet the minister, through his office, refuses to recognize it and refuses to give his support to the Governor General's Chancellery of Honours, to support our veterans in wearing the Republic of Korea service medal.

Certainly it is time that we have an in-depth examination of many of the wrongs that were created in the past, and it is a proper time now to correct them. We have corrected the merchant navy. I am certain it is time to allow our veterans of the Korean war who were issued the Republic of Korea service medal the right to wear that medal with honour, as they should.

The purpose of Bill C-31 is to extend more comprehensive and timely coverage to members of the Canadian forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police serving in areas and operations where the risk to their safety and security is elevated. Now they are at least going to have some peace of mind that there is some coverage there, not only for themselves but for their beneficiaries.

Under the current Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, members of the Canadian forces and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are entitled to financial compensation in the event of disability or death in the performance of their duties. The coverage is provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and includes insurance against all perils for those serving in what are known as special duty areas. Special duty areas are defined as areas that are geographically outside of Canada.

The substance of Bill C-31 would provide more complete coverage to eligible members serving in designated operations both inside and outside of Canada. Surely since September 11 we all realize the importance of extending this coverage. It was important before but it is even more important today that we extend this coverage inside of Canada. That coverage is for exposure to conditions of elevated risk up to and including armed conflict.

*Government Orders*

●(1300)

In addition to special duty areas, Bill C-31 would create a new service type called special duty operations. Serving in these areas or operations is special duty service which is defined in Bill C-31 as meaning service by either Canadian Forces or RCMP members in an area or operation designated for Canadian Forces members by the Minister of National Defence in consultation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs as a special duty area or operation. For Royal Canadian Mounted Police members the designation falls to the Solicitor General in consultation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

A special duty area or operation in Canada, or abroad, will be so designated if it is determined that it involves exposure of Canadian Forces or RCMP members to elevated risk. Examples of elevated risk include: search and rescue missions, UN operations, armed conflict or counter-terrorism. They include any area or operation of elevated risk dating back to September 11, 2001. This coverage includes: training for the operation, deployment to and from the area, and authorized leaves of absence.

It is my understanding that the bill is long overdue. For a government that has been in power since 1993, there have been a number of issues that have sat on the back burner. This is one of them. It took a major attack inside the confines of North America to even have the government interested in bringing this type of legislation forth and certainly it is timely and long overdue.

In closing, it has been said that a nation reveals itself not only by the men and women it produces, but also by the men and women it honours, and the men and women it remembers. In this spirit, it is an honour to support Bill C-31, a bill that seeks to improve the conditions of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Forces and their families.

●(1305)

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, Bill C-31 stands referred to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill.

[English]

I am pleased to begin second reading debate on Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts.

Bill C-32 contains key proposals to ensure that sufficient protection is in place to address new and emerging forms of threat. The bill proposes a small number of clarification amendments to ensure an efficient and proper application of our criminal law.

The first proposal would establish a more serious offence, with significant penalties, to address the use of deadly traps in places used by criminals to protect their illegal activities, such as drug production operations.

The second set of key amendments are needed to ensure that the public and private sectors can use reasonable measures to protect their computer systems, and the valuable information they contain, from hackers and malicious electronic communications that may contain viruses.

The bill also contains a small number of proposals to address some pressing matters that the government feels should be dealt with at this time. Although the majority of the proposals consist of clarification amendments they are important to ensure our criminal laws apply effectively.

[Translation]

First, I would like to describe the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code offence of placing traps that are likely to cause death or bodily harm to a person.

The placing of traps is already considered an offence under the Criminal Code. However, the current maximum sentence is five years. The government considers this sentence too lenient, considering the seriousness of the danger posed by the traps, particularly when they are placed in areas where criminals want to protect their illegal activities, such as drug production operations.

Lately, enforcement agencies and other organizations, such as fire fighters associations, have raised concerns about the presence of deadly traps that are often hidden in residences. Police, firefighters and other front line workers are indeed reporting a significant increase in the use of traps by criminals in order to protect their drug production activities whether against their rivals or against law enforcement officers.

We have heard of boards being cut near doors and windows, of weapons such as crossbows or shotguns being triggered by the opening of a door, and of incendiary devices designed to destroy the evidence of a drug production operation.

Since such activities are often hidden in residences, front line workers are particularly at risk when responding to emergency calls. These traps are an unacceptable additional risk for front line workers.

*Government Orders*

The placing of traps has become a serious problem associated with criminal activities, particularly those of organized crime, and we must create a specific offence for this type of criminal activity and impose a commensurate sentence in order to adequately punish those who use these lethal traps to protect their criminal activities.

Thus, we propose to reformulate in several respects the provision on traps. First, we propose to create an offence with a stiffer sentence, of up to 10 years of imprisonment, for a person placing a trap in an area that is used for the purpose of committing a criminal act. If the placing of a trap causes bodily harm to a person, the maximum term of imprisonment will be 10 years, but when a trap is placed in an area that is used for criminal activities, the maximum possible term will be 14 years of imprisonment. In cases where a trap causes someone's death, the maximum term will be imprisonment for life.

In other cases, the term of imprisonment for anyone who places traps will remain five years.

The purpose of these Criminal Code amendments is to ensure that those who place traps, who kill or who cause injuries, will face stiff sentences reflecting the seriousness of the offence.

Emergency services workers, such as police officers and fire-fighters, who must go to places that are apparently safe will benefit from protection that is commensurate with the danger created by the placing of traps.

• (1310)

[*English*]

The second set of key amendments in Bill C-32 seek to answer the protection of computer networks from cyber attacks. On a personal level most of us have been victims of some form of cyber attack. A virus, a worm attack, could wipe out important data and cripple vital networks while intrusion by a hacker could result in the theft of private or classified information.

The bill proposes amendments to both the Criminal Code and the Financial Administration Act to permit the use of systems capable of detecting intrusions that could harm computers or the valuable and often sensitive data they contain.

Intrusion detection is an essential part of information technology management intended to protect computers, networks and data. These defensive monitoring activities are necessary to safeguard the integrity of systems operations and ensure continuity of service.

The proposed amendments are needed to bring legal clarity to the use of intrusion detection so that persons who employ intrusion detection measures for the purpose of protecting or managing a computer system are not wilfully intercepting private communications.

These amendments are particularly important for the government because they would ensure that the government would be able to protect its property and more important, safeguard the information it is entrusted with as this information impacts upon the privacy of all Canadians.

Bill C-32 therefore proposes amendments to the Criminal Code to create an exception to the offence of intercepting a private

communication similar to exceptions that already exist to ensure quality control in the communication industry. The exception will only be applicable to persons using protective technologies for the purpose of managing computer systems for quality of service or for protecting the computer system against computer related offences.

An amendment is also proposed to the Financial Administration Act to ensure that federal departments and agencies may take reasonable measures to manage and protect their computer systems which may include the interception of private communications.

The Treasury Board Secretariat will, through the promulgation of standards, ensure consistent application of intrusion detection technology across the Government of Canada in compliance with the Privacy Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To protect the privacy of Canadians, limits will also be imposed on the use and retention of private communications obtained for the use of information technology management practices.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

I would like to emphasize that this bill also includes clarification amendments to the Criminal Code and related legislation. An example of such an amendment clarifying our criminal law is the amendment permitting the use of as much force as is reasonably necessary onboard an aircraft to prevent the commission of an offence that would be likely to cause injury to the aircraft or to any person in the aircraft.

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks led to a review of our legislation. We realized that we had to clarify the grounds for the use of force aboard a Canadian aircraft outside Canadian airspace. The amendment will include in the Criminal Code the Tokyo convention principles, which permit the use of reasonable force to prevent certain offences.

The rules on the use of force will not be changed by the proposed amendment, because the use of force to prevent the commission of an offence is not a new concept in Canadian law. The proposed provision builds on existing legal principles. The main goal of this new provision is to allow the use of the existing grounds in the case of offences committed outside Canadian airspace.

This is also a ground of defence. In civil or criminal proceedings, the accused could use this ground of defence, but he or she would still have to prove that the use of force was reasonable and proportionate. The same test applies to other grounds for the use of force in Canadian law.

[*English*]

Another clarification amendment included in the bill is needed to ensure that the one provision in the Criminal Code to search for and seize weapons, ammunition and explosives explicitly sets out the appropriate constitutional requirements. The courts should not have to read in the grounds for obtaining such a warrant. The government is proposing an amendment to provide in the legislation that information given by the police has to be made under oath. The bill improves and clarifies the criminal law.

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

Other changes to clarify the bill seek to eliminate ambiguity or language discrepancies in our criminal law. The government proposes such changes on a regular basis to maintain the quality and clarity of the legislation for which it is responsible and to ensure the effectiveness and the proper functioning of our criminal law system.

[English]

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the residents of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts.

I listened to the minister's speech very carefully. Some of the things the minister has proposed have been long overdue.

The bill would amend the Criminal Code to establish more serious offences for placing a trap that could harm someone; emphasize that the use of reasonable force on board an airplane to prevent the commission of an offence is permitted; comply with a court decision regarding weapons searches; and create an exception to the offence of intercepting private communications to protect computer systems. These are the various elements of the bill.

I am particularly pleased to see that the bill would create a Criminal Code offence of setting a deadly trap in a place used for a criminal purpose. This would protect first responders, like firefighters, police officers or other law enforcement officials, who respond to an incident by going there first and then falling into that trap.

The lives of these firefighters and police officers could be endangered by entering such a place in the performance of their duties. Therefore it is our responsibility to protect them.

The maximum sentence for this offence depends on the outcome of the situation. It is generally 10 years. If injury occurs, the maximum sentence is 14 years. If death occurs, the maximum sentence is life imprisonment.

Currently section 247 of the Criminal Code provides for the offence of setting a trap with a maximum sentence of just five years imprisonment.

The House will recall that in 2001 I introduced Motion No. 376 which called upon the government to amend the Criminal Code to expand the definition of first degree murder to include the death of a firefighter acting in the line of duty and to add language that addressed the death or injury of a firefighter engaged in combating a fire or an explosion that was deliberately set. We debated the motion in March of last year. I am very happy to see that the government is finally addressing this important issue through Bill C-32.

Everyone recognizes that firefighters play an important role in our Canadian society, protecting persons and property as they rescue their fellow citizens and extinguish fires. We acknowledge that firefighting is a hazardous occupation with the inherent risk of injury or death. Firefighting is four times as hazardous as any other occupation but commands the highest public trust and respect; more than any other profession.

The number of deaths and injuries sustained by firefighters continue to rise in Canada. When such casualties are the result of either deliberate action or carelessness on the part of members of the public, then a true tragedy occurs. It is saddening to know there were 13,724 arson fires in Canada last year. I was alarmed that over 30%, or one-third, of fires in my home community of Surrey were as a result of arson.

● (1320)

A high percentage of them contain booby traps. There have been arson fires in schools. There have been arson related fiery explosions in residential neighbourhoods. These fires are disturbing. Some are caused purely by mischief, but many more have been set with more sinister intentions of covering up illegal activities like marijuana grow ops, methamphetamine labs or other drugs or illegal trade organized crime related activities.

At other times firefighters respond to calls only to find the premises booby trapped with crossbows, propane canisters ready to explode, cutaway floorboards or other serious but intentional hazards. It has also been reported that the criminals, those monsters, will tie wires to the doors and when the doors are opened to the premises weapons will fire at the individual or some sort of explosion will take place. Even the electric power switches have been connected to such disastrous tools. These malicious devices are intended to kill or injure anyone who interferes with a drug operation, including firefighters, police officers and other law enforcement officers.

Firefighters in Surrey are especially at risk considering the growing number of marijuana growing operations that plague the city. The RCMP recently announced that there are 4,500 marijuana grow ops in the city of Surrey. That represents about 6% of the city's households. It is said that there is not one block in Surrey where one cannot find a marijuana grow op. Marijuana grow ops are probably a \$6 billion industry in British Columbia.

In one neighbourhood there is a street with 12 houses, nine of them built in the last year and a half. Six of the 12 houses have been linked to illegal marijuana grow ops. These are not mom and pop operations. They are controlled by organized crime, often by gangs who are increasingly buying new homes to conceal their illicit crops.

B.C. Solicitor General Rich Coleman believes the problem stems from the way in which the Canadian judicial system treats marijuana cultivation and trafficking. While in neighbouring Washington State a first offence carries a minimum three month jail sentence, in British Columbia a person can be charged seven times and never see the inside of a jail cell. According to Mr. Coleman, in British Columbia 82% of people charged do not go to jail or even receive a serious fine. They receive a slap on the wrist and off they go. Sometimes the fines are so low and the value of the crop is so high, even from one plant sale, that they can pay the fine and the rest is profit. It is shameful.

*Government Orders*

In the 2001 B.C. yellow pages there are 508 advertisements for hydroponics equipment. For obvious reasons, I do not think it is because everyone is growing hydroponic orchids. There have even been TV ads selling hydroponic equipment. For what? Just for marijuana grow ops.

The glaring deficiencies within the Criminal Code of Canada fail to allow on duty firefighters the same provisions as on duty police officers, which places their lives at greater risk. Instances are becoming more prevalent where firefighters working in cooperation with law enforcement officers are used on the front lines to break down doors or other barriers to drug related operations and labs. In these cases the armed police officers are standing behind the firefighters who are the unarmed first line of defence out there on the front lines.

● (1325)

The situation is getting worse. These drug related incidents are regrettably on the rise. Realistically, the work environment of firefighters has been dramatically altered.

It is time that our law afforded protection under the Criminal Code for our firefighters who serve and protect communities in the line of duty. At least there should be some deterrent in place, not a motivation to commit a crime or such serious criminal activities. A deterrent is needed.

The Criminal Code needs to be strengthened by including criminal infractions, such as deliberately setting fires or causing some other kind of explosion or hazard that needlessly places the lives of firefighters at risk. It is imperative that legislative amendments be made as promptly as possible to afford protection to the men and women who place their lives at risk in the service of our communities.

My motion called on the government to amend subsection 231(4) of the Criminal Code dealing with first degree murder and section 433 dealing with the offence of arson to specify that a person is liable to a minimum of life imprisonment. I received many letters of support for my motion from firefighter groups both locally and nationally.

On behalf of its 17,000 Canadian members, the International Association of Fire Fighters repeatedly expressed its support for my motion and in fact, appreciation for my efforts on behalf of its members.

The Surrey Firefighters Association, on behalf of its 350 members in my riding, the professional firefighters of the city of Surrey, expressed its appreciation and support for the motion which was debated in the House. However, the Liberal members did not support it and of course it was not votable. I was not lucky to win a draw to make it votable.

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs has 1,000 members. Its executive committee unanimously supported that motion and applauded me for my efforts.

It is time our nation protected the protectors. I am pleased that the government is finally listening today.

Let me move on to consider some of the other amendments proposed in Bill C-32.

Bill C-32 proposes to amend the firearms search and seizure warrant provisions of the Criminal Code to bring the law into line with the recent Ontario Court of Appeal decision in *R. v. Hurrell*.

Section 117.04 of the Criminal Code sets out the procedure for a peace officer to apply for a warrant to search for and seize weapons, prohibited devices, ammunition, explosives or any licence, authorization or registration certificate for such items based on public safety concerns.

To obtain such a warrant the peace officer must satisfy a justice that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person possesses these things and that it would not be desirable, in the interest of safety of course, to let the person continue to possess them.

In *R. v. Hurrell*, weapons searches under section 117.04(1) of the Criminal Code were ruled unconstitutional. The court found that the warrant application section did not include enough protection of individual rights since it was not clear that a peace officer had to have reasonable grounds to make an application for the warrant.

The court gave Parliament time to react to the decision. This amendment is the result of the time given to Parliament to deal with this issue.

● (1330)

The bill amends the Criminal Code to require that an officer must have reasonable grounds to believe that a person is in possession of a weapon and that it is not in the interest of the person to possess the weapon before a warrant may be issued.

The bill also provides for the civil enforcement of restitution orders. That is the third element of the bill. On occasion, offenders convicted of a crime are ordered to make restitution to their victims. Often this involves an order to pay a certain amount of money as compensation for the wrong committed or the injury suffered.

Currently, criminal restitution orders are only enforceable by a civil court action if the order is separate from the sentencing order. The amendment will allow civil enforcement of all restitution orders. It will thus make it easier to collect money owing under an order.

Bill C-32 also amends the Criminal Code to explicitly recognize that everyone on board any aircraft in Canadian airspace is justified in using reasonable force when he or she believes it is necessary to use force to prevent the commission of a criminal act that could endanger the safety of the aircraft or its passengers. We know that security issues are important.

Currently Canadian law recognizes this right, but it is not explicitly stated. The bill also clarifies that this justification also applies on board Canadian registered aircraft in flights outside Canadian airspace. The amendment will ensure the full effect of the Tokyo Convention On Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft.

Finally, Bill C-32 also contains amendments that may prove to be somewhat controversial due to perceived infringements on an individual's privacy.

*Government Orders*

Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Financial Administration Act would allow information technology managers in both government and the private sector to disclose the contents of private communications intercepted by intrusion detection systems, also called IDS, in certain circumstances.

The Criminal Code amendments allow for disclosure of intercepted private communications if the disclosure is necessary for the protection of a computer system and if the disclosure is made appropriately.

Intrusion detection is an essential part of information technology management intended to protect computers, networks and data and to ensure quality of service.

A number of systems or products exist to detect attacks on computer systems by hackers, viruses, worms, et cetera, and to alert human operators. We have all experienced that. Even in the House of Commons we have experienced that.

Some systems protect networks by identifying and intercepting suspicious electronic communications, including some that may be private communications. Those messages can be analyzed to determine if they contain a malicious program code, such as a computer virus that could attack a computer system and the data it contains.

Statistics confirm that cyber crime is growing and has a global reach that affects large corporate giants, government agencies, small companies and individuals at home. The amendments to the Criminal Code and the Financial Administration Act would allow information technology managers to protect their computer systems from electronic communications, such as these viruses that could harm them.

The Criminal Code amendment would create exceptions to the offences of intercepting a private communication and of disclosing its contents to ensure quality control in the communications industry.

The provisions of the bill relating to setting traps, use of force on an airplane and civil enforcement of restitution orders are all causes worthy of support.

● (1335)

The amendment regarding warrants for firearms searches is really nothing more than a response to the court decision. As a consequence, firearms owners should be more protected from an unreasonable search under this section.

The provisions regarding disclosure of private communications may prove to be controversial but the Criminal Code already provides for several exceptions where private communication can be intercepted and disclosed. The protection of computer systems is an important objective for government and businesses. Therefore incidental disclosure of private communications for this purpose may be tolerable.

If some of these measures had been taken a long time ago, particularly when I had my motion in the House which was debated last year, I believe some of these elements would have already been enshrined into law and many more firefighters and police officers would have been protected by now. However the government has

taken too long to listen to Canadians and to incorporate these aspects into the law.

The safety and security of Canadians and their property is the stated objective of the Canadian Alliance policy. We recognize the rights of victims of crime and will introduce programs of financial restitution from the offender to the victim as a component of sentencing and parole. I believe some of the objectives of the elements of the bill I mentioned are consistent with what our policies have long called for. I wish the government had introduced these elements into law a long time ago.

I will support some of the components of the bill. I am sure the government will review some of the other elements, such as privacy, the inspection of firearms and other elements of the bill.

● (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and other Acts. For the benefit of those Quebeckers and Canadians listening, I will summarize the four important points that have convinced the Bloc Quebecois to support this bill.

The first establishes more serious offences for placing, or knowingly permitting to remain in a place, a trap, device or other thing that is likely to cause death or bodily harm to a person. The second permits the use of as much force as is reasonably necessary onboard an aircraft to prevent the commission of an offence that would be likely to cause immediate and serious injury to the aircraft or to any person or property in the aircraft. The third modifies the provision dealing with the provision of information on oath in relation to weapons. Finally, the fourth creates an exemption to the offence of intercepting private communications in order to protect computer networks.

Clearly, for the most part, the Bloc Quebecois will support the government on this bill, including the new offence about placing traps, for some obviously fundamental reasons.

This is now a scourge. The presence of organized crime in growing marijuana, sold in large quantities on the black market, has led to serious offences. To protect crops in homes or fields, criminals have invented all kinds of systems.

Obviously, the purpose of amending section 247 of the Criminal Code is to create harsher sentences for individuals committing criminal acts and who, by placing traps, cause serious harm to individuals. The Bloc Quebecois can only support the harsher sentencing proposed under section 247 of the Criminal Code.

Currently, this section establishes a maximum five-year term of imprisonment for every one who, with intent to cause death or bodily harm to persons, sets a trap that is likely to cause death or bodily harm to persons, no matter where it might be. Obviously, right now, it is only a five-year term for individuals setting traps and causing death or bodily harm.

*Government Orders*

The bill before us proposes stiffer penalties. If a trap actually causes harm, there would be a 10-year sentence. If a person sets a trap in a place used for a criminal purpose, the maximum sentence would be 10 years. If a trap set in a place used for a criminal purpose actually causes harm, the maximum sentence would then be 15 years. Finally, if the trap causes death, the maximum sentence would be life imprisonment.

Of course, you will have realized that this bill is based on a request by the International Association of Fire Fighters and other intervenors who have suffered injuries when responding to fires. We are seeing this often in everyday life: many fires are caused by people who grow marijuana for criminal purposes. They do it because it is profitable, of course, but such operations require very substantial electrical systems. Firefighters are responding to more and more fires in these situations. The law must be adjusted to fit the reality, since such operations are being discovered week after week.

The riding of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel is obviously a beautiful area with woods, forests, lakes and rivers. At first, marijuana was only cultivated in corn fields. Now it is grown in the forests, often in privately-owned forests.

Marijuana growers often buy the land, or lease land from dealers who have purchased it. They put up lots of signs saying “Private property—Keep out”. Often, there will be a triggering system that—when someone enters the land—sets off a firearm or another device that could cause bodily harm.

In any event, all this is done by criminals to keep people away, sometimes men and women who simply want to take a walk in the forest.

• (1345)

Obviously, these systems have been refined. Marijuana is now longer only cultivated in corn fields or forests, but more and more in urban areas, inside houses.

So, in order to protect the crops, all kinds of more or less sophisticated equipment is installed to try to discourage visitors and keep away unwanted people. These are often honest citizens who want to visit properties, who knock on doors for whatever reason. That is when they find out who they are dealing with.

Fire fighters and police officers and others who arrive on the scene are confronted with threats to their safety or are injured by traps and other devices designed to keep people out.

It is important to understand this, to strengthen this bill and set appropriate sentences for all of these criminal acts. It is unthinkable that in our society right now there are criminal groups that use devices that harm others in an attempt to protect their criminal investments.

Again, the Bloc Québécois supports these amendments to section 247 of the Criminal Code to strengthen measures and to apply the maximum sentence, imprisonment for life for any person who causes death by setting a trap or device to discourage visitors.

Obviously, the whole issue of marijuana is complex for people who are following this debate. The cultivation of marijuana is

completely illegal. Cultivation is not allowed; however, people do have questions because of legislation passed by Parliament.

People need to understand that there is a certain type of use of marijuana that is permitted. This is the use of marijuana for therapeutic purposes. This use was recognized right here in the House. Legislation was passed to allow individuals who need it to obtain permission to use marijuana for therapeutic purposes.

Obviously there has been so much controversy that, as we speak, even those who have authorization have had it withdrawn. In the next few weeks I shall have an opportunity to bring to the House a petition specifically intended to support those who need marijuana for therapeutic purposes for an illness. We are not talking about just any ordinary sickness, but of serious and fatal diseases. Often these people find comfort in the therapeutic use of marijuana. It is as simple as that, and it is legal.

This is hard for our audience to understand. Marijuana is illegal, growing it is illegal, but there are patients who need it who can obtain permission for its therapeutic use, on a doctor's recommendation.

This has, however, become so complicated that even doctors no longer dare make recommendations. Yet this use is permitted by law for therapeutic purposes, by prescription of course. That is why the Government of Canada has even authorized the government-monitored growing of marijuana to provide a supply on the legal market for patients needing it for therapeutic purposes.

It must be kept in mind, however, that there is currently a whole debate going on at the Department of Justice as well as within the opposition parties on the legalization of marijuana. Marijuana is still illegal. If someone is picked up by the police on simple possession, he or she will end up with a criminal record and all the problems that go with it. Parliament is looking at how marijuana can be made legal. If someone has in his possession an amount of marijuana that is under a certain amount—what is termed simple possession—only for personal use, this would no longer result in a criminal record. It would be decriminalized. This position, which is being discussed in Parliament, will come to pass very soon, or so we hope.

Marijuana is still illegal, however, as is its cultivation. This is particularly the case when it is passed around by people in a group or when criminal organizations are involved.

• (1350)

In that context, I will remind members of the position of the Bloc Québécois and the very important motions that it proposed when Bill C-24, the anti-gang legislation, was before the House. These motions dealt with those people who grow marijuana and become criminals.

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Those who are watching us today must understand. People often think that there is nothing wrong in growing marijuana to earn a little extra cash to make ends meet. However, it is still a criminal activity. When Bill C-24, the anti-gang legislation, was passed, the Bloc Québécois was calling for much stricter measures for gang members.

We proposed two measures. The first was to criminalize passive membership in a gang. This did not necessarily mean wearing the colours of biker or other gangs, but it applied to those who grow marijuana knowing that it is bought by criminal organizations and sold on the black market through a network and so on.

We wanted Bill C-24, the anti-gang legislation, to criminalize passive membership in a gang, but the Liberal government rejected the idea. Again, this would have sent a clear message to those men and women who may decide to grow marijuana just for fun, to make a little extra cash. Then they expand their operation. They do that in their own home and find it quite amusing. They sell their crop and make some money. Doing that is just like being a member of a criminal organization. Obviously, should the opportunity arise, the Bloc Québécois would recommend once again that the anti-gang legislation be amended to criminalize passive membership in a gang.

Second, what we wanted, when the anti-gang legislation, Bill C-24, was adopted, was to reverse the burden of proof. Currently, the burden of proof rests on the State or the Crown. People are innocent until proven guilty. What we wanted, once it had been proven beyond all reasonable doubt that an accused belonged to a criminal organization, was for the Crown not to have to prove that the former's assets were the proceeds of criminal activities. We wanted, once it was proven that a criminal was part of a crime gang—so he was automatically considered a member of the gang and as having committed criminal acts—then, for that individual to prove how he had acquired his assets.

Once again, it is too easy for some criminals to get off. It is all too easy for criminals to get off, but they keep their assets because the Crown has not managed to prove that these are the proceeds of a crime.

The solution was simply to reverse the burden of proof. In this respect, the Bloc Québécois was not alone in making this proposal. This proposal has been adopted by other countries. I will name the other countries that enacted legislation in which the burden of proof with regard to the proceeds of crime has been reversed. They are Australia, Austria, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland and Great Britain. Each of these countries has reversed the burden of proof. More may do so too.

Again, this would be a wake up call for the men and women who, too often, do this for fun. They do not think it is very dangerous to grow marijuana on private land or property belonging to other people, or at home. They make a bit of cash. All this to say that these people are clearly members of criminal organizations. They are criminals.

If Bill C-24, the anti-gang legislation, had been amended the way the Bloc Québécois wished, these people would have been considered passive criminals. Then, if the burden of proof had been reversed, we would have even been able to get at their assets and say, "You are going to have to prove to us that you acquired all the assets

you now possess in some way other than through crime and, if you cannot, we will seize them all: your car, boat, motorcycle and ATV". Of course, that would cover all the assets these persons might own which they could not prove they had acquired by honest means.

• (1355)

That is the position the Bloc Québécois is defending and will always defend, with respect to the proceeds of crime.

Once again, with regard to the bill before us this morning, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the amendment to section 247 of the Criminal Code whose purpose is to increase the penalties for those who set traps to defend places used for criminal purposes, such as growing marijuana.

This bill also makes it possible to use force on board an aircraft. At present, the Criminal Code of Canada gives any citizen the right to use necessary force to prevent commission of a criminal act. Obviously, what this bill adds is clarification. If you find yourself on board an aircraft registered in Canada, flying outside Canadian airspace, you are permitted to use the necessary force to prevent commission of a criminal act.

Obviously, this is in response to the events of September 11, 2001, and to the Tokyo convention. This authorizes, among other things, the use of necessary force to prevent the commission of a criminal act on board an aircraft.

I will conclude with a comment on intrusion detection systems. In its explanations, the department asks for the power to authorize the use of intrusion detection systems. That could be in conflict with the respect for privacy. The Bloc Québécois has serious concerns regarding the protection of privacy. We do not want personal information to become the property of the state in such cases.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### QUEBEC GENERAL ELECTION

**Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues will be pleased to join me in congratulating the new Liberal MNAs elected in the provincial election held in Quebec two weeks ago.

Now there will be a changing of the guard, a new start toward actions that will prove that the Liberal Party is the party of all Quebecers, that it is solidly rooted and that its characteristic values of freedom, justice and openness to a wider world will help to bring about the peace of mind that has been sought for so long.

The ambiguity is over. The recent majority win by the Quebec Liberal Party will at last make it possible for us to work in a spirit of collaboration and synergy for the greater good of all those who so proudly compose the population of that province.

I know my colleagues on this side of the floor are anxious to start working with the new premier and his team in achieving some realistic goals. My congratulations as well to the three Liberals who were elected in my riding.

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[English]

#### PARLIAMENT OF CANADA

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, western Canadians have a sense of place in Confederation they do not see reflected in Parliament. Despite quality representation, we have insufficient influence.

Add substantial policy differences over decades, together with Ottawa's flirting with anti-Americanism, its starvation of the Canadian Forces, and its phony "neutralist" foreign policy: these are not reflective of western values of courageous compassion.

Ramming Kyoto through Parliament then giving massive emission exemptions to Ontario's auto industry is typical of alienating behaviour.

The standard answer is to extort more out of Confederation by voting Liberal. However our vote is the sacred trust, purchased at our great cost, for without having had our soldiers there would now be no politicians. We have long ties to the military, such as The Royal Westminster Regiment, whose origins predate joining Confederation.

We also will not be bribed with our own money. Alienation comes from the Liberal ideological failure to be fully democratic.

The west matters, especially our value for participatory democracy which would be good both for Canada and for the trends of governance around the world.

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• (1400)

#### MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT NETWORK OF CANADA

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the House and all Canadians the excellent initiative of the Mental Health Support Network of Canada. This group of 12 organizations, including the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Psychological Association, the Canadian Psychiatric Association and the Canadian Medical Association, have developed information sheets for both the public and health care providers to help us all with the stress and anxiety associated with the recent SARS outbreak. These fact sheets provide simple advice on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of SARS. They provide tips for coping strategies to help manage the associated stress and provide advice on how to talk to children about SARS.

The Mental Health Support Network of Canada advises Canadians that, while SARS is of great concern, the vast majority of us are not in danger. Based on what we know at this time, the best thing all of

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us can do for ourselves and our families is to carry on with our normal daily routine.

The member organizations are working hard to provide clear information tools to help Canadians cope with the concerns they may have regarding SARS. These information sheets are available through the Internet at [www.cma.ca](http://www.cma.ca).

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[Translation]

#### QUEBEC GENERAL ELECTION

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, voters in the Outaouais region gave a majority to the Quebec Liberal Party candidates in the provincial election held this past April 14.

I would like to extend my congratulations to the Liberal candidates in the Outaouais region, all of whom recorded impressive wins: the MNA for Chapleau, Benoît Pelletier; the MNA for Gatineau, Réjean Lafrenière; the MNA for Hull, Roch Cholette; the MNA for Papineau, Norman MacMillan and the MNA for Pontiac, Charlotte L'Écuyer

All of them have what it takes in the way of talent and knowledge to ably represent the interests of their constituents and their region in the National Assembly. They understand the problems and are prepared to work to resolve them.

The voters of the Outaouais region have given these five a clear mandate and I am certain that they are equal to the task.

My heartiest congratulations to them all.

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#### QUEBEC GENERAL ELECTION

**Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on April 14, voters in many Quebec City ridings, like Charlesbourg, Chauveau, La Peltrie, Louis-Hébert, which was in fact the riding of former minister Bégin, Montmorency, Portneuf, Vanier and Lévis, sent a clear message for change to the Government of Quebec.

These ridings, which were represented for years by members of the ruling Parti Québécois, elected candidates from the Liberal Party of Quebec to join forces with their colleagues from Jean-Talon and Jean-Lesage who were re-elected to the National Assembly, Margaret Delisle and Michel Després.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Éric Mercier, Sarah Perreault, France Hamel, Sam Hamad, Raymond Bernier, Jean-Pierre Soucy, Marc Bellemare and Carole Théberge for their impressive victories.

Bravo.

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[*English*]

### HEALTH

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today is the fifth anniversary of the day the Liberal Party of Canada said no to all victims of tainted blood by hepatitis C.

On April 28, 1998, we put a motion before Parliament that all victims of tainted blood receive help. Only Liberals voted this down.

The former health minister said that there were 22,000 victims between 1986 and 1990, and 40,000 outside this narrow legal window. The truth is that there were just over 4,000 between 1986 and 1990 and less than 5,000 outside. We were also told that no test was available prior to 1986 to detect hepatitis C. That was wrong.

Joey Haché said, "There is no difference between someone infected December 31, 1985 and January 1, 1986. People were infected the same and should be treated the same". He is right.

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### ARMENIA

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 88th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

The past year has seen important developments in efforts to have official recognition of the Armenian genocide. On June 13, Senator Shirley Maheu successfully moved a motion in the Senate of Canada, seconded by Senator Setlakwe, calling on the Government of Canada to recognize and commemorate the Armenian genocide.

On October 29, 2002, the National Gallery was the site of the Ottawa premiere of world renowned Canadian film director Atom Egoyan's film *Ararat*. The Minister of Canadian Heritage joined with Telefilm Canada in welcoming the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, members of Parliament and the diplomatic corps to a special screening of the film dealing with the Armenian genocide.

On November 27, 2002, I successfully introduced a motion in the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade calling on the House of Commons to recognize the Armenian genocide.

Each year as we commemorate this sad anniversary, I am hopeful that the lessons of the past will be recognized and serve to help us avoid making these mistakes in the future.

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• (1405)

[*Translation*]

### HEALTH

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the SARS epidemic continues to be a very serious situation that requires a great deal of our attention. While prudence is called for, we must not give in to panic, but concentrate instead on appropriate measures to ensure and safeguard public health.

This tragedy that has already claimed many victims around the world must be controlled as soon as possible in order to contain the risk of SARS spreading.

The Toronto area has unfortunately been hit very hard by this epidemic. The Bloc Québécois sympathizes with all those who have been affected, directly or indirectly, by SARS.

We are convinced that it remains imperative to take all necessary action, and the government can count on our full cooperation to that end.

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[*English*]

### NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today is the National Day of Mourning to remember those individuals who die in workplace accidents.

Almost 800 employees have died from accidents at work since last year's day of mourning, but this is just part of the story of workplace safety, as another 800,000 Canadians were injured at their place of employment. It is calculated that 16 million days of work are lost each year to workplace accidents, which costs the Canadian economy more than \$9 billion.

Those are the statistics, but they tell only part of the story. Statistics cannot tell of the loving spouse who has lost his or her partner, or grieving parents who will never see their child again, or young children who have to be told that mommy or daddy will not be coming home again.

It is these personal tragedies that are the real legacy of occupational deaths. It is why today is the National Day of Mourning and why business, labour, government and individual workers must do everything possible to make the workplace a safer place.

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[*Translation*]

### RIDING OF PONTIAC—GATINEAU—LABELLE

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be speaking here today, after being absent for several weeks because of health problems.

First, I would like to thank everyone who was cheering for me during my convalescence. Their good wishes and their words of encouragement were of considerable support to me and contributed enormously to my return to health.

I can assure them that I am in good health and ready to shoulder my responsibilities as a member of Parliament, and in particular, ready to represent and serve the people of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle for several more terms.

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*[English]*

I want to assure my constituents of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle that their MP is back on the job, leaner and meaner, and that he is in it for the long run. It is with great pride that I will continue to represent and serve the people of my riding for many more elections.

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**NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** The National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, which has its origins in a private member's bill of the former NDP MP for Churchill, Rod Murphy, is an occasion for all Canadians to mourn the tragic deaths and injuries that result from occupational accidents and work related illnesses.

At this time we especially remember health care workers who have lost their lives or have been put at risk during the SARS outbreak, and emergency workers like the firefighters, who are in Ottawa this week, who put their lives on the line on a daily basis.

Many occupational deaths and injuries would be prevented if we had proper workplace safety standards in place and the will to enforce such standards. We are still waiting, more than a decade after the Westray mine disaster, for legislation to hold corporations criminally accountable for behaviour that leads to the death of their employees. The time is long overdue to honour the memory of the 26 miners with legislative action.

The NDP calls on the government to act soon so that by April 28, 2004, we will no longer have to lament the absence of such legislation and will be in a position to claim that we have done our parliamentary duty to both the dead and the living.

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*[Translation]***NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING**

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, April 28 is the day we honour workers who have been injured or disabled as a result of a workplace accident, those with a work-related illness, and the memory of those who have died on the job.

Let us take a few moments to say to all these people and their families just how much we sympathize with their suffering and let them know that we stand with them in their pain and in the midst of the problems resulting from their work-related accident or illness.

The Bloc Québécois reminds the federal government of the importance of improving preventive measures in order to adequately protect workplace health and safety. Workers can rely on the Bloc Québécois to make their voices heard.

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● (1410)

*[English]***WORKPLACE SAFETY**

**Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Monday marks the beginning of the work week for many Canadians.

However, today is unique because it marks the 12th annual National Day of Mourning.

I rise today, as do others, to highlight this distinctive occasion to commemorate those who have been killed or injured in the workplace. Every working day in Canada, at least four people die from work related accidents or illnesses. Close to 375,000 people were injured seriously enough to prevent them from reporting to work. It is estimated that the total number of work related injuries and illnesses occurring each year in Canada is close to 900,000.

Workplace deaths are increasing and this day serves as an important reminder of the work that remains to be done: We must prevent these accidents from happening and we must strive to prevent injuries.

I ask all hon. members to take the time to remember the workers who have lost their lives or who have been injured on the job. We honour them by putting forth our best efforts to foster safer and healthier workplaces through continued education, awareness and co-operation. Let us prevent these needless tragedies.

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**COD FISHERY**

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Newfoundland's minister for ACOA have announced the closure of the cod fishery on the northeast coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that closure will affect 700 plant workers and 2,000 fishermen.

Knowing full well the impact that this announcement would have on these fishermen and their families, the ministers went before the microphones with no long term plan for the future employment of these people or the survival of their communities. Newfoundland's minister announced a measly \$23 million to be used, in the minister's words, for make work projects.

I want to tell the minister for Newfoundland that these people do not want make work projects. They want an economic development plan geared to providing a future for themselves and their families. Newfoundland and Labrador has lost 70,000 people since the last moratorium. Let me ask the minister: Where is the plan to stop this out-migration from happening again?

Or does the minister care?

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I invite members to rise and observe one minute of silence to mark the National Day of Mourning and honour the memory of workers killed or injured on the job.

*[Editor's Note: The House stood in silence]*

## Oral Questions

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

## HEALTH

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the WHO has placed Toronto under a global travel advisory to prevent the spread of SARS. The health minister claims that this advisory is not warranted, that it is based on inaccurate and outdated information.

Could the health minister explain how it can be based on inaccurate and outdated information and how she did not know about the advisory when she claims to be in contact with WHO officials each day?

•(1415)

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, my officials are in contact with the WHO on a regular basis and at no time did WHO officials give notification to my public health officials, my office or the deputy's office that they were contemplating a travel advisory in relation to the city of Toronto.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that does not quite ring true, but I would remind the government that it was over a month ago that the World Health Organization called for exit screening at Canadian airports. Our party has been calling for that for over a month. It was not done. SARS was exported from Canada. We got the global travel ban on Toronto and costs now that are going to run into the billions of dollars for the Toronto and Canadian economies. Does the minister now justify her decision not to implement this screening?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we do in fact have screening measures for both outbound and inbound passengers at Pearson and Vancouver airports.

Let me in fact read that which Dr. David Heymann said in relation to what we were doing:

Canada is doing an exemplary activity and much of what has been going on in Canada, including the system of notifying airline passengers and of screening airline passengers, has been shared with other countries as an example of best practices.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, only with this government could we have this black mark on Toronto that is going to cost us billions, and it claims everything is just great, only with this government. What a lack of leadership. We have the Prime Minister on holiday, we have the former finance minister in his perpetual bubble, and we have the health minister hiding from reporters in Calgary and ignoring the recommendations on airport screening.

To help assure Canadians that the government has learned something, will the government at least admit some responsibility for fumbling the SARS football?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, what I would like to say is that unlike the opposition, my department, this government, and my officials have been working with the Government of Ontario and public health officials on the front lines in Ontario. That is why in fact today we can proudly say that this outbreak is controlled and contained and that is why Toronto is an example to the rest of the world.

## IRAQ

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, before Parliament recessed, we asked the government what it had planned as a comprehensive package for the rebuilding effort in Iraq. The Prime Minister told us then that he had not received a call for help. Now that the allies have called, it appears the Liberals have put them on hold.

When it comes to Iraq, why is the government so reluctant to stand with our allies in any meaningful way?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we received some communications from the American administration about a week ago on that. We are looking at the possibility of helping in the reconstruction of Iraq and using the people and equipment that could be useful. When the cabinet has decided on that, we will make a report to the Canadian public.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance):** As I said, they have been put on hold, Mr. Speaker.

This weekend the *Toronto Star* seemed to confirm what many have believed all along: that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were in fact partners in crime. Imagine the horror that these two thugs could have wrought had Saddam not been stopped. Saddam had the weapons and bin Laden had the terrorists to deliver them.

In light of this evidence, does the government now regret its decision not to join our allies in the liberation of Iraq? And why will it not redouble its efforts aggressively and openly now in the rebuilding of Iraq with our allies?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we made a decision, based on a long-standing policy of all Canadian governments over a long period of time, that these activities should be done under the authority of the United Nations and the Security Council.

In terms of fighting terrorism, we have 1,700 people in the gulf, and ships and planes at this time, and we are preparing to send a lot of Canadian soldiers to Afghanistan.

As I said a few minutes ago in reply to the first question of the hon. member, we are about to do something to help the reconstruction of Iraq.

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[Translation]

## TAXATION

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the new Premier of Quebec reaffirmed the consensus of the National Assembly and declared that his government would make fiscal imbalance a priority.

Since Jean Charest has promised to attack fiscal imbalance in the weeks following his election, can the Prime Minister tell us whether the federal government, which denies the problem even exists, is prepared to cooperate with the Government of Quebec in settling all of the issues surrounding fiscal imbalance for once and for all?

*Oral Questions*

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members on this side of the House, I would like to extend my most sincere congratulations to the new Premier of Quebec.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** I am sure we shall be able to have a constructive dialogue with him. We will not always agree, but he will never use separation as a threat.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Séguin report describes fiscal imbalance as evidence of the dysfunction of Canadian federation: the money is in Ottawa but the need is in Quebec and the provinces. Jean Charest said the following during his campaign, “Solving the fiscal imbalance will mean ensuring the long term funding of health and education”.

Instead of denying the existence of the fiscal imbalance, can the federal government at least commit to sitting down with Quebec and the provinces to address the matter in the very near future, and to meeting with Premier Charest?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we met with provincial representatives only a few weeks ago, at which time we reached a very significant agreement on health, and we have transferred, starting this year, over \$5 billion to the provinces to help with their health care system.

As for the fiscal imbalance, it is true that we have a surplus. In 1995, when Quebec wanted to separate from Canada, it said it had to because Canada was bankrupt. Now we are proving that a good administration can make a federation work, and work well, reduce taxes and pay down part of the debt.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite convenient for the federal government to deny the fiscal imbalance. But, in truth, its existence is acknowledged not only by Quebec but by all the provinces.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, by denying the fiscal imbalance, the federal government can have it both ways? On one hand, it is cutting off the provinces, and on the other, it is using its surplus to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know of many programs introduced over the past few years to help the disadvantaged in Canada and in all the provinces that were met with strong public disapproval. People want the federal government, like the provincial governments, to very actively address the social problems facing our society.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the effects of the fiscal imbalance can be seen in the budget with its huge surplus, and the throne speech which announced a series of measures in areas of provincial jurisdiction, such as education, where the three leadership candidates called for a greater role for the federal government, even for the creation of a federal department of education.

Will the Prime Minister recognize that denying the fiscal imbalance is a pretext for refusing to agree with the provinces, duplicating structures and justifying infringement in Quebec's jurisdiction?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has just paid me a very surprising compliment. He said that the candidates vying for my position have more centralizing tendencies than I do. I accept his compliment.

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[English]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the right hon. Prime Minister.

When natural disasters hit—and I am not talking about the political disaster for the Bloc in Quebec—like the Saguenay, Manitoba and the ice storm, governments respond.

The average response time in those cases was eight days. We are 40 days and 40 nights into the SARS crisis and not one red cent of government money has gone to help workers, families and businesses in Toronto.

How can the Prime Minister sit on a \$14.8 billion surplus—

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

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all government programs are involved in this crisis. All our front line people in the provinces and federal government are working very well to contain the crisis. They are managing to do a fantastic job according to international institutions.

The system is working quite well. On the question of specific disasters, there is a law where funds can be applied for. However that kind of disaster is apparently not covered by this law.

This morning I met with the Premier of Ontario and I looked at what we could do to help.

• (1425)

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the system is not working as well as the Prime Minister would like us to believe. In fact, with respect to the need for a national public health strategy, we have scientists at Winnipeg's virology lab saying that no industrialized country is as bereft of a national public health strategy as Canada.

The fact is that we were not ready for this. We have had 22 new infectious diseases over the last decade and we do not have a national public health strategy. Perhaps the Prime Minister can tell us when we will have one.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I met with many officials last Friday in Ottawa. There were scientific representatives from Genome Canada and the Health Council of Canada who praised the government for what it has done for medical research and all of the government activities over the last few years. The hon. member should have been there. He would have been very impressed.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, on April 1 the Minister of Health told the House that the government had “been in constant contact with the WHO” regarding SARS. The minister knew that the World Health Organization believed her department’s screening requirements for air passengers were inadequate. She knew that disagreement could cause a travel advisory against Toronto. She knew that only a direct intervention by the Prime Minister could have stopped the travel advisory before it was issued.

Since the government knew all of that, why did the Prime Minister do nothing until it was too late?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me clarify and make absolutely clear for the record that what the right hon. member just outlined is a fabrication. It is a web of half truths and misrepresentation.

In fact, it is that kind of thing that does not help all of us who have been working in our seventh week to control and contain SARS on the ground in Toronto and in Vancouver.

It is that kind of thing that most of us, and particularly front line workers, find demoralizing in relation to their heroic efforts.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that might sell in the Dominican Republic, but it does not sell here.

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

**Right Hon. Joe Clark:** Canada has pledged to take command of the defence forces in Kabul—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It is impossible to hear the right hon. member, who is putting a question at the moment. Perhaps we could get back to the question and ignore the other comments.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark:** Mr. Speaker, Canada has pledged to take command of the defence forces in Kabul this summer. When that promise was made, the senior officer responsible for military planning resigned.

Our Hercules are grounded. How does the minister plan to get our troops and supplies to Afghanistan? Can the minister tell the House whether Canada is able to fulfill its commitment without asking NATO to do the heavy lifting?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, NATO is not going to do any heavy lifting. The fact of the matter is the government is proud of the fact that we are making a very major commitment to Afghanistan which includes 1,500 to 2,000 troops over a six month period starting in August and the same number again for the following six months.

We are working closely with our German allies and others. We are going to have a major impact, including \$250 million in aid plus diplomatic efforts by my colleague in foreign affairs, to have a significant mass in Afghanistan and make a major contribution to that beleaguered nation.

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, back on March 27 the WHO recommended interviewing outgoing passengers, but the minister refused. We agreed with it at that time. The human and economic fallout of that decision is with us today. What a mistake it was for the government not to require interviews at that time.

Will the government now admit that the previous measures were inadequate and fix them?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I come back to the fact that Canada was one of the first countries, probably one of two, to respond to the WHO recommendations regarding screening. I guess I can do nothing better than quote Dr. David Heymann, who is the key person on this file at the WHO. He is the executive director of WHO’s communicable diseases unit. He said:

Canada is doing an exemplary activity, including the system of notifying airline passengers and of screening airline passengers.

• (1430)

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the original recommendation, and she knows it, was to interview outgoing passengers.

The Ontario health minister will be travelling to Geneva to meet with the WHO. That is the good news. But where is the federal health minister? The WHO is an international organization. What will it take to engage the government and who is speaking for Canada?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear who is speaking for Canada. In fact, let me remind the hon. member that what we have here, and it is something the opposition cannot understand, is a truly collaborative effort between us and the province of Ontario.

Let me remind the hon. member, when the travel advisory was issued last week, the Prime Minister and I immediately spoke to Dr. Brundtland.

Today, I am pleased to indicate that the WHO and Dr. Brundtland have apparently conceded that they need new and better procedures by which to notify countries in relation to travel advisories.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in response to my question about the \$25 million funding cut to the Canadian Television fund, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said that “this year, we will have over \$200 million because the private sector has increased its contribution”. However, outside of the House, the candidate for the Liberal leadership has said that she is aware that the \$25 million cut is being felt.

We would like the Prime Minister to tell us one thing. Is the government’s position the same as the minister’s when she is in the House, or is it the same as that of the candidate on the campaign trail?

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the numbers are there. The Canadian television fund will have \$230 million this year to meet the needs of the industry for television production.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, who are we supposed to believe? The Minister of Finance who says that \$75 million is better than nothing, or the minister when she says she will fight to defend the Canadian television fund? Who is right? Is it the Minister of Canadian Heritage or the Minister of Finance?

**Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my colleague gets her figures from. The Government of Canada will provide \$75 million this year to the fund, Telefilm will provide \$45 million and \$110 million will come from the cable and satellite television industry.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, a review of the flight logs for the year 2000 of Corrections Canada's Pilatus plane indicate that it was used to transport the Governor General's luggage and on another occasion the Prime Minister's bodyguards to a Florida golf destination.

My question is for the Solicitor General. How exactly does this fall within the guidelines set for the use of this \$4.8 million aircraft?

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the aircraft that the member is talking about is an aircraft that is now shared jointly between the RCMP and Correctional Service of Canada.

As the member knows, there are defined rules respecting passengers authorized to use police transfer aircraft. I have been assured by the RCMP that the RCMP policy is strictly followed and has been followed in this case.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we understand which operations and departments are supposed to be using the aircraft, but the problem here is that it is being overextended to other personal uses.

Clearly, the use of this extremely expensive aircraft for such frivolous excursions is a disgustingly blatant misuse of taxpayers' money. What is more disgusting is the Solicitor General's flippant response and defence of such extravagance.

Again to the Solicitor General, exactly how much did these little excursions cost the Canadian taxpayer?

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I reject the member's allegations. There has been no misuse of taxpayers' money in this instance. This aircraft is used for the purposes that it was designed for and only for that.

• (1435)

[Translation]

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the real reason for the slump being felt by Gaspé fishers is the federal government's mismanagement of the fisheries. Today, with the stocks gone and a moratorium declared, boat owners have enormous problems, and the workers are unemployed.

Will the government admit that the eastern fishery is in need of a comprehensive plan which would include buying back licences in order to help the boat owners and more specific measures relating to employment insurance for these workers, who have been left high and dry?

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I think he knows that we are doing a complete review of the Atlantic fisheries policy. The provincial governments, industry and members of Parliament are participating.

We want to have a sustainable policy and a fishery with long-term economic viability.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government, through negligence and poor decisions, is directly responsible for the serious problems now affecting the eastern fishery.

Since the resumption of activity in the fisheries may be a long time coming, does the federal government not realize that it has a duty and responsibility to set up measures directly adapted to fishers, fish plant workers and boat owners?

It was the government that created the problem; now it has to solve it.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will admit that, over the years since 1992, we have invested a great deal of money in order to help communities get back on their feet and to provide assistance to fishers.

We had a limited fishery. Unfortunately, this fishery could not be maintained. We are providing funding to help the affected communities in the short term. There will be discussions involving the Economic Development Agency of Canada, ACOA and the affected provinces concerning long-term economic development goals.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the ambassador to France, Raymond Chrétien, sent a tear-stained letter to his uncle, the Prime Minister. Apparently the French found the requirements for the 40 year old Sea King replacements had sidelined their politically picked replacement. The performance requirements for the helicopters were promptly lowered to keep Eurocopter in the bidding.

*Oral Questions*

Could the minister explain how we will get the best value maritime helicopters when bidders like this are able to pull the strings in the Prime Minister's office?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there was a statement of requirements published with respect to military aircraft in the late 1990s.

The procedure being followed by the Government of Canada is designed to ensure that statement of requirement is in fact fulfilled by the equipment that is ultimately purchased.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, with their procurement policy we have lost 10 years and hundreds of millions of dollars have been squandered. According to the new requirements released on Friday, bidders can start deliveries in 2008 or 2009. That does not fit with the 2005 date the Liberals bragged about a week or so ago.

Of the 3,200 requirements that the minister discussed, 85% do not need any proof of compliance. That means they do not have to work. Taxpayers will get that hit years down the road.

Could the Minister of Public Works explain how these watered down and imaginary compliance requirements will lead to best value replacements?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the process here is designed to make the requirements of the military very clear, so that all the bidders know exactly what they are bidding on and at the end of the day we get the aircraft that does the job to the military's satisfaction and we do so at the best possible price for the Canadian taxpayer.

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**FISHERIES**

**Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans delivered more bad news to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Given the fact that his scientists over the last number of years have confirmed the impact seals have on fish, in fact last year they confirmed that they ate 47,000 metric tonnes of cod and 940,000 metric tonnes of caplin, why then would the minister put another \$6 million into research to see if seals eat fish?

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member will undoubtedly know that the government has taken action.

Last year, for the second year in 25, we reached the allocation on seals. We let it surpass by over 30,000. I announced a three year harvest plan that would greatly increase the harvest of harp seals.

We are also looking, with the \$6 million, at the recommendation of gentlemen, such as the member for seal exclusion zones. We will then see what is the ecological effect of seals and other species on the ecosystem.

We are also working with provincial governments such as Nova Scotia, which is looking at marketing other species of seals.

• (1440)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans continued what all his predecessors did and that was to destroy the hopes and aspirations of the good people in Newfoundland and Labrador who make a living from the sea.

Why did the minister ignore the Newfoundland and Labrador all party committee, the FRCC, the FFAW union, as well as people in the scientific community who said that we did not have the scientific evidence yet to make any conclusion about the fishery because we did not have the resources and we did not use the independent fishermen's catch data in this final analysis? Why did the minister cut from the fishermen their hopes—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I made a very difficult decision last week to give long term hope to fishermen and their communities by saving and rebuilding those stocks.

I did take the advice of committees and organizations that the member mentioned. That is why, at their advice, not only did we remove the fishermen from the equation, but we also took definitive action on seals, on exclusion zones, northern dragging areas and measures on caplin to give the stocks the best possible opportunity to rebuild.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, aboriginal people from coast to coast have made it perfectly clear that they do not accept the first nations governance act and yet the minister continues to plough ahead ignoring their concerns, and it is not just first nations who oppose it. All the mainstream churches, constitutional experts, the Canadian Bar Association and other representatives of civil society all agree that Bill C-7 infringes upon constitutionally recognized aboriginal and treaty rights.

Would the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development listen to first nations, withdraw Bill C-7, send it back to the drawing board and come back with a piece of legislation that first nations and parliamentarians can support?

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is such an important matter that I think everyone in the House would agree that the status quo first nations people find themselves in today is totally unacceptable.

*Oral Questions*

The objective of the consultation and work of the government, and all parliamentarians, is to improve the quality of life of aboriginal people. We cannot do that by backing off every time someone disagrees. We have to come to the table, work with each other to come up with better improvement and better laws, and the way to move ahead is with Bill C-7.

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**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans closed the cod fishery to fishermen in parts of Atlantic Canada while refusing to deal substantively with other mitigating factors, such as foreign overfishing which he did not even mention, the rapidly growing seal herds, bycatch and gear types.

Why do Canadian fishermen and plant workers have to be the only ones to pay for government incompetence and will the minister tell us how he proposes to set up seal exclusion zones?

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as for the seal exclusion zones, first of course we will ask them to leave. As for foreign overfishing, it has always been the mantra of the member to blame everything on the foreigners.

The fixed gear blame the mobile gear. They both get together with the member to blame foreigners. How can the member tell me that foreign fishing could have an effect in the gulf? How could it have an effect in the areas near Newfoundland?

However, I do take the question of overfishing, domestically and internationally, very seriously and I will continue my work with my counterparts in Europe as early as next May to encourage them to work progressively at the next meetings of NAFO.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the sorrowful thing is that the minister probably believes what he said. The minister and his cohorts responsible for ACOA took away the livelihoods from Atlantic Canadians and Quebeckers and substituted it with a fistful of dollars, actually one-tenth of one per cent of the EI surplus fund.

Will the minister get away from this handout mentality and give these people a hand up by involving them directly and actively in rebuilding the resource?

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. We are working with communities to ensure that they have the tools and the resources to build their futures because this is a go forward plan.

We are providing income support in the immediate term because there are fishermen and plant workers who are affected in various ways. There is still a very vibrant fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have to reflect on that and build it into our strategy but we also know there is a very healthy future for rural Newfoundland and Labrador and we are committed to building on that future with additional funds.

●(1445)

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, our troops have been making do with antique equipment for many years: Sea Kings over 30 years old, naval vessels over 35 years old and Hercules aircraft approaching 40 years.

The price of not replacing the equipment continues to grow. Nine out of our thirty two Hercules are now grounded. With so few serviceable aircraft, will our troops have to hitchhike to Afghanistan?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the right hon. gentleman, we are very proud that we will be sending 1,500 to 2,000 troops to Afghanistan for six months and another 1,500 to 2,000 for the following six months.

Yes, some Hercules were grounded. Five, not nine, are undergoing inspection. This is the same that has happened to the same aircraft in the British navy and the U.S. air force. This is under control, and of the few that are grounded work is being done and they will soon be airworthy once again.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the government has failed our troops. Our soldiers will be forced to fly these planes well into their fifties. Pretty soon these planes will be able to collect old age pensions, just like the former finance minister. There is no coherent plan for replacing the Hercules planes, just as there is no coherent plan for getting the forces the money it needs to do the job.

When will the government replace our Hercules aircraft?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government, unlike the opposition, has been supporting our troops at every moment. We have not supported them only when it was politically expedient for us to do so, as was the case for the Leader of the Opposition, we have supported them at every moment. We continue to support them and we will support them at every turn in the future.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the courts are getting ready to hear a class action suit filed by the FTQ and the CSN to recover the money taken from the employment insurance fund by the federal government.

Will the government admit that this confirms what the Bloc Québécois has been saying about the government stealing from the EI fund and using money that does not belong to it?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm for the hon. member and for the House that the employment insurance system is there and is working well for all Canadian employees. The system, as it is designed, covers fully 88% of Canadians who may be in need of it.

I would remind the hon. member that every year \$2 billion is conveyed to provinces and territories for active measures, through EI part II, and another \$9 million, through EI part I, in direct benefits.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in reality, the federal government took \$44 billion from the EI fund; this money belongs to businesses, workers and the unemployed.

Why is the federal government refusing to use some of the funds it stole from the EI fund to help victims of the softwood lumber crisis or the fisheries crisis? After all, it is their money.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. The government has ensured that the employment insurance system is there and has responded to the needs of Canadian workers. That is why we review the program every year and make changes to it where changes are warranted.

I would ask the hon. member to pay attention to the program in its entirety, to look at all the details in the separate different programs that are there to support Canadian youth, older workers and others, because we understand full well when an individual Canadian finds himself or herself between jobs, the employment insurance system must be there to assist him or her.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the problem with the government's first nations governance act is that it fails to demonstrate any understanding that it has learned from the failures of the past.

The thin-skinned Indian affairs minister wants us to go back to the future to an approach that is both dictatorial and top down. That is exactly the approach the governments of the past took; a father knows best approach, which is unilateral. Governments of the past did not listen and this government is not listening now.

The first nations governance act, like the Indian Act, is well intentioned but it is clumsy, unilateral and imposed.

One stains our past. When will the minister realize that the other threatens to endanger and stain our future as well?

● (1450)

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing how a member can be a critic and never read a piece of legislation himself.

First, the Indian Act is very much a paternalistic, prescriptive piece of legislation.

Bill C-7 is an enabling piece of legislation that would do three things. It would allow a code for electoral purposes. It would allow the Financial Administration Act. It would allow for administration as a code to allow first nations to improve their fundamentals of governance with the idea of allowing first nations to develop that on their own, using their traditions and their cultures. That is very different from what has been described by the member.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is somewhat hilarious but not hilarious to those who oppose the legislation, and that is virtually every Canadian who has read it. Like a stubborn little boy, he covers his ears, stomps his feet, jumps up and down and says, "I can't hear you. I can't hear you." It is time for him to start listening.

The Canadian Alliance wants to see the minister and the government address serious problems. The Canadian aboriginal population wants the same.

What about home ownership? What about property rights? What about women's rights? What about human rights? What about the equality for aboriginal Canadians to be treated as Canadians?

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there you have it. What the member is basically articulating is the fact that they want assimilation. They do not believe in the unique rights of aboriginal people. They do not believe in the treaty rights or aboriginal rights of first nations people. That is not the policy of the government. It is not the policy of our Canadian citizenry.

Quite frankly, the enabling legislation of Bill C-7 is an interim step toward the inherent right of self-government, which is what this government believes in.

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**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday's announcement by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was devastating for fishermen, fish plant workers and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. In past fishery closure announcements there were always provisions for an early retirement program and a licence buyout program.

Is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans considering an early retirement program, a licence buyout program and an extension of EI benefits for those immediately affected by this closure?

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that during the 1990s and until 1998 a series of measures were taken by this government to assist fishermen in their communities to exit the industry with packages. This was a very limited fishery that unfortunately we had to close. We have announced some measures to assist and maintain communities rather than individuals, but assisting individuals through their communities. ACOA will be consulting with the communities and the provinces on long term economic development objectives.

*Oral Questions***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it has been 68 days since Ernst Zundel was allowed to enter Canada and make a refugee claim. The minister pledged he would protect our system from abuse by Zundel. He boasted “Just watch me”.

We watched Zundel being housed and fed at public expense. We watched hearing after hearing. We watched the minister allow Zundel's unfounded claim. We watched Zundel remain in Canada. Why did the minister break his word?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to welcome the immigration critic; it is always a pleasure to talk to her in the House.

I would tell her that not only are we respecting the rule of law, but this individual has been detained. Not only are we ensuring the safety of Canadians—this person is now in detention—but we will take the appropriate action when the time is right.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, what time is the minister waiting for? He is part of the process. It is his lawful duty to protect the process.

Zundel is a known security risk. That is why he is in detention. Zundel's claim is an abuse of Canada's refugee system.

The minister acted within hours to save himself from embarrassment in the case of Helen Ann Dougherty but he has had weeks to put a stop to Zundel's abuse of our refugee process.

Why has the minister not removed Zundel from Canada?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can give her some more subjects to talk about. We keep repeating ourselves.

I can say one thing. He is being detained because he is a risk. He has been there for several detention reviews. We believe in the process and we are doing what it takes. It takes time to build a case. We will not let anybody make a mockery of our refugee system. That is the reason we went through cabinet and we are discussing the issue.

The most important thing is that we have a balanced approach with security and at the same time we have to build a case. When we are ready, just watch us.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs has said that he was not afraid of protesters, that he was immune to them. He encouraged them to go back home because he will impose Bill C-7 on them.

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

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Today, there is—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member is holding up something that is really not appropriate in the House. Yes, I saw it, and I have already spoken to the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre. It is inappropriate and I therefore ask the hon. member to withdraw it and continue with his question.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, today there is a demonstration on Parliament Hill to make the government aware of the aboriginal people's indignation and opposition to Bill C-7 on governance.

Does the minister intend to repeat his cynical and arrogant words or will he instead take advantage of this opportunity to put aside for once and for all Bill C-7, which no one wants, and instead lay the foundation for a true nation-to-nation partnership with the aboriginal people?

[*English*]

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, there is a standing offer for all aboriginal leaders and communities to participate in consultations with the Government of Canada. My point is very clear. The option to protest is to consult and be involved in the process with the Government of Canada.

Let me read what has occurred so far under phase one: 135 information sessions have been conducted across nine regions; 335 consultation meetings have been held both on reserve and off reserve; and 8,465 first nations citizens have participated in consultation meetings. That is just the beginning of the first phase.

The second phase, which is going on now, I will read a little later into the record.

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**FISHERIES**

**Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we sit here today, DFO offices in Newfoundland and Labrador are being occupied by frustrated people, frustrated fishermen in the province. I am not so sure the government today understands how serious this is and the impact it has on people's lives.

To say that we are going to ask seals to leave exclusion zones is making a joke and making fun of the people. It is not right to do that.

Let me ask the minister a serious question. Will he reconsider his decision—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I regret that the member did not get a chance to pose his question. However I would like to assure him that I fully understand the gravity of the situation.

It is not likely that we would make a decision to close a fishery so important to so many communities, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec. That is why we took the additional measures, as mentioned by the all party committee, by the eminent panel on seals and by the FRCC, to reduce predation, to increase the feedstock, to remove dragging from critical areas, to continue the index fishery and do basic research.

*Points of Order***PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday on *Cross Country Checkup* the former minister of finance told all Canadians that the government policies dealing with people with disabilities were incoherent, inconsistent and confusing. He said that when he is the prime minister he will fix it but that it should be fixed now.

Will the government take the advice of the former minister of finance and fix those programs now, and make them consistent among HRDC, Revenue Canada, Veterans Affairs and Health Canada, instead of the hodgepodge we have now?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to working with Canadians with disabilities to ensure that they have full access to the programs of this country as citizens.

I want to applaud the government, in its most recent budget, for making significant changes that recognize, for example, that it is more expensive for parents to raise children with disabilities and providing additional support to them through specific supplements to the national child benefit.

The hon. member can rest assured that the government is working across departments in support of Canadians with disabilities and will continue to do that.

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**REGULATORY REFORM**

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in the last quarter century Canadians have witnessed an unprecedented growth in red tape, with 100,000 new regulations. That is an average of 16 a day. It is estimated to cost businesses \$103 billion, which they then pass on to consumers.

The government is paying lip service to regulatory reform with the external advisory committee on smart regulations but there is scant promise of a serious review of the many thousands of existing outdated, ill-considered, overlapping regulations.

When will the government start cutting the red tape and allow businesses the freedom to prosper?

● (1500)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if the hon. member is not aware of this but the government announced, through its excellent throne speech some months ago, that there would be regulatory reform: the smart regulation initiative. I answered a question on the floor of the House only a few weeks back announcing the chairmanship of that initiative. The other members will be announced very shortly.

The process has already started and of course it is going to work just fine, as it does when the government does all the things that it does so well.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Jack David, U.S. co-chair of the

Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence, an organization whose Canadian co-chair is the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I would like to point out the presence in the gallery of a member of the National Assembly of France, Mr. Lenoir, who is on an official visit to Canada.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to your attention the word used today by the Minister of Health in response to a question asked by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre.

The minister used the word “fabrication”. In fact she said that what the member said was a fabrication. I would refer you to Beaudesne's at page 149, Citation No. 492 which states:

The following expressions are a partial listing of expressions which have caused intervention on the part of the Chair, as listed in the Index....

One of the words listed, Mr. Speaker, is the word “fabrication”, and I await your direction.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that in Beaudesne's list there are a number of expressions that have been consistently ruled unparliamentary and we know what those are. A number of others have been consistently ruled as being parliamentary. Others have been the subject of the Speaker's interpretation depending on the tone, the way in which they were raised and whether they caused disorder in the House.

That has been consistently the way Mr. Speaker has interpreted these things in the past. I support the way in which Mr. Speaker has interpreted the matter today.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. House leader has made my point. It was the way it was used that should be considered by you. Seeing as it is a word that is in Beaudesne's list, I would ask the hon. minister to do the right and proper thing, and stand and withdraw the word that she used.

**The Speaker:** The Chair heard the question raised by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre and the long number of adjectives used by the hon. Minister of Health in detailing her view of the question.

*Routine Proceedings***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 17 petitions.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL TRANSFER OF OFFENDERS ACT**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-33, an act to implement treaties and administrative arrangements on the international transfer of persons found guilty of criminal offences.

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology entitled "Opening Canadian Communications to the World".

A modern telecommunications infrastructure and a robust telecommunications sector are essential to Canada's economic success in the global networking economy. The committee believes that implementing the four recommendations contained in this report will help to improve investment and innovation in the Canadian telecommunications sector, provide better services to consumers and ensure that the government's telecommunications policy goals are achieved.

I wish to thank the individuals and organizations who took part in our hearings, the research staff of the Library of Parliament, particularly Dr. Lalita Acharya, Geoffrey Kieley and Dan Shaw, and the members for their invaluable contribution during the discussions.

\* \* \*

**CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance)** moved: moved for leave to introduce Bill C-433, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (appointment of election officers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, they say that if at first you do not succeed, try, try, try again, so I am trying again with a bill which is supported by the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada. It would amend the Canada Elections Act to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to appoint returning officers across Canada.

I did not think anything she said transgressed the rule but since the hon. member for St. John's West has drawn the Chair's attention to the citation referred to in Beauchesne's, with which the Chair is quite familiar, and I noted, as the government House leader noted, it was from the section which caused intervention from the Chair, so it is some sort of a word that can swing both ways, if the hon. member knows what I mean.

I will examine the matter very carefully and get back to the House if necessary to deal with the matter further. However it did not strike me at the time that there had been a breach of the Standing Orders. I take things at first impression and away we go, but I will look at it again. I assure the hon. member that I will review the matter.

• (1505)

BILL C-20

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is the second point of order in recent weeks regarding the inaccuracy of *Hansard*, and once again it concerns the *Hansard* of April 1.

There is a discrepancy in the recorded *Hansard* regarding the vote on Bill C-20, an act to amend the Criminal Code. The vote was conducted using the application method of voting. The whip of the Progressive Conservative Party indicated that his party would be voting against the bill. However the Progressive Conservative caucus was recorded as voting for the bill in the actual recorded division that followed.

It is not clear how the Conservatives voted but I would think that this error taints the accuracy of the position of all parties in the House. The accuracy of our records is very important. The public needs to know why and how members voted.

I would ask the Speaker to check into this and make sure that we get accuracy so that people will know how we all voted on this very important issue in the House of Commons.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast for his assistance in this matter. As he knows, when votes are applied, particularly on evenings when we have a large number of votes, sometimes things can get confused.

He may have uncovered a confusion here that arose and an error that was made and, if so, the Chair will be diligent in ensuring the matter is corrected because I agree with him completely. We do want our records to be completely accurate in the House. I am glad that the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast shares the Chair's enthusiasm in that regard.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[*English*]

**GRAIN HANDLING AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report entitled "Monitoring the Canadian Grain Handling and Transportation System Annual Report 2001-02 Crop Year".

*Routine Proceedings*

Returning officers at present are appointed by the Prime Minister. At a recent committee hearing the Chief Electoral Officer indicated that about 11 of those are non-performers which he cannot do anything about. He cannot fire them. He cannot get rid of them. We are fed up with a situation like that. By giving the Chief Electoral Officer the power to appoint people to the position of returning officer, we would overcome that terrible patronage association with the Prime Minister.

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

\* \* \*

• (1510)

**PETITIONS**

BILL C-250

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a large petition from Saskatchewan. Once again people are asking that the government look at the petition. They are asking Parliament not to pass Bill C-250 and make it law in Canada.

## STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the petitioners on whose behalf I present this petition suggest that non-embryonic stem cells which are also known as adult stem cells have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells. Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat illness and disease of suffering Canadians.

## CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today. The first is on the issue of child pornography. The petitioners from my riding of Mississauga South draw to the attention of the House that the creation and use of child pornography is condemned by the clear majority of Canadians and that the courts have not applied the current child pornography law in a way that makes it clear that such exploitation of children will always be met with swift punishment.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, again from my riding of Mississauga South, is on the subject matter of the definition of marriage.

The petitioners point out that the majority of Canadians believe that the fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not by an unelected judiciary. They therefore call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative means, including invoking section 33 of the charter, being the notwithstanding clause, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

## STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the final petition is on the issue of stem cells.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that Canadians support ethical stem cell research which has already shown encouraging potential to provide cures and therapies for the illnesses and diseases of Canadians. Their concern is where the stem cells come from. They note that non-embryonic stem cells, which are also known as adult stem cells, have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cells.

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

## FISHERIES

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have four separate petitions. The first one is from the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They call upon Parliament to extend and accept the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans' recommendations to take over custodial management of the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap.

• (1515)

## VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Four Harbours Legion in my riding point out to the government that they would like the same standard of long term care in provincial hospitals for veterans as the standard of care that is provided in Sainte-Anne's, Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I could not support something like that more than I do now.

## BILL C-206

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition is on behalf of thousands of Canadians across the country who have written in in support of my Bill C-206. They are asking Parliament to support and enact the legislation to allow caregivers an opportunity to leave their place of employment for up to a year to care for someone under a palliative care situation.

## WESTRAY MINE

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in this petition, the people of Halifax and Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia call upon Parliament to enact legislation to ensure that incidents like Westray do not happen again. That is where the mine managers and mine owners got away with what they consider a despicable act as no charges or fines were laid against them with regard to the deaths of 26 miners. The petitioners want to ensure that never happens again and never goes unpunished again.

*Routine Proceedings***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 questions will be answered today: Nos. 158, 175, 189 and 210.

[Text]

Question No. 158—**Mr. Scott Reid:**

With regard to the web application AROSuite, designed by and for aboriginal groups under the aboriginal human resource development agreement to manage grants and contributions relating to training contracts: (a) when will AROSuite be deployed to aboriginal organizations; and (b) does it have the functional capability to be used to manage grants and contributions being delivered on behalf of Human Resources Development Canada by third party partners such as youth and homelessness agencies?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Under the capacity building component of the aboriginal human resources development strategy and under the information exchange section of the aboriginal human resources development agreements, AHRDAs, Human Resources Development Canada worked with AHRDA holders to develop web-based tools to improve accountability and results reporting of AHRDA holders. The ARO Suite is a package of web-based tools for AHRDA holders to seamlessly perform the following functions: screen clients to determine EI funding eligibility; case manage client files; manage the financial aspects of training and other service contracts; report results to HRDC through the data gateway, complies with Gs and Cs audit requirements.

Presently, the ARO Suite of web applications is being successfully piloted with two AHRDAs: the North Vancouver Island Aboriginal Training Society, remote location, and the Vancouver Friendship Centre, urban location. No decision has yet been made on the deployment to other organizations. Dependent on the results of the pilots, HRDC will then review the feasibility for use by other parties.

Question No. 175—**Mr. James Moore:**

For the past five years: (a) what is the total amount of advertising spent by the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation CDIC on an annual basis; (b) what contracts were entered into with advertisers; (c) what minister is responsible for the CDIC and was there any correspondence between the minister's office and the CDIC pertaining to the advertising; and (d) was Communication Canada involved in the decision to advertise CDIC services, please provide relevant information?

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** I am informed as follows:

For the past five years:

a) The Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation has spent the following amounts on advertising by fiscal year:

1998-99 \$1.3 million

1999-2000 Nil

2000-01 \$2.15 million

2001-02 \$2.12 million

2002-03 \$2.3 million

b) Contracts were signed with the following advertising agencies: Goodgoll Curtis Inc. and Focus Strategies and Communications Inc.

c) The Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions) is responsible for CDIC. The Minister of Finance has delegated all his powers, duties and functions regarding CDIC to the Secretary of State. Over the last five years, CDIC and the Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions) corresponded with one another on several occasions with respect to CDIC's public awareness campaign.

d) Although Communication Canada is responsible for coordinating advertising for the Government of Canada, the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, CDIC is an entity listed on schedule III of the Financial Administration Act. As such, the CDIC does not have any obligation to report its advertising activities to Communication Canada. Consequently, Communication Canada was not involved in CDIC's decision to advertise its services.

Question No. 189—**Mr. Leon Benoit:**

Concerning the Canadian Forces: (a) how many operational aircraft has the air force had each year since 1940, broken down by aircraft type by year; (b) how many operational ships and submarines has the navy had each year since 1940, broken down by ship type by year; (c) how many tanks, light armoured vehicles, self-propelled artillery and towed artillery and other heavy equipment has the Army had each year since 1940, broken down by equipment type by year; (d) how many regular force personnel have the Forces had each year since 1940, broken down by army, navy and air force regular force personnel by year; and (e) how many reserve force personnel have the forces had each year since 1940, broken down by army, navy and air force reserve force personnel by year?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):**

A detailed list with the requested information is not readily available. Developing such a list would be labour intensive and expensive. It would also involve extensive coordination, and a manual search of existing and archival material. Such an undertaking cannot be completed during the time period allotted to respond to Order Paper questions.

Question No. 210—**Mr. Ted White:**

With respect to products and services provided by the private sector in the precinct of the House of Commons during fiscal years 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, what percentage of those contracts were awarded to, or in the case of long term contracts, held by companies or individuals based in the Province of Quebec, and by companies or individuals based in the Province of Ontario, and what were the nature of those contracts for products and services?

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

**The Speaker:** The questions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered. Is it agreed that the remaining questions stand?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Speaker's Ruling***REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

## SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

**The Speaker:** The Chair has applications for emergency debates pursuant to Standing Order 52. The first one received was from the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 52 I wrote a letter to you dated April 23 requesting an emergency debate on severe acute respiratory syndrome, SARS. In the absence of a response in the House from the government, I believe this debate is critical. I quote from my letter to you, Mr. Speaker:

Ignorance and panic are significant enemies in battling this disease. A debate in the House of Commons would allow the government to place facts before the House.

That is something it has not done.

Members of the House of Commons would also have an opportunity to express their views on the measures taken.

We would be able to review and debate some of those measures taken by the government and put forward some of our own ideas.

This is not just a Canada issue; it does not affect just Canada, or only Toronto or Vancouver. It affects all of Canada and in fact the international world as we know it. Despite our best efforts, we cannot function in isolation from the rest of the world. This disease does not understand international boundaries. It does not respect international boundaries.

It has taken a huge toll in Canada, not only a human toll, but a huge economic toll. We only have to look at the tourism industry and the words of the governor of the Bank of Canada who said that it has had a severe impact on Canada's economy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, our original request back on March 31 was put forward by the member for Cumberland—Colchester. Mr. Speaker, I think you were accurate in your response to that request and in fact, giving you full credit, you invited us, once the facts were out and known by all of us, to reapply for the emergency debate.

We believe the time is right to bring this issue before the House of Commons. There has been a notable absence in the House by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health. As individual members of Parliament, we have an obligation to bring an issue as important as this one to the floor where it can be debated. I think Canadians support us, the opposition, in that request.

Mr. Speaker, the request is now before you. I look forward to a timely response on your behalf.

**The Speaker:** The Chair has also received an application on the same subject from the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas. He knows it is the practice not to hear two submissions at the same time, but I note that he has forwarded an application. I know of his interest in the subject and for that I thank him.

## FISHERIES

**The Speaker:** The Chair also received an application for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore which he withdrew, but he has filed another for tomorrow.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, however, also filed an application in respect of this matter. Since his has not been withdrawn, he may proceed to tell me about the issue he wanted to raise.

**Mr. R. John Efford (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 52 I wrote your office and asked for an emergency debate on the situation of the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We consider the announcement the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans made last Thursday to be unnecessary. Many other options could have been put in place to deal with the serious situation of the fishery.

In 1992 people in the fishing industry were decimated in the province. It is 11 years later and communities now have been kicked again. The people involved in the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador are saying very clearly that DFO does not understand the situation with the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador and it is not working with the people in the industry to create a major rebuilding plan.

We need this debate in the House of Commons to get across to and implant in the minds of the people in DFO and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who inherited this problem, an appropriate way to deal with a very serious situation. The biomass of northern cod today is less than it was in 1992. The outmigration of people from Newfoundland and Labrador has continued at a rapid rate and is unnecessary.

This is a renewable resource. It is part of the world food chain. It does not benefit just the people living in the communities of Newfoundland and Labrador; it is part of the world food chain. It is the responsibility of the Canadian government to manage this resource appropriately. We want the opportunity to debate this in the House of Commons to send a clear message and work in partnership with DFO and the minister to create an appropriate rebuilding plan.

● (1520)

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I note also that the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore is interested in this matter, as has been indicated previously. Again, I know he knows that I do not normally hear two submissions on each of these matters.

I want to thank hon. members for drawing to the attention of the Chair their concerns on these important issues.

Having considered the matter carefully this morning and having heard their submissions this afternoon, I am inclined to grant an emergency debate in respect of the request of the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, to be held this evening. In respect of the hon. member for Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, I will grant the request, the debate to be held tomorrow evening. We will have two emergency debates in the next two days.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore.

This debate today is about Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts. Bill C-32 is an omnibus bill that changes the Criminal Code in a variety of ways. I want to start out by saying that I wish, by way of talking about amendments to the Criminal Code, that we had before us those amendments to the Criminal Code for which we have been lobbying for such a long time. It would have been great if today, on April 28, the national day of mourning for workers killed or injured on the job, we could have begun a debate on amendments to the Criminal Code which would have incorporated some kind of criminal penalties for corporations that behave in ways that lead to the death or injury of workers. Of course I am speaking of the cry for such legislation that came out of the tragedy of the Westray mine disaster over a decade ago.

Let me begin with that. I know the government has indicated in the past that it intends to bring forward amendments to the Criminal Code along the lines of what came out of the Westray mine disaster inquiry, but we are not sure exactly what it is the government has in mind. We understand that this kind of legislation might be coming forward in May. May is not long off. I would certainly urge and I am sure my other NDP colleagues would urge the government to bring in that legislation in May. Let us have a look at it. Let us see if it is good enough, and if it is not, let us get it into committee and make sure that it is good enough by the time it comes back to the House at third reading.

In the legislation that we actually have before us, Bill C-32, we do have amendments to the Criminal Code that are relevant to the question of protecting workers. For instance, Bill C-32 contains amendments to the Criminal Code having to do with more legislated protection for on duty firefighters and first responders from criminal acts.

Bill C-32 institutes harsher penalties for Canadians who protect criminal businesses such as drug labs or grow operations with traps that would likely kill or injure a person. The proposed maximum sentence of 10 years in prison increases to 14 years if injury occurs and to a life sentence when a trap kills someone. This change was strongly supported by the International Association of Fire Fighters, the IAFF, which has lobbied the government for a number of years now to have just this kind of amendment made to the Criminal Code.

Certainly we in the NDP support the government in bringing forward this amendment. We know, for instance, that in the recent budget there was one other change for which the firefighters had lobbied for a long time, one having to do with the changes in pension accrual. It would seem to me that we at least have something to

celebrate in terms of the things for which the firefighters have been asking for a long time.

I remember rising in the House a year ago this week when the firefighters were here and saying that if we are all for it, if the firefighters come here year after year to lobby individual members of Parliament and nobody is against it, why does it not ever happen? I remember saying that to the then minister of finance, now the aspiring Liberal leadership candidate and prime minister. At the time, members on this side of the House and perhaps even members on that side of the House in chorus agreed with me. If all members of Parliament think something is right, then it should happen. It took a long time, but at least it finally happened. We hope the other things for which the firefighters are lobbying this time around will happen at some point. I hope it will not be too far into the future. That is what we have before us here in these amendments to the Criminal Code: more legislated protection for on duty firefighters and first responders from criminal acts such as the setting of booby traps. We certainly support that.

Bill C-32 clarifies Canadian law, which generally recognizes that anyone may use reasonable force to prevent a serious crime. The amendment brings Canada's laws in line with international law by recognizing that everyone on board an aircraft is explicitly authorized to use force to prevent a criminal act that endangers the safety of the aircraft or other passengers. Again this sounds like something that is certainly supportable.

• (1525)

The bill would also modify section 117.04 of the Criminal Code to ensure compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I will not go into the details of how this section of the code is made charter compliant, but certainly anything which will make our laws more compliant with Canada's basic law, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is something to be welcomed. There may be some discussion of that in committee, I do not know, but certainly in principle we support that.

Bill C-32 would amend the Criminal Code to allow the civil enforcement of all restitution orders, thus making it easier for people to collect restitution, money that was to be paid to them following an offender's conviction. Currently these orders can be enforced only by civil court action if the order is separate from the sentencing order. This is something that has deserved attention in the past and we certainly welcome the attempt by the government to deal with this particular problem. We would welcome more exploration at committee stage to see if more can be done to make it easier for people to obtain restitution.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-32 also adds a new clause to section 160 of the Financial Administration Act to create exceptions to the offences of intercepting a private communication and of disclosing its content. This, as I understand it, is to allow information technology managers in government and the private sector to use intrusion detection systems, otherwise known as IDS, to screen suspicious electronic communications and to detect attacks on computer systems by hackers, viruses, worms, et cetera. To address privacy protection concerns, we are told, the government will impose limits on the use and retention of private communications harvested through IDS. Treasury Board will issue standards to ensure that the application of IDS technology across all government departments is consistent and complies with the Privacy Act and the charter. This is good to hear, but I think one of the things we will want to hear more about in committee is this whole question of privacy. I would personally recommend that the privacy commissioner, if he has not already done so, certainly should be taking a look at the bill and giving us his best judgment as to whether or not this is an acceptable intrusion on the privacy of Canadians.

All in all, let us get the bill to committee and let us see if we can improve it in some respects. As I have said, we welcome the changes, particularly with respect to protection of firefighters and other first responders and the section having to do with the strengthening of restitution orders.

● (1530)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague from Winnipeg. It is April 28 and we have been waiting 12 years for legislation like the Westray legislation. Twenty-eight miners were killed in the Westray mine disaster and still to this date we have no effective legislation in this country to prevent something of that nature from happening again. If possible, could the member elaborate as to what Bill C-32 would mean to workers and their families if this type of legislation were enacted?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, of course what are we looking for in the way of legislation is something that would create a criminal offence for corporations and act as a deterrent. We hope that such a law would never have to be used, because if it did it would mean workers already had been killed or injured on the job. It would be basically a form of deterrence.

Right now, knowing what we know as a result of the Westray mine disaster, there is an opportunity there for negligent corporate ownership to act in ways that they know would lead to the death or injury of their employees, and they need not have any fear of the criminal law in that respect as a corporation. What we want to see is legislation that would deal with this.

The hon. member for Halifax has brought forward private member's legislation in this regard, as has the hon. member for Churchill. Twice this subject matter has gone to committee, and twice committees have recommended that the government act. After two committees, two sets of recommendations, and two private member's bills that have gone to committee in order to get the kinds of recommendations that have come forward, surely if there is a shred of integrity or accountability in the parliamentary system the government must now act and bring forward such legislation.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona has taken the opportunity, appropriately on April 28, to focus in on an aspect of the Criminal Code of Canada that needs to be changed. Regrettably, the government has chosen not to deal with it in the changes that are now before the House and in debate.

I also appreciate that he stressed, because it is very important, that the point of introducing criminal liability for corporations which knowingly endanger the health and safety, and lives of their employees, is to act as a preventive measure and deterrent. This is an important point to stress. The member is aware that it was widows of the deceased Westray miners who said to not let their children have lost their fathers' lives in vain by ensuring these changes to the Criminal Code.

Given that there have been several private members' bills and given that the justice committee has twice recommended that the House move on this, what is it that is causing the government to delay, 12 years after the Westray mine disaster?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what it is that is causing the government to delay except that we know that this is characteristic of the Liberal government when it comes to important matters.

However, I can say to the hon. member, and I know it is true of her and others in our caucus, that we will not be deterred. We will continue pushing and working with the United Steelworkers of America and other unions that are concerned about such legislation until the day finally comes when we get that legislation.

Last summer I made a point to visit the Westray memorial in Stellarton, Nova Scotia, and the little park that surrounds the memorial. I can certainly give my own personal commitment, and I know the commitment of the NDP in general, that we will not rest until those who are resting at the bottom of that mine have the appropriate legacy, which is the introduction and passage of appropriate criminal liability legislation.

● (1535)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we would assume that when a tragedy of this nature occurs, as happened at Westray 12 years ago, that we as parliamentarians and the government would use the tragedy to bring some good from it.

The people in Nova Scotia, the United Steelworkers of America, the mothers, wives, children, parents and friends of the miners have been asking that the miners' deaths not be in vain.

The best thing we can do to honour those fallen is to ensure that there is enough effective legislation in place to ensure that corporations, businesses or anyone of that nature not get away with this again. If we did that then we could have some movement in the country.

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There is another thing the government should be doing in this particular legislation. When somebody dies on a corporation's property or when the corporation commits an environmental offence of some kind and it is fined, the fine could be \$5,000, \$20,000 or \$100,000, the reality is that the corporations are allowed to write the fines off as a business expense. That is unacceptable.

We have fines in legislation to act as a deterrence. That deterrence should not be allowed to be a tax deduction. Imagine how we would feel if one of our children was working in a hardware store and died because of negligence of the management of the hardware store, then we found out the store was fined, paid a \$100,000 fine, and was eligible to write the fine off as a business expense. That is unacceptable and it needs to be changed.

Another aspect the government should be focusing on in the omnibus bill, which we in the NDP are very supportive of and would like to see get to committee, is the issue of child pornography. The government still does not get it when it comes to child pornography and the need to protect the most vulnerable citizens in our society, our children.

Just recently in Halifax, a pedophile, who is known by the medical profession to probably repeat again, received house arrest after being convicted for sexually touching a 12 year old. This has caused quite a controversy in our area of Nova Scotia. The people are asking how a pedophile, who the medical profession and psychiatrists have said poses a risk to society, would be given house arrest? What kind of deterrent is that?

The pedophile basically gave the 12 year old child a life sentence in terms of scaring that child for life and the deterrent by the judge was that the individual would get house arrest. That is unacceptable and the law should be changed where there is no discretionary consideration used by a judge at any level when a person molests a child in any way, shape or form, and that the person would go to jail, period. No ifs, ands or buts.

That is the type of legislation that should be within this bill. As the father of two girls, one of them being 12 years old, if a pedophile ever did that to my child the last thing I would want to see is that individual getting house arrest. That individual should get help but receive help while in prison serving time.

Another aspect of the bill deals with protection of first responders: police officers and firefighters. That is a very good aspect of the bill that we support wholeheartedly. When the call goes out at any time of day, firefighters, police officers and first responders are the first on the scene and in many cases they use their experience to assess the situation, but behind any door, behind any shed, and behind any area lies potential danger that could do fatal harm to these brave people who protect our society.

The legislation should be tough enough to act as a serious deterrent that would tell anyone that if he or she were about to do harm to unsuspecting first responders, that person would pay the price and it would be a severe price.

• (1540)

Anyone who takes advantage in any way, shape or form of the great actions of a firefighter, a police officer or a first responder deserves to go to jail for an incredibly long period of time.

That message should get out and justice should be swift. It is irresponsible of us as parliamentarians to dither on this particular issue. It is extremely important that this type of legislation go before committee so that we can have a thorough coast to coast to coast debate.

We should not just have a debate with academics. It is time to invite the people of Canada into committee through representation to allow them to voice their concerns. There is no reason why the firefighter associations, those who are paid and those who are volunteers, should not have the opportunity to appear before the committee in the city of their choice. The committee should travel across the country to hear the views of Canadians on what they want in terms of tightening up this legislation.

As one who has travelled on various committees for over five years, I find those types of hearings extremely beneficial. It helps me understand the very nature of what people are saying. The concerns may be a little different in Nova Scotia than they are in British Columbia, from Alberta to Quebec or Newfoundland and Labrador to Yukon, but it is imperative and important that we as parliamentarians hear the views of Canadians and enact those views into legislation.

We cannot just say to people "Thank you very much. The copy was great. We loved to hear you, nice to see you, great weather, and where is the golf course?" That is unacceptable. Canadians have told us time and time again that nothing ever seems to happen. We must take their views into account.

We represent the people of Canada from various parties, from various backgrounds, and from various ridings across the country, but one thing on which Canadians are unanimous is ensuring that there are laws in place that are strong enough to act as a serious deterrent to ensure that other people will not commit these violent crimes against Canadians, especially when those crimes go against unsuspecting workers, unsuspecting first responders like firefighters, police officers and ambulatory staff, as well as young children.

If we as parliamentarians cannot enact legislation to protect our children, then we have no right to be sitting here. Even though that vast voice of Canadians under 18 do not get to vote, it is imperative that we enact legislation quickly and make it strong enough to ensure that those who have no voice or no vote in the House of Commons be protected from the sins and evils of pedophilia.

With that, I would like to thank the Chair for the opportunity of an emergency debate tomorrow on the fisheries situation in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to say that the federal NDP will be supporting this bill to committee for further discussion with Canadians from across the country.

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**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore a question arising from his earlier comments regarding the changes to the Criminal Code that are before the House. Those comments concerned specifically the national day of mourning of April 28. It is a sad irony—I am going to say tragedy—that the government has not seen fit to include the recommended changes to the Criminal Code amendments for consideration by Parliament that would finally establish some liability for corporations and senior executive officers who knowingly put the health, safety and lives of their employees at risk.

The member for Winnipeg—Transcona who spoke before him cited and acknowledged, in fact applauded, the United Steelworkers of America and the trade union movement for their leadership in this ongoing campaign, one that will continue until we gain these concessions from the government. However, it is also true that a great many workers in this country, who do not now enjoy the protection of a union, would benefit from such changes. One example which comes to mind is a 19 year old Ontario youth in the prime of life who was clearing brush for Ontario Hydro a couple of years ago when he was electrocuted. He became a triple amputee and is now an articulate spokesman for the need for change in the Criminal Code along the lines of what has been recommended by the NDP and by the labour movement.

I wonder if the member could elaborate a little on why this legislation is so important for all workers, but particularly workers who do not now enjoy the benefit of any trade union protection which has implications for health and safety enforcement in the workplace.

• (1545)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely a large part of the Canadian workforce does not have the protection of a union. Its protection comes from municipal, provincial and federal statutes and laws.

It is so very important for the government, after 12 years of dithering and if it does anything today when it sees our flags at half-mast, to announce in the House or in committee that it will now bring forward legislation which enacts exactly for what we have been asking.

Organizations such as the steelworkers, the Canadian Labour Congress and many others have been asking for very strict deterrent legislation to ensure that when corporations knowingly put the lives of workers at risk or endanger them to impairment of physical or mental concerns that they themselves will be held liable for the actions that they have caused.

I thank the member for Halifax who has raised this issue continuously as a provincial member of the legislature as well as a federal member of Parliament.

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words on Bill C-32, an act to amend the Criminal Code.

The proposed bill, as we are all very much aware, will establish a more serious offence for placing or knowingly permitting to remain in place, a trap or device that is likely to cause death or bodily harm

to a person. It also will permit the use of as much force as necessary on board an aircraft to prevent the commission of an offence that would seriously harm people on board. It also makes a number of other amendments to the Criminal Code.

I am pleased to deliver these remarks on behalf of my colleagues, the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, who is the critic in this area. He could not be here today because he is away on Her Majesty's business.

I would like to welcome the International Association of Fire Fighters in Ottawa this week for its annual legislative conference. In Canada it is over 17,000 members strong. We cannot say enough about the work the members do. Those on the frontlines need the support of government, and positive changes to the Criminal Code can send a very strong message to those who would willingly or unwittingly endanger the lives of these brave men and women.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that good ideas and strong legislation that can act as a deterrent in crimes of this nature are long overdue. I am reminded of a private member's bill introduced last October by the member for Nepean—Carleton. His bill seeks to give greater protection to firefighters by creating two new offences of aggravated assault and first degree murder, when the victim is a firefighter acting in the course of his or her duties. That fits quite nicely with what the current Minister of Justice is trying to achieve with the bill.

On a daily basis Canadian firefighters put their lives at risk to save ours. It becomes important that we recognize the sacrifices they are willing to make on our behalf.

As with all legislation, nothing is perfect. A closer examination of the intricacies of the bill will need to be conducted of course at committee stage. However the bill is a great first step and a much needed piece of legislation.

The main portion of the bill amends the Criminal Code by creating a new offence targeting those who would set traps in a place used for a criminal purpose. Currently the offence of setting a trap in any place, which is under section 247 of the Criminal Code, carries a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment. The new offence raises the bar by providing for significantly lower stringent penalties. As subsection 247(2) states:

Every one who commits an offence under subsection (1) and thereby causes bodily harm to any other persons is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

If someone should commit an offence under section 247 that causes injury, the penalty increases to a maximum of 14 years. If that offence causes death, the offender can receive a sentence of life imprisonment.

This legislation of course is aimed directly at illegal drug operations which pose a myriad of dangers to firefighters. Many of these illegal drug operations are rigged with hidden devices such as crossbows and explosives designed to kill or maim anyone who interferes with the operation. Other dangers include illegal electrical wiring, which poses the additional risk of fire, electrified door knobs and cutaway floor boards.

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•(1550)

It should also be recognized that all too often these illegal residential grow operations put at risk the lives of those in the community when the fire spreads from one house to another. Innocent families can lose their homes, their valuables or even their lives when criminals rig the wiring in their homes. Anything we can do as lawmakers to put a stop to this criminal behaviour is a step in the right direction.

These types of incidents are not new to those on the frontline. They have occurred in the past. For example, there are multiple cases of Canadian firefighters who have been injured and nearly killed while responding to illegal drug operations. A British Columbia firefighter, for instance, received a very severe electric shock when responding to a blaze. In Brampton, Ontario a firefighter's life was at risk when he fell through floorboards that had been previously cut away.

The International Association of Fire Fighters has pushed for legislation of this sort and is encouraged to see the government finally recognizing the contribution that members of the IAFF play in the daily lives of Canadians.

It is important that we recognize the dangers Canada's firefighters face as a result of illegal drug operations. As I noted earlier, the legislation will amend the Criminal Code by adding provisions to the existing section of the Criminal Code that deals with setting a trap. The legislation also adds provisions for setting a trap used in a place kept for criminal purposes that is likely to cause bodily harm, with a maximum 10 year prison sentence.

If a trap used in a criminal enterprise such as a drug operation causes bodily harm, the legislation calls for a 14 year maximum sentence and life imprisonment if a trap causes death.

Frontline firefighters have to be protected from this growing danger. The nature of these criminal activities creates a risk of fire, with volatile chemicals used in drug labs and electric power stolen through unsafe means. If firefighters and police officers are put at risk, or injured or killed by traps set to defend these criminal enterprises from law enforcement or rival gangs, those who set the traps have to feel the full weight of the law.

In another case earlier this year, Oshawa firefighters had to back away from a residential fire when they discovered that it was an illegal drug lab, loaded with dangerous chemicals. Of course the home was allowed to burn.

While the problem has been most serious in British Columbia and in Ontario as well, illegal drug operations are found in all parts of Canada. They pose a growing threat to firefighters in every province.

We should also be cognizant of the fact that a large portion of firefighters in Canada are volunteer firefighters. They give up their spare time. They give up their evenings and weekends to volunteer in their communities to take courses which will ultimately help them protect our property and our lives.

Amendments to the Criminal Code of this sort are long overdue. I would encourage the government to take a closer look at initiatives brought forth recently by the International Association of Fire Fighters.

For instance, a \$500,000 annual investment, a fraction of the cost the government wastes on a daily basis, would give firefighters access to hazardous material training. Currently military reaction is hours if not days away. Firefighters are on the scene in minutes. Training is necessary for their protection and for our protection as well.

•(1555)

Liberal cuts to ports policing, the Coast Guard and the military have put at risk the safety and security of Canadians. The real threat of bio-terrorism, delays in response time and the inability to board planes could cost lives. On these and other important issues the government is only paying lip service. What firefighters need to do their jobs is action and resources. The lives of our firefighters and those who they so selflessly serve and protect deserve no less than our complete protection when the opportunity occurs.

The government also needs to listen to the IAFF when it talks of support in the area of pensions and compensation for those who have been injured in the line of duty.

In his address to the House today, the minister said that he was happy to see that his government was finally addressing the important issue in regard to setting deadly traps. He told us that the number of deaths and injuries sustained by firefighters continues to rise in Canada and that it was a true tragedy when these events occurred.

Using statistics, he noted that there were 13,724 arson fires in Canada last year and that 30% of the fires in his own riding were a result of arson. He acknowledged that firefighting was four times as dangerous as any other occupation and that it was a job that commanded the highest public trust and respect, more than any other professional in the country. Firefighters are people who people trust.

A poll released by the Canadian Press and Leger Marketing in February of this year showed that 96% of Canadians trusted firefighters, the highest level of trust among 20 occupations included in the survey. That says quite a lot.

It is time that the minister and the government truly recognized the sacrifice made by those on the front lines and recognized it in a very substantial way. Firefighters, professionals and volunteers need the support of the federal government in the areas of pensions and compensation for spouses and children. The government should act today and begin the process of establishing a national public safety officer compensation fund in Canada.

The government's argument that the majority of firefighters are municipal employees and therefore not the responsibility of the federal government is hollow and I do not believe sits very well with Canadians.

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As the IAFF has stated on a number of occasions, the Canadian government continues to avoid addressing the need for the establishment of a national compensation fund. The families of the nation's firefighters stand to endure financial hardship in addition to the grief of losing a loved one. It is time for the federal government to stop using jurisdictional arguments and implement the national public safety officer compensation fund to benefit the families of Canadian firefighters killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to make these few remarks today on Bill C-32. Again I welcome the International Association of Fire Fighters to Ottawa this week for its annual legislative conference. The association is 17,000 members strong in Canada. We cannot say enough good things about the work it does.

• (1600)

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That when the House begins proceedings under the provisions of Standing Order 52 later this day, no quorum calls nor dilatory motions shall be entertained by the Speaker after 9 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to.)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this particular bill, Bill C-32. At the outset I want to say that the opposition intends to support the legislation. There might be changes suggested when the legislation goes to committee for study and we will rely upon our justice committee critics to search out weaknesses and recommend changes before final approval.

One proposal here is, I believe, an amendment to the Criminal Code for which all Canadians would approve. The proposal would make it a criminal offence to set a deadly trap that could kill or seriously injure another person such as a firefighter or law enforcement officer. This would protect first responders, as they are often called, meaning firefighters or police officers, and is a response to calls from the International Association of Fire Fighters. These brave men and women have enough on their hands when they are doing their jobs without having to worry whether some criminal has planted booby traps that might endanger their lives.

One only has to monitor the news to know that manufacturers and dealers of illegal drugs often plant traps to deter other criminals from raiding their illicit goods.

We have heard rumours in my home province of British Columbia and from bordering American states of booby traps being set along trails that lead to high mountain marijuana crops. Stories have been told of fish hooks being suspended at eye level along trails to deter raiders. Whether these stories are true or are rumours started by those who cultivate such crops as a deterrent is not certain but the fact is that we know from news reports that those who deal in these illegal cash crops will do anything to protect their profits.

The same is true where illegal chemicals are manufactured. We hear and read in the news of the enormous profits to be reaped by those who manufacture amphetamines. It would not be a stretch to presume booby traps are set in these buildings to deter raiders as well.

Our brave firefighters and police officers deserve at least the comfort of knowing that this Parliament will single out and punish those who would set such traps.

The maximum sentence, generally, has been 10 years depending upon the outcome. If injury occurs, whether it is to criminals, firefighters or police officers, the sentence can be increased to 14 years. If death occurs, the penalty maximum would be life.

I would digress slightly here and say that under the Liberal government, a life sentence does not mean very much. It certainly does not mean life. More often than not, a life sentence means living the good life in some comfy prison where all the comforts of home are available to the inmates and that includes the right to vote in general elections.

What Canadians want is for life to mean life. If a life sentence for murder is handed down, Canadians want to know that prisoner will not be out on the streets again, but that is not the Liberal way. The Liberal way is to sentence them to life and then let them out in 10 or 12 years, maybe more, maybe less.

We salute the International Association of Fire Fighters and the law enforcement people and, through this legislation, recognize the dangers they face daily. We are forever grateful to them for the jobs they do for all Canadians. We hope the legislation will serve to deter those criminals who would put the lives and safety of good people in jeopardy.

Another amendment we are considering here today will address a problem raised in *R. v. Hurrell* where the court found weaknesses in the warrant provisions of the Criminal Code pertaining to firearms search and seizure. The court ruled those provisions were unconstitutional because the warrant application section did not include enough protection of individual rights. The court said that it was not clear that a peace officer had to have reasonable grounds to make an application for the warrant. The court generously gave Parliament time to react and address its decision, and the legislation before us is the result.

The bill would amend the Criminal Code to require that an officer must have reasonable grounds to believe that a person is in possession of a weapon and that it is not in the interests of that person to possess that weapon. Only after the officer is convinced personally and in turn convinces the court, will a warrant be issued. This appears to be a reasonable response to the court's earlier ruling. It seems to safeguard individual rights and satisfy the constitutional concerns of the court in the *R. v. Hurrell* case.

•(1605)

The meatiest part of the legislation before us is an amendment to the Criminal Code to explicitly recognize that everyone on board any aircraft in Canadian airspace is justified in using reasonable force where he or she believes that it is necessary to prevent the commission of a crime aboard the aircraft. In essence, it allows civilian use of force to save lives. This essentially is the right of self-defence. It is what those brave souls did on September 11 when their aircraft was hijacked. They attempted to save lives by trying to overpower the hijackers. In some cases they were very successful, and all of us are grateful for the sacrifices they made.

The legislation also clarifies that this justification also applies on board any Canadian registered aircraft in flight outside Canadian airspace. That means any brave soul who attempts to thwart a hijacking or any crime aboard any Canadian airplane will have the protection of the courts no matter what the outcome.

Canadians would probably feel a lot more confident and comfortable if they knew that armed and trained air marshals were aboard select flights, but that is a debate for another day. Members should rest assured that it will come up again. At least this recognizes that innocent civilian passengers have a right to defend themselves and to use whatever force they deem necessary to do so.

The bill also contains amendments that could be very controversial due to perceived infringements on individual privacy. Amendments to the Criminal Code and the Financial Administration Act would allow both the government and the private sector to disclose the contents of private communications intercepted by intrusion detection systems in certain circumstances.

The Criminal Code amendments would allow for the disclosure of intercepted private communications if the disclosure were necessary for the protection of a computer system and if the disclosure were made appropriately. This will require further study and I trust our very knowledgeable members on the justice committee will give it the due diligence it deserves.

We know the Criminal Code already provides for several exceptions where private communications can be intercepted and disclosed. We do have to protect our computer systems because we know the economic devastation hackers, for instance, can cause. The protection of computer systems is an important objective for both government and industry, so incidental disclosure of private communications for this purpose may be tolerable. We in the opposition will rely on our members who serve on the justice committee to ponder the ramifications and to propose amendments if necessary.

The provisions of the bill relating to setting traps, use of force on an airplane and civil enforcement of restitution orders are all worthy of our support. We will accept the amendment regarding warrants for firearms searches as nothing more than a response to a court decision. That is in fact what put this in place. We believe an intended consequence of this will be to offer more protection to firearms owners from unreasonable search under this section. Perhaps when the Liberals discover that it might offer firearms owners more protection than it has in the past, they themselves will move to make an amendment. I hope that does not happen. We know

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how much contempt Liberals have for innocent and law-abiding firearms owners. It has been displayed over and over for years under the registry.

The safety and security of Canadians and their property is the stated objective of the Canadian Alliance criminal justice policy. The bill is largely in keeping with our philosophy. The Canadian Alliance policy number 29 states:

—We recognize the rights of victims of crime and will introduce programs of financial restitution from the offender to the victim as a component of sentencing and parole.

Therefore the Official Opposition is prepared to support the legislation knowing that it will be subject to further study and scrutiny.

In my closing remarks I would like to mention that if the House had adopted the motion that was put forward by my own colleague from Surrey a year ago, we might already have seen this put in place and we might have seen it working today. Whether or not that happened was in the hands of the House and it was voted down. We do have something in place now and we will work with it. That was a good start. We will begin again.

•(1610)

We have only had a brief time to look at the piece of legislation that is before us. If further study and scrutiny reveal weaknesses not evident to us now, we will return with our own amendments some time in the future. In the meantime, I am pleased to support this proposed legislation.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-32 appears to have broad support in the House. I appreciated the remarks from the members opposite. It is encouraging to see that when good legislation comes before the House we all come together and support it. I am very glad to have an opportunity to speak to the bill for the good reason that it is an excellent example of how Parliament does work very well.

Exactly a year ago a delegation of the Hamilton Professional Firefighters Association came to my office. It was a year plus one week; I think it was April 23, 2002. They came to make a representation on behalf of all firemen that the Criminal Code should be amended whereby people who set dangerous or deadly traps in order to harm firefighters responding to alarms would be subject to the maximum penalty that the law allows, life imprisonment, if that trap actually killed a firefighter.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the proposed amendment that the professional firefighters brought before me in my office a year ago. They hoped to amend section 433.1 of the Criminal Code. That amendment would have read:

Every person who intentionally or recklessly causes damage by fire or explosion to property, whether or not that person owns that property, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for life where the fire or explosion causes death or bodily harm to a firefighter who is acting in response to the fire or explosion.

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The object of that amendment was to complement another amendment that they also proposed to the Criminal Code which read that every one who commits an aggravated assault, who wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of a firefighter acting in the course of his duties would be subject to these offences under the Criminal Code.

What that basically refers to, Mr. Speaker, is the idea of setting a trap for firefighters responding to an alarm which might emanate from a premise that is engaged in some sort of illegal activity, presumably drugs or something similar. We have heard from earlier speakers that actual incidents occurred where sites where illicit drugs were being manufactured were deliberately booby trapped so that firefighters who responded to an alarm would be harmed or even killed.

What delights me as a member of Parliament is the fact that this was an initiative to change a law that came from the people, in this case the people were the association of firefighters, responding to a similar situation that was occurring in the United States.

I am happy to stand in the House and draw to the attention of the public that the government did indeed act. Again, as members have commented, what the government has done by Bill C-32 is it has amended section 247 of the Criminal Code and specifically defines the crime of setting a trap for the purpose to injure a firefighter.

What happens here, Mr. Speaker, is that if a person sets the trap, just the very fact that he has set a trap or knows that a trap has been set means that is an offence right at the outset and is liable to a term not exceeding five years. It further goes on that if this is done in a place where there is illegal activity, the term of imprisonment is 10 years. Better than all of that, and which reflects what the firefighters were after, is that everyone who commits an offence under section 1, that is setting a trap, and I am now reading from Bill C-32 "and thereby causes the death of any other person, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for life".

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that is a very good legislative initiative. It is important to remind Canadians that this is Parliament—I will not just say government—this is Parliament acting as a result of representations by Canadians going not just to government MPs, but to Canadian Alliance MPs, to Bloc MPs and to Conservative and NDP MPs.

• (1615)

I well remember when I first came to Parliament nearly 10 years ago that it was quite uncommon for citizen groups to make representations to MPs in their offices, to lobby the MPs. The normal practice was to lobby government officials. In the 1980s under a previous government here in Ottawa, lobbying flourished and that lobbying was primarily directed toward bureaucrats.

I think if one change that has occurred here that has been a very positive change in the last 10 years it is the fact that more and more Canadians are recognizing that the appropriate people to lobby for changes in law, to lobby first, to get onside, is not even the government, is not even the ministers, it is come to the MPs first.

This was a classic example. The association of professional firefighters divided the job across the country. My group came from close to my riding and they were people who were already known to

me and made these representations. And there we have it, exactly one year later the law has changed, and the law has changed in a way that I think actually improves the original proposal of the firefighters. I wanted very much to make that comment.

I wanted to comment also on another change that I do not think has been mentioned so far in this debate. That is the change to the Canada Evidence Act. In this change there are three paragraphs in the Canada Evidence Act that refer to information received from a foreign entity that pertains to the Security of Information Act, and then it goes on to make the connection to national defence or—and this is the change—it inserts the words "national security" where only the word "security" existed. Then it goes on to discuss the whole process of getting a certificate pertaining to this secret information.

The reason I wanted to mention that is that is a change that reflects an error or an oversight that was in our anti-terrorism legislation that was brought forward and passed in the House I believe about a year ago. That was Bill C-36. It was Canada's response to September 11, in which various very necessary changes were made pertaining to the protection of secrets, pertaining to the collection of information. This touched on the whole business of terrorist financing and so on and so forth.

When Bill C-36 was introduced, it caused, I thought, a lot of very healthy debate in the House because similar legislation to Bill C-36 was coming forward in Britain and the United States, the homeland security bill specifically in the United States. This was all to strengthen the ability of the police and the security services to deal with the terrorist threat.

The problem was that in bringing in laws that increase security, that increase police powers, there is always the danger that they will interfere unnecessarily with civil liberties. We had extremely active debate in the House on all sides in which MPs tried to balance the needs for increased police powers with not intruding any more than was necessary on civil liberties. I would like to say actually that I believe that Canada's legislation in Bill C-36 struck this balance better than occurred in the United Kingdom or the United States where I think that there were serious erosions of civil liberties in their parallel legislation.

The reason I am telling this story is that when Bill C-36 was in first reading and was dealing with changes to the official secrets act, which was changed to the Security of Information Act, there was a clause in which it defined potentially injurious information.

• (1620)

This particular definition is an important definition that affected all other aspects of the bill, or almost all other aspects. In defining potentially injurious information, the original Bill C-36 said:

"Potentially injurious information" means information of a type that, if it were disclosed to the public, could injure international relations national defence or security.

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What was wrong with that clause and why it was so necessary to change it was that the definition of potentially injurious information which affected all kinds of information that was to be collected and distributed by the police services, simply said “national defence or security”. By not having the adjective “national” security and simply using the word “security”, it opened the door in this legislation to expanding police powers that would touch all manner of policing events or all manner of criminal or even quasi-criminal or non-criminal investigations. Security was far too broad a word and it was a dangerous word.

This is another example, I want Canadians to know, of this place working I think extremely well. Some of us behind the curtains actually, approached the minister of the day and pointed out the danger of this clause referring only to security and not to national security. I am happy to say that subsequently when the bill came to report stage, the government amended that particular clause and put in the words “national security”.

I cannot emphasize how enormously important that apparently small change was because it limited the expansion of powers to terrorist acts, to acts that affected the entire country, not to acts that may affect narrow police interests or narrow security interests. I thought that was a very fine reaction to the government and Parliament working at its best.

The reason why I am referring to this in Bill C-32 is I do not think people would otherwise have noticed that the government is continuing to make sure that the police powers do not go too far and that there are proper limitations on police powers, because in making that change to Bill C-36 the government would have appeared to have overlooked the fact that the Canada Evidence Act has a similar problem where the word “security” was used without the adjective “national”.

Therefore, one of the changes in this legislation is to make these changes to the Security of Information Act. This is our official secrets act. It is a very important act because we cannot have the government keeping secrets for any security reason. We cannot give the government huge powers to clamp the lid on things for any security reasons, as they have done in other jurisdictions. We are not a police state. We are a democracy and it is very important to define that it is national security, not all security. There we have it. That is the change that is in Bill C-36. Quite frankly, it is an excellent bill in other aspects, but that change alone I think is simply excellent.

If I have a little more time, I would also like to comment on another aspect of this change that I think may be otherwise overlooked in the bill. My involvement in this particular debate is that I am very interested in issues of secrecy and police powers. I think it is important to note that this bill also corrects another problem that existed in Bill C-36, the anti-terrorism legislation, in making a change to the Security of Information Act, again the original official secrets act. This change is a classic example. The drafters have to be very careful in legislation because just a simple past tense or present tense error can lead to a serious problem.

• (1625)

I draw everyone's attention in Bill C-32 to a change in section 21 which changes a single paragraph of the Security of Information Act. It basically says that there should be security of information on the

identity of persons or bodies that have been approached to be confidential sources of information to the intelligence services of Canada. In other words, spies and human resource personnel for the gathering of intelligence.

In the original Bill C-36, they forgot to include those that may have acted in this capacity for Canada in the past. What we have here is a change to change the present tense to the past tense so that those who have given sensitive intelligence, police intelligence, or anti-terrorism intelligence to Canada in the past could continue to enjoy the protection of the Security of Information Act.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows today is April 28, the national day of mourning. What many labour groups, along with the United Steelworkers of America and the families of the Westray victims of 12 years ago, have been asking for is legislation to be brought forth so that corporations, directors and front line managers of these corporations, who wilfully and knowingly put the lives of employees at risk will be charged, fined and punished appropriately.

We have had two private members' bills in those 12 years. We have had it brought to committee which recommended that this type of legislation be put forward. Here we are 12 years later talking about justice legislation and this particular aspect is not in the legislation.

I would like the hon. member to elaborate as to why his government has yet to see fit to enact this type of legislation to protect the interests of workers and their families, and to enact a deterrent of serious consequences to any corporation that wilfully and knowingly puts the lives of workers at risk. Does he not think that the 26 miners who died and their families deserve at least that from the government?

• (1630)

**Mr. John Bryden:** In my past, Mr. Speaker, I was a police reporter and I covered a lot of accidents that occurred in the industrial world. The most common cause of accidents that I covered as a reporter, and these were fatalities, were those that occurred in small businesses. It could be a bake shop where someone gets caught in the dough making machine. In fact, that actually happened.

The majority of industrial accidents that led to fatalities in my experience involved small businesses and small corporations. One of the reasons for this is that small enterprises—whether they be fishermen on the east coast or farmers, another good category—hire temporary workers. Lamentably, there is a tendency in these small businesses to ignore the rules or be ignorant of the rules. This often leads to innocent people being killed. Indeed, a very unfortunate accident happened like this very near to home with me in which a young man was killed. In fact, it was United Co-operatives, a farm co-op, where the young man was killed.

*Government Orders*

The difficulty with the legislation that has come to the House at various times as private members' legislation is that if we were to apply it to large corporations, like the Westray instance, that in fairness we would have to apply it to all corporations and all small businesses. I think this would be very difficult. If we were to pass that legislation in that form I think the sad thing would be that many thousands of small entrepreneurs would be driven out of business or alternatively would be sent to jail because that is what was proposed in those private members' bills.

I am very sympathetic to those who lost lives in the Westray mine disaster. There is no doubt that there was incompetence and improprieties that occurred at the time. However, to take that instant and try to apply it across all of Canada and all businesses from large to small, I think is something that may save some lives, a few lives perhaps, not many perhaps, but it could cause a lot of harm and damage to the many small entrepreneurs who do, I am sorry to say, take short cuts. While we lament that they do, I am not sure that we want to pay the cost that is proposed by the private member's legislation that was discussed here.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** That is an incredible statement, Mr. Speaker, to say that we cannot afford to protect workers from employers, whether they be small or big, who knowingly put their lives at risk.

I do not care if we have to shut down every small business that does that. We should not allow anybody who employs another person to knowingly put lives at risk while the person is performing employment. It is simply unacceptable.

However, my other question for the hon. member pertains to companies that are fined, either through an environmental fine or through a legislative fine. For example, we had a particular warehouse in Nova Scotia where an individual fell to his death. The company was proven negligent. It had to pay a \$100,000 fine and the company a year later was able to write that fine off as a business expense, a tax deduction. We can imagine how the parents of that young man must have felt.

Does the hon. member believe that any corporation or any business that receives a fine which is supposed to act as a deterrent should be eligible to write that off as a tax deduction because I find it incredible that it still exists in this country?

•(1635)

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to remember that every province has labour laws and there are federal laws as well that control the workplace to ensure that the workplace is safe and if there are unsafe practices being followed they are spotted and the people fined.

The problem with the negligence idea that was advanced by the member's party in its private member's legislation was that it would create a penalty of negligence that would be applicable to every farmer.

Obviously, the member opposite has never worked on a farm as I have. Perhaps he has never worked in small enterprises. Perhaps he has never worked on a ship at sea. However constantly, and certainly regrettably, people in these small enterprises that are not controlled by large unions take shortcuts and they knowingly take shortcuts.

If we were to send them to jail every time they took a shortcut, then we would stop all of industry. We would certainly stop the farming community because we cannot legislate to death human nature. People do take chances. I am sorry. It is regrettable, but it does happen.

However, I do not want to see a world in which everyone is afraid to move, afraid to take any risk whatsoever for fear that big brother will come down with both thumbs.

There are adequate laws and adequate legislation provincially that govern the workplace. To accelerate it, to make every farmer, fisherman, baker, and small entrepreneur liable to criminal negligence, I think would require a little tempering in what we are trying to do. No matter how well intended, we must always look at the grand unintended consequences and what the grand unintended consequences would be in this case.

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague from across the way would care to answer a couple of questions.

Last year when my colleague from Surrey put forward Motion No. 376 the member's party thought it was bad legislation. I would like to know how it could have been bad legislation a year ago and good legislation today?

The second question I would like to ask is this. Does the hon. member believe, as I do, that when an offender is given a life sentence for committing a crime that it should indeed be a life sentence and the offender should not be out of jail in eight to ten years?

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that what was proposed by her colleague was a motion. It was not legislation. What we had before and the change that we have here is legislation. It is the actual building change. It is not enough to simply come before the House and express one's good intentions.

I think the member's colleague, if he had been really serious about his intent to change the Criminal Code, should have presented it as a private member's bill. Indeed, I suspect he probably would have succeeded. We do not know looking back, but private member's bills from the opposition have succeeded in the House. The Bloc Québécois for certain has had several and I know the Canadian Alliance has had several. As a matter of fact, there have been more successful private member's bills from the opposition than from the government side.

It was a motion and we cannot go back in time. Perhaps this side may have felt that the motion was not the way to go and I do not remember the original wording. However, I am sorry that the member did not succeed in the sense that he obviously contributed much to the debate at least to Bill C-32.

If I may say to the member and to her colleague, we all succeeded by the changes in Bill C-32 that arose because we were lobbied. It was not just the Canadian Alliance that was lobbied. We were lobbied on this side and a motion or a bill could have come as easily from this side as a private member's initiative, but in the end it was the government that took up the baton and championed the cause.

*Government Orders*

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The vote is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### CANADA AIRPORTS ACT

**Hon. Jane Stewart (for the Minister of Transport):** moved that Bill C-27, an act respecting airport authorities and other airport operators and amending other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-27, the Canada airports act, introduced in the House on March 20. It is part of the vision for our transportation system policy framework embodied in "Straight Ahead - A Vision for Transportation in Canada" that was released in February by the Minister of Transport.

The Canada airports act would be part of moving this vision forward and would guide the continued development of a sustainable airport system. This is a piece of legislation that has been developed for the longer term. Its purpose is not to address the short term challenges facing the entire air industry sector at this time.

These more immediate concerns have the full attention of the government. Let me assure the House that the government is actively monitoring the current situation in the airline industry. As we all know, the air industry is facing challenges, such as the SARS health issue, the war in Iraq, and fluctuating fuel costs.

The government remains fully committed in reviewing its policy on rents collected at the airports that it leases. The minister hopes to be able to announce shortly the direction the government intends to take on this matter.

The Canada airports act would provide a legislated economic policy framework for the only part of our transportation infrastructure that is lacking one, namely airports. Canada's transportation policy has evolved over the years in response to changing times and conditions. Today, we need to modernize and reform Canada's airports policy by enshrining some key obligations and governance principles in legislation. In doing so, we are contributing to the governance agenda as set out in the most recent Speech from the Throne.

The act responds in a positive manner to the recommendations in the government mandated local airport authority review report of 1999 and the Auditor General's report of October 2000. It conveys the governance response to the recommendations on airport governance in the Canada Transportation Act review panel report and in the final report of the independent observer on airline restructuring.

[*Translation*]

It reflects comprehensive consultations with the affected airport operators, air carriers and provincial and territorial governments.

[*English*]

The Canada airports act is intended to build on the successes of the 1994 airport commercialization policy, while addressing new and emerging issues that have arisen, with 10 years experience since that policy was announced.

The bill contains a new declaration for a national airports policy that replaces the 1994 policy which was primarily divestiture oriented. This declaration is very much in line with the new transportation policy statement set out in Bill C-26, the transportation amendment act, introduced in the House on February 25.

The declaration recognizes that it is in the public interest to have a national system of airports that is operated in a manner that is safe, secure, efficient, economically sustainable, transparent and environmentally responsible. The new policy also articulates the requirement to provide facilities and services to air carriers in an effective, pro-competitive manner and to provide opportunities for air carriers and passengers to express their views on key airport development issues and fees.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

The policy recognizes local and regional interests through the activities and governance structures of airport authorities, as well as the role airports play in linking the air transportation system to other modes of transportation and linking the communities they serve to the rest of the world.

The new national airports policy declaration will guide airports in how they must implement the requirements of the act.

[*English*]

Upon passage, the Canada airports act will apply to 29 airports that account for 95% of the traffic of all scheduled passenger and cargo traffic in Canada. This includes the 26 airports identified in 1994 as comprising the national airports system and other airports of national significance due to their strategic geographic location, continued federal residual ownership or because they serve more than 200,000 passengers annually.

The bill contains the key elements that constitute an economic policy framework to strengthen the governance, transparency and accountability of these airports.

I will say a few words on each of these.

*Government Orders*

Let me start with the government's role and powers. The government's key role is to protect the public interest as it relates to airports, namely, monitoring the airport system and making policies to promote the integrity and long term sustainability, protecting federal property and promoting good corporate governance.

The Government of Canada will be granted the power to give directions and create regulations, for example, in the provision of equitable access for air carriers to airport facilities such as gates, bridges and counters, slot coordination, federal visibility and environmental requirements. The Government of Canada will also be given emergency powers to remedy extraordinary disruptions similar to what is provided in the Canada Transportation Act.

As for the roles and obligations of all affected airport operators, there will be a requirement for them to provide information to the Minister of Transport in support of carrying out his role of overseer, policy-maker, landlord and regulator.

[*Translation*]

Operators will also have to develop a pro-competitive, equitable access policy for airlines wanting to use essential airport facilities and services, and to post information on fees.

Airports will also have to give access to state and military aircraft, and airports with international traffic will have to ensure visibility of symbols of Canada.

All will have to help Canada meet its international obligations including trade commitments, for example, obligations under bilateral agreements with other countries.

[*English*]

Turning to disclosure and accountability, the focus of the act is on higher transparency through public reporting. There is a more limited application to the airports in the territorial capitals and airports not operated by authorities. However all affected airport operators will have to produce annual reports with audited financial statements and hold annual meetings that are open to the public.

In the case of airport authorities, the requirements are spelled out in greater detail and include those respecting financial information on investments in subsidiary and minority interest corporations. They include the requirement for an independent, comprehensive performance review to be conducted every five years from the date of transfer. To increase transparency, authorities will have to have all their key documents available for public review including their leases and performance review reports.

Perhaps one of the most important subjects covered in Bill C-27 relates to airport fees. Although notice requirements are covered in our leases, this bill would establish a more formal fee setting process respecting aeronautical fees and passenger fees of general application.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

The bill sets out the charging principles and requires that a methodology for determining fees be developed that will make it clearer how they meet financial needs. It establishes a procedure for

notices of fee adjustments and obligatory consultations with concerned parties.

The bill makes provision for appeals to the Canadian Transportation Agency in cases of alleged non-compliance with these procedures or with charging principles.

[*English*]

The proposed bill includes rules on the use of airport improvement fees, AIFs, collected from passengers. AIFs can only be charged in support of capital projects and those projects must be identified. Smaller airports, with traffic of less than 400,000 passengers, are permitted to use passenger fees to cover operating costs and they must also be disclosed.

I would like to explain some of the elements specific only to airport authorities, those related to their corporate structure and governance regime.

Unlike the port authorities that were continued under the Canada Marine Act of 1997, airports were divested without the benefit of a specific legislative framework. All but three airport authorities were incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act, part II, as for not for profit entities.

We have now determined that it is more appropriate for the airport authorities operating leased airports of national significance to be incorporated under their own legislation. Consequently, all the airport authorities will be continued under the act. This means that instead of 21 different statements of purpose, the airport authorities will have a single, simplified statement that applies equally to all of them. Initially this will affect 18 airport authorities. This will be accomplished without any requirements other than to amend their bylaws to comply with the act.

The rights of the airport authorities will be preserved and they will continue as not for profit entities without share capital that are not agents of the Crown. The airport authorities will have the power to engage in activities defined as essential and complimentary activities of the airport and to create subsidiaries within investment limits.

Bill C-27 would also establish the framework for a more uniform corporate governance regime for authorities that updates and strengthens what we have now.

[*Translation*]

Nothing can replace a solid regime of governance and transparency for airports of national significance that provide an essential public service. The regime will be based on elements such as the structure of boards of directors, the necessary skills, the rules of eligibility for directors and rules regarding conflicts of interest.

All airport authorities will be subject to the same requirements regarding the make-up of boards of directors, with the possibility of choosing directors based on local factors in the region where the airport is located.

[*English*]

The bill spells out the types of organizations that can become selecting bodies that appoint or nominate directors as well as the processes for nominations and appointments of directors. These bodies include the federal government, the provinces, the regional authorities and municipalities and five categories of non-governmental entities, including the Air Carrier Industry Association. This uniform yet flexible regime is designed to ensure that no single entity controls the board and that persons with all the necessary skills are identified.

The proposed bill sets out in detail the duties of the boards of directors and will require them to have a governance committee and an audit committee. In addition, there are rules on auditor selection and rotation, on public bid solicitation and mandated consultation with air carriers and the community. As well the airport authority obligations respecting compliance with the Official Languages Act have been transferred without change.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

We believe that with this bill we have struck a balance between the freedoms that airport authorities have and the need for increased accountability. We also believe that we have struck a balance between the wish of air carriers to have their say in the decisions of the authorities, and the independence of said authorities.

[*English*]

There are pro-competitive provisions to assist the airlines and the airports in their decisions on access to essential airport facilities such as slots, gates, bridges and the like. We believe these are measures that will contribute to ensuring the viability of air carriers. How communities can relate to their airports is made much clearer.

Many of these obligations are already in some form in our leases with the authorities, but we have done more. We have offered to provide advice on how to be compliant with the act to any airport that asks. Members should know that some airport authorities have already begun to put in place transitional measures to bring themselves into compliance more quickly.

The bill is a significant piece of legislation which I know has been anticipated by members. The Minister of Transport looks forward to the debate on its contents and to discussing it in detail in standing committees.

**Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand to speak on Bill C-27 today. I listened with interest to the words of the parliamentary secretary to the minister and I will probably have some direct comments on some of those things if time permits.

With a bill like this, let us start with the worst. One of the worst things in the bill is that the powers of the minister are not subject to review or appeal. He gives himself awesome powers in the bill.

### *Government Orders*

Let us just imagine how this would work in other areas like, for example, the former minister of finance, who says, “Let us close some of the tax loopholes in all these foreign countries where we have Canadian corporations that are getting tremendous tax benefits, but let us leave one open, Bermuda, let us say”, where, as it happens, the former minister of finance has all his ships in his private company registered, “and let us have that not subject to review or appeal”.

How about the former minister of public works and government services, who says, using these kinds of powers, “Let us have the power to award contracts without tender. Let us be able to send them out to our friends, our donors, and let us get into a big advertising scheme and pay these people whether they actually do the work we have contracted for or not”.

Or maybe we will have the former minister of justice, who will come up with a bill like Bill C-68, tell us that it is going to cost \$2 million and, when it costs a billion, says, “That is fine. Let us leave it that way. Let us not review it and most certainly let us not have any appeal”.

Given the mistakes that the Liberal government and its various cabinet ministers have made in the past, I think the very notion that we would give any minister on that side of the House the powers to make decisions that are not subject to either review or appeal is absolutely absurd, yet that is exactly what Bill C-27 does.

I will now get to some of the specifics. One is airport authority directors. The authority makeup calls for up to 15 directors on the board and it is quite possible that there would not be so much as one person representing the airlines. The required makeup includes two from the federal government; we notice that the government always make sure that it is on the list. The mandatory requirements are two from the federal government, one from the provincial government, three to five from municipal government, and then three to five from two of the following five groups. To be sure, one of those five groups is the national association of domestic air carriers, but they do not have to use that one. The other alternatives are economic organizations, provincial associations of lawyers, engineers or accountants, community organizations and unions. Out of all of these three to five are taken. It is quite possible that in some cases there would not be so much as a single representative of the airlines on those boards.

This is a not for profit corporation we are talking about, the airport authority set up by the government, as the parliamentary secretary has stated. By contrast, the same government set up Nav Canada. Nav Canada also has 15 directors of which four are from the airlines and one general aviation representative on the board. Five out of 15, one-third of the board, are absolutely guaranteed to be from the aviation industry, yet for the airports of the country, the national airports, the government has a board that could quite conceivably end up with not so much as a single airline representative, yet they are the ones that have a primary interest. The primary paying customer of the airports is the aviation industry, but with this bill there is not a commitment to have even one industry representative on the board.

*Government Orders*

●(1700)

The airlines must have the ability to influence terminal designs in order to ensure that cost effective designs reduce costs. We can imagine how we could build a very elaborate and very fancy edifice with a lot of architectural oddities, wasted space, a lot of dramatic flare in the design and incredibly expensive furnishings, none of which are part of the functions of the airport. We do not want a bunch of ugly boxes dotting the country. We want buildings that are pleasant to be in and are effective for the flow of traffic and so on, but we all know that there are people who have a tendency to get carried away. With that very primary customer possibly not being on the board, there is nothing to prevent airport authorities from saying "We can charge pretty much what we want, add airport improvement fees, and build something pretty fancy. It would be a monument to our work and our board to have such an incredibly beautiful airport".

We do like to have nice things, but we also like to have a functioning, cost effective airline industry, particularly at this time. We are finding out that the airline industry is having a tremendous amount of trouble staying afloat and the last thing we should be doing is coming forward with a bill that could add to those costs instead of trying to find ways to control them.

Speaking of controls, there needs to be some control on the rent that the federal government charges airports. The federal government used to lose hundreds of millions of dollars a year in airport operations. Now it makes hundreds of millions of dollars and all the improvements that are done to the airports are done at no cost to the government; now there is a sweetheart deal. The government used to have airport landing fees and a variety of fees that it charged the airlines. It used to lose a lot of money and it still had to operate the airport and do any improvements.

I was in the aviation industry for many years and saw how bad many of these terminals were. In fact, even now some of them are still in the process of growing out of that neglect by government. Right here in Ottawa is a prime example. We have a very inadequate terminal in Ottawa, but as we drive up to it, we see a very beautiful new terminal being constructed off to the right. That new terminal will be in operation sometime next spring, actually ahead of schedule. It is being built by the Ottawa Airport Authority at no cost to the federal government. We have that wholly inadequate terminal, out of which we are still operating while the airport authority puts up the new building, yet the government is essentially gouging these airport authorities. The government is taking huge profits out of these businesses, if we want to call them that, on which it formerly lost money.

Government rent increases are exorbitant, not just from where the rents started but in regard to where they have gone since the government has had these airport authorities take over. For example, when the Winnipeg Airports Authority officially took over the operation of the Winnipeg airport in 1997, the rent was \$900,000 a year. That is quite a bit of money. Basically it is \$1 million a year. Since that time, the Winnipeg Airports Authority has made many improvements, none of which were funded by the federal government. It has done this through its own drive, through its own funds raised in operating the airport. The rent that the federal government will charge by the year 2007 will have increased to \$7 million from \$900,000 in 1997. No wonder the airline industry is in

trouble. It gives new meaning to the old adage "I am from the government and I am here to help". With that kind of help, it is a wonder we have an airline industry left at all.

National airports are not the only ones affected by bad government decisions of this nature. When the government, as the parliamentary secretary described, set about creating the national airports program, it also set about divesting itself of all the other airports in Canada, all the smaller feeder airports and community airports. The government pushed these onto the municipalities, many of which really did not want to take them. They did not want to be operating airports. They have enough responsibilities on their own. In my hometown, the airport of Castlegar used to lose, under the operation of Transport Canada, half a million dollars a year, so the government was telling Castlegar, a small community of about 7,000 people, "You had better take over the airport, because if you do not, no one will take it over, so we guess we do not need an airport and we will just shut it down". That is a hell of a load, frankly, to put on a small community of 7,000 people.

●(1705)

At the time the government asked Castlegar to take over, it said there were certain things that the city would be able to do to be cost effective and to hopefully get rid of some of this deficit, because of course adding half a million dollars a year in costs for a small community like that would be absolutely devastating. Castlegar was allowed to put on an airport improvement fee. The parliamentary secretary said the minister was very generous, that he would allow the city to continue to operate it to cover operational costs. It is a good thing, because otherwise it could not operate that airport.

There is one other thing that was done. At the time the City of Castlegar took over the operation of its airport, there was an airport fire department with a full complement of staff, vehicles, facilities and everything. They were well-trained, very conscientious people and I want to make sure that no one misunderstands that. I am not in any way suggesting that airport firefighters are not highly motivated and well-trained, conscientious people. However, in many of these airports, they are largely unnecessary. I worked directly at airports for 22 years. During that 22 years of working at airports, I have never once seen a firefighter save a life, not because they are not properly trained or motivated but because the opportunity never arose.

*Government Orders*

First, to put it graphically, the aircraft, if that is what we are dealing with, has to have the decency to have its emergency at the airport. If it happens somewhere en route and comes down somewhere off the airport, then the fact that there is a fire department at the airport is irrelevant. Second, gruesomely but accurately, there have to be survivors. If there are no survivors, then the whole exercise is for naught as well. Third, in terms of response time, it has to happen suddenly and without notice. If an aircraft has a problem and is coming in to land, the people on board want you standing by. They are not going to wait until they get to the airport to tell you this; they radio ahead and advise. So firefighters do not necessarily have to be at the airport. They can come from some distance.

The federal government said, "We know that there are a lot of costs in operating airports like Castlegar. We know that we lost a lot of money. We also know that there has to be some level of protection for public safety. That is reasonable". It said, "You do not necessarily need to have the firefighters stationed right at the airport if you can demonstrate to us an acceptable response time for bringing in those firefighters from somewhere else".

Castlegar and many other airports like it did exactly that and said, "Here is our plan, here is the location, here is the distance, here is the staffing we have, here is the response time. It has been all properly demonstrated. We can do this. This is our plan, presented in detail". The federal government said, "We accept your plan. Do you now accept the airport, with this and all the other conditions that have been agreed to?" And the City of Castlegar, and many others, over 70 of them, said, "Yes, we do".

The federal government, having had these little communities accept these airports, now has come back with Canadian aviation regulations 308, CARs 308, which now potentially would place the onus on many of these small communities that run these airports. They basically took money losers off the hands of the federal government. They came to an agreement with the federal government before they took them over in which the government said, "You don't have to keep the firefighters on. We agree with your proposal. It is safe". Now the government is saying, "We changed our mind. Thank you for taking over the airport. Thank you for getting this loser off our hands and coming up with better, more efficient ways to operate it than we ever could. Now we are going to force you to put the firefighters back at the airport".

• (1710)

For small airports such as Castlegar, or even small communities in some cases, that is an overwhelming expense to visit upon a community of 7,000 people. In some cases they are spread over a bit bigger population. That is absolute total irresponsibility on the part of government. Yet the minister wants us to think this is a good bill when it does not even begin to address things like that.

I would like to talk about some of the things the government is involved in that also have not been dealt with in the bill, things where the government could be saving money. It is just like the example I gave on small community airports where the government was so inefficient and ineffective in its operation that it lost a fortune. We should look at the things for which it is still responsible, that it

still actually operates or an operation it has taken over and see whether it is cost effective.

I am talking now about airport security in general terms. I would like to give a couple of examples that really draw to light the fact that airport security, to a certain degree, is a myth. It is nothing but a facade to make people feel safe. It is something that stops an honest person from accidentally doing something wrong, like taking along a little penknife that he forgot was in their briefcase. It stops him from doing that. It does not stop someone who intends to take some form of weapon that could be used against other people on board an aircraft.

Let me give an example of that as it applies to security at the House of Commons, post-September 11. Undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, you have noticed the large number of RCMP officers at the foot of the road coming into the House of Commons down by the Confederation building. Half of the parking lot, which used to be there, is gone. A great big trailer is there. There is a big covered inspection station. At any given time there are as many RCMP officers and RCMP vehicles at that location as most individual detachments in my entire riding have.

What is their purpose? Their purpose is to inspect vehicles that drive on to the hill. They stop them. They check who is driving them. They check where they are going and why they are going there. They may look in the trunk. They may look under the hood. They have fancy roll out mirrors that they can roll underneath to see if anything is attached.

One time I asked an RCMP officer why they did that and what was the purpose. The officer said that it was to make sure somebody did not take something into Parliament that was not allowed, that would be dangerous and that could be used for destructive purposes. It was to prevent terrorists from smuggling explosives on to the Hill.

The RCMP officers stop these cars, open their hoods and their trunks and roll fancy little silly mirrors underneath the vehicles. Maybe they are dripping water on to the mirrors. Right beside that station people off the street, coming from wherever, dressed in whatever manner, without any security or any connection with the House of Commons whatsoever, walk on to the Hill with backpacks, with shopping bags and with big packages of things. They come on the Hill not only at the bottom by Confederation building where the vehicles are stopped but at a number of points along Wellington. They just walk on the Hill. If this is about stopping explosives and all these other things, what is the point of looking under a car's hood when there are people who we do not know walking on to the Hill carrying backpacks?

I am not suggesting that we stop and search every person who comes on the Hill. I am showing the absurdity of looking under the hood of a car to ensure there is nothing tied to a tailpipe but not worrying about people, whoever they may be, coming on to the Hill with backpacks, shopping bags and whatever other method of conveying stuff on to the Hill that they might happen to use. It is absolutely absurd.

*Government Orders*

In my entire riding there are 27 communities, 18 city councils and two regional districts. It is 27,000 square kilometres. We have 100 RCMP in my riding. We have about 100 RCMP officers on the Hill, never mind the House of Commons security people.

• (1715)

RCMP officers are not inside the buildings. They are out there wielding these silly little mirrors underneath the cars and watching all the other entrances, not for the people with backpacks and shopping bags but to ensure that someone does not drive through. I pointed this out to them one time and they said that if those people tried to come into a building, then their backpacks and shopping bags would be checked. Why do we not check the vehicles when they come into the building? That is absurd.

However, if we are worried about what is in the vehicle, then why would we not be worried about a vehicle coming through without anything, being checked through and then having half a dozen people with big backpacks or whatever come and put them into cars. Now they are inside the parliamentary grounds and the car has whatever has been taken in unchecked in the trunk, or back seat or wherever else. The concept is absurd. When we get to airports, we have exactly the same concept: the facade of security.

We now have plastic knives on board aircraft. We get plastic knives but we get China plates, glass glasses and steel forks. When I fly, I have a meal on board Air Canada. I am given two steel forks. Something happened some time ago now. The trays are a little crowded. I was working and then dinner came, so I put my work away and had my dinner. One of the forks must have been knocked off the tray and landed in my briefcase unbeknownst to me. When I got home and took the stuff out of my suitcase I discovered I had one of these forks. Being an honest person, I wanted to return it to Air Canada because it certainly was not my intention to steal that fork.

The next time I went to the airport, I took the fork with me. When I got to airport security I put all my metal stuff, my pen, my organizer and my cell phone, into the little basket. I also included the fork because I certainly was not trying to sneak it on board the aircraft. Security looked at it and said that I could not take it on board. I asked why not? I asked the security officers where they thought I had got it? It had an Air Canada logo right on it. I told them that I would be given two more as soon as I got on board the plane. They said that they knew that, that it was silly but those were the rules. They confiscated the fork, and I presume that Air Canada never got it back. I was stopped from taking on board a steel fork. We are paying a fortune to stop people from taking on something that the airline will give them once they get on board anyway.

While I had that fork, I looked at it because there were some striking comparisons. A lot of people may have found that when they tried to get on board the aircraft, they were stopped because they had one of those little manicure clippers, the kind that people squeeze together to clip their nails. It has a tiny slide out file. People can take the clippers on board but the files have to be broken off. I had one of those at home which had not been modified for airport security. When I looked at the fork, much to my surprise the tines on the fork were longer than the file I was required to break off if I wanted to go on board the aircraft with it.

We are not talking about John Q. Citizen. We are not talking about some accountant or a school teacher going on board to do something stupid. Conceptually at least we are talking about terrorists who would hijack the plane or do something incredibly disruptive on board. Do they need an inch and a half long nail file, especially given the training that many of them have? If they take an ordinary wooden lead pencil and hold it so the eraser part is in the palm of their hand and the rest of the pencil protrudes between their second and third fingers, that is infinitely more dangerous and more deadly than a sharpened stiletto in our hands. Yet they do nothing about that.

Let us talk about an ordinary credit card. A person can actually hone the edge of a plastic credit card to the point where it is as sharp as a knife. Speaking of knives, they make composite material knives, special hard plastics, that one could actually strap to one's leg and go through security. It will not set off any alarms because it is not metal. It will not be found in the X-ray machine because a person's leg does not go through. Yet it ends up on board in the hands of someone who is trained to use that type of thing.

• (1720)

That is the facade we are going through and nothing will change that. There are totally different ways of dealing with it. Many suggestions have been made, including something that is politically incorrect but nonetheless effective. Something like profiling is very open to criticism but it is effective. The Israelis have had one hijacking. They are a target, yet they have had one hijacking. That is the method they use. What we are doing is completely ineffective.

The carpet cutters that were taken on board were not snuck on board. They were taken on board because they were allowed. Now we do not allow carpet cutters but we still allow pencils and credit cards. The airlines still give out steel forks and regular glasses on board the plane. There are wine bottles, liquor bottles, all these things. Even things like a shoelace in the hands of a highly trained person is a deadly weapon. We have to be realistic about the incredible amount of money we spend and what it is supposed to do.

To put it in a more specific manner as to how we can save money in a lot of these airports, I go back to the example at Castlegar.

First, let me talk about the major airports. The major airports now have what the government calls enhanced security. More people have been hired and given training. Bigger and better X-ray machines are being put in and there is talk about putting in CAT scans. There are explosives sniffers and all kinds of things. Supposedly this is pretty effective.

Then we go to small communities like in my area: Cranbrook, Castlegar, Penticton. We do not even have basic X-ray machines. We have some very conscientious people who check hand luggage and make passengers walk through metal detectors. For all their training, it is incredibly easy to conceal things for those who would do that type of thing. Obviously it is easier to get something through there than it is when one gets to a big airport and it is run through a CAT scan.

*Government Orders*

However once people go through that and they get on board the plane, that plane flies around all that fancy enhanced security and deposits them on the secure side of the airport. All the money being spent to put this stuff into the major airports is for naught because we let people get on at the least secure airport and fly them around them.

How can the government save money? Places like Castlegar, Cranbrook and Penticton have Dash 8 service. Anyone can charter a Dash 8. It is not a big deal. They do not even use the terminal. They get on the plane and fly to whatever place that plane has been chartered. Why would people worry about getting on board a Dash 8 to hijack it? They can lease the plane and take it wherever they want?

I suggest the government look at doing away with airport security in the small airports that only have small turbo prop service. It should let people get on board in those places and not worry about checking. When passengers fly into places like Vancouver or Calgary or other places, the passengers should simply be unloaded into the general part of the airport so they do not go into the secure side. If they are only flying from Castlegar to Vancouver on a business trip, they are on their way, no hassle and no cost. If they are connecting to other places or flying overseas, they should go through this enhanced security. There is some logic at least to that.

It is still essentially ineffective for someone who is determined enough but at least there is some rationale behind that and at least we have eliminated the cost of security in a lot of airports where there really is no justification for it. The old adage for this one is "a chain is as strong as its weakest link". It is a phenomenal waste of taxpayer money to put a CAT scan in Vancouver and one in Castlegar then fly them around the CAT scan in Vancouver having gone through in Castlegar.

• (1725)

Clause 116 would require every airport authority to display the Canadian flag in the terminal and in any other place to which the public has access. I like to see the Canadian flag as much as anyone. The people are arriving in Canada. The minister has suggested that these would be at airports that have international travel. I would suggest that it is probably already there. However if the government wants to formalize it I think it is going way over the top in terms of the bill. Beyond that, it would require that signs be erected in prominent locations around the airport and in every terminal building proclaiming that the airport is owned by the Government of Canada.

The only possible reason for doing that would be to fool travellers into believing that the new terminal, built with airport improvement fees, was somehow provided by the government. It is a deception at best and a fraudulent misrepresentation at worst.

Let us say that we own a business. We rent a building and make all kinds of development improvements to the building because we have an expansive operation. Why on earth would we put up signs proclaiming that the building and all the wonderful things belong to somebody else? It does not happen.

Why should these airport authorities put up prominent advertising saying that the building they are leasing happens to belong to the Government of Canada, especially in buildings such as the new terminal building that will be opened next spring in Ottawa which

does not have 5¢ of federal money? Yes, it belongs to the federal government, and what a sweetheart deal that is, but not 5¢ was put in. In fact, a huge amount of money was extracted from the very people who paid to put that building up.

Clause 57 would limit an airport authority's ability to invest in another corporation, limiting it to 2% of gross revenues per year. This effectively would kill off Vancouver airport's very profitable YVR airport services by severely restricting its ability to finance projects in places such as Chile, Jamaica and Hamilton. The profits from these projects come back to be utilized by this non-profit authority and reduce the overall costs of airport operations.

The airport authority is made up of business people and the government is the last entity in the country that should be giving the private sector rules and advice on how to make a profit.

Going back to the example of Edmonton, here is an airport like all the rest on which the federal government lost money. The Winnipeg airport authority has made a tremendous number of improvements to its airport at no cost to the government. Its reward was, first of all, being hit with \$900,000 a year in rent, and, if that is not bad enough, since 1997 its rent has been increased many times and will be \$7 million in 2007.

Another thing that is significantly absent in the bill are rules regarding airport improvement fee money collected by the airlines on behalf of airports. This is curious given that the government has already recognized the need to protect its own money in the name of the air traveller's security charge currently being collected by airlines. The airlines are required to hold that money in trust separate from general revenues.

All funds collected by the airlines on behalf of others should be held in trust. It should not become part of the individual airline's revenue and then some other charge come out at some other point. If it is collected by the airline on behalf of someone else then it should be held separate.

As of April 4 Air Canada, which is, as we know, in a lot of trouble these days, owes Canada's largest airports many millions of dollars for airport improvement fees collected. That money is now tied up in Air Canada's bankruptcy protection hearings.

When we talk about small airports, as I have with my home airport of Castlegar, it does not take a lot of funds that were budgeted for and counted on by that community to run into serious trouble if they suddenly find that they are not getting paid those fees.

*Government Orders*

•(1730)

I would like to talk in general terms about the fact that the bill has too many errors and omissions for the aviation public to deal with. There are always a few things in a bill that someone will not like or a few things that should be in it but are not. That is what makes up Bill C-27. A vast majority of the things in the bill should not be in it or should at least be better modified. If the government were truly responsible a lot of things would be in the bill but unfortunately they are not. Committees should be tasked with fine-tuning bills, not doing major overhauls.

I want to touch on a few things the parliamentary secretary to the minister said. He said that the government was building on the 1994 airport program it introduced and that this was new international airport policy that was building on this and doing things well. One would think that when it takes nine years to put something together it would be put together a lot better than the government has done with this. There are so many problems in the legislation that it is absolutely absurd.

The parliamentary secretary spoke about monitoring and promoting good corporate policy and yet the government does not have any concept of good corporate policy. Everything it does is either touched with corruption, like the former minister of public works and government services, or it is corrupted with absolute financial irresponsibility, like the former minister of justice who came before Parliament with a bill that he said would cost \$2 million and now has cost \$1 billion. While all of this was going on, the government knew of the horrendous cost overruns and it covered them up. This is the organization that will monitor and promote good corporate policy for the private sector, not for profit airport authorities. That is pretty absurd.

The parliamentary secretary also talked about better transparency and public reporting. Why does the government not start over there on that side? It is curious to hear the government saying that it has to watch this organization to make sure it is held accountable, that it is absolutely transparent in its operations and that it holds public meetings to allow the public see exactly what is happening. Where was this idea when the government ran up a bill of \$1 billion with Bill C-68, the Firearms Registration Act, which was supposed to cost \$2 million? Why does the government not start with those kinds of policies and then maybe we can consider that it has some credibility to start talking about accountability from others?

Let me talk about the charging principles for airport improvement. The government wants to have mandatory consultations with the users and a lot of control to make sure nobody is overcharged. I again remind members of the example of the Winnipeg airport where \$900,000, almost \$1 million a year to start, from something that it used to lose money on, accelerating to \$7 million a year by the year 2007, while that airport authority continues to build up that airport and make it better than it was when it took it over from Transport Canada.

The public bid solicitation is also something in the bill.

I see I am almost out of time so I will conclude by saying that I am concerned that none of the recommendations from committee dealing with security fees, airport rents and reduction of aviation

fuel taxes have been addressed by the government. I therefore would move that the motion be amended by replacing all the words after the word "that" with "this House declines to give second reading to Bill C-27, an act to amend the Criminal Code and other acts, since the bill fails to address the recommendations in the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport, air travel security charge, tabled on December 12, 2002".

•(1735)

**The Deputy Speaker:** While the Chair takes the matter into consideration we will resume debate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate today on Bill C-27, an act respecting airport authorities and other airport operators and amending other acts.

As the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel and as transportation critic, I had the opportunity to review the legislation on airport authorities, since the Mirabel airport is managed by an airport authority called ADM, Aéroports de Montréal.

When a minister or other member of the Liberal Party introduces a bill as a means to have more transparency, we obviously always look at these nice proposals with an open mind.

In Mirabel, we had quite an exercise in transparency with ADM. All reporters and all Quebeckers who have followed the Mirabel airport saga know that Aéroports de Montréal did not operate with a great concern for transparency.

We sometimes use harsh words out of frustration with certain situations. I will try to explain the position of the residents of the Basses-Laurentides area concerning what could have been the best chance for economic development in this region of Quebec.

In 1966, when the federal government decided to replace Dorval airport, which was built in 1941, it really wanted to put Quebec back on the map. I should remind members that, at the time, Montreal was the only international gateway into Canada. Building a brand new airport was obviously indicative of a great desire to open our door to the world.

And it was not just any kind of airport. At the time, the government expropriated 93,000 acres of land, which was 10 times the size of the largest airport in the world and 27 times the size of Dorval airport. That was the goal of the Liberal government of the day.

Since 1966, or over the last forty and some years, the Liberal Party has been in power two thirds of the time. It is the Liberal Party that launched this project and set this goal. There were periods when the Conservatives were in office but, in the end, this is part of the history of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Giving Quebec a giant airport, the largest in the world, is a very important goal. Now we must see what the goal was and what the reality is today. Right now, Mirabel airport still sits on 15,000 acres of land, which is still four times the size of Dorval airport.

*Government Orders*

However, this international airport deals with only one air carrier, Air Transat, which is quite happy. In the Lower Laurentians, we are very glad that Air Transit is still doing business in Mirabel. ADM has announced that in the fall of 2003 or the spring of 2004 at the latest, international flights or air passenger services will be a thing of the past at Mirabel airport.

As you know, that is the harsh reality we have to face. Things happen, like the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 or SARS which is currently affecting some airports, but ADM and the federal government took their decision well before air carriers throughout Canada started having problems.

Of course, that brings us to the operations of the infamous airport authorities, which have been a problem. Since 1988, we have been dealing with what is now called a non-profit corporation. First, there was SOPRAM, which was created in 1988 but was replaced in 1992 by Aéroports de Montréal, the current organization that this new bill will now change.

• (1740)

Non-profit organizations are currently managing equipment belonging to the people of Quebec and Canada and also funds. Let me go over some of the provisions of this bill to try to explain how it is possible to close down an airport that was inaugurated only in 1975 while investing in another airport, Dorval. At this point in time, over \$800 million of public money has been invested. When renovations started at Dorval, we were told that they would cost \$200 million at the very most. Believe it or not, the costs have now reached \$800 million. Based on the most recent estimates, to properly upgrade Dorval for the new millennium, we will need to invest another \$1.2 billion in the airport and the surrounding road infrastructure. That is \$2 billion that the federal government will have invested in a airport that should have been replaced back in 1966, when Dorval and all of its facilities were felt to be obsolete.

However, today, this airport is being renovated but there are constraints. Indeed, Dorval is an airport in the middle of a city, with time constraints. Flights must not take place after 11 p.m. So there are time constraints. When Mirabel airport is closed, this will be the only airport capable of receiving passengers in the metropolitan area of Montreal. Of course, this will create constraints for airlines.

This is a matter of choice. When we put the question directly to the minister, to all the representatives, to Liberal members from Quebec, they say: "We will go back to Mirabel one day". Why? Because Mirabel airport is located outside Montreal. The runways have been laid out so as not to disturb the urban populations. It is a highly secure airport. Considering September 11, 2001, we never want to experience another plane crash in an urban area. Thus, everything should have been taken into account, particularly since September 11, 2001, to try to keep Mirabel airport. On the contrary, a destruction operation started in 1992—in fact, in 1988—but more specifically since the creation of the new ADM. This destruction operation will continue, of course, because passenger services will disappear, as I said earlier, by January 2004 at the latest.

Besides, we are still being told that Mirabel is an international airport. Of course, people were up in arms. Not only was there land flipping, but proceedings were launched by the municipality of Mirabel and all social and economic stakeholders. Millions of dollars

were spent. It was ruled that the lease had been respected, since ADM had an obligation to maintain an international airport.

Clause 6 of this brand new bill that has not yet been passed says:

Nothing in this Act derogates from the rights and obligations under a lease of an airport granted by any person, including Her Majesty in right of Canada, to an airport operator, as the lease read on the coming into force of this section, except to the extent that those rights and obligations are inconsistent with this Act.

That means that a lease takes precedence over this bill. Obviously, I would like to agree with the content of the bill, but I have to live with the situation in Mirabel. People are living with the situation in the Lower Laurentians in West Quebec. The airport authority there is going to eliminate passenger traffic, insisting it is still operating an international airport, and the government and the minister will say "Yes, we consider this to be an international airport". An international airport without passengers is hard to swallow.

What is really going to happen in the industry? Will legal proceedings be taken again against ADM to compel it to abide by the lease? As long as the government is not willing to rein in these organizations that are claiming to be non profit, it will not work.

The government has quite the defence, of course. I am saying this for the benefit of Quebecers who are listening to us; I will sum up how the airport authority board is set up. It is made up of between 11 and 15 members, their number being set in the bylaws.

• (1745)

In the case of the Montreal airport authority there are 15 appointed board members. The government is saying that the management of airports is being turned over to the industry. Out of these 15 appointed board members, only one is from the Lower Laurentians and the Mirabel area. As far as the other 14 are concerned, 11 come from the Island of Montreal, one from Laval and two from the South Shore.

Once again, we are told that the management is local. Obviously, the managers are not coming from Mirabel airport. When the time comes to make big decisions, it is obviously easy to reach a consensus around the Montreal airport board table.

This bill is telling us there will be greater transparency, but it confirms that independent bodies will manage assets. I will go even further than that. Clause 45 says:

An airport authority is not an agent of Her Majesty in right of Canada.

*Government Orders*

So it is not only non-profit organizations managing the government's assets. Clearly, the land and buildings belong to the federal government. They belong to us all because we all pay taxes in this country. The assets are managed by independent agencies that, furthermore, are not agents of Her Majesty in right of Canada.

So, why include this provision? It is so that the minister can say, in the House, in response to questions from the opposition about the actions of airport authorities: "It is not my responsibility. Those people do not report to the federal government".

We had a terrible time with this in the Lower Laurentians and at Mirabel. We are going to go through this again. In fact, ADM is holding its annual general meeting on May 8. According to my sources, I am almost certain that ADM will announce the complete shutdown of the airport and will expect its board to adopt, next Thursday, a resolution to launch an international call for tenders for the use of the airport, hotel and administrative offices, excluding tenders related to running an airport. In other words, ADM wants to see if the airport, hotel and administrative offices can be converted into something other than an airport. That is the goal, although it says it will respect the lease and that this will remain an international airport, because Mirabel still offers cargo operations.

I do not know how members with international airports in their ridings would feel if an airport authority candidly told them that it did not want to launch an international tender call for aviation operations, because it was too afraid of the competition. There are people interested in using this site for civil aviation and passenger transportation. So, ADM does not want to manage it.

The hotel has been closed since last summer. There have been at least six potential buyers and ADM has said publicly, "We operate airports; we are not hotel managers". The hotel belongs to the federal government. In the lease, there is a clause stipulating that they must use the buildings and infrastructure for the purposes for which they were entrusted. That is a clause in the lease.

The hotel was entrusted to be operated. Today, they can contravene the lease with the Minister of Transport's approval, since he responded here in the House that it was an independent organization and it could do what it wanted. He trusted ADM because ADM has the obligation to maintain an airport of international calibre.

Those who know anything about aviation predict that three years from now even the cargo sector will have left Mirabel. The airport will cease to be. In this bill, once ADM has been given all of the powers it needs to reach its objectives, how will it be possible to save Mirabel?

• (1750)

It will be impossible. The government should modify the lease and allow ADM to close Mirabel airport.

Obviously, there would be a debate. How would the government do it? It would wait until the election and make the change in the first year of its new mandate, so that voters forget about it. Governments always operate in the same old ways. When you follow things and see how good the Liberal government is at controlling information, you can predict how people will react. We know the important stuff

occurs before the election and a month or two after. Then it comes around again three and a half or four years later.

Polling indicates—and you may have had the opportunity to see some polls—that attitudes toward politicians in Quebec differ a great deal from those of the rest of Canada, where the central governments are chosen by the people, whereas in Quebec, it is the complete opposite. Local governments are the ones that are most loved by Quebecers. That is traditional and probably historic. We could always take a closer look at what has happened.

Yet the Liberal government is fully aware that, in Quebec, the public is far less concerned about federal government operations and this therefore allows the feds to stir up great hopes as it did with Mirabel. It created a huge potential for employment and now it is going to be closed down completely.

There cannot even be any predictions because as we speak, believe it or not, Mirabel, the biggest airport in Canada, as far as area goes, still has no development plan. Even with the lease requirement of the provision of a master plan and a development plan by 1998, there is still none, yet they say there is a master plan.

It is so complex, but I can tell you that they do not know, at this time, what they are going to do with Mirabel. Never mind whether one calls it a master plan, a development plan or a land use plan, I can tell you they have no idea. If they are asked the question tomorrow, they will say they do not know what they will do with Mirabel.

One thing they do know: passenger flights are going to disappear and they will try to keep the freight for the moment, despite what the reports are saying.

Leafing through the bill, I must express my resentment of it, despite its possible good intentions. We are told, of course, that the role of an airport operator is to give equitable access to its facilities. Clause 24 reads:

Every airport authority and other airport operator must provide to all air carriers who operate or wish to operate aircraft on their airport, equitable access to the facilities or air terminal building—

Having spoken with executives of Air Transat, which is at Mirabel, I can tell you that they are still interested in remaining there. They want to stay, but of course the approach that has been taken by ADM and the company to get it out of Mirabel will leave them without the same access to facilities at the same price. There have been threats along the lines of "You are the only ones flying out of this airport, so we will charge all costs to you". This will make it more expensive than flying out of Montreal. So there have been threats.

Even though the carrier has a lease with obligations, even though, legally, it could go to court and try to protect its rights, things are not easy for an operator in such a situation, with all the complexities of aviation today.

In addition, even though the Government of Canada is the owner, it is clear that ADM acts as the landlord, managing the facilities, negotiating with the airlines and, in the end, saying to them, "If you do not move to Dorval, you will have big problems in the future. We will send you bills and you will be fighting them in court". That battle will last 15 years, until their lease runs out.

Here is a company that provides very good service, that is quite satisfied to be at Mirabel, and which has another 15 years on its lease, but, under pressure from ADM, will probably sign a new agreement to move to Dorval, if it has not yet already done so as we speak. Nobody is supposed to talk about it; it all has to be done oh so nicely and under a cloak of secrecy. No pressure must be put on ADM. No one should say anything, because that might reflect badly on the company and on operations.

• (1755)

Finally, one thing I know is that it is bad for the entire population of the Lower Laurentians and West Quebec. If there had been transfers to other airports in Quebec, I would have said, "That is not so bad". The problem is that the shift is towards Toronto and Ottawa. That is a fact.

One problem is that those who manage the Montreal airports have not understood that they are not helping Quebec; they are helping the rest of Canada. That is what they are doing. They are helping the Ottawa airport, which has been expanded, and that is good for Ottawa. They are helping Toronto, which has picked up all the transferred flights, and now finds itself the new gateway into Canada.

All this has been to Quebec's detriment, and it has been done with the full knowledge of all the federal Liberal members from Quebec and all the Conservative members at the time. They watched as all this happened. Obviously—I say it again—the Liberal members were especially involved, since they were in power for more than two thirds of the last 40 years while the Mirabel saga was unfolding.

Of course, when we see concern for transparency in a bill and when we hear the minister say, in his press conference on Bill C-27, that the government will stop having airports managed by organizations that do it behind closed doors, we cannot imagine how things can be different. These organizations have been doing everything behind closed doors since they were created. I cannot see how they could show any concern for transparency. It will be very hard.

Moreover, passengers who use Mirabel airport are required to pay enormous fees to repair Dorval airport. All those who have flown from Mirabel airport over the last eight years, since the fees were implemented, have been paying for the renovations at Dorval airport. Imagine that. I would not say it is Machiavellian, but close. That is the way things are done. People are told that they will have better services. The authority took the money and renovated Dorval airport.

Everything is done in secrecy. The government tells anyone with whom it deals not to say anything, that it will make an announcement. Of course, at the general meeting that will take place on May 8, there will be a big press conference and we will all be handed a done deal. We will not have the opportunity to object and to criticize; the decision will already have been made.

### *Government Orders*

Why? Because, as I mentioned earlier, these non-profit organizations are not accountable to the federal government. They are completely independent and I should add that they are also financially self-sufficient. They are given the power they need to find money. It is as simple as that.

In fact, clause 46(3) reads as follows:

An airport authority may issue a bond or debenture or other evidence of indebtedness.

And that is done, of course, without any endorsement from the federal government, but rather on the sole basis of expected revenues, which are the projected revenue from the airport improvement fees collected from the users, because that is the beauty of all this. These people have clients. They go to the banks and say "Look". And they end up with the same credit rating as any Crown corporation and they can contract loans. During all that time, nobody is held accountable. It is a very profitable deal for those who charge interest rates. There is no risk involved. The money is not used to run deficits. Have you any idea how far a director can go? Some people have heard directors say "If things do not work out, the federal government can take the airport back." It is as simple as that. Of course, there are the buildings, the land, the runways, the hotel. All of that belongs to the federal government. The directors only manage the buildings and have the duty, as I said before, to maintain two international airports.

I find that quite incredible, which is why I would like to go over clause 6 one more time.

Nothing in this Act derogates from the rights and obligations under a lease of an airport—

This provision puts the lease above the bill. It has always been that way. They have never upheld the law. They have always had their own way. The minister has always said "Yes, you are doing good; everything is going well, it is up to you. We will not get involved in what you are doing". Why? Because it is politically dangerous and might even be politically devastating. That is how governments behave nowadays. Discussions are held and then the onus is put on independent organizations who are subjected to incredible political pressure.

• (1800)

The problem is that, often, these are people who are appointed, because there are representatives appointed by the government. In this case, we will have an appointment process that is well indicated in the legislation. Yes, these are representatives of the area, appointed by organizations in the area, but the fact is that Montreal's north shore and the Basses-Laurentides, excluding Laval, will only have one representative. It is not the new board and the new process that the bill is proposing that will change anything.

For us, ADM has already changed. Last year, the type of board contained in this bill was introduced. For all those who thought that, with this new bill, a new way of operating or appointing directors would be introduced, it is too late. In Quebec, things were going so bad that everyone had to get involved to get rid of the old directors, among others, the old chief executive officer. The process was changed and we have the new board of directors.

*Government Orders*

Bill C-27 is already in force. The Mirabel area, the Basses-Laurentides and Montreal's north shore, excluding Laval, only have one representative out of 15 members of the board. Consequently, the future is not looking good.

In this bill, there are airport authorities. I see that several airports are jointly managed. But Ottawa and Halifax manage only one airport. I even dare to dream that we could perhaps think about having an airport authority for Mirabel and one for Dorval. We could perhaps abolish ADM, which is managing two airports, but which is bleeding one dry to try to make the other one survive. Perhaps we will see this one day. Perhaps the Bloc Québécois will introduce a bill or an amendment to this bill. Except that it would really take the will of the people to make this happen.

I know perfectly well that it will not happen since I asked the question to ADM officials. That is why they will put out an international call for tenders for the terminal, the hotel and the administrative buildings. When I talk about an international call for tenders, it is to find a new vocation for the property. They will look at the international level to see what someone could do with an empty hotel, an empty administrative centre and an empty terminal, apart from operating a passenger airport, which any interested party will be told they cannot do.

That is the decision that will be made, believe it or not. I am preparing a nice question to ask of the minister the next day or a few days later. I will ask him if he thinks that ADM's position respects the terms of the lease. He will certainly answer that, yes, it still is an international airport because of the freight operations. Some international airports rely solely on freight.

But those who know the history of air transportation know that the newer passenger aircraft have more and more space in the cargo hold for the transportation of goods. That is how airlines make flights profitable, which allows them to reduce fares for passengers. Aircraft are made bigger so they can carry more cargo. As a result, cargo planes are disappearing, slowly but surely, in favour of bigger passenger planes. That is a fact.

But once again, they think people on Montreal's north shore or in the Basses-Laurentides and all over Quebec do not understand how the industry works. They are telling them, "Look, you have a nice cargo airport, which is going to be developed and remain an international airport".

No matter how much we hope, how much we read into bills such as this one, how much we try to be encouraged and to encourage our fellow citizens, this is not the first time the federal government slaps the Basses-Laurentides in the face.

Of course, my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville can attest to it. A decision was made to close the GM plant in Boisbriand. Ontario finally managed to eliminate car manufacturing in the rest of Canada and maintain it in the province. We know full well that it is the minister in charge of Canada's economic development in Quebec's regions, the current justice minister, who announced after visiting Detroit and meeting with the executives at GM Canada that he had no choice and that the GM plant in Boisbriand had to be shut down.

Mirabel international airport will be closed to passenger traffic. What it will become will be announced in a matter of months or

days. It is tough to be repeatedly slapped in the face by the federal government.

● (1805)

It is not true that the federal government cannot act; however, it is true it does not want to act. That is the truth. Of course, Bill C-27 is a perfect example. I can predict that even before Bill C-27 is passed, Mirabel airport will be closed to passenger traffic. That is what is going to happen. This bill will be dragged through the House long enough so that the government will not have to force ADM to abide by this new bill, especially section 6 that would compel it to respect the terms of the lease and not to do anything that would be contrary to the lease since it has precedence over the bill. That is what will happen. ADM is in a hurry. We know. Air Transat is being pressured. ADM is rushing ahead to make sure everything is done before May 8 to be able to make the announcement at the general annual meeting. It is rushing to announce Air Transat is moving.

Why? Because ADM does not want Bill C-27 to be adopted. It does not want to have to deal with other problems. It has already had to deal with the hotel owner's wrath. About \$17 million had to be paid to the hotel owner because, clearly, the profit projections are not quite what they were when the lease was negotiated. The owner won. An appeal has been launched. Obviously, in the meantime, this is costing hundreds of jobs in this sector. This hotel was not just for passengers; it was also used for other purposes and had built a reputation over the years. That is why so many hotel owners would like to purchase it.

The harsh reality is that ADM does not give a—there are things we are not permitted to say in the House—hoot what the residents of Mirabel, the Basses-Laurentides, Quebec and Canada might think. It does not care. It wants to try to save what remains of the aviation industry in Quebec, again by choosing the wrong solution, which is to try to direct road and air traffic toward Montreal Island.

On every island in the industrialized world, traffic is being directed elsewhere to try to set up offices for white collar workers. Pretty suburbs are created too, all to try keep the big stuff outside, including airports. In this respect, Montreal will always be doing the opposite, controlled by the West Island of Montreal—how wonderful—which prefers to deal with Toronto than the rest of Quebec.

This is the reality. It has always been like this. It always will be. I cannot imagine things being any different, although maybe some day they will. That will be the day that Quebeckers create their own country. Perhaps then people will see that by helping someone else, you help yourself. Charity begins at home. So, the people of Quebec must understand that they must do unto themselves before they do unto others.

That is the harsh reality. Once again, the federal government had created high expectations within the population of Quebec. Let me go over the figures one more time, because they are incredible. The government had set aside 93,000 acres of land, that is 27 times the Mirabel airport and 10 times the largest airport in the world. That is what Mirabel was at the beginning. Nowadays, it is still one of the biggest airports in the world. Even if almost 75,000 acres have been given back to the expropriated, it still sits on over 15,000 acres of land and that is four times the size of Dorval airport. Once again, this airport will disappear with what? With an organization, ADM, that will argue that we will be going back to Mirabel one day; with a minister that will agree; with Liberal members from Quebec who will also tell us "One day, we will come back to Mirabel. It is unavoidable. Because of security issues. Because of all kinds of things". In the meantime, \$800 million has already been spent on Dorval and another \$1.2 billion will be invested in that airport, with the requirement, under the new legislation, for greater transparency. There is a whole chapter on airport improvement fees. Air carriers have the tough duty to tell airport authorities, "You charge too much for improvements. The fees that we and the passengers have to pay are crippling the airline industry".

● (1810)

I do not see how these costs can be reduced at Montreal. ADM has not finished and still has over \$1 billion to invest in its facilities.

There will be an attempt by all companies, Air Canada leading the pack, to ask ADM to cut the charges. One way to do that is to reduce renovation expenses. Renovations are finished at some airports, but Montreal is only about one-third done. ADM cannot, therefore, cut its costs. Obviously, Mirabel will have disappeared, so there will be only Dorval left.

There is another issue: rents. Today the airlines are coming before the standing committee on transport to tell us that, if the industry is to be saved the federal government absolutely must reduce rents so that airports, airport administrations, can reduce the charges levied on the airlines. Our audience needs to understand that in Montreal ADM does not just charge user fees for hanger or facility renovations, but also charges the airlines fees. Each time loans are arranged or bonds are issued, these must be paid back. They need revenue from somewhere.

I can tell you that the Bloc Québécois agrees. Rents must come down and this must have a direct impact on the airlines. Believe it or not, ADM has been making requests of me for more than three years, since I was elected. ADM wants to reduce the rents in order to invest, once again, in renovations for Dorval. That is the reality.

I cannot see how to make it work in Montreal, because ADM has already thought about reducing the rent paid to the federal government, but that was to free up cash to borrow more and put more money into Dorval. As people have said, in 20 years, that will be finished and they will come back to Mirabel.

Somewhere the idea of the high speed train to get to the Mirabel airport has been dropped. Believe it or not, the terminal, which was built in 1975, has a train station that has never been used because high speed trains were never brought in. However, there is a station.

It would have cost \$350 million to finish both highways, highways 13 and 50, and to finish the access by high speed train.

### *Government Orders*

In 2000, the cost was up to \$450 million. More than \$2 billion will have been spent at Dorval and yet, one day, we are supposed to be back at Mirabel. That is the reality.

In closing, it has been a pleasure for me to take this time to try to help those Quebeckers and Canadians who are following understand that sometimes we have good reason to complain about the federal government's actions.

Obviously, for the residents of Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, of Terrebonne—Blainville, of Laurentides and Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, and all of the ridings that could have benefited from the major development as a result of the Mirabel airport and that never got that chance, I hope that this bill will allow us to wake up ADM or even the federal Liberal government. It is never too late to do the right thing. As long as we own 15,000 acres of land with good buildings and equipment, there is always hope that it can be made profitable. I hope that a ray of wisdom will beam down from the sky and enlighten the Liberal government, so that justice can be done for the Lower Laurentians region.

● (1815)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before resuming debate, I am now ready to rule on the admissibility of the amendment moved by the hon. member for Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan.

After careful review of the bill, the Chair finds numerous references to fees levied by airport authorities. It does not deal with fees levied by the government such as referred to in the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport. Marleau and Montpetit at page 639 states:

For a reasoned amendment to be in order...it must be relevant and relate strictly to the bill being considered.

Accordingly, I must declare the amendment out of order.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to shorten my debate so my colleagues from Saint John, New Brunswick and Hamilton West, Ontario may say a few words in this critical debate.

At first blush one would think that if the Minister of Transport wanted that much control over the airports, why he would not just take them all back. This is the perception he is giving to the people who run the airports.

Halifax International Airport is run by some very good and competent people. Bernard Miller, the chair of the board, Reg Milley, the president of the airport, as well as Andy Lyall do great work in servicing the needs of the customers of the airport facility.

One of the concerns we have, besides the high fees that are charged through Nav Canada, either the airport security tax or whatever, is that the fees are becoming cost prohibitive for people who travel. That concern needs to be addressed.

*Government Orders*

Another concern we have is that appointments to the boards of the various airport authorities should remain in the control of the community and not the minister. We will be keeping a close eye on that.

We are also concerned that security personnel at all airports across the country receive a high standard of training so that people who travel to places like Regina, Whitehorse or Halifax, do not go through different types of procedures. The procedures should be similar so customers will have a see through process on the entire screening aspect.

We know that the minister is a railroad man by choice. We will be ensuring that he is up to speed on our concerns on what is happening at airports throughout the country, especially airports such as those in Yarmouth, Deer Lake, Saint John, Miramichi, et cetera and the smaller airports such as in Sydney which get neglected in the debates on larger airports. We need to ensure that they are not only viable but also have service available for their communities.

Our transport critic, my colleague from Churchill will have more to say at a later date on this important legislation.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for sharing his time with me.

The government has to take a look at the smaller cities, towns and villages. It has to reach out. My city of Saint John has the largest privately owned oil refinery in Canada, the Irving oil refinery. We also have the nuclear power plant, Crosby's Molasses, Moosehead Brewery and several pulp mills. Yet the government has taken the large planes out of Saint John, New Brunswick, which is the second largest city in square mileage in Canada. It took away my train. Glory be to God, I cut the ribbon for it when I was mayor six months before the 1993 election and six months after, it closed the train and took the train away from us.

We have to have the planes. In order for us to attract business into our communities we have to have all modes of transportation. Certainly we have to have our planes.

I left Saint John, New Brunswick at 11:10 this morning, which was 10:10 a.m. Ottawa time. Guess what time I arrived in Ottawa. I arrived here at 3:30 p.m. my time in Saint John, 2:30 p.m. Ottawa time. If we had the planes we used to have, I would have been here within an hour and a half.

We only have Dash 8s and I know the minister is looking at whether we will even have Dash 8s before the government is through. When that happens, the people of the country can blame the government for the way in which Saint John, New Brunswick will go and it will not be in a positive direction.

Does the minister want me to drive to Halifax? Does he want me to drive to Quebec City, to Montreal or Boston in order to get a plane to Ottawa?

Enough is enough of this. The government has to get its priorities straight. The Minister of Transport has to get his priorities straight. Everybody in this country from coast to coast needs to have transportation. They need to be able to fly. They do not want to drive.

I laughed when the minister said to me one day "Maybe you could drive to Moncton to get a plane". They do not have them in Moncton. They have them in Dieppe.

For me to drive there takes two hours if the sun is shining, but look at this past winter. Maybe some people in the House would be glad if I was not sitting in the House every day, but there would have been no way for me to get to the House, no way for my colleagues in St. Stephen, St. George and Saint Andrews to get here, no way for my other colleague in Kings County to get here.

There is just no way this can happen. The Minister of Transport does not understand.

We are going to help our colleague over here because he is telling me he is not in favour too. If he had said he was in favour, I would not be giving him any time at all.

I look at the information I just received this week that the government is planning to cut six, eight or ten flights out of Saint John for the month of May. I may have to call on you, Mr. Speaker, to come down and drive me up because I may not be able to get to Ottawa because of the Minister of Transport. There is no way the government should be removing any flights. Every seat was taken on the flight I was on today. In fact, it was overbooked. The flights are always overbooked. There is no reason in the world to cut out any flights.

This is going to be a matter of major debate. If Sir John A. Macdonald were still living, he would make sure we not only had trains but we also had planes.

• (1820)

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first let me thank my colleagues from Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore and Saint John who are giving me this opportunity to speak. I rise on behalf of my constituents in Hamilton West to address second reading of Bill C-27, the Canada airports act.

There is extreme concern in the airports community that Bill C-27, if not amended, would cripple an airport's ability to continue to work in what is clearly a very competitive international market. It is no secret that the air transportation industry has an enormous impact on the Canadian economy. It creates over 300,000 jobs, accounts for over \$34 billion in economic outputs, and provides nearly \$4 billion in tax benefits to all levels of government.

Today, the viability of Canada's air transportation system is threatened and the consequences for Canada are enormous. It is a well known fact that the airline industry is in crisis. The impacts of 9/11, the war on terrorism, the war in Iraq and SARS have led to a 20% reduction in air traffic. Air Canada's restructuring will have a dramatic impact on smaller airport communities where Air Canada is the dominant and/or sole air carrier.

Airports must adjust to the new realities of air travel. Reduced frequency and withdrawal of service mean airports will have to reduce costs in order to minimize impacts on airlines and of course air travellers.

The federal government too must act to cut costs to airports so that these may be passed along to airlines in the form of lower fees and charges, and to air travellers in the form of lower airfares. Ironically, at a time when the federal government should be reducing the operating costs of airports the proposed Canada airports act does just the opposite. The act, which effectively re-regulates an economic sector which the government effectively and successfully de-regulated eight years ago, piles one administrative redundancy upon another and introduces over 40 areas in which the minister may pass regulations adding to the administrative burden of Canada's smaller airports.

The government is introducing these drastic measures without a single overarching public demand for change and without having conducted a single regulatory impact or cost benefit analysis. In fact, a number of independent and government commissioned studies have recommended a course of action substantially different from the government's proposed legislation. These include: first, a moratorium leading to a reduction and eventual elimination of airport rents; second, removal of industry specific security surcharges—no other type of traveller is required to pay directly for security and policing services—third, full funding for ACAP and making these capital funds available to all level two airports; and fourth, substantial reduction of regulatory burdens.

I declare my bias and it is called John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport. According to Mr. Tony F. Battaglia, President and CEO of TradePort International Corporation, and operator of the Hamilton airport:

The act will have a profound impact on the growth of John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport. The act's one size fits all approach to airport government conflicts with Hamilton's unique and award winning public private partnership between the city of Hamilton and TradePort International, a private company operating the airport under terms of a 40 year lease. The act impedes the ability of the private operator to innovate and adapt to changing market conditions and customer needs in order to improve service and reduce costs. The act significantly erodes local

### *Government Orders*

control by the community—a founding principle of the Canada Airports Policy (1995).

The John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport is unique in Canada; between 1999 and 2002 passenger volumes have grown exponentially—from 23,000 in 1999 to 846,000 in 2002. In the next five years passenger volumes will grow sixfold—to about five million passengers annually—and HIA will become the fifth or sixth largest airport in Canada. Under the act, the ability of HIA to attain this growth is substantially impaired. Growth of this magnitude requires a significant investment in airport infrastructure—over \$100 million must be raised in the capital markets.

● (1825)

By adding to the airport's cost structure and impeding its ability to set fees and charges to match revenues with expenses, the act imposes an element of risk that private sector lenders may be unwilling to accept. Blindly advancing this gratuitous legislation may bring irreparable harm to Canada's smaller airports; there are other alternatives. We suggest the following:

Phased implementation of the act with Canada's Schedule II airports exempt from its provisions until three years after its proclamation.

Schedule II airports would have three years to file with the Minister of Transport an operating model that satisfies the act's governing principles of transparency and accountability.

As operators of the John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport, we stand willing to work with the federal government and parliamentarians to find solutions that meet the needs of the government, the aviation industry, and air travellers.

It is signed by Tony F. Battaglia, President and CEO.

I could go on because the problem also impacts larger airports such as Vancouver airport. I do not know if it is appropriate, Mr. Speaker, but given the time, may I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to complete my remarks which would take no more than five minutes?

● (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Hamilton West have the unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** No.

*[Editor's Note: For continuation of proceedings see part B]*



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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, April 28, 2003**  
**Part B**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 28, 2003

[Editor's Note: Continuation of proceedings from part A]

## EMERGENCY DEBATE

•(1830)

[English]

### SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the severe acute respiratory syndrome known as SARS.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC)** moved:

That this House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion this is probably one of the most important debates that we will be having in this place for many months to come.

Regrettably, we called for this debate about a month ago when the member for Cumberland—Colchester requested the debate. In the ruling from the Chair, and I think it was a fair ruling at the time, it was suggested that maybe the timing was not right, that there was not enough information and that maybe we should wait and revisit this.

The House has been in recess for a couple of weeks. I reapplied for this special debate on April 23 and today being the first day back, the Chair agreed that the timing was right. A number of circumstances have developed since then and this emergency debate was granted.

Mr. Speaker, I give you and your staff full credit in recognizing the importance of allowing the debate to take place.

Sadly, the government has not come into the House and uttered one line that would provide Canadians with any level of comfort at all on this issue. In fact, I would have to say that the government has been in hiding on this issue and as a result of that a lot of circumstances that could have been avoided were not avoided.

Mr. Speaker, in my letter to you today I pointed out that one of the important things that we must do in this place is provide a level of confidence or information to the people, or at the very minimum, exchange ideas. I want to quote directly from my letter of April 23. I said:

Ignorance and panic are significant enemies in battling this disease. A debate in the House of Commons would allow the government to place facts before the House. Members of the House of Commons would also have an opportunity to express their views on the measures taken...

I would suggest that, in fact, members of this House might have some ideas for the government, ideas that could be debated, examined and information exchanged. That has not happened up until this evening. The debate, in my view, is not about the outbreak itself, but rather about the federal government's response which can only be described as too little, too late.

All of us in the House, regardless of political stripe, commend the work of the scientists, health care professionals and public health officials, all of whom have succeeded in containing the outbreak and reassuring a very worried and nervous public.

The difficulty with SARS of course is the fact that there is no known cure and so the best that we can do is to contain or control the outbreak. In our opinion, the tragedy of this is that individuals were let down by the highest level of government in the country. Health Canada officials did their work, as did their provincial counterparts, but sadly our elected federal government did not do its job.

In fact, there is a raging debate, not only within your caucus, Mr. Speaker, but within the government itself on—

•(1835)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The Chair feels rather uncomfortable when the Chair is referred to as being a member of a caucus when in fact the Speaker has waived all possibilities of participating in that political context. I am not indicating in any way that the member for New Brunswick Southwest is trying to indicate anything. I would just like to set the record straight.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, when putting everything through the Chair, sometimes I might overdo that. I should not use the term caucus, but there is no question that there is a raging controversy within the government frontbench, that is, the cabinet. The members of the Liberal Party who make up the cabinet are in complete disagreement. When the Minister of Canadian Heritage suggests that the Minister of Health dropped the ball and has not responded adequately as a minister of the crown, I think that is telling us something.

## S.O. 52

Again, as evidence of dropping the ball, where was the Prime Minister? The fact of the matter is that he was on a golfing vacation in Santo Domingo. Never once was he in Ottawa to address this in the last couple of weeks. That is deplorable. I can say the same for the Minister of Health. To my knowledge she never left the country, but she certainly was not in Ottawa on this file. In fact she was in a very deep state of denial.

With a disease where there is no known cure, and we may be months from that if we are lucky and we do get one, there is danger in that sort of laissez-faire management of government. The simple fact is that a lot of information was not communicated to the World Health Organization. I think that if we listened very carefully to the response by the Minister of Health when she was being pressed by one of Canada's leading journalists today, we would have heard that there is no question that the government did mess up on this file. She suggested that the process was wrong in which they communicated that message to the WHO, and information was wrong that they communicated to the WHO. There is a full understanding within the international rules that there is a process that has to be used and there is detail that has to be passed on to the WHO and that was not passed on by the ministry, neither by the health minister nor the Prime Minister.

The result is that today there is a huge cost to Canadians and the rest of the world. The reason for this is that we did not control the situation. We did not contain the virus quickly enough. In other words, the government did not respond quickly enough, much to the chagrin of the World Health Organization, and today we are paying a heavy price for that. Not just Toronto and not just Vancouver but the entire country is paying a price for it. Again, it is not just I who am speaking that way, but the Governor of the Bank of Canada, and just about anybody else who runs a business in this country will say the same thing. There will be a cost to Canada for not acting quickly and in a fashion that would have prevented the WHO ruling coming down hard on Canada. That is not a debatable point. It is simply what happened.

There was an urgency for the government to act in a manner that would be consistent in terms of what we would expect a government to do. The cost of not doing it will be felt for many months in this country, because we rely on tourism. We have just finished speaking in the House about the heavy costs to the aviation industry in terms of the outbreak. Much of that damage could have been controlled or minimized by the government in a quick and rapid response.

More important, when this first occurred, members on this side of the House were asking questions of the minister. How much information is exchanged in this place in the normal course of question period? I would suggest that it is not a lot. Most of the people who watch this place on a routine basis would say that most of it is showmanship to a degree. We try to ask questions that will embarrass the government and the government attempts to answer and try to get off the hook.

● (1840)

That exchange of information has to occur in 30 second spots. We have to abide by the rules of the House, as do the Speaker and the minister. In the course of a 30 second exchange on both sides, the minister has to articulate an answer to a question. There are

limitations in that type of exchange of information: basically there is none. We were counting on the minister to give us an overview of what the government was doing and suggesting. That is why I think debate is important in this place. The minister does not have all the answers and neither do we as opposition parties. This is the highest court in the land. This is where laws are written. We do not interpret them, but I think that most people would interpret the government's response to this issue as being inadequate. If we cannot debate issues like this in this place, what are we here for?

Again, the government is in a constant state of denial. In fact, the heavy-handedness of the government is evident on the government side. Not one government member suggested that we should have this debate on the floor of the House of Commons. It was up to the smallest party in the House of Commons to proceed with this emergency debate. The member for Burnaby—Douglas, the health critic for the NDP, will be speaking shortly. He was the only other member to request an emergency debate today and he was in the House when I filed my request. We are members of the smallest parties in the House. That is the type of leadership one would expect from the Government of Canada and we have not seen it on this issue. Nor have we seen it on many other issues.

In fact, today a Liberal member got up the courage to demand an emergency debate on the cod closure in Newfoundland, which is an issue that is deserving of debate. That emergency debate will take place tomorrow evening. We can understand the pressure on this man not to do that. In fact, some discussion was held today behind the curtains and outside this place suggesting that he will be basically ostracized by the Prime Minister for suggesting that the debate should take place. We can understand why Liberal members, particularly those from Ontario and those from the City of Toronto, are hiding under their desks on this issue. They are taking their lessons from the top man, because he spent all last week hiding under his golf cart with regard to this issue. As a consequence of that deliberate evasion of this issue, we are stuck with a ruling made by the WHO which we should not have to live with.

In fact, today the World Health Organization told us that Vietnam is the first country in which there has been a SARS outbreak to completely control that outbreak. Canada is a country that at one time had the best health care system and information system in the world. We are now being outdistanced on this issue by Vietnam. Members should think about that. We have to give that country full credit because it did not duck the bullet, but the fact is that it could have been us, not Vietnam.

I should not say that the Prime Minister of Canada should learn something from this, because he is in his dying days in office and just holding on by a thread hoping he can make it through to next February. What price will the country pay at the next crisis if he does hold on until February? His number one replacement is now saying that the government is out of focus and admitting it is not handling many issues correctly or in the fashion one would expect a government to handle issues as critical as this one.

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●(1845)

Let us talk about the role of the government and the roles of the Prime Minister and the health minister. That is where the Prime Minister can use the power of his office. Despite who the Prime Minister of Canada is, there is still an acknowledgement that despite our disagreements he is still the Prime Minister of Canada and that entitles him to do certain things. One of them is to bring together the provincial health ministers of Canada and come up with a strategy to deal with this from coast to coast to coast. Those are just some of the things that could have been done.

The health minister should be the last person in this place to interfere in this debate, mouthing off from the side as she enters the chamber, because she has been noticeably silent on this file for weeks, busy hiding under her desk, not owning up to her responsibilities. Evidence of that, as I pointed out earlier, is the WHO ruling, which falls clearly at the doorstep of the minister, and her inability to take her job seriously. Where was she when these questions were first raised on the floor of the House? There was a 30 second response from the minister on given occasions, regardless of whether I or other parties put that question to her. That was it and then it was a slide out the back door of this place without standing in the House with any detailed account of what she and the Prime Minister were doing on this file.

The fallout for this is not with the opposition parties. When she gets on her feet she will talk about the rhetoric, the extreme statements that we are making, but we have not made them. We have been more than responsible on this file in our role as the opposition. We are the ones who forced the minister to come into the House tonight to make a statement on this issue for the first time and hopefully take questions from individual members, because she might have actually reached the conclusion that this is the place where ideas can be formulated, where we can exchange information. Would it not be helpful for opposition members if we knew exactly what was on the mind of the health minister? Would it not be good if when we shared some of our ideas on what we would like to see happen the minister would actually take them under consideration?

This debate is necessary. I think the golf trips have to be over. We must have the Prime Minister paying attention to this file. If they had paid attention to this file I do not think we would be here tonight, because this spread of SARS would have not reached the proportions that it did last week. In all fairness, I think the situation is better this week than it was last week, but the key to this is containment.

I was watching the minister this morning when she was talking about implementing some new technology at the airports. The minister would like us to believe that this new technology only came about or was invented last week, possibly by the minister herself, but the fact is that this technology was there and was being used by other jurisdictions, including Vietnam, and that is why they got a favourable ruling from the WHO compared to Canada.

I look forward to comments by the minister and questions from some other members, but the fact is that it is refreshing to see the minister in the House prepared to give a statement on this SARS issue—finally.

●(1850)

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to be here this evening and to participate in this debate. In fact, I look forward to the ideas that will be expressed here this evening by my colleagues on all sides of the House.

While we in this country and in particular the people of Toronto have faced a major public health challenge in relation to SARS, at this point I want to say congratulations and thanks to the front line public health workers in the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto who, for over six weeks, have been working with others, including Health Canada, their provincial and territorial colleagues, researchers in this country and around the world. I do believe that we can now say with confidence that the containment and control measures put in place in the city of Toronto are working and have worked. I do believe it is incumbent upon the House to acknowledge that extraordinary effort.

Nothing should be said here this evening to create the impression that those control and containment mechanisms and procedures have not worked, because they have. That has been acknowledged as late as Sunday of this week by the World Health Organization itself. That is a tribute, as I say, first and foremost, to the resilience, the strength and the heroic efforts of the front line public health workers in the city of Toronto.

I am pleased to rise in the House this evening to speak to the hon. member's motion on SARS. The global outbreak of SARS and the events of the past month have taught the Canadian people two things. First, we have been reminded of our vulnerability to the global forces of nature to this disease. Those of us in the House who have been around a little longer than others have heard stories while growing up, stories of families coping with polio and Spanish flu claiming the lives of our great-grandparents. So much has changed in just a few generations. Immunizations and medical research, new treatments and medicines have made us healthier and have reduced the fear of diseases that were so common just a generation or two ago.

I think it is fair to say that SARS has changed that somewhat. It has changed our expectations about our mastery of disease. Where did SARS come from? How did it start? Can it be eradicated? That brings me to the second point I would like to speak about this evening. The other thing that we have learned since the arrival of SARS is that people, while vulnerable and fragile, have a remarkable ability to protect themselves and to overcome threats.

The health and safety of Canadians is a priority of this government. Since the outbreak of SARS a month ago, all of our actions have been directed toward protecting the health and well-being of Canadians. We sincerely regret the loss of life due to SARS. Our thoughts are with the friends and families of those who have been affected by this disease.

We must also take time to recognize public health workers for their extraordinary efforts. Thanks to them, we believe the infection is now under control. Thanks to health care providers, many SARS patients have now recovered. Thanks to researchers, we have a much better understanding of this disease. All levels of government have worked together to respond to this disease and to help those affected by it.

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With research and partnership, we have made great strides to overcome this disease and to mitigate its effects on our society. This disease represents a challenge for all Canadians, especially for the citizens and public health officials of Toronto. This evening I would like to spend a few moments describing the actions the Government of Canada has taken in response to this disease.

Upon being first notified about the existence of SARS on March 13, Health Canada established a federal-provincial-territorial SARS committee of public health experts and began a daily teleconference. On March 16 Health Canada's operation centre was activated and in fact it has been working 24 hours a day, seven days a week since.

Employees have been deployed as quarantine officers in a number of airports, especially Pearson and Vancouver. These employees are playing an important surveillance role, detecting SARS cases among travellers who may have been exposed to SARS. We are also advising travellers about the symptoms and the steps that they can take to protect themselves. We are working with the airlines to ensure that check-in procedures include confirmation that passengers have read the information about SARS.

● (1855)

In addition, on March 19 Health Canada issued its first SARS related travel advisory and the first team of epidemiologists left for Toronto. On March 22 field epidemiologists were sent to Toronto to support the front line investigation. On March 25 Health Canada activated a SARS website for health care professionals. On March 29 we instituted more aggressive screening measures at airports. On March 31 at the request of Ontario, we sent supplies to the front lines. On April 5 we convened a meeting of travel, tourism and health stakeholders to help them understand what we knew about SARS and what was happening on the ground. On April 10 we instituted in-flight measures for the distribution of information as it related to SARS.

On April 23 which was last week, I convened a federal-provincial-territorial conference of health ministers where the minister from Ontario, the hon. Tony Clement, had a first-hand opportunity to share with his provincial and territorial colleagues what was happening on the ground. In fact the opportunity arose at that point for Mr. Clement to identify some front line health professional needs. We all know that health care professionals in Ontario are stretched at this point. I must say it was heartening to see provincial and territorial colleagues and federal departments come together to see how we can help those front line health care professionals who have been on the job for the past number of weeks.

It is also worth noting that outside agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from Atlanta have described the Canadian efforts as exemplary. It is through collaboration and cooperation among governments that we have achieved this level of excellence.

Here in Canada we have not only collaborated nationally but also internationally. Infectious diseases like SARS know no boundaries. Throughout the past month we have worked with the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

We have taken appropriate measures to protect the health of Canadians. To help prevent the spread of disease we have, for

example, recommended that Canadians not give blood if they have been in a SARS affected region within the last 10 days.

Our excellence is also demonstrated in the research being done in our Canadian laboratories. At Health Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, employees are working tirelessly to find the cause of SARS.

The Government of Canada is also ready to respond to additional requests for support, financial or otherwise, from Ontario and other provinces and territories. The Prime Minister and my other cabinet colleagues have been visible in their support of Toronto as a safe place for people to visit and do business. In fact in a show of support, the Prime Minister will hold this week's cabinet meeting in Toronto. I do believe, to the best of my memory, that this is the first time in 10 years the Prime Minister has held a meeting of the cabinet of his government outside Ottawa. This speaks to the very strong show of support the Prime Minister and the government are making on behalf of all Canadians for the people of Toronto and the front line health care professionals who have been fighting SARS for the past six weeks.

We are reviewing every request for assistance. While the government is aware of the economic impact SARS is having, our number one priority is and must be the health of Canadians. We will use all available means and we will be successful in managing this disease.

I end where I began, which is that it is truly remarkable to see the heroic efforts of those on the front lines. This morning I had the opportunity to meet with approximately 50 of those people, including a doctor who has returned to work, who in fact had contracted SARS and has fully recovered. From the Salvation Army to the paramedics, nurses and doctors, those who work every day in the community SARS clinics in Toronto, their dedication and devotion is truly remarkable.

● (1900)

I am very proud to say that Health Canada has worked shoulder to shoulder with those people and people like them across the country from the day SARS was identified by the WHO.

We will continue to work as a government and as a department shoulder to shoulder until SARS is controlled. As I have indicated, we are pleased today to be able to say that because of these heroic efforts SARS is controlled and contained in the city of Toronto.

We will continue to be vigilant. We will continue to do that which we need to do as a government to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a brief point of order.

I wonder, given the importance of the issue that we are dealing with tonight, whether the minister would be prepared to answer a number of questions from members in the House following on her speech.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas have the consent of the House for his proposal?

**An hon. member:** No.

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**The Deputy Speaker:** It might be helpful if I could ask the member for Burnaby—Douglas if he could maybe indicate a time limit. That is usually helpful in these circumstances.

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to ask the indulgence of the House to have a five minute question and comment period for the minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas have the consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thought this would be the opportunity to begin my debate but it is even better to begin with a question for the minister. Most of my dialogue would have been to question the minister on the lack of intensity in dealing with SARS from the very beginning.

Why would the minister not discern the need for a federal quarterback dealing with the issues from coast to coast on SARS rather than giving it off to the provinces? I think the provinces have done a tremendous job. I could not agree more with the minister that the province of Ontario has done a tremendous job, particularly in the Toronto area.

Why was it that there was not a national quarterback dealing with the issue when the travel advisory first came out that morning, that Nova Scotia said it would not advise travel to Toronto and Alberta said it would not advise travel to Toronto? There was no national agenda to say that we would deal with this on a national basis.

Why was the minister not prepared to stand up and work as a national quarterback on that issue and many other issues right from the very beginning a little over a month ago when SARS was first identified?

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Mr. Speaker, I and my department have been playing exactly that role. That is the appropriate role of Health Canada as it relates to public health challenges, both the development of public health infrastructure and the utilization of that infrastructure in these kinds of public health challenges.

Let me say to the hon. member that I want the record to reflect that the Government of Alberta did not issue a travel advisory in relation to travel to Toronto. In fact, I point out that the minister of health for the province of Alberta made it absolutely plain that he saw no reason for people not to travel to Toronto. Obviously reasonable precautions should be taken but with that in mind, there would be no reason for people not to travel to Toronto.

In fact we have been doing exactly that which the hon. member has requested. I know I do not have time here, but I could list chapter and verse all the things we have done, especially since September 11 in relation to the creation of a public health infrastructure. Is there more that we can learn and more that we can do? Of course there is because we learn from every one of these public health challenges.

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that there is limited time. I wanted to say that I share completely with the minister the accolades to the front line workers. They have been absolutely extraordinary.

I think also that Canadians feel there has been a huge failure of leadership by the federal government. I want to ask the minister a couple of very specific questions.

The minister will know that a coalition of 24 respected scientists from across Canada has asked the federal government for \$500,000, a very little amount of money to jump start the development of a SARS vaccine. They are top people. They want to get to work. They want to develop a vaccine. They need the money now, not a month from now. Is the minister prepared to support that?

What steps is the minister prepared to take and the Liberal government prepared to take to deal with the economic crisis that is facing Toronto, particularly small businesses? Jack Layton, the leader of the federal New Democrats, has called for a funding program to assist these businesses to assist workers who have been hurt. What is the minister prepared to do on that front as well?

• (1905)

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Mr. Speaker, could I ask the hon. member a question in relation to the \$500,000? Is he referring to the recent request for proposals from the CIHR, which involved the amount of \$500,000, because that is moving forward? I have been in discussions with Dr. Bernstein and proposals are being sought. That work will move forward.

I had the opportunity to speak with the Premier of British Columbia this afternoon. He spoke to me about a particular research initiative in relation to vaccines that he would like to pursue in British Columbia. I told him I would be taking that up immediately with my department to see how we can facilitate and move forward with the science and research so we both get better diagnostic tools and can work toward a vaccine.

At the moment the view is that it may be up to three years for the development of a vaccine. If it is possible to cut that time in half or even less, then clearly we, as part of the international scientific and research community, will do our part.

I can reassure the hon. member that we are looking to the resources we put to science not only in our world class lab in Winnipeg but more generally for researchers. I think the hon. member will see that we will be doing more in this area in the days ahead.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, why did it take this long for the minister to come into the House of Commons and address this issue? As I said, during question period there are 30 second responses but should she not have invited participation by members of Parliament to help her, the ministry and the country deal with this?

Why so late coming into the House? Why was it up to the opposition parties to suggest this emergency debate?

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Mr. Speaker, I was in the House every day until the beginning of the break. During the first week of the break, I was available to the media two days for full scrums. Last week I was available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. In fact, my scrums were 15 or 20 minutes long and covered live, I believe, on all three major networks, as well as excerpted widely in the pages of the papers.

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My key message during that time to Canadians was that people were working on the ground to control and contain this disease. They were doing an effective job. It was being controlled, it was being contained and Toronto was a safe place to go. I was in the House this afternoon for question period. I answered a number of questions in relation to this issue.

This is the first day back from break. If people want to discuss this further, be it in this context, during question period or at other times, I am available and I think there are a number of members of Parliament and colleagues from this side of the House who take this issue very seriously and would be more than interested in engaging in this important debate.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure finally to be able to talk in some sort of substance with regard to this emergency debate on SARS, a virus that has gripped the nation, that has gripped the attention of the world and that has the potential of great harm. We understand that. I do not think anyone is fooling themselves by thinking anything different.

I am absolutely amazed when I see how the health workers in Ontario have dealt with this issue. They have dealt with it in a commendable way. They were absolutely stretched to the maximum even before the SARS virus came upon them as a challenge for them to control it and deal with it. I can only imagine just how intense it would be for the health care workers.

We know the most unhealthy workplace in Canada is in our hospitals which are stretched to the maximum. Nurses take more sick time off than people from any other workplace in Canada because they have a very intense job and they are very stretched. The lack of dollars in our health care system has allowed it to erode over the last number of years. We have talked a lot about this but I am not here to talk about it. I am talking on top of that. We have a situation now with this virus and they have been called upon to do extraordinary things. It is very intense. I just cannot impress upon the House enough how much gratitude we owe them.

I believe on Sunday five nurses said that was it, that they could not handle any more and they decided to quit. I can understand their frustrations. I talk to nurses all the time, and they were frustrated before this.

This is where we needed a national quarterback and some national attention to bring together as many resources as we possibly could to assist in areas such as Toronto, where the virus exploded and got out of hand for a short period of time. To contain that, we had to add resources to it. We should have intensified the workplace force there so they could deal with it in a most effective and efficient way as possible. Unfortunately we saw lack of leadership in the area of dealing with the containment side of it. Although there was no hesitation whatsoever on behalf of Tony Clement, the health minister of Ontario. Very quickly the Grace Hospital was quarantined. Shortly after, the York Hospital was quarantined. It was done very quickly and there was no hesitation to deal with the virus.

It was somewhat different as to how this all started; the Vancouver situation compared to the Toronto one. Both had patients who came from overseas and brought this to our borders. They were allowed

through our airport and screening systems. We did not know really with what we were dealing.

However we have to compare how the hospitals dealt with this. Why did the virus get out of control for a short period of time in Toronto but not in Vancouver when the same warnings were given to both? I think because of the proximity of Vancouver to Asia, officials were really looking for flu-like symptoms. They had been alerted to it. As soon as patients came in they were isolated immediately. Officials in Toronto however were not aware of with what they were really dealing. I do not fault anyone for that. I just say that we are all human. What we can learn from that is how important it is to act quickly.

When all is said and done, one thing we absolutely have learned is we cannot hesitate when it comes to dealing with the safety of the people of Canada. We have seen the results of what happened when we hesitated to deal with leadership issues and protect Canadian population because of this. Therein lies the reason for an emergent debate in the House tonight so we can talk about what has happened, what we can learn from it and where we go from here. It is very important we do that.

One thing we can say is that no matter how we can applaud the workers in the containment side of it to deal with it nationally, all of that is for naught if we turn around and allow the SARS virus to be imported to our nation by other carriers from other countries. That is the reason why the WHO was so adamant that countries exporting this virus to other countries had to be stopped. That is how we contain it.

● (1910)

Whether issuing the travel alert was premature, and we can argue I suppose whether the facts were there, the WHO obviously felt the virus was being exported. Whether it was exported to Australia, we do not know. There was a case of a couple of children whom they thought had SARS. They got better before they were diagnosed, so it is hard to say. There was a nurse in the Philippines who died. She passed it on to her father and he passed away. There was one in Bulgaria who had pneumonia and they suspected SARS. The other one is in the United States. We are exporting this virus to other countries so we should not be so alarmed about what the WHO says.

The WHO issued a travel advisory because the screening process was not in place. If the screening process is not in place, we have to ask why it is not in place. I asked that question this afternoon in question period, and the minister's reply was that the WHO had said everything was going fine. I do not buy that. The WHO was saying that it was going to issue a travel advisory to Toronto because we were exporting the virus. Whether we were or were not does not really matter. The issue was the WHO felt that we were. It said that the screening was not appropriate.

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Some colleagues are saying that was not why the travel advisory was issued. I do not think it would have a case to stand on if we were not suspected of transporting SARS to other countries. The WHO would never have issued the travel advisory. I say that very clearly because when this first started there were four different places in the world that were hot spots: Beijing, Hong Kong, Singapore and Toronto. That is where the SARS virus broke out but a travel advisory was not issued for Singapore.

One might ask what Singapore did that it was not issued a travel advisory. It had 19 deaths and an even higher number of individuals who had contracted the disease, so it was not the containment side of it. We are pretty much equal on that. It was not the death side of it. It was the exporting of it. The WHO felt that the screening at the airports was sufficient enough and that it dealt with the issue of transporting the virus other countries, so there was no reason to issue a travel advisory to Singapore.

That is how I would assess the facts of the case. The problem we have in Toronto is that we should have been doing a similar job there. The WHO on March 27 said that we should be screening and it recommended the screening process was to be an interview. I challenged the minister at that time, on the 26th and 27th of March, why we were not screening as the WHO had recommended. The comment came that the voluntary pamphlet was appropriate enough. That was a terrible decision made that day. We are feeling the repercussions of that decision today.

It is very fortunate in some ways that other countries were doing their jobs and we did not have more transported into Canada during that time period when we were inappropriately screening those incoming passengers. That could have made the Canadian population more vulnerable than it already was. However it was as important not to export this to other nations.

Because of that, we are in a situation where Toronto unjustifiably is now seen as a place that is a risk for travellers and a travel advisory is now in place. The world, regardless of the facts, believes that Toronto is not a safe place to visit. Concerts are being cancelled, hotel reservations and meetings of all kinds are being cancelled. It is a devastating blow to the economy of that area in particular.

I live in a constituency that actually is in the Rocky Mountains. Jasper Park is in my riding. I asked the people of Jasper Park if they were being affected. Some of them said yes, that they were having some problems with what they expected to see this summer. Some said no, that it was not quite there yet. There is a possibility that perhaps, if we can get on top of this in time and we can advertise that Canada is as clean and pristine as it was once known, we can recoup the damage that has been done. Nonetheless, the damage which has occurred is very significant, particularly for the Toronto area.

We are having this emergency debate so we can see if we have dealt with this yet. Is there still a problem at our airports?

• (1915)

I was reading an article on the front page of, I think, the *Edmonton Sun* about an individual who tried to test the system from Toronto to Great Britain. He actually put on a lot of layers of clothing so that he was sweating profusely and he faked a cough. He was coughing intensely when he went to the wicket. There were three pamphlets

there, whether people voluntarily picked them up or not. He jumped on the plane and was coughing intensely up and down the aisle waiting to see if someone would stop him and check to see if he had SARS. The problem was that the plane ended up landing in Montreal where he thought for sure he would be escorted off and asked some questions about it. Nonetheless, the comment, and I am reading from the paper, was that the individual continued on to Great Britain with not a word said to him. This is the sort of thing that happened.

What alerted me to the entire issue of the screening process not being appropriate was when an individual sent an e-mail to my office saying that his business had called him back from Hong Kong because of the fear of SARS. The problem was that he was not asked one question during his trip from Hong Kong to the Toronto airport about SARS. He actually could have contracted it there and imported it here and no one would have even known.

That was why we said there had to be appropriate screening at the airport in Toronto. Screening was not being done on passengers coming into the country or passengers leaving the country. We encouraged the minister to invoke the Quarantine Act and to say to Canadians, "We will stand between this virus and the health of Canadians initially". The minister said no, that it was not needed and that we did not have to worry about that.

However we must understand that the protection under the Quarantine Act goes both ways: protection from incoming passengers so they do not carry disease and protection for other countries on outgoing passengers. The power to contain both is in the act and it is spelled out very clearly.

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** We have quarantine officers at each airport.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield:** The minister is saying that she has quarantine officers in the airports. That is a very interesting thing to say because I checked that out and there is a difference between what Vancouver is doing and what Toronto is doing when it comes to quarantine officers and screening. For the number of quarantine officers in Vancouver they look to the local authorities, as well as the federal authorities, to make sure they have enough quarantine people in the Vancouver airport to deal with it. There are fewer quarantine officers at the Toronto airport which has many more passengers going through it. It is those officers who are not appropriate in number, nor are there appropriate screening to even identify anything to do for those officers because passengers are not questioned when they go to the wickets.

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The other questions asked of individuals when they check their bags are whether their bags had been left alone or whether they had packed them themselves. Those are the two standard questions asked. They do not make much sense but nonetheless we are asked them every time we go through the airport. I do not think there are many people in the House who do not go through the airport on a regular basis. Those two questions could have been replaced very quickly and easily with the following questions: "Have you been in contact with SARS? Have you had a fever? Do you suspect you might be coming down with any kind of illness?" It would not have slowed the process down at all. Yet the minister has said that we cannot ask those questions because there are 36,000 individuals leaving the Toronto airport on a daily basis and it would retard the process. I am sorry but I do not buy that.

My frustration is in seeing how this whole case has been handled from the beginning until now. We say that when we must deal with a crisis like this we must look at it as a three-pronged approach. First, it must be contained nationally. Thank goodness we have great workers doing that job. Second, to ensure we do not reinfect we must protect the nation internationally. Third, we must work on a vaccine to protect Canadians in a long term way so that somewhere in the future, regardless of where this virus goes, we are dealing with it.

My frustration was being contacted by the media saying that the government was not sure whether it should put \$10 million or \$100 million into research for a vaccine because it was an international problem and perhaps the whole international community should deal with it. I suggest there is absolutely no way that should even be a question. We should automatically be dealing with the health and safety of Canadians in the long run.

● (1920)

When we have a government that is about to spend \$131 million to continue running a gun registry program next year that will not save one life in the country, its hesitation about putting money into a vaccine should not even enter its mind. It should be automatic.

Nonetheless, there has to be a three-pronged approach when dealing with this virus if we are going to deal with it in the long term.

I am frustrated because I see a government that has failed to act. This is the history of this government. It fails to act when it comes to emergency situations. It is just sort of the character of the government. It did the same thing with September 11. It did the same thing with the Iraq war situation. Now it is doing the same thing with SARS. Hopefully we can learn something: that we have to deal with this in an aggressive way. We cannot hesitate. If we are going to err we should err on the aggressive side not on the other side.

The people on the other side will say that we are just fearmongering, that we are trying to scare the nation. I will tell members something about fear. Fear usually comes when one does not understand or know something. When we are straight up with the population and tell them the truth the fear erodes. They do not have the fear because they are part of the process and they have the information to deal with it. That is how the government should have dealt with the SARS virus instead of telling us initially that we had to be coughed on for a significant amount of time before we could

catch the virus, and then coming out four days ago and saying that the virus could actually live on an object for up to 24 hours.

Some people have said that the government just did not know, that it was too new a virus and that it did not understand for sure. If it did not understand then it should not have said that we had to be coughed on for four hours before we could contract the disease.

The government should be straight up and aggressive and tell everyone that it is prepared to screen people appropriately at the airport so that SARS can be contained. Canadians would accept and approve of that.

Unfortunately, because that was not happening, we have a significant hole to dig out of in this country. Thank goodness it looks like SARS has been contained.

Here we are today looking ahead and asking for the facts. Hopefully tomorrow the travel advisory to Ontario will be lifted, no thanks to the health minister because she is not over talking to the WHO right now. She sent Tony Clement. I do not understand that. This is an international organization and we should have some federal representation there. She should not be sitting here. She should be sitting over there, which is unfortunate.

Nonetheless, hopefully the advisory will be lifted tomorrow and then we can advertise that Canada is the pristine country that it once was, and that it is safe to come here and enjoy life and to enjoy the benefits of Canada. It is a vast country with wonderful people, a wonderful health system and a weak health leader, but we will work at fixing that.

However we have a situation where we can move from here in a positive way. I would like to end by saying that positive tone is what I would like to leave us with. We do have opportunities to move forward.

We do have another cloud on the horizon which is West Nile virus. I hope we have learned because this is the second time we have had a major illness that we fell asleep on. The first one was West Nile last fall where we thought there were only 11 cases and it ended up to be over 200 cases. Hopefully we will not approach the West Nile virus with the same apathy that we have with this one.

The upside to the West Nile virus is that it is not the pandemic bug that has been forecast for many years. If there is another upside to this it is that we hopefully have learned not to be passive when these situations come along, that we become aggressive. That is the approach we need to have as we move forward to protect this nation and to deal with viruses and diseases that come along.

It really is frustrating that we are having an emergency debate after the disease has been contained and after things have been almost wrecked. We should have had this debate early on when the WHO on March 27 said that we had to screen at the airport. That was when we should have realized this was serious and that we should have had a debate on it to give some direction and move on it as aggressively as possible.

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•(1925)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this evening's debate. I say pleased because it is certain that as members of Parliament we are in the habit of giving speeches and we enjoy taking part in this kind of discussion, even when the subject is basically very serious.

Naturally, I will begin by offering my sympathies to the victims of this terrible disease, another plague touching the human race. We have seen wars, we have seen AIDS, which has been around for some time, and now we see a new kind of pneumonia—very severe, with respiratory problems, and possibly deadly. Of course, not everyone will die from it, but society will pay a high cost. I believe we should make every possible effort to try to limit this disease, to avoid its spread.

First of all, we must think of the victims. They need care and their families also need our sympathy. Imagine having a relative or close friend in one of these hospitals. Imagine the psychological conditioning of the people who support these friends and families within the hospitals. These are worried people and they hope that the virus does not spread through the rest of the hospital, as it seems to have done in Beijing, where entire hospitals have had to be put under quarantine.

I also feel special sympathy for the health care workers looking after these people. I am a former health care worker. Before going into politics, I worked in a centre for mentally handicapped young people. A disease of this kind, not as brutal or deadly, but just as contagious, appeared in the centre. We had to put whole units into quarantine. I have been through this and it was not easy. There is always the feeling that no matter how much attention is paid to hygiene, no matter how much is done to ensure that the nursing staff can continue its work, we ourselves might fall victim to the disease.

I have a lot of sympathy for these people, especially since the disease with which we are dealing now is even more serious. We must put ourselves in the place of these workers who, day after day, put their health at risk to help those who are sick. I think that it is worth mentioning. I understand the kind of psychological pressure that they must feel and I know how difficult it is for them and for their families.

Last weekend, I saw on the front page of a Quebec newspaper a nurse who looked exhausted and a little desperate. These people work in difficult conditions. They have to work overtime and spend all their energy fighting this infection during so many hours, days and weeks. They certainly deserve our admiration, and I wanted to let them know that at the outset.

It seems that this disease originated in China, which I think is a well-known fact by now. Political measures have already been taken in that country. Of course, the political system there is not the same as ours. It is often the president of the republic who makes decisions like removing the minister of health or the mayor of Beijing. That is what happened. Some people were removed in China precisely because they acted without any concern for transparency and because they minimized the impact of the disease. They did not know what they were supposed to do and they probably did not have any contingency plan. When they realized how serious the problem

was, it was already too late and the disease had already spread, which makes the present situation in China extremely serious.

Fortunately, we reacted more quickly here. It is likely that Ontario, Quebec and all the Canadian provinces have better medical services than those in China. I am not saying that China is completely lacking in resources. It has hospitals. But, in terms of the professionalism of medical personnel and the availability of tools to diagnose and treat this disease, I must salute Canadian health care workers.

So, there are always political consequences. China is experiencing political consequences, but so are Ontario and Canada, with regard to what happened and who is responsible.

•(1930)

It is great to be a minister or prime minister, but the job comes with responsibilities. Now, there is some confusion, perhaps not about the origin of the disease but whether it has been contained.

The WHO is telling Ontario that it does not believe SARS has been contained. It is not true that just one person arrived and contaminated everyone else, that this is the full extent of it and that it has been contained to Toronto. Apparently, some cases went through Toronto and spread the disease elsewhere, including in the United States.

People are wondering, then, if SARS has been contained or not. It is dangerous because this creates a psychological climate that has an impact on society as a whole, particularly in Ontario, because this province was the one hit.

Many of my colleagues talked about the economic impact, and I am going to do so shortly, but there is also a psychological impact. What does this lead to? People tend to stay home with their families and go out as little as possible. This slows down the local economy and also the social vision.

So there is currently some uncertainty. I am drawing the connection with the political leaders in China. An emergency situation such as this requires a certain type of action.

I remember what happened in my riding during the ice storm. I was in Mexico at the time. As soon as I learned how serious the situation was, I naturally hopped on the first available plane. I spent 24 hours on board different planes, making connections right and left in order to get back home. I think it is important to be in the field, where things are happening, to show the people that we know what we are doing, that we care and that we are fighting on their behalf.

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That is not what happened in China, and we might have concerns about how things were done here in Canada. At the beginning of the crisis, the Prime Minister showed up in Chinatown, in Toronto, to have dinner. Is that enough? It was a first step. A message. The Prime Minister goes to Chinatown to show that it is not dangerous or at least not as dangerous as some might believe and that we will get this disease under control.

We might criticize the Prime Minister for not cutting his vacation short when the disease started to spread. It is important. His decision can be examined from different viewpoints. If the current Prime Minister had been involved in a leadership campaign, would he have come back? Why do we not hear more from the leadership candidates on such fundamental issues? These are very important political issues.

Tomorrow, cabinet will be meeting in Toronto, hoping to send a signal. I think it is important for the cabinet to meet there, but it would be much more important to give health professionals what the need to be able to fight this disease. It is not enough for the Prime Minister and cabinet to show up in Toronto and say that everything is fine.

We can also talk about the mayor of Toronto, who is more or less filming a video clip on the city of Toronto to show how great things are there. This is inappropriate because people can tell that it makes no sense with everything that is going on. Authorities must face the situation and recognize that there is a problem. When they show someone walking on the beach in Toronto, near Lake Ontario, pretending that everything is fine, some say that this probably produces the opposite effect to what was intended.

We must also talk about the whole political approach at the WHO. It is the WHO that issued a travel advisory, telling people that they should not travel to Toronto unless they absolutely had to. What was our ambassador in Geneva doing? He must have heard about that at some point. Why did he not call the government to say "Listen, we have a problem". Did our ambassador, Sergio Marchi, go to the WHO when he heard about that to tell them, "Listen, do not move too quickly on this; why would you put Toronto on such a list"?

Some people have started to say that if we want the WHO to revise its decision, it is because it was made for a political reason. Some even said that it was made so the world would not point the finger at eastern and Asian countries. It meant "Look, Toronto also has that problem, and that is why we have put it on the list of places to avoid for a while".

• (1935)

What was our ambassador in Geneva doing? One may wonder. It might be too early to point a finger at those responsible. For the time being we are wondering. We can wonder whether this crisis has been properly managed or whether we let things go too far only to wake up suddenly when we saw that the issue was becoming national in scope?

We have questions regarding all these approaches, the fact that the Prime Minister had dinner in Toronto, that cabinet will meet there tomorrow, that the Prime Minister decided not to cut his holidays short. We have a lot of questions so far. I have the feeling that if

things were to get worst we will have to probe much deeper and there will be some finger pointing.

I will not raise the issue of jurisdiction in the area of health, an area under provincial jurisdiction—I believe the provinces are responsible for health—but this is another example of the number one priority of voters in Canada, namely the health care system. So why is the government, which has surpluses, not giving more money to the provinces to provide quality health care?

What does the government want to do? It wants to put \$10 million in a tourist ad campaign. This is not what we need. We need quality services in every province. Everybody is saying that the health care system is underfunded.

Do you not believe that what we need right now in Toronto is more nurses, more social workers to provide psychological support to people, more front line workers in those hospitals? We need this money, but the government knows that it most likely will have to foot the bill since we cannot say whether or not \$10 or \$20 million will be enough.

Once again, the province will have to absorb the cost and it will have an impact on the budget. We might be able then to look at the alternative: providing emergency disaster relief funding, as was done in the Lac-Saint-Jean area and during the ice storm.

But there is no sign this will be the case. For the time being, Canada is saying it will try to help Toronto through an ad campaign to attract tourists. It is questionable in the present context.

There will certainly be economic costs. Many people have mentioned this. Some economic institutions have even said that Toronto might be losing up to \$30 million daily at the present time. It is certain that all Canadians and Quebeckers—for we are their next door neighbours—are following developments.

It is very important to us that every effort be made to contain this crisis and I am certain that Quebeckers are sympathetic to the cause of the health workers and to the political leaders of Ontario. We are, of course, not anxious to see the disease spread to Quebec as well, which could happen at any time.

Every effort must therefore be made, and I think that the people of Quebec would not hesitate to help out their colleagues in Toronto if they were asked, because we understand that this disease, this atypical pneumonia, must be stopped from spreading further in Canada or elsewhere on the continent, not only out of feelings of solidarity but also out of pure self-interest. I think that Quebeckers would be prepared to make that effort.

I also want to congratulate the federal government on the initiatives it has taken. It was, for instance, very important as far as employment insurance was concerned for the minister to lift the two-week waiting period requirement for EI.

There are potential dangers related to this, because a person with symptoms might not want to report them for fear of being laid off and forced to wait two weeks before seeing any money. I therefore think this measure is an important one. It may not look that important but workers must be helped, especially those in direct contact with victims, who might be affected by the disease. Everyone must therefore understand that, if symptoms are reported, the minister has said that she was lifting the two-week waiting period. This is, I believe, extremely important.

Summarizing then, I believe it is very important at this time for politicians, health care workers and all other workers in these hospitals to combine their efforts. Nurses and orderlies are not the only ones involved; there is the housekeeping staff, who have a huge task as well in containing this virus.

● (1940)

It requires a lot of cleanliness and disinfection. That is the job of the cleaning staff. These people are also subject to quotas, to restrictions, and to the danger posed by their work. We should recognize what they are doing. At the moment, it may be too soon to begin to say, "We should have done this; we should have done that".

To me it is important that, when disaster strikes, we ask, "Where was the emergency plan?" We may wonder where it was. Where was the emergency plan before the aircraft hit the World Trade Center towers? Perhaps there was no plan. But now there probably is one.

Still, there was probably no emergency plan for this type of disease. But it must be a lesson to us. Once we are in a crisis situation, it is not the time to assess blame and make decisions about what to do. First, we have to make sure the virus is contained. First, we have to contain the spread of the virus. Once that is done, and once the storm is over, the reliability of the plan's preparation will have to be evaluated.

Last week, or two weeks ago, I was questioning witnesses appearing before the defence and veterans affairs committee, on the topic of critical infrastructure. I was worried about the way it is being done. There seems to be no emergency plan if a nuclear reactor were attacked. I do not think that there was an emergency plan ready to handle this kind of disease.

Research will have to be done on diseases. People may say that this disease was unknown until now. That is true. Still what would happen if another disease appeared and struck in the same way, and it was unknown to us? Who are the first to respond? How do you work with the levels of government? How do you work with the municipality? All of these things are extremely important to assess and to prepare for, and conclusions must be drawn.

As I was saying, now, the virus needs to be contained. Health care workers must also be given support and encouragement. We often sing the praises of war veterans, who represent a country and defend its interests. Now, we must sing the praises of the health care warriors. They too are risking their lives, perhaps not in the same way as soldiers, but they put in long hours, in their theatre of operations—to use an expression often used in connection with the military—in hospitals, which are dangerous places to be right now, and where there can be serious consequences. These people deserve all our respect.

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In closing, I want to reiterate that Quebeckers have great sympathy for this situation, for the health care workers in Ontario and for the victims. They would not want this to spread elsewhere. Quebec is Ontario's primary and closest neighbour. It is therefore important for Quebeckers to send a message. That is what the Bloc Québécois is doing today and intends to continue to do. The Bloc is sending a message to say that this situation has elicited its sympathy, that it wants to help these people and will do so any way that it can; they can count on the generosity and the solidarity of Quebeckers. We all live on the same planet and on the same continent, so we must help each other in times of crisis such as this. The solution lies in our solidarity. Health care workers are our best guarantee of the solidarity required in times like these.

● (1945)

[*English*]

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, the spokesperson on health for the Progressive Conservative caucus, for having joined with me in seeking this emergency debate today on this profoundly important question of the response or the absence of an effective response by the federal Liberal government to the outbreak of SARS.

It is sad that it was the two smallest parties in the House that had to take the leadership on this issue. This is leadership that has been shamefully lacking from the federal government from the beginning of this crisis.

I want to start out by extending condolences to the families, friends and loved ones of those 21 Canadians who have been victims of SARS so far. I wish to extend those condolences on behalf of the federal leader of the New Democratic Party, Jack Layton, and all of my caucus colleagues. We can only imagine the anguish and pain that their families are feeling at this time.

At the same time I want to join with members on all sides of the House in paying tribute to the extraordinary leadership, heroism, dedication, and tireless commitment of the front line workers across this country, but particularly in Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg, and a number of other centres in the fight against SARS. I am speaking here of health care workers, researchers, public health professionals, and others who have worked tirelessly day in and day out to do whatever they could in an extraordinary and courageous effort to stop the spread of SARS.

It is particularly appropriate that we acknowledge and pay tribute to the workers on the front lines today because April 28 is also the national day of mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. The Canadian Labour Congress has reminded us that well over one-quarter of all the cases and suspected cases of SARS are in fact health workers. We should join in expressing our gratitude as Canadians for their dedication, competence and professionalism.

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We should also acknowledge the tremendous obstacles that health care workers have had to face in recent years: cutbacks, downsizing, privatization, restructuring, and other attacks on our public medicare system. Unfortunately, we are seeing some of the implications of those in the total absence of any meaningful and significant leadership by the federal Liberal government in the response to this SARS crisis.

Many Canadians are asking themselves where has the leadership been of the federal Minister of Health and the Prime Minister who after all speaks on behalf of all Canadians? Why did it take the Minister of Health a month to convene a meeting with her provincial and territorial colleagues? It was only on April 13 that she finally moved. We as New Democrats say that that inaction was shameful. It is shameful and there is no doubt whatsoever that the lack of federal leadership may have led to a situation which ultimately resulted in the World Health Organization issuing its travel advisory.

Canadians share this sense of anger and outrage that their federal government has not been there on the front lines. We have not had the kind of national leadership that Canadians are looking for on a crisis such as this.

In fact, there was an Environics poll conducted last week on the evening of April 24, only a few days ago. When Canadians surveyed in the greater Toronto area were asked what the response was like of the different levels of government, 53% of them said that they thought the city of Toronto had done a good job. Certainly, when we look at the dedication of the chief medical health officer of the city of Toronto, that remarkable woman and others on the front lines in Toronto, we understand that kind of response. I will remain silent about the spectacle of Mayor Mel Lastman, but certainly with that notable exception we have seen significant leadership there.

● (1950)

Regarding the Ontario government, there was a lot of concern. Only 43% said it was doing a good job and 52% said it was doing a poor job. It is no wonder that my provincial colleague the Ontario New Democrat Leader, Howard Hampton, has continued to speak out strongly for a real economic relief plan from the provincial government. It took far too long for Ernie Eves to finally act on this important question.

Yesterday Howard Hampton called for Queen's Park to top up employment insurance for SARS affected workers to 100% of income and to fund retraining for hospitality workers so they can upgrade their skills during the period of reduced demand. Hampton also said that the Conservative government should be working cooperatively with Ottawa in the event we finally see a real federal assistance plan and supplement those federal dollars which hopefully will be coming with provincial dollars.

However, here is the most glaring statistic. Only 31% of the residents of greater Toronto said the federal government was doing a good job. Over twice as many, 65% said that the federal government was failing Canadians. That is a damning indictment of the failure of leadership and the failure of federal Liberal members of Parliament from across Canada, but particularly Liberal members of Parliament from the greater Toronto area. Where have they been as this crisis unfolded?

I see a member here from Toronto who actually asked his own government to do something in terms of a financial aid package for businesses. That member was just laughed at by his own Minister of Health, by his own finance minister and by his Prime Minister. That Liberal member was completely ignored. In fact, to date there has been absolutely no response at all to the cry of smaller businesses in the Toronto area who are desperately looking for some support from a federal government that is sitting on a surplus of \$14.8 billion. Not a penny out of the federal government to support businesses and workers who are hurting in the greater Toronto area.

Jack Layton, the federal New Democrat leader, has called as recently as yesterday on the federal government to stop and end its shameful silence with respect to the importance of responding to businesses in the greater Toronto area. The Prime Minister said that there are ups and downs in business. What a pathetic response. What an abdication of leadership not only of this country but particularly of the greater Toronto area.

Where are the silent, invisible greater Toronto Liberal MPs? There is not a peep out of them and when they actually stand up and try to get some support from the federal government, they are just slapped right down by their own ministers. They tell them to forget it and ignore them completely. Those of us on this side of the House are saying it is time that the federal government did ante up.

We briefly heard from the Liberal leadership candidate, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who said this is a national epidemic and that we should pony up 90% of costs to assist in responding to this epidemic. There has not been a peep out of her since then nor any of her colleagues because the reality is that we know that she was speaking off the top of her head and not speaking on behalf of her government.

As Jack Layton said yesterday, Toronto does not need damage control from the Prime Minister. It needs damage assistance. Why has it taken over 40 days into the SARS epidemic before there is any relief package? There is still no relief package. It is all well and good to hold a cabinet meeting in Toronto but what the heck difference does that make to the businesses and to the workers who are suffering from this epidemic? There is no leadership, a shameful absence of any effective leadership.

● (1955)

Jack Layton and the federal New Democrat caucus have been calling for changes to EI eligibility and waiting periods to allow laid off workers, especially hospitality workers, to qualify for EI. We have been calling for an income support package for quarantined part time contracted and self-employed workers who are ineligible for EI benefits. We have also called on Ottawa to deliver a compensation package for Toronto's businesses, a package which could include a deferral of GST payments.

Jean Chrétien was golfing down in the Dominican Republic—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas is referring to the Prime Minister, but he knows he cannot refer to members by name. His own party leader may be able to do that because he is not a member of the House yet. The member for Burnaby—Douglas knows very well he has to be very careful. He will not want to break the rules of the House in this way.

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**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, no indeed and I should have referred to the Prime Minister who was golfing in the Dominican Republic while Canadians were looking for that leadership which was totally lacking from both the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister.

As New Democrats what we are saying is that the front line workers, the health care workers have put their lives on the line, tragically in some cases have given their lives, in the fight of this epidemic. The research workers and others, their dedication should be matched by leadership at the top. Instead we have had a complete vacuum; we have had a shameful and complete vacuum of any leadership whatsoever.

I want to suggest as well that the lack of leadership may indeed have contributed to the fact that the World Health Organization issued a travel advisory. I as a Canadian frankly was embarrassed when I heard the head of the World Health Organization heaping praise on Vietnam. The World Health Organization actually has removed the travel advisory from Vietnam because it brought together leadership at the most senior levels of government, at all levels. It came together with a national plan and fought successfully against SARS to the point that the World Health Organization actually removed the travel advisory.

What an embarrassment that instead of Canada showing that kind of leadership, which hopefully would have led to the travel advisory never having been imposed, it was Vietnam that showed that leadership.

I want to mention another country, Taiwan. The Government of Canada should be absolutely ashamed of itself for how it responded to Taiwan by issuing a travel advisory telling Canadians that they should not travel to Taiwan. The World Health Organization said not to travel to Guangzhou, not to travel to Hong Kong, not to travel to Beijing, but the World Health Organization did not say anything about not travelling to Taiwan. What did the Canadian federal Liberal government do? It told Canadians not to travel to Taiwan.

That kind of travel advisory obviously has a devastating impact on the Taiwanese economy. Fortunately many other countries, including Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Ireland and Israel removed Taiwan from their travel advisories. Canada did not. I have to ask, what on earth was the problem? Why was it that Canada failed to respond to Taiwan's call to lift that travel advisory?

More important, a broader question, why is it that the Canadian government is still refusing to support Taiwan's application for observer status at the World Health Organization? There is an upcoming meeting next month of the World Health Assembly. The foreign affairs committee just a couple of weeks ago passed a motion calling upon the Liberal government to do the right thing, to support observer status for Taiwan. I call today upon the government to respect the will of Parliament, to respect the call from the Standing Committee on Health and to support Taiwan's application.

Taiwan has shown real leadership in the fight against SARS. Certainly we regret the fact that it has imposed a ban on travel for Canadians, but given the absolutely appalling decision of our government to impose a travel advisory on Taiwan for no reason whatsoever, I do not think any of us should be surprised that Taiwan

responded in the way it did. Let us only hope that when the World Health Organization lifts its travel advisory that it will in fact follow suit and respond, but shame, shame on the Liberal government for its response to Taiwan, both here and in failing to support it at the World Health Organization. What do they think?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs says that China speaks for Taiwan, that we have a one China policy. China's response to the SARS epidemic has been a bloody disgrace, a shameful disgrace. China knew back in November about this new illness and did not do anything at all, quite the contrary. So why should the people of Taiwan have to rely on China, of all countries, to speak on their behalf in the World Health Organization?

• (2000)

Jack Layton as our federal leader, and my colleagues in the New Democrat caucus have called for leadership in a number of areas. I have already made reference to the importance of emergency funding and disaster relief. I would note that it is particularly the hospitality, tourism, retail and transportation sectors that are taking a huge financial hit and the government is doing nothing at all to respond to that.

I want to address another issue and that is the ongoing failure of the government to move ahead with a national public health strategy. We are not just as New Democrats highlighting this today. My colleague from Winnipeg North Centre has been up in the House from the time she was first elected calling on the government to finally move ahead with a comprehensive public health strategy. Instead we have seen massive cuts by the former Liberal finance minister, now the leadership candidate, the member for LaSalle—Émard, who is travelling around the country talking about visionary leadership when he was the minister of finance responsible for huge cuts to public health.

These were identified as a concern long ago by the Auditor General. The Auditor General has pointed out in a number of reports that we have to see serious action on a public health strategy. Here is what the Auditor General said back in November 1999:

Health surveillance is particularly critical now, when globalization has created an environment for disease and its transmission that never existed before. Sound surveillance information can save lives.

The Auditor General went on to say that we did not have that national public health strategy. In December 2000 the Auditor General once again called on the federal government to move ahead on a public health strategy and pointed out:

For these reasons, it is in the interest of all parties to work together and to participate in the development of a national health and safety regulatory plan.

Then just last September once again:

Gaps and weaknesses in the way Health Canada tracks diseases leave Canadians vulnerable, says Sheila Fraser, the Auditor General of Canada.

That was in September of last year and there is still no public health legislation.

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Where has the federal Liberal government been? It has been cutting back on our public medicare system. It has failed to move ahead on a public health strategy. As my leader in the House, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, pointed out earlier today, the lead Canadian researcher in the fight against SARS, Dr. Frank Plummer, the head of the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, has been calling on the government for a national public health agency, for performance based investments in public health, including training of public health professionals in emerging infectious diseases, community approaches to chronic disease prevention, reducing health disparities, biosecurity, migration, aboriginal public health, food and water safety, and for a public health innovations fund to put emphasis on cutting edge research in public health.

Where is that leadership? Again it is totally lacking from the federal government.

Another concrete example of the failure, the bankruptcy of the federal Liberal government's policies, is in the area of research to find a vaccine. Just a few minutes ago during this debate I asked the minister whether she would support the call by a coalition of 24 respected scientists from across Canada, led by Robert Brunham, the medical director of the B.C. Centre for Disease Control. They are asking the government for \$500,000 to jump start the development of a SARS vaccine.

The government still has not agreed to that request. This is a government that is sitting on \$14.8 billion in surplus and it cannot come up with half a million bucks for scientists to do the work they have to do on a vaccine. I say shame on the Minister of Health. She has been a disgrace. There has been a total failure of leadership by the government.

● (2005)

I once again want to call for the kind of leadership that the government should have been bringing forward for some time. I also want to remind the House that April 25 was Africa malaria day. While we mourn the deaths of those who have died from SARS and call for much more action in this area, let us also remember the global fight against malaria, against AIDS, against tuberculosis as well. Our government should be doing far more on those struggles also.

I call on the government to show the kind of leadership that is long overdue.

**Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River.

I also want to join in on this urgent debate on SARS. My prayers and thoughts are with the families who have lost loved ones and who have seriously been affected by the killer virus SARS. My thanks and appreciation go to the front line staff of our hospitals, clinics, emergency units, the police, fire and ambulance departments and their families who are stressed to the limit in coping with this killer disease.

People talk of ground zero in New York after 9/11. I want to talk about ground zero in Toronto and the effect SARS has had on my community.

The first case to be diagnosed in Canada was at Scarborough Grace Hospital which is located in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. The first school to be placed under quarantine was David Lewis Public School also located in Scarborough—Agincourt. Two schools followed later on, Stephen Leacock high school and John Buchan Senior Public School, also in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. Later, people attending a funeral at Highland Heights Funeral Home, again located in Scarborough—Agincourt, were quarantined.

Some people are saying that Toronto is ground zero. In New York City the whole city was affected and there was a ground zero. Similarly there is a ground zero in Toronto and that is Scarborough—Agincourt. My whole community is affected. Businesses in my constituency are feeling the effects first hand.

In the early stages people thought this would go away very quickly. Knowing the effect this virus was going to have on my community, I contacted the Minister of Human Resources Development and at my request she put a plan into effect that the two week waiting period for employment insurance benefits for the people who were quarantined would be waived. I thank the minister from the bottom of my heart. I also want to thank the Minister of Health who upon my request assisted the riding of Scarborough—Agincourt early on.

The waiving of the two week period by HRDC addressed the issue of working people and put money in their pockets and food on their tables. There is still a larger question. Small and medium size businesses are going to get hurt. Usually on Saturday nights in many malls in my riding there are arguments over parking spaces. However this has not been the case in the last few weeks. The malls have become ghost towns. People are afraid to go out and shop.

A fear overcame my constituents that they would be overcome with this disease and would die. SARS is a killer disease. There are other viruses that have the same overwhelming effect as SARS, but SARS is an unknown virus to date. SARS is able to become airborne and can be transmitted through various means very quickly. It has deadly effects. A patient who had been in the same room as the first person infected died. We have heard of many other examples.

Were it not for the World Health Organization putting Toronto on a watch list, we would not have acted. I brought this matter to the attention of my colleagues almost three weeks ago when I asked that we act immediately. Unfortunately I was dismissed. I tried getting the unanimous consent of the House for a motion asking our government to act quickly on this virus and again I was dismissed by many parties. It took the WHO to put us on the map in order for us to act. I did ask for special measures and for special means to be put in place in order for the House to respond to SARS and again I was dismissed. Now that this is biting us, we are here to deal with the matter.

Businesses are hurting. The hospitality industry is almost dead in Toronto. Hotel occupancy is down by 80% to 90%. Related businesses are also hurting. Just yesterday I was talking to a travel agent who expressed to me that he was ready to declare bankruptcy.

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● (2010)

As a collective body we have to move to in order to address this issue quickly and effectively. Finger pointing must be put aside. Political bickering and differences must be overcome in order for us to deal with this issue. We are losing many businesses and we will be putting people out of work.

Last week in my riding, which is ground zero, I took the initiative and put together a task force in order to deal with this monster. In order to get a grasp on this issue, I brought together business leaders, chambers of commerce, banking institutions, mall managements, the hospitality industry, labour unions and representatives of all three levels of government.

I want to share a few comments that were made. Toronto Catholic school board trustee Michael Del Grande stated, "Virtually every home should have a 'welcome to my home' banner. We also need welcome back discounts throughout Toronto to generate people coming back. We should also have a celebration party or a parade to identify the heroes in all this". Horace Chan, district vice-president of Canada Trust, stated, "We haven't seen a problem yet but that might still come. Right now we are working on a short term strategy to help customers financially. Our biggest concern is the small business owners". Ian Raynor, first vice-president of the Scarborough Chamber of Commerce, stated, "We have to deal with this on a business level but we can't do this on our own. We have to do our best to get through this and get back to work".

Overwhelmingly, this is not an issue for just one community. This is an issue for all communities. We started a process of rebuilding in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, ground zero. We are putting together a blueprint for other communities to follow and soon we will be reporting our thoughts and ideas for others to share. Are we hurting? You bet. Are we beaten? Are we licked? No way. We have the will and energy to move forward. And yes, we will persevere.

However, we cannot do it alone. We all need to be in this together. A few matters that we can certainly look at in the House are the means and methods by which we can assist the businesses of the country. Possibly we can defer the collection of taxes for a few months and ask businesses affected by SARS to pay their taxes over a 10 month to 12 month period. We can ask the Business Development Bank to defer the collection of interest on loans for a few months and have the affected businesses repay over eight to twelve months. We can encourage other levels of government, both municipal and provincial, and lending institutions, mall owners and landlords to follow our example. Together, we can overcome this killer disease of SARS. We can lead by example or we can bury our heads in the sand and point fingers as some political parties in the House want to do. At this point there is no right and there is no wrong. There is SARS and its effects and we must deal with it.

Having the Leader of the Opposition walk through terminal 2 in the Toronto airport and criticize the government does not help. He might want to come and visit ground zero and offer support to Canadians. That will help. Having the Leader of the New Democratic Party take cheap shots at the government certainly does not add to people's will to go on with their daily routines and their businesses.

Yes, we have failed as a whole to grasp the severity of what SARS did to us. We failed to understand this when I brought it to the attention of the House and was the lone voice asking for immediate action to deal with the severity of this disease. That is all history now. We must, as a collective, put a plan in action to deal with future diseases and other emergencies that might knock on our door. This nation demands of us to look after all our people, not to turn our backs on them. The House cannot turn its back on my constituents. We must move forward and provide the assistance that is required, and quickly, and we must overwhelmingly stop the finger pointing and the name calling.

● (2015)

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join in this emergency debate tonight. First I want to recognize that there are Canadians out there who have been hurt. They have been hurt physically and they have been hurt financially. Their numbers in comparison to the 30 million in our country are fortunately relatively small, but they are real. They are not just in Scarborough or Markham, but that is the focus of where, as my colleague has just pointed out, the SARS outbreak began. I want to extend condolences to the families of those who have passed away and the families of those who have endured the difficulties associated with this disease.

In the beginning, this was a health care issue. It was that on day one and it grew from one case of the virus entering Canada. In the early days, most of us looked upon it as a simple health care issue and we asked health care professionals to deal with it. As they always do, they did. There never was a time when a person sick with SARS was not attended to. In the early days before we realized the virulence of the disease, how communicable it was and how long it could live outside the human body as a virus, health care workers jumped in and worked hard. Many health care workers succumbed to the virus. Some have died. We want to recognize that.

In the beginning it was quite appropriate to view it as a health care issue. At the time we even called upon health care professionals to deal with it. I remember daily press conferences given by health care professionals about a health care issue. The containment was not successful in the early days. It is now, but in the early days it was not. As one case grew to 250 or so, it was unreasonable for us to expect that health care workers could manage the entire file.

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This thing grew beyond a health care issue and became a political issue, a communications issue, a financial issue, an economic issue, and an international issue. Yet we continued to give the file to health care professionals and ask them to manage it. This was wrong. This was wrong in the city of Toronto, it was wrong in the province of Ontario, and it was wrong for us to expect that health care professionals, as good, as well trained, as dedicated and professional as they were, could manage this whole file. In the end, we know that we were in error is asking them to carry the whole file.

The World Health Organization—again, health care workers—has made a decision, but we cannot ask health care workers to run our country or manage the globe. They are limited in their mandate and in their skills. The finest ever doctors are not necessarily the greatest communicators. I look upon this government, the Government of Ontario and the government of the City of Toronto to be communicators. Perhaps we as elected members were not there as soon as we should have been and in the way we should have been.

I look at the WHO decision of the last few days. It appears to have made a decision without all of the information, without objectivity and without a view of all of the other impacts, political, economic and international, that flow from the decision. It makes me very uncomfortable.

Now we know that this issue is bigger than just a health care issue and that we have to break out of the silos: federal, provincial, municipal, health care, employment insurance, Department of Foreign Affairs, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Immigration Canada and Transport Canada. We have to break out of the silos and have some leadership. I think we are beginning to see it. I certainly hope we are.

I live a few hundred metres from what my colleague has described as ground zero, Scarborough Grace Hospital in Scarborough. During most of this period I had a cold and I was coughing occasionally. I must say that I restrained my cough as much as I could. But I just had a cold. I am sure there were many other people who had colds over that period and were a little nervous about their condition. But an entire series of communities had to bear the brunt of this and we got through it.

● (2020)

There are not a lot of masks being worn in Scarborough and Markham. I live there and I see that, but when I see the issue on the television screen, I see masks. I see people wearing masks. On CNN, I saw on the television screen the little line, "Toronto gripped by fear". That is wrong. What a slander. What a libel. My community was not gripped by fear. My community was getting on. We were getting on with our lives as best we could. Yes, there is less traffic in the malls. Yes, there are some businesses significantly affected in the short run by this. We are concerned. But this was yellow journalism. Some of my political supporters told me about a television crew taking newscam videos who brought along masks to give to the people so they could show masks on the television screen. What hypocrisy. I have been out to the malls. I have been out to the schools. My colleagues have too. There are no masks there: just people.

As I say, we are getting along with this. We are just looking for a bit more leadership. I am a little bit angry at the media. As they fan

the panic, as they fake the panic, there are other communities around the world that have a greater problem with this than we do.

As we deal with it now, it is perhaps natural to want to reach out and blame somebody. This is a disease. It was not a conspiracy. It was a virus, a communicable disease. We did not plant it. No one planned the whole thing. We have to get a grip on this and understand what we are dealing with. Fortunately, our health care professionals have managed to deal with it in such a way that we think we are just about at the end of it. There is no point in trying to blame somebody for a disease showing up in our country. That is pointless. Let us simply deal with it. Turning on people in the House or out on the street is rather pointless. I think we ought to work together and focus on the positive things and work out of it.

We have work to do. We have to improve our communications. Tomorrow in Geneva there will be some decisions made. It is to be hoped they will be positive decisions that we as a country can build on. We have to break out of the health care silo. There are economic and financial implications. The tourism envelope is somewhat in tatters. Who knows how that will turn out? In terms of financial impact, there is pent up demand. Someone who was going to buy a car two weeks ago perhaps did not buy it two weeks ago. Hopefully they will buy the car two weeks from now. I hope the travel will begin again. Hopefully people will get into aircraft and come out to shop again. I was there on the weekend and I watched the traffic on the streets. People actually were out shopping again. We have managed to put this by us, I think. We are a big country, a big province and a big city. If New York City can get through 9/11, Toronto and Markham and Scarborough can easily get by the SARS challenge. Our people are fair-minded, they are tough and they are resilient. I know we will get through it just fine. Give us a bit of time, give us a bit of leadership and give us a bit of support and we will get through it.

Right now in Ottawa I know that the Prime Minister has made a number of significant communications. I know the health minister has too. The same thing has happened with the Ontario minister of health and the Ontario medical officer of health. Hundreds and hundreds of health care workers are all doing the right thing. I should also mention the Toronto medical officer of health and the medical officer of health for York Region. They have all done outstanding jobs in managing this very difficult file.

In the end, as I said, I carry a bit of resentment. Perhaps other Canadians do. Perhaps I am not all that happy with how the media handled this, but we are a free country and the media has free speech. Perhaps the media ought not to stick a microphone in front of me over the next few days because I might lash back verbally. However, I hope I am in a position in the days to come to congratulate all of the governments involved for the work they have done and will be doing over the next weeks to address the fallout and the implications, bring us back to normal and hopefully learn a few lessons.

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● (2025)

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Lakeland.

I have sat here and listened to the debate. I heard the member from ground zero, as he called it, speak about how Toronto was affected and how the people had been affected. I want him to recall and to think back to when we asked for the help of the government last year. I want him, when he talked about the lack of leadership tonight, to remember that Canadians in western Canada did not get leadership. That is why we are asking the government to give us leadership on this whole SARS problem in Canada.

Ironically, the fact that we have waited until today to have this debate is just proof of some of the points that I will be making. We have been aware of the problem since March yet it has taken until today for the Liberal government to finally let us have time to discuss the problem.

When the virus and deaths came to Canada in March, it threatened to disrupt the vacation plans of the Prime Minister but we need not have worried, he went anyway. While the Prime Minister was travelling abroad to watch golf at the edge of the ocean, health workers and customs officers were bracing for a tidal wave of disease.

The health minister was invisible at the time when Canadians needed reassurance, information and direction. I attended a briefing by her officials but the minister was not there. She did not have anything to say. Who knows where she was but she definitely was not on the job.

Many experts and those with common sense have said that a global viral outbreak poses more threat than a nuclear war. Modern trade and business patterns, increased globalization and the increase of international vacations has made it a certainty that a virus can circle the globe in a matter of hours. Are we prepared? SARS has brought us that test of our system and I do not think that we have stood up too well.

First indications of the handling of the SARS outbreak strongly suggest we were not prepared for this or even something worse. Save for the tragic deaths that have taken place, we should consider ourselves lucky at this time. Luckily the worst things most Canadians have been exposed to is leadership vacuum.

Just this weekend in Saskatchewan, the NDP government decided to advertise for a pandemic influenza coordinator. In the first line of the job requirements it said that it needed a person with "skills to complete Saskatchewan's contingency plan for a pandemic influenza".

Imagine, Saskatchewan does not have a plan for influenza after the many decades of its existence. Heaven help us if we are hit with influenza of pandemic proportions.

The crisis has exposed the lack of leadership at several levels of government. It has shown that the federal government is not prepared to handle incoming threats in our airports. It has shown that our governments are not willing to make life and death decisions. It

has shown that vacations and golf are more important than death and disease. Shame on the Liberals.

We should be doing more than handing out pieces of paper to prevent the spread of disease. We should be willing to question those coming into our country and those going to infected areas and prevent travel if necessary.

Last week many Canadian families went happily to China to pick up adopted children for return to Canada. Why were they allowed to go and why did the government not prevent them from going for their health protection and ours? Was a formal decision ever made or did the health minister just cross her fingers and hope for the best? Did she even know?

Hoping for the best seems to be the modus operandi for the Liberal side of the House. Instead of screening outgoing passengers to prevent the spread of disease, it downplayed the threat under the cautionary watch of the World Health Organization. The result has been disastrous.

The Liberals think that CNN is going to cover their caucus meeting in Toronto, the same way as it did the World Health Organization travel warning. They think health experts will be convinced by their public luncheons instead of concrete health precautions.

● (2030)

Imagine if the World Health Organization extends the travel advisory? The lack of proper screening process for incoming and outgoing travellers has increased that risk. Toronto and the economy of Canada cannot afford to gamble on this matter again.

If there is one silver lining to this issue, it is the stellar work of our health care workers, the frontline workers. They have stepped forward into a realm of uncertainty without the resources and support they need from their leaders. They have protected the public health interests of all Canadians when their leaders have run the other way. They have taken life and death risks to protect us when the government will not even take a political risk to do the same. I cannot express my gratitude in any way that truly demonstrates my appreciation for their efforts.

Like most MPs, I fly several times a week and usually I go through Toronto to do so. I flew from Ottawa three weeks ago to go home. My colleague from Edmonton North had mentioned something to me so I watched very closely as I went through security. I want to tell my colleagues in the House about this.

Like most travellers, I have a cell phone. Those phones are usually swiped, especially when we go through Ottawa. They check them all the time with a swab. It is used for explosives detection. The swab is rubbed over the telephone on several parts including the mouthpiece. Unfortunately the same swab is used on numerous phones before being replaced. Is there a risk of passing SARS with this method? When I questioned the security officer, she stated that she had received no direction to change the swab for each phone and had not actually considered the threat of passing germs in this fashion. Once again, we see the lack of leadership in this crisis.

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If SARS cannot be spread in that way, I am sure other things can. The people doing this important work should have the facts before them to answer this uncertainty. Until we hear otherwise, I encourage those travelling to clean their phones after they are handled by others as a precaution and ask that the swab be changed before their equipment is checked.

The world will never be free of germs, disease and deadly viruses but it should not be free of leadership either. Our government should be ready, willing and able to step forward to meet these challenges when they come. Our military should be able to contribute more than two doctors and one nurse when called upon. It is unthinkable that a military of 45,000 plus cannot muster more than three trained medical people in peace time. Has this government cut our military so thin that it cannot even find people to help in a domestic emergency? In fact, the Canadian Alliance caucus has two doctors. It is a shame that our military does not have more at a time of crisis like this. What would happen if we had a bioterrorism attack? What then?

We will always assume the U.S. will be there to help us but the government has put that at risk too. Let us stop taking risks, it is costing lives. Let us be prepared. Let us see some leadership from this Liberal government.

The Liberal government's lack of leadership was the best kept global secret. Unfortunately, the WHO was all too willing to expose this problem for the world to see. The WHO's reaction is a clear indication that it does not see leadership in Canada and had to step in. Canadians are demanding it but they are not getting it. If the Liberals are not willing to do the job, they should say so. The WHO has taken over.

Once again, I thank those frontline health workers and I want to let them know that it is their competency and not that of the leadership that is preventing public panic.

• (2035)

It is the men and women who stood in front of the microphones and explained things to Canadians, things that people in western Canada and across the country could understand. It was the health care workers who did that. Their work is so vitally important, and thankfully they are meeting and exceeding expectations.

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on this issue, although of course I wish there was no need for it. It is very unfortunate indeed. What we are facing with SARS is a very serious national issue.

I would like to start tonight by thanking all the people involved in the health care system, the health care workers, doctors, nurses, other frontline health care workers, as well as public health officials, for their response to this issue. They have done an awful lot to help contain this very serious problem and deserve recognition for that. I would like to sincerely thank these people for the truly wonderful work they have done during this very difficult time. They have done a tremendous job and they should be recognized for that.

I and my party colleagues certainly would like to extend our sympathies to the families who have lost family members or friends to this disease. We know there have been many already. Certainly not only the thoughts of family members are with these people but the thoughts and prayers of people across the country are with those

individuals who have lost family members and close friends to this disease.

• (2040)

I have heard some government members say that we should not be making a partisan issue out of the whole situation surrounding SARS, and I fully agree with that. We all have to work together to do what we can to deal with this very difficult situation. However, as a member of the official opposition, I also feel it is my responsibility and the responsibility of my colleagues to talk about some things that have happened on this issue which should not have happened and to talk about some things that have not happened which should have happened.

It is important to talk about the lack of leadership on this issue. It is not only on this issue where there has been a lack of leadership. The lack of leadership on the military and on health care have also contributed to the situation we are facing today.

I hear members of the government party over there heckling me. They can heckle if they like but it is important that they listen to the opposition on this issue, maybe learn a little and certainly take some responsibility for what they have not done regarding leadership instead of heckling on the issue.

Because the government has not taken the leadership with the military, when the military was asked to provide doctors and other medical personnel to help deal with the situation, how could it respond? I was asked, as the defence critic for the official opposition, whether the military should be providing doctors, nurses and other frontline health care people. I said that ideally it should but the reality was that the military had been so mismanaged by the government that it simply did not have the doctors, nurses and other frontline people to contribute. Realistically it does not have enough medical personnel to meet its own needs. The one area of mismanagement has led to a problem in the second area of mismanagement.

Second, the government has mismanaged health care generally across the country for the 10 years I have been here. We have seen it go downhill and deteriorate more and more. Because of that and the poor leadership on that issue, we see a shortage of health care people. They are stretched so thin that it is very difficult to find enough people to deal with the very serious situation we are facing now.

Government mismanagement is not only directly on the issue of SARS. It is in other areas as well. That mismanagement has led to a problem in dealing most effectively with this issue.

• (2045)

I want to talk directly to the issue, to what, unfortunately, has not happened and to the lack of leadership on the part of the government. Government members can tell us not to get partisan but I do not believe this is partisan. I believe this is just the Official Opposition members, including myself, carrying out our responsibility as members of the Official Opposition.

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Health Canada issued its first public advisory on SARS on March 16. Since last week the federal government has been virtually invisible on this important national and international issue. The Prime Minister was off golfing somewhere. The health minister has not been available. In the U.S., on the other hand, early on in the outbreak we saw President Bush, who so many government members like to criticize, announce quarantine measures would be put in place if needed. He took a very firm, very public and very definite stand on the issue. That certainly helped Americans deal with the issue.

In Canada, the government's response has been timid at best. I think I am being very generous in saying that it has been timid. The government has said there is no need to invoke the Quarantine Act. The United States certainly took a different position and I think it was the right position.

I have talked about the fact that the Prime Minister certainly has not been here. The health minister cancelled a press conference last week because journalists wanted to discuss SARS. Surely when something like this SARS outbreak goes on in our country the government should expect that on a daily basis the health minister and the Prime Minister would answer to the public and answer the public's important questions on this issue. That is leadership.

Liberals take the time to speak to the public when they want to promote some cause they feel is important. Why, on this issue, when the public is so desperately looking for leadership, have they not been providing that leadership? That is the question with which members of the government simply have to deal.

The heritage minister declared a national emergency and said that the government was pledging emergency assistance even though the Prime Minister and the health minister were not available. When they have said things they have said there was no national emergency and that there was no need for any emergency assistance, although they finally offered \$10 million, but the heritage minister was saying something entirely different. We have to wonder who is in charge of this. It certainly shows a problem with leadership.

On the other hand, the Ontario health minister has gone to Geneva to talk with the World Health Organization on this issue. What about the federal health minister? Not yet as far as I know. The World Health Organization is an international organization. It has made its statement on this issue but who speaks for Canada? Is it the Ontario health minister? Why would there not be a Canadian government minister or prime minister speaking to the World Health Organization on this? So far we have not received answers on that.

On March 27 the World Health Organization recommended the interviewing of outgoing passengers. The Canadian Alliance at that time said that the government should comply. The federal government was very slow to respond and when it did the results were inadequate. The results were pamphlets, posters and self-screening, which simply was not what the World Health Organization had called for and not what was reasonable. Unbelievably, there were no direct questions at airport checkouts for passengers getting on and off planes. It would have been very simple for passengers going through the checkouts to add one or two questions.

Some members of the Liberal Party said that was what should have happened. Why then did the leadership in the party not make that happen? Even after Health Canada put this measure in place there were several reports of travellers returning to Canada through the Pearson and Vancouver airports from SARS hotspots, sometimes through the U.S. on the way, who were not asked a single question on SARS and who never saw a poster or any other information on SARS.

How about other countries? We know the President of the United States took some quick action. Singapore, which I do not think would be any more progressive than Canada in dealing with health issues, put in place infrared screening and tough quarantines some time ago. Vietnam and Hong Kong put in place temperature screening, something that surely we could have had in place in Canada some time ago and yet for some reason we did not. The government has to answer very honestly to Canadians now why in fact these things have not happened in Canada.

● (2050)

I hate to have to say this but I feel I must, again as a member of the Official Opposition whose job it is to hold the government responsible, but the refusal to fully implement the World Health Organization recommendation may have contributed or helped to contribute to the export of SARS from Canada. Again, for obvious reasons I do not want to say things like that, but I believe, as a member of the opposition, I must. Now I expect some answers from the government on these issues.

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

The debate tonight is hugely important in that what we should be getting out tonight is a good news story. This disease, which we knew nothing about a couple of months ago, is now under control because of the kind of learning that has happened in the trenches of health care and the kind of cooperation that has happened between all levels of government in an unprecedented way.

The sad story tonight is the politics that have gone out of control and the disappointing lack of responsibility that we have seen in terms of mixed messages as to whether people should be scared or not scared. What actually happens when fear is augmented is that we end up with empty Chinese restaurants in Montreal because people are scared.

This is a story that is disappointing in terms of what actually is the role of an opposition and the role of leadership candidates in the party. This has really not helped. Fearmongering does not help. Frankly the media is not helping by the pictures it chooses to put in the papers. It is not helping when the CBC actually puts out a directive of a travel advisory to its employees. We actually have to first understand the facts. When a cabinet minister can call this a national emergency or an epidemic when it is not, it is extremely dissatisfying.

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When the leader of the NDP can write an op-ed piece that actually questions a previous medical officer of health, Dr. Richard Schabas, and makes one think that the leader of the federal NDP knows more than the previous medical officer of health and questions, do we hope Dr. Schabas is correct or do we put in place a plan. It means do we hope he is correct. Of course he is correct. He is dealing with the facts.

What has happened over the last couple of weeks is a miracle in terms of what our health care workers on the ground have done. We have seen unprecedented cooperation between the ground and the medical officers of health for Toronto, Dr. Sheela Basrur, Dr. Jim Young and Dr. Donald Low.

There was an opinion piece in the *Toronto Star* by Rick Anderson, a previous policy adviser for the Reform Party, lamenting the approach of politics to this. He actually was quoting Tony Clement, the minister of health for Ontario, about our Minister of Health, saying "Anne's there day after day asking always what more Ottawa can do to help. She's easy to work with, responding positively to suggestions". That was said by the Ontario minister of health.

One would never have thought after the first ministers meeting that we could get this kind of commendation to actually the way that the politicians working on this file know what has been working well.

I will go on to quote Mr. Anderson who said:

Behind-the-scenes efforts seem uncharacteristic of politicians, especially to the cynical and hungry media who cover politics. But solid and steady support for front-line, round-the-clock efforts of thousands of health professionals is probably just what the SARS doctor ordered. Certainly more helpful than political grandstanding and self-promotion.

He further states:

If and when Toronto completely contains SARS, it warrants treatment as a success story, a saga of prompt response, quickly marshalled resources and collaboration across professional, jurisdictional and bureaucratic lines. Not the sensationalistic [opportunistic?] "vacuum of leadership" cry arising this week from the usual suspects, and from a few who may know better.

It is disappointing that we now have a crisis of confidence in the system when actually it is so important that every single Canadian know that those of us who live in Toronto are going about our business every day. We are not wearing masks. It makes me feel that even in terms of someone who has never been a cheerleader for the provincial government in Ontario right now, that I myself would have walked up to Ernie Eves and asked him politely to take the mask off his face before he spoke on University Avenue last week because we knew that optic would be bad and that no one would hear what he had to say. Again, it is the kind of cooperation we should have had and that I wished his handlers had at that time.

• (2055)

When Professor Harvey Skinner, the chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Toronto, says that the mounting evidence is that the SARS virus is under control in Toronto and when the headlines are signalling that we have won the battle, it is extraordinarily important to understand that the prime enemy is fear.

He has elaborated many times that the two concepts to understanding the public's fear of a health condition are perceived

threat and control. First, he feels that it is important to acknowledge that maybe we were not perfect in dealing with the perceived threat. Confidence will be the most important thing and the unknowns are the most inherently scary.

What we did not know about this virus at the beginning has meant that the learning has had to take place in the trenches. What has been learned every day in Toronto from those health care workers in terms of incubation and in terms of appropriate quarantine measures and safety precautions for health care workers has been a work in progress. It has been a culture of learning and of disseminating information. That has been the important role of the federal government.

It is important for people to understand, as Dean Naylor once said to me, that his job as the Dean of Medicine at the University of Toronto is the same relationship with departments as is the federal role in our relationship with the provinces. It must be one of coordination in synergy and harmonization, and a conscience. It means that our job cannot be command and control from the centre, particularly with these new emerging conditions where the learning is happening in one locus. Our job is to make sure that the best and the brightest are brought together to actually share information and implement and use the new knowledge.

I think we have learned a little bit on the communication file that we could have done better. As Dr. Don Low said this morning, by publishing cumulative data it unfortunately means that the graphs are always going up. If we were better able now to publish data on new cases we would perhaps be better able to reassure Canadians that the new cases are definitely going down. If we were able to disaggregate the data to the hospital acquired infections and the community based infections, we could show the World Health Organization and anyone else who wants to listen that this is definitely a disease that is in hospitals. This is not a disease out in the community as the CDC came to our defence after the WHO ruling last week.

The CDC was very clear in its alert that it was a hospital problem in Toronto and that the community control of the disease was well done. Everyone will learn from what Toronto has done. It will be our job together as Canadian politicians to tell that story. We have to ensure that in the next chapter we can go forward having taken note of the lessons learned and having tried to ensure that everything we have done puts in place some of the most important things that all of us are fighting for in health reform.

We know that 1% of health care dollars is not enough for public health. With the provinces downloading and public health being downloaded to municipalities the municipalities are having to decide between TB inspection and potholes. That is not the way to run a public health system. I think the downloading from the provinces to the municipalities has been the problem. We as the federal government need to look at this.

The Montreal media is starting to question whether mega hospitals are a good idea. When we see a hospital such as Sunnybrook in Toronto having to shut down its urgent care and all of those processes maybe we do need a more distributive model or a more federated model for our hospitals.

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I think the main take home message from this has been that the collaborative approach we have learned from this is better than anything we could have predicted from the first ministers meeting. It is about the need for an integrated system and a learning culture. I hope we will go forward in a constructive manner and put the politics away.

● (2100)

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with the facts of this issue. We have heard so much from members across the way about the disaster that is occurring and about the national crisis. Members have been ratcheting up the heat on this issue. There is a lot of rhetoric. There is a great deal of heat. However, very little light has been shed on this issue, and I intend to shed some of the light on it tonight.

This is a public health issue. There are some clear and specific responses to a public health problem when it occurs. There is the initial and immediate emergency response that public health officials put into place. There is the long term response as well as the preventative response. Research work must be done. There are ways of advising and assisting the public to understand what is going on, and ways of advising them to take precautionary measures to prevent them from becoming infected. If they believe they are infected or if there is a suspicion of infection, there are techniques for isolation or if there is a probable case, quarantine.

We have heard members saying over and over again that the Prime Minister could not be bothered to cut his vacation short. Members have talked about leadership. Let me talk about leadership.

Three weeks ago, before anyone else thought about it, the Prime Minister was in Toronto having dim sum at a Chinese restaurant. Let us talk about who is showing leadership. Every single day the Minister of Health has been getting briefings, and not only from her own officials. She has been in contact with public health officials across this country ensuring that she has her finger on the pulse. The Ontario government has taken a very responsible stance on this issue in a similar manner as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health.

There are a couple of things I want to ask. First and foremost, because this is a public health issue, did the politicians that I spoke about have the ability to do anything? They have done exactly what they should have done. They have left it up to public health officials, to experts who know exactly what to do in these cases. They have allowed public health officials and front line workers to take the ball and run with it. They have stood back and allowed them to take the initiatives while at the same time providing support and the facilitation necessary for them to do their job.

Let us talk about the facts of this issue. Members have talked about this being a national epidemic. It is not. There have only been four cases of SARS in Vancouver. Toronto has had about 134 probable cases and 21 deaths. Let us put this on the scale. No other provinces have had any actual cases of diagnosed SARS. Let us put this into perspective. This is not a national emergency and it is not a national crisis. However, at the same time we must be careful that it does not become one.

Let us talk about what the government has been doing on the advice of public health officials to deal with this crisis. Members have said there is no emergency response and no public health

strategy. There is a public health strategy. There has been constant contact with Toronto officials and other public health officials in every single province since the start of this disease. At the request of the World Health Organization Canada is the first country to send officials to Hong Kong to look at the risk factors associated with this disease.

On the advice of public health officials the Minister of Health has set up guidelines for blood donors or for people who have been in contact or have been in an affected area. She has told them not to donate blood. Research components moved into place immediately. The Winnipeg national microbiology lab has sent out diagnostic tests and vaccines are being worked on. The Canadian Institute of Health Research has already put out protocols for work on vaccines. The genome lab at UBC has set up the sequencing for the virus.

● (2105)

Canada's workplace health and public safety employees were dispatched immediately when SARS began to Pearson, Vancouver and Dorval airports. They have been doing training, they have been doing inquiries, and they have been doing ongoing occupational health advice for all of the workers at these areas and training them to do the right thing. Health Canada sent staff to Toronto, Dorval and Vancouver airports to act as quarantine officers.

The department activated its emergency response team so that 10,000 class N-95 masks be sent out with money for 1.5 million more to be sent as needed. The economic response has been put into place with changes to EI so that financial assistance can be provided to those who have either been quarantined or have been asked to stay away from work because of various protective mechanisms.

An emergency response is in place. It has been moving forward. Everything that the public health officials and the experts have asked the Minister of Health to do, she has done.

We have heard my hon. colleague from St. Paul's say that the Minister of Health has acted in an exemplary manner in terms of the way she has managed to deal with this disease. Politicians are not public health officials. They are doing what they are told and that is how it should be. However, what we hear across the way every single day is this ratcheting up of rhetoric creating fear among people so that they are walking around with masks. We know that SARS has been contained. It has been contained in Toronto and Vancouver, which are the only two areas with SARS cases. Let us get that clear and straight. Nowhere else in the country do we have any reported cases of SARS.

We have seen that the right advice given by public health officials has been taken. Each day this disease is changing. Each day we are learning what new things we should do. Each day the Minister of Health, the Government of Canada and the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia are given advice by the people who know what to do, the public health officials. They have been moving forward and doing it.

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Emergency response teams and readiness have been there from day one. Let us forget the rhetoric and let us not listen to people who know nothing about public health who sit on the opposite side of the House and just continue to scare everyone. The reason we have an economic fallout, the reason that people are walking around the streets with masks over their faces, and the reason that people are wondering whether Toronto is a safe place to go to is because of this kind of irresponsible rhetoric that we hear coming from across the way, and the kind of irresponsible charges that people have been making. This is not the way to handle a communicable disease and I wish members would butt out and let the people who know how to handle a communicable disease do their job.

There have been comments that if there is one thing that Health Canada did that probably it should not have done was that it was upfront. A decision was made that Canada would be completely upfront and honest with Canadians. Therefore, we decided to name suspected cases. Anyone who knows anything about public health knows that there is a difference between a suspected case, a probable case and an actual case. Suspected cases have within their mix anyone who has a fever, anyone who has been sweating, or anyone who has a cough, a cold and a sneeze.

There has been no suspected case in this country that has been moved into probable or that has turned out to have SARS. We wanted to be honest and upfront. We did not want to hold anything back. If Health Canada is guilty of that I would say that it erred on the side of caution. It erred on the side of being upfront and honest with Canadians.

One of the things we want to talk about here is responsibility among our politicians. We have seen that the federal government has acted in a responsible manner. I would like to ask my colleagues and all of the opposition members to remember that this is a public health crisis. Members should stop ratcheting up the heat on this. They should try to be calm and let everyone know that all of the right things are being done.

We have been seen in Canada a good example of how we should deal with this particular disease. Everyone is working on the immediate short term and on the long term to develop a vaccine. I would ask my colleagues in the opposition to behave in a responsible manner.

• (2110)

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight for this emergency debate on a very important subject, the SARS epidemic, an issue that transcends partisan politics.

I think that the most important thing we need to keep in mind when it comes to this tragedy is that people have been affected. Some are sick and others, unfortunately, have died. Families have also been affected by these deaths. I am fortunate in that my parents are still living. I have never lost a close relative, but we know that under the current circumstances, it must be terribly difficult to lose a loved one to this epidemic, to this invisible enemy that is SARS.

I would like to remind the House that the SARS epidemic continues to be a very serious situation that deserves a great deal of

attention. And while prudence is called for, we must not give in to panic, but instead concentrate on appropriate measures to safeguard public health.

This tragedy, which has already claimed a number of victims around the world, must be brought under control as soon as possible in order to minimize its spread. The Toronto area has unfortunately been hit hard by this epidemic. The Bloc Québécois sympathizes with those who have been affected, directly or indirectly, by the situation. We in the Bloc Québécois are convinced that it is vital to take all necessary measures, and the government can count on our full cooperation to that end.

Right now it is 9:13 p.m. in Ottawa, and while preparing my speech, I watched the 9 o'clock news. The first item on the news was a squabble: the Minister of Canadian Heritage—and Liberal leadership candidate—said plump and plain that the Minister of Health had completely absented herself from the debate and that she was totally incompetent in dealing with the situation.

I do not mean to say that the Minister of Canadian Heritage is wrong in describing the Minister of Health in this way. The issue is not whether she is right or wrong. However, in the grips of this epidemic, we would expect that our government would act responsibly, rather than dissolve into petty political bickering.

I said that I am not playing politics. But I believe that the government side would be well advised to reassure everybody. People are quite worried.

Next week, as you know—if you do not, I am telling you now, Mr. Speaker—I will be hosting seven or eight groups from my riding in Quebec. Unlike yours, my riding is not located in Cornwall, at a one hour and fifteen or thirty minutes' drive from Ottawa. For one of the groups coming to pay me a visit it will take five to five and a half hours by bus. I host groups like that seven or eight times a year; half are senior citizens groups and the other half are student groups, from primary school or high school. All this to say how tense the situation is because fear is a difficult thing to control.

• (2115)

One of the groups from my riding, l'Âge d'or de Montmorency, in Beauport, was supposed to come and see me in Ottawa next week, on the 5 and 6 of May I believe. On Friday I got a call from the organizer saying that these elderly people were afraid to go to Ottawa; they feared that the epidemic had spread to Ottawa.

I am not saying this to blame those who are afraid but to illustrate a situation. When psychosis takes hold of people, fear becomes hard to control, especially when dealing with older people, 75, 77 and 79 years of age, who are a bit afraid, who are a bit more concerned about their health; it is difficult to control.

Instead of barnyard squabbles and street fights between the Canadian heritage minister and the health minister, we expect some leadership from this government. Showing leadership is doing a lot more than announcing that the next cabinet meeting will take place in Toronto tomorrow. It is a lot more than announcing that the wife of the Prime Minister will go shopping on Thursday in various department stores in Toronto. A government that shows leadership would do a lot more than that.

The money that the federal government is about to spend to encourage tourists to come to Toronto—about \$10 million, according to what we heard—would be much better invested in Ontario—the situation being more critical in that province with 21 or 22 deaths so far, if I am not mistaken—to hire new hospital workers to replace those already exhausted by the work overload and the stress, and also to compensate people who must be quarantined so as to encourage self-identification. In my opinion, this would be money much better spent by this government.

Again, we must applaud, in a non-partisan way, the initiative taken by the government in changing the employment insurance regulations. The Bloc Québécois believes that it will encourage people to remain quarantined without being penalized financially. The question that people who think that they may have contracted the disease may ask themselves is “Without any income, can I afford to stay home and take the antibiotics that the doctor prescribed?” Or they may say “If I feel well enough to work, I will go, even though I risk exposing my co-workers and others around me to the disease”. We applaud this initiative by the government with regard to employment insurance.

I remind the House that, on April 4, the federal government abolished the two week waiting period for those who might be suffering from this disease. We are glad that the government has agreed, in this instance, to amend the employment insurance legislation. But we would also like to remind the government that it could take similar measures in other areas where workers are not quarantined, but are affected by decisions made abroad.

Let us take Quebec's lumber workers for instance. Over 7,000 workers have been affected by the softwood lumber crisis generated by the U.S. The same thing goes for the cod fishery. The House will be holding another emergency debate tomorrow to discuss the crisis in the cod industry, which might bring the government to consider new improvements to the employment insurance legislation.

So, on the one hand, the measures that were taken were fine, but on the other hand the government should try to be a bit more sensitive to the needs of other sectors where workers are hurting.

• (2120)

However, if we need to suggest some kind of enhancement to help the government consider this issue, we in the Bloc Québécois would like the self-employed to be covered by the current employment insurance scheme.

It is sad to see the government spend money on ad campaigns but do nothing for the self-employed who are as much at risk as any other worker. I hope nobody believes that union members in a company or in a hospital are less likely to suffer from SARS than the

self-employed. Anyone can catch this disease, whatever their employment status. I think we all agree on that.

The government should look for a way to provide coverage for the self-employed and for some income support measures for these workers who often rely on short-term jobs. We realize that self-employment is not always the ideal situation.

In closing, I would like to say that we hope the federal government's recent actions will help stop the spread of the disease. We need to point out, however, that the federal government's efforts are uneven. Considering the number of cases and of fatalities in Canada, this is cause for concern. We even wonder whether the measures taken to detect the disease were effective at the start of the outbreak.

Unfortunately, I am running out of time. We could also talk about airport surveillance. Unlike the contagious diseases that were around in the 1700s or 1800s, with the means of communication and of travel that were available at that time, now we are in the era of the jet plane and distance no longer matters.

To take the example of someone who is infected and has visited a market and then takes a plane. It appears that the thing started somewhere in China in some kind of bazaar or public market with infected poultry or snakes. The disease was then transmitted to humans. It would take just one person, someone from Toronto or Vancouver who had travelled to Hong Kong for a nephew or niece's wedding, to get on a plane, and the virus would be here in eight, ten or twelve hours.

This is how diseases are spread now, unlike the Spanish or yellow fever of the 1800s. The spread of disease was far less an issue in the days of horse-drawn carts, the Pony Express and so on.

Once again—and I am sure that you are delighted, Mr. Speaker, although you need to remain neutral, and do not have to agree or disagree with me—I have tried to rise above partisan politics. When we make speeches that are not too partisan, I hope that the government members can take their earplugs out, and hear our constructive comments.

• (2125)

[English]

**Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Erie—Lincoln.

Let me say that the debate this evening is a real opportunity to talk about a Canadian success story. That success story is that we have right across the country an amazing public health infrastructure that has been mobilized on a moment's notice to protect all of us who are working here tonight, who are working right across the country, to make sure we are not affected in any greater way by the SARS outbreak.

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In my own community of Burlington, the staff at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital have been exemplary in dealing with this emergency for over a month now. The executive director, Donald Scott, and the incredible team of individuals who have been working under very difficult circumstances are to be commended for their incredible efforts, the nurses and doctors on the front lines, the cleaners, the telephone operators. It has not been easy for them to work under these conditions and our hearts and prayers go out to them. We know it has been difficult. We thank them for what they have done. Certainly right across the GTA and Ontario, people have really shown what tough stuff they are made of to be able to deal with this outbreak.

The families of those who have been affected by SARS, by the scare of SARS, certainly are in our thoughts and prayers tonight as well. For all those people who are waiting for surgeries, who are waiting for medical tests to find out if they need further assistance, I know it has been incredibly difficult on all of them. Just the other night coming into my own home I bumped into someone who needs hip surgery and of course it has been delayed. Everyone has really demonstrated that they understand this problem and that they are able to deal with this problem. They really have been aided by this incredible infrastructure that we have developed through the years in Canada.

It is a great opportunity in this debate to congratulate the Minister of Health and her incredible team, her staff both on the political level and in the bureaucracy, for all the work they have done to support the province of Ontario, to support the people in Vancouver who are dealing with this crisis, and to reassure the rest of us that we are prepared and that the proper measures are being taken. They are not reassuring just because; they are actually reassuring because they know we have dealt with this and that we have the systems in place.

Health Canada has been collaborating with all the medical officers of health right across the country to make sure that the proper procedures are being taken to contain this, that proper procedures are being taken to prevent an outbreak somewhere else. An outbreak of this scope calls for national guidelines. Health Canada has lent its expertise and advice to ensure that all of us in this country are in fact as safe as we possibly can be, that we are equally protected and that we benefit from the experience of other countries and other parts of Canada.

All of us, instead of scoring cheap political points or creating more scare, should be saying that this is an amazing opportunity, that this is what people have worked so hard in public health to deal with, to make sure that we are limiting the number of people who are affected.

We have guidelines in this country for infection control and for public health in a variety of settings. They are being utilized in this present situation. We have a federal-provincial pandemic influenza committee, something I did not know about before the SARS outbreak. I know that we have been dealing with the provincial and territorial ministers at the federal level to make sure that we are putting together the right measures, the right surveillance, and addressing the clinical issues and the laboratory and infection control issues.

It is quite terrific that in spite of some of the difficulties that the various levels of government have had over the last couple of years, they are working collaboratively to make sure that everyone has the information, everyone has the tools to deal with this and everyone can disseminate that information. The right people are on the job and they are taking care of it.

In Ontario where the largest number of cases has occurred, health care professionals and the staff at the bureaucracy in the province of Ontario are to be commended for their outstanding efforts. I read about Dr. Sheila Basrur in Toronto who has done an amazing job. She even sent herself home one day because she was starting to come down with something. We appreciate all their efforts and hope that they get relief soon.

Early on in the struggle Health Canada was able to deploy 13 epidemiologists. They went down to Toronto and were able to help the ministry of health with the investigation of the SARS cases and work with the senior executive committee in the provincial response. We were able to send machines and processors for the two isolation units that were being set up in a non-hospital environment.

● (2130)

This outreach team that is in Ottawa has been in constant contact with provincial colleagues and colleagues in Toronto in particular to make sure that the right systems are there and to respond as new information comes on line. This is not a static situation. This is where the best minds have to respond to the issues and deal with the occurrences as they come up. We have expert advice and support. Disease control in all its conceivable settings is taking place. I was at the chiropractor this morning. The staff had the information. They were asking me if I had been exposed. They are doing their jobs. All of us are becoming much more aware of the impact of our actions and the need to protect ourselves and our neighbours.

We have been able, at the federal level, to supply masks to Toronto, to make sure that they were accessible through the emergency stockpile system. It is great to know that we have put it together and invested in the systems and that this is how we are able to respond.

I think that this again is a great opportunity for us to congratulate those making the efforts, to encourage the people who are dealing with it on the front lines to keep up the good fight and to make sure that in other issues we will be faced with in this increasingly globalized world we have the systems in place for the future. We have had an amazing test run here. We have the systems in place for the future and they will make a difference for all of us. It is not a time for cheap political points. It is a time to say, "Way to go. Keep up the good fight and let us know what other support is needed", so that we will get it in place as people realize there are further needs, to make sure that all Canadians and citizens of the world are protected. We want to make sure Canada is doing the right thing and setting the example for other countries as they deal with the SARS outbreak.

**Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk tonight about a topic that has not really been canvassed this evening, and that is screening at airports. The government recognized early on that SARS is a global disease and that swift, proactive measures were required to limit its spread. As soon as the first cases of SARS were recognized, Canada undertook immediate efforts to address the threat of transmission of SARS, both domestically and internationally. We did this in an organized and thorough manner, addressing both inbound and outbound flights and then implementing inflight measures.

We are convinced that we have an effective series of measures in place and we will continue to improve our approaches as necessary to help contain the spread of SARS. Quarantine officers from Health Canada are on site at our main international airports in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. These health professionals monitor incoming passengers for signs of illness. In addition, any airline passengers who are discovered to be ill en route to Canada are assessed immediately by a quarantine officer and, if necessary, are referred at once to a medical facility for diagnosis and care.

Health Canada nurses are available at Toronto's Pearson airport to answer questions about SARS. The Health Canada SARS team of professionals will provide information to airline and airport staff. In very limited circumstances, they will assist individual travellers and, if necessary, arrange for the transportation of individuals to local medical facilities.

Health Canada has instituted a series of health alert notices intended to reach both incoming and outgoing passengers. The yellow health posters and cards alert passengers to the symptoms of SARS and inform them of what to do if they begin to exhibit the symptoms. These posters and cards are available at all major airports across Canada. In addition, airlines flying to Canada from SARS-affected areas are also passing out the cards inflight to make sure that all passengers are reached. A system to collect contact information from passengers coming into Canada from affected areas has also been instituted to ensure that there can be swift follow-up should a case of SARS be detected after a flight has landed in Canada.

The government also takes seriously its responsibilities to ensure that cases of SARS are not unwittingly exported from Canada. Bright, cherry-coloured posters and cards, referred to as health alert notices, inform passengers departing from Pearson about the symptoms of SARS and direct people not to travel if they are exhibiting these symptoms. Some airlines are asking passengers if they have read the cards as they check in for their flights. Airlines also have a responsibility not to board the seriously ill.

The government is in regular communication with airport authorities and airlines and understands the importance of measures to contain the spread of this disease. Information booths, distribution of cards, informed ticket agents and health resources in airports as necessary are ensuring that travellers can make informed and appropriate decisions. We all have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker: you, I, all members of the House, and all members of the Canadian public.

We believe our airport screening measures are effective. We are committed to reviewing those measures and strengthening them if necessary. To ensure that every possible measure has been taken,

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Health Canada officials are currently exploring options for introducing other measures such as temperature monitors at airports. We are also investigating the use of infrared technology, among other things, and may have a pilot project this week.

The government's efforts have not gone unnoticed. I would like to refer members to a comment made on April 3 by Dr. David Heymann, executive director of the WHO communicable diseases unit. He said:

Canada is doing an exemplary activity and much of what has been going on in Canada, including the system [of] notifying airline passengers and screening airline passengers, has been shared with other countries as an example of best practices.

Those are excellent words complimenting our country for its initiatives.

I would also like to refer to SARS precautions that have been implemented all across the country, as well as in the Niagara region area where I come from. The Niagara health system has acted quickly to monitor entries into Niagara regional hospitals and has set up a special SARS unit at one of the facilities, Welland General Hospital. If SARS, and fortunately this has not happened, comes to the Niagara region, they are well equipped to deal with those people exhibiting symptoms. As I said, fortunately this has not happened, and I think that is testimony that in fact the battle has been won and SARS is on the decline. This is positive news for Canada, for the Canadian economy and for the Canadian tourist industry.

● (2135)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would like to extend our thanks for the dedication and the hard work of the first line responders who came to the call when this crisis emerged and to the families of these first line workers who have gone without them and supported them through these long hours.

As a member of Parliament from the province of Ontario, my participation in this emergency debate on severe acute respiratory syndrome, SARS, is an important independent voice compared to what people will hear from the government benches. It was clear from the outset when SARS was first identified that the leadership was evident here on the benches of the official opposition. My party, the Canadian Alliance, was very careful in its approach, allowing the federal government latitude on how it dealt with SARS. Our questions were constructed to provide information to the public. It would have served no purpose to unduly alarm the Canadian public or the international community. In that regard, the Canadian Alliance was very responsible in our approach to this crisis.

The tragedy of this case is that because of the total lack of leadership from the federal government, the people of Ontario will suffer. First, there was the West Nile virus to scare away the tourists. Then we had the disgraceful decision by the Prime Minister and his party to support Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi conflict instead of our traditional allies, Great Britain, the United States and Australia. And now, because of the incredible incompetence on the part of our federal government, the World Health Organization, the WHO, has issued a travel ban against Toronto, Ontario.

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**Ms. Paddy Torsney:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I may have actually misunderstood what the member opposite just said, but I believe she just suggested that this government, or any Canadian, supported Saddam Hussein, which is an absolute falsification of what occurred. It is absolutely irresponsible for any member of the government, including the opposition—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think we are getting into a debate rather than a point of order, but certainly the member for Burlington has it on the record.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Mr. Speaker, because of the incredible incompetence on the part of the federal government, the World Health Organization, WHO, has issued a travel ban against Toronto, Ontario. The American tourist has become an endangered species in Canada thanks to an uncaring, insensitive, corrupt federal government.

To add insult to injury, the Prime Minister has offered \$10 million, probably for an ad campaign, probably to a Liberal ad agency on an untendered contract knowing that the economic losses to Ontario alone will be in the billions of dollars. There is no doubt that every member of the Liberal government shares in the blame of this fiasco. If the province of Ontario had not acted decisively and displayed the leadership necessary to control the spread of SARS, it is clear that Canadians would have been faced with a full blown epidemic.

Given the current government's penchant for secrecy, Canadians will probably never know just how serious the threat to the health of Canadians SARS posed. What is truly unfortunate is that the government has learned nothing since 9/11.

Canadians who are watching this emergency debate on SARS will be surprised to learn that Canada has a minister responsible for emergency preparedness. This minister who has a mandate to deal with national emergencies has gone missing, totally invisible during the events as they unfolded regarding SARS. Canadians will be surprised to learn that the member for Markham is the minister responsible for emergency preparedness.

On behalf of the official opposition to the large Chinese population in Markham, Toronto and the rest of Canada, please accept our apologies for the fear and uncertainty their community has been put through because of the lack of leadership on the part of the federal government. They have suffered because of the government's insensitivity and I encourage them to hold the government accountable now and in the upcoming election.

The events of 9/11 should have taught the government a few lessons. Unfortunately, the minister responsible for emergency preparedness who should have been in charge has been so consumed in his other role as an apologist defence minister for the federal government's lack of support of Iraq, the events of SARS has completely overtaken him.

On April 3, I had the opportunity to question his assistant minister, Jim Harlick, at defence committee. In responding to a question from the member for Compton—Stanstead, Mr. Harlick stated the following, "We only have one minister at the federal level really designated as the minister for emergency preparedness although all ministers under the statute have responsibilities in it". It is too bad

the assistant deputy minister did not tell the minister what his role was.

This is not the first time the Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness did not tell the minister what he was supposed to know. It was not until I questioned the minister in the House that I am even sure he knew that the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior even existed let alone the bureaucrats and the PMO that decided to shut the Arnprior college down.

What we are witnessing today is a department out of control and a minister who is out of touch.

The Office of Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness, or OCIEPEP, was recently described in the media as a secretive emergency agency, its public affairs officials known not for returning phone calls from journalists or politicians.

● (2140)

During the April 3 defence committee meeting, when I attempted to question Bill de Laat, whose title is director general of external relations and public affairs, ADM Harlick instructed him not to speak. His presence was a joke to committee members, a public affairs bureaucrat who was not allowed to speak to the public.

In the 9/11 budget, OCIEPEP received \$396 million to prepare for emergencies. What has the public received for these dollars? For Canadians to understand why the government has been so inept in handling SARS, they only need to look at the government's own internal analysis on how it responded to 9/11 to see that nothing has changed.

In the government's own internal assessment of how it responded to 9/11, it found the following. There were concerns with "fluctuating requests, multiple players, problems with the availability and capacity with ground transportation, with special blame directed at Health Canada and a lack of Canadian Forces aircraft". Is it not interesting that for 9/11 Health Canada was singled out for special criticism and here we find two years later that nothing has changed? There was a lack of clear coordination within the Government of Canada, no declaration of lead department, no standard coordination mechanisms and lack of clarity around OCIEPEP's role.

The internal analysis then identified the immediate steps to be taken: properly trained personnel; the need for strategic airlift; and the need to develop a permanent, high level, interdepartmental body responsible for planning, directing and coordinating federal and national operations during a crisis. It is clear that not one of those recommendations have been followed.

The most scathing criticism was reserved for the \$396 million that the OCIEPEP agency received. This is the same agency that has discarded all its institutional memory on how to deal with an emergency when it made the decision to close the Emergency Preparedness College in Arnprior. OCIEPEP was characterized as having "inadequate internal operating procedures and a workforce with little relevant experience or specialized training" and that "these inadequacies generated confusion, slow responses and disappointed stakeholders".

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The OCIPEP assessment went on to confirm that Emergency Preparedness Canada had a limited capacity to maintain extended operations that would be required in a crisis. The headquarters staff, many of whom have been with OCIPEP for less than six months, displayed, and I quote the report, “a lack of knowledge and awareness of policy and operational procedures”.

The complaint was charged to the Prime Minister's office, or central agency control, that it prevented the public and the stakeholders from receiving this information. Interdepartmentally, OCIPEP identified a lack of agreed upon and tested procedures to guide central agencies, lead departments and senior officials during emergencies and crises.

The OCIPEP assessment concluded, and I continue to quote from the federal government's own internal assessment to handle emergencies, that the Government of Canada played insufficient attention to emergency planning. OCIPEP must improve its relationship with the voluntary sector in Canada and with the international bodies.

● (2145)

Imagine, if that recommendation had been followed, would we have the problem today with the WHO? The government needs a new federal policy and related operational documentation and standards on emergency management, including crisis communications management, critical infrastructure protection, network security, business resumption planning and a rejuvenated vital points program.

The government contributes too little to national capacity building, for example, training of first responders at the Armprior college exercise programs. All these came from OCIPEP's own internal assessment.

OCIPEP on its website has different patches for computer viruses. We have been unable to find a single word on how to cope or protect against SARS.

The \$10 million that has been allocated to help out with the fallout from SARS does not buy the government absolution from its responsibility. This is a disease that on average claims 4% of its victims. Imagine what would have happened if we had a disease such as smallpox, which takes 30% of its victims? If that had hit instead of SARS, there would be far more deaths across Canada.

This was a disease that was unintentionally introduced at a couple of sites in Canada. Again, what would have happened if the contagion had been deliberately introduced, carefully planned so that the infected persons went to several major cities across Canada, or North America for that matter? A pandemic. There would not be enough people on this continent to battle against such a biological case of warfare.

We need a nationally coordinated plan with a clear and rehearsed protocol for all the relevant stakeholders and departments of government that would take in all the information from the WHO, heed its recommendations, take the information from the CDC, collate it and act responsibly.

● (2150)

**Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I only heard a little bit about what the previous speaker was referring to with respect to emergency preparedness. As the former minister who was in charge of that, I think she has it completely wrong. The appropriateness of the handling of this particular case lies with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Health has carried out her responsibilities appropriately.

There has been a coordinated effort from Health Canada, the provincial and local health authorities. There has been the provision of equipment and support in many other different ways. I talked with the Minister of Health this morning in Toronto as she was talking with health officials in that city. She is carrying out the appropriate function, which in terms of emergency preparedness is properly assigned to the appropriate minister, she being the appropriate minister in this case.

I rise with two perspectives on this issue. One is as the chair of the greater Toronto area caucus of some 40 MPs, all Liberals of course, and some senators who have been seized of this matter for the past few weeks and have been dialoguing with officials as well as ministers with respect to the handling of this issue. I also come at it from the perspective of being a lifelong resident of Toronto and one who spent some 22 years as a member of the local government, 11 years as the mayor of Toronto. I can frankly say that never in that period of time have I ever seen a health challenge quite the same as this one.

As it is turning out, the health challenge has been handled enormously well by the professional health care staff in Toronto, in Ontario and in Canada. We are now getting to a point where the cases of SARS are on a downward curve. It is contained. It is controlled.

Certainly the praise for the front line workers is very well deserved. Doctors, nurses and many other health care workers have gone above and beyond in terms of the performance of their duties. I know the people of Toronto are very grateful, as indeed we should be right across the country for what they have been able to do.

We are coming into a period of time where much of the focus will now shift to the economic damage that has been done in the city, the province and the country, first and foremost to the tourism industry and the Chinese businesses that exist in the Toronto area.

This morning the Minister of Transport and I were at city hall in Toronto in what was called a SARS summit. It was brought together by various Chinese business associations who felt the initial impact. In fact, they said this morning that 50% to 80% of their business had been lost in this period of time, that people were not shopping and were not going to restaurants. We do know that a number of members of Parliament, our Prime Minister and others have gone into Chinese restaurants as a demonstration of just how safe it is.

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Indeed I spent the last little while during most of the recess in Toronto. Life is going on in the city and has been going on in the city. There are not people walking around with masks. Rarely would people see that. The containment is within the various health facilities that have been dealing with the SARS outbreak. I say outbreak but we all know that more people die of flu and there are more people who are stricken with other kinds of diseases than this. It has been very well contained.

The mystery of it has added to the anxiety, quite naturally, not knowing exactly where it has come from or exactly how to treat it. I hope we can continue to work on that. There has been some suggestion of a vaccine. That certainly is worth exploring.

• (2155)

The Minister of Health said today that we need to study the lessons to be learned in terms of this particular problem. We definitely need to do that to see if there are ways we can tighten up the things we do and the procedures we carry out to help ensure that we are prepared if this kind of thing should ever occur again. We certainly hope it will not.

With respect to the economic concerns, business associations from the Chinese community have asked for some financial aid. Many of their businesses are on the verge of bankruptcy. We certainly need to look at what can be done to help them. Last week the Prime Minister announced \$10 million which would match the provincial \$10 million and the city of Toronto's \$5 million. This would help to provide a recovery program for Toronto. This would give back to Toronto the reputation and image it deserves as a world class city.

The WHO travel advisory needs to be lifted. The Ontario minister of health and representatives of the federal Minister of Health are going over there hoping to—

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hate to interfere with the member's speech, but I was hoping that he would specifically address the lead story in tonight's news and that is the issue of the minister of heritage taking exception to the Minister of Health and her mishandling of that file. I want some answers on that one.

• (2200)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bagnell):** I appreciate that intervention but it is not a point of order.

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** Mr. Speaker, the member can ask me a question afterward if he wants to have me say something other than what I am saying. I would be happy to answer that further.

There will be an attempt to get the travel advisory lifted. It was over the top and an overreaction by the World Health Organization. Some evidence of that is the fact that officials from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta went to Toronto to study the situation and quite appropriately said it was not a matter of avoiding the city. They indicated there was no reason to avoid the city. If people were going to avoid being in contact with SARS they should avoid those health care institutions where there have been patients with SARS. That was a reasonable approach.

Nevertheless the World Health Organization is concerned about the spread of it in other parts of the world. I can appreciate that if this

disease got into developing countries that do not have the health care system that we have in Canada it could be catastrophic.

Hopefully the team that is going over there will be able to persuade the WHO that the travel advisory needs to be lifted. When that is done, and with the cooperation of the three levels of government, people in the international community will be told that the advisory has been lifted and that Toronto is a safe place to visit. This should restore some of the large revenues lost by the tourism and hospitality industries in Toronto.

Tomorrow the greater Toronto area caucus will meet again on this issue. It will look at several recommendations that came from the summit today from the Chinese business associations and from the unions representing those in the hospitality industry in Toronto and will make further recommendations to the government. Ministers will be attending the session tomorrow. This will give us an opportunity for a fulsome discussion.

The bottom line is that the governments at all three levels are pulling together to resolve this issue. There has been some question about leadership. I think the media has distorted and exaggerated that issue considerably. There is always room for improvement in leadership, but in this particular case people have done what was necessary for them to do.

In the early stages of this it was necessary to hear from the medical profession. They were the ones giving the daily advisories on this matter and appropriately so since it was a medical concern. Now we all need to be engaged in terms of a recovery plan. We have to get the Toronto economy and the Ontario and national economies which are all affected by this, moving again. We have to get people to come to our country, our province and our city.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise tonight to take part in this debate on the SARS problem in Canada.

I must say at the outset that I have difficulty with the position of the government that is almost saying that we do not have a problem in Canada. As my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas pointed out earlier, the Government of Canada itself has issued a travel advisory for Taiwan, even though there has not been a single victim there. Nobody died in Taiwan, and yet people were told not to travel to that country. In Canada, SARS has already claimed 21 lives in Toronto alone.

The government is being totally irresponsible when it says things like that; human lives are at stake. In Canada, the economic aspect will come first, but without any concrete measures. By concrete measures I mean ways to help our small and medium size businesses in difficulty, ways to help workers and, above all, ways to help people fight this problem that has occurred in our health care system.

Tonight I would like to congratulate the Canadian Labour Congress. I would like to read the message that it issued today, April 28, on this National Day of Mourning for workers. I think that it is important to send this message to all our governments, all Canadians and all workers.

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Today, April 28, the National Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job, the Canadian Labour Congress recognizes the health workers that have suffered or died of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). A statement issued today by Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, reads as follows:

"The idea of the National Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job, was conceived as a challenge to dangerous workplaces, as a solemn highlight of our continuous and perpetual struggle against those bosses and authorities who still gamble with the lives, the health and the safety of workers.

"That is why on this day, we often repeat: We mourn the dead and we fight for the living. Today, with this slogan, with this sentence, our thoughts must go to the health workers who, selflessly, attend to those who have or are suspected of having contracted the SARS, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome."

Our sentence, "We mourn the dead and we fight for the living": somewhat summarizes some working days for many health workers.

"But this sentence also creates obligations for us all. When we say "We mourn for the dead, and we fight for the living": today we must acknowledge and recognize these workers who put their health and their lives on the line, not just to heal others but to prevent the spread of disease to our communities, to our home.

"We must acknowledge and recognize, with gratitude, that well over one quarter of all the cases and suspected cases of SARS are health workers.

"We must acknowledge and recognize, with gratitude, the dedication and competence of these workers. For our sake, they have achieved some impressively successful outcome, despite years of cutbacks, downsizing, restructuring, privatization and other forms of dismantling of their work, their working conditions, their workplaces—in truth, the slow dismantling of our public medicare.

"We say thanks to all health care workers. We owe a great debt to the victims of the disease. We mourn their sacrifice, but we must also honour their sacrifice with a commitment to continue to fight for them, their working conditions, their working environment, our public medicare.

● (2205)

The press release also says:

Because of the SARS outbreak, this year, the National Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job must be in defiance of all political agendas that gamble with the health of Canadians.

The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour movement, represents 2.5 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together the majority of Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 137 district labour councils.

I took the time to read this press release by the Canadian Labour Congress because today is the National Day of Mourning, a day to commemorate the dead and to fight for the living. I think that this message is very appropriate in our country today, especially with this disease that has come to Canada from China.

Forty days have gone by, and I still have difficulty with that. Frankly, I have difficulty with the fact that the Prime Minister thinks that everything is all right, and that going to a Chinese restaurant in Toronto to drink tea or taking the whole Liberal cabinet to Toronto will solve the problem. This is not the kind of leadership that we expect from the government.

What we want our government to do is to begin to find solutions, to begin to prepare itself. What will happen if it spreads to another city? What will happen if it spreads to another province? How are we preparing those who work in health care? Preparedness is at zero now. Yes, it is true, Toronto's economy is taking a heavy beating. But if we do not solve the problem across Canada, the whole country will suffer.

We must give attention in coming days to how things can be administered. We see that today WHO lifted the travel restriction on Vietnam. People can now travel to Vietnam. I think we should take our hats off to the government of that country and acknowledge that

they did what was necessary right away, rather than trying to say there was no problem.

The hon. member from Toronto, the former mayor of that city, told us just now that it was no worse than the flu, which people die from. That is not the point. With the flu, at least, we know we can treat it; we have experience. Our health experts already know something about flu, but SARS is an unknown. We cannot just say we will wait, that there is no problem. That is not how things happen.

It is disappointing to hear representatives of the government speak. We heard the Minister of Heritage say today that the government and the Minister of Health did not do their job. They are now trying to develop a policy. There is dissension within the Liberal Party. Not only dissension within the Liberal Party but also within Parliament about how the government handled its responsibilities in terms of this disease in Canada. This is totally unacceptable and should not be tolerated.

We need a program and a vision from the government as soon as possible. The government needs to sit down with health care experts throughout Canada and set up a team to work on an action plan. It is not just Toronto that needs an action plan; a national action plan is needed for each province, for everywhere there is a hospital, so that people know what to do if this happens.

We must not wait for SARS to arrive in a place and all of a sudden say that it has come to Bathurst or Chatham or Hamilton or Vancouver or elsewhere, like Thunder Bay or Cornwall in Ontario. We must not wait for this to happen. The government must be able to set up an action plan, not just hold a cabinet meeting in Toronto. That is not what we need. We need to know how the government will talk to experts.

I was pleased when the government announced that people with SARS would not have to wait two weeks to get employment insurance. I was happy to hear that.

But more needs to be done. We must remember that because of the cuts made by the government in 1996, there are people who do not even qualify for EI. How many people lost their jobs today, in tourism, for example, because of SARS in Toronto, employees in small and medium size businesses, that were forced to lay off people who do not even qualify for EI?

● (2210)

How many self-employed workers are there who do not qualify for EI, who do not pay EI premiums? There needs to be an emergency plan, not only for people who have contracted SARS, but also for workers affected by job loss.

The government has the responsibility to deal with this, too. It must not just sit and wait. It will be too late.

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It is strange that the government thinks that the situation is not serious here in Canada. It warns against travel to Taiwan, where not one person has died of SARS, whereas 21 people here have died of it, and it says that it is not that serious, that it is no worse than the flu.

I will say it again: the government must show leadership.

● (2215)

[English]

It is totally unacceptable that the government turns around and says that it is not that bad, that the flu is worse, that more people have lost their lives because of the flu. In our country 21 people have lost their lives. The government has issued a travel advisory saying that Canadians should not travel to Taiwan. Taiwan did not even have one death but it is dangerous to go to Taiwan, but not to Canada. It is not that I do not want people to go to Toronto, but I do not want us to take it lightly, thinking that we do not have a problem in our country. We do have a problem.

The Liberal government has to show leadership. It has to put a plan together. It has to speak with the health experts and come up with a plan not just for what is happening in Toronto but for what could happen all across our country. We need to have a national plan on health care.

With all the cuts the government has made to health care since 1994, this is where we are at today. We have a health care system that is sick itself. People have to wait in the hallways and cannot even get served. Imagine what could happen, in Quebec, in New Brunswick and all across the country, because of all the cuts the government has made. If SARS spreads across the country, imagine what will happen.

That is why I say it is important for the government not to just say "It is not that bad, we are doing a good job". As I said, they are fighting among themselves now. The Minister of Canadian Heritage said today, and I think it will be the news headline tomorrow, that the health care minister did not do the job.

It is not by bringing the cabinet to Toronto that the problem will be resolved. It is not by the Prime Minister going to Toronto and drinking a cup of tea at a Chinese restaurant that the problem will be resolved. What will resolve the problem is putting a plan together for Canadians, doing what Vietnam did. The World Health Organization has removed the travel advisory to Vietnam. People can go there now.

Canada could be more proactive. We are supposed to be the best country in the world. A Liberal member tonight was talking about having the best health care in the world. The best health care in the world and we cannot handle the problem that we have in the country now. The government has a responsibility, when there is a surplus of \$42 billion in the employment insurance fund, to look at the workers who are losing their jobs over this. Now is the time to take the money and instead of paying down the debt and balancing the budget with it, give it to the workers who are in need.

In Toronto the people are in need. The business people are in need. The small and medium businesses are in need. The people running restaurants are in need. The workers are in need. The workers need the help of our government.

We need a plan like we had with the ice storm when the government came in and helped the people. When we had the problem with the flood in Saguenay, the government came in and helped the people. When we had the flood in Manitoba, the government came in and helped.

The government is not saying anything about this. It is being quiet, hoping it will go away and it does not have to spend a cent on the working people or on the people who got sick. That is a shame. Canadians do not agree with the position of the government. It might brag that it is doing a good job, but that is not a good job.

The health care community wants to meet with government and come up with a plan that will look after Canadians not only Toronto, but a plan for all across our country and to be prepared. We need a national plan so that if it hits Bathurst, New Brunswick, the people and the hospitals are prepared for it; that if it hits Caraquet, they are prepared for it; if it hits Tracadie, they are prepared for it; if it hits Cornwall, Ontario, they are prepared for it; if it hits Thunder Bay, they are prepared for it; if it hits Yukon, they are prepared for it. We cannot wait until it happens there and we lose brothers or sisters, uncles or aunts, or our children. That is not what we want from our government.

● (2220)

We want to be prepared. We do not want to see someone having a cup of tea in Toronto. That is not what we want our government to do. We want our government to meet with the experts, to make a plan together, to make sure the plan will work to save lives, to be the top in the world to show how we handled the problem. We do not want to just sit and wait for the problem to get worse. That is not what needs to be done. It is leadership that we need.

We need leadership from the government. The government has the responsibility to do it. Do Canadians have confidence in them, in democracy? It has to act now and not wait. It is not the time to wait. It is not a joke when people lose their lives. It is not a joke when people lose their jobs. It is not a joke when businesses close because of this. That is where leadership has to come in. There has to be a plan of action.

The government has over \$43 billion in surplus which it took away from the working people of our country. Just last year the government had a \$14.8 billion surplus. Today it is sitting there saying it will put a couple of million here and a couple of million there. That is not what needs to be done. A real plan of action is needed.

Jack Layton, the leader of our party, has shown leadership by saying that a plan needs to be put together and not just let it go by. The plan needs to be something that Canadians can look at and say that the government or Parliament has done something.

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I am pleased that Parliament agreed to have this emergency debate because it is an emergency when Canadians are losing their lives.

[*Translation*]

This is an emergency. You can call it what you want. You can use nice words and say this infection is not creating a health care crisis in our country. It is all very nice, but Canadians are not crazy. They know full well there is a problem and they want the government to show some leadership. The kind of leadership that would result in an action plan under the direction of the health community and health professionals.

We must work with them and, at the same time, listen to the workers. We need a plan for them so that they do not lose their houses and are able to make their payments; they must be able to go through all that as Canadians and in full solidarity.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I share the views of most of the speakers who have addressed the House tonight. I had an opportunity to watch much of the debate. There is no question that the issue of SARS has seized Canada, that it has international implications and that it should be dealt with in a very serious manner.

It has been well laid out by hon. members the important steps the Government of Canada has taken to ensure that the support is given, as appropriate, but also to be responsible and not to be too alarmist about the situation. In these delicate matters we have to rely very heavily on the expertise of the health care providers in Canada and those who are trained and knowledgeable about disease and disease control to provide the assurances and the information that Canadians would like to have with regard to this situation.

I spent some time last week in Toronto. I was at a large function at the Air Canada Centre, a skating exhibition. I spent some time walking the streets. I did not see anyone wearing a mask in the area of Toronto in which I happened to be. Canadians should be aware that this is not an alarmist situation with regard to the people who live, work and recreate in the Toronto area, that there is a great deal of confidence in the health care providers, in the excellent work that they have done and that they are confident the steps that have been taken carefully and jointly with other levels of government are in a manner in which to the greatest extent possible protects the health and well-being of Canadians and all residents in the areas affected now.

I also had the opportunity to travel to Michigan on Sunday to visit my son who lives there and also to meet with his father in law and mother in law. We had lunch together. I asked them about the impression they had with regard to SARS. I had told them that when I crossed at the Sarnia border, the U.S. customs and immigration gave us a multilingual flyer which laid out the SARS situation in the Toronto area, that there was an incubation period of some 10 days and that people should monitor their health over the next 10 days just to be absolutely certain. Therefore there is some concern across the border.

However when I spoke with my son's in laws, quite frankly they said that SARS was not a major story. In fact they said that the people who lived in the Canadian border area, such as the state of

Michigan, knew Ontario very well. Many of them have business relationships and many of them have travelled there. They understand that Canada is a country which is at the top of the game in terms of caring for its citizens, its health care system and is well able to deal with the situation that is challenging us right now, particularly in the Toronto area.

Interesting enough, as an aside, they raised the fact that SARS had come up in some of the conversations by state authorities who were concerned about the trucking of garbage from Toronto to Michigan. I think they are playing politics with SARS and it is a good segue to suggest that this is not a subject matter with which one should play politics.

● (2225)

This is a very sensitive matter for those who would suggest alarmist activity or somehow make some cheap political points at the expense of alarming the citizens with rhetoric that is unsubstantiated by the facts, not only from the health care system in Canada but verified by international authorities such as the Atlanta Center for Disease Control.

It is an important time for us to rely very heavily on the system that we have put in place. This is not a time when we can ask politicians to simply come up with simple solutions to complex problems. There is support for people who have to be under quarantine. The waiting period for employment insurance benefits, for instance, has been waived. The federal government has contributed money to the Toronto area to match with moneys from other levels of government to deal with the issue of the economic impacts for those who have some concerns and who have been impacted maybe not so much by the knowledge of what is here but the fear of what might be here. It is that sensitive an argument.

The government also has to work very carefully with other levels of government because the delivery points are not the direct responsibilities of the federal government. They are indeed the responsibilities of the provincial governments. We have worked very carefully with them.

We are very hopeful that the resolution of the facts becomes very clear and that the situation with regard to the WHO travel advisory will be resolved very quickly. Then we can take some comfort that the system is working in terms of the reduction in the number of cases and that there are no new cases outside of the net which has been put around it.

I am a realist as well with regard to SARS. This evening I was advised by my wife, who is a secretary in a grade school, that a child in that school was sent home with a fever. It turns out that child's mother is a nurse in a hospital which is taking care of a large number of SARS patients. There are procedures they have to follow. It is not a matter of anything but the protocol is they must advise the parents. We now have a whole school of children whose parents have now been advised that a child has been sent home and there is possibly a link to the SARS situation.

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This made me think that this child has been in contact with other children, certainly with my wife and myself. We travelled and we met many people last week. When we were in Michigan, we met many people closely. People have to understand that if we have a disease which is readily transmittable and has an incubation period, then there are possibilities, however slight they might be.

We have to be sensitive to the fact that many Canadians will look at even the slightest possibility as being more than a remote possibility. We all have to do a better job of giving them the assurances about the net which has been established to deal with this situation. We have to assure them that the precautions have been taken. As members know, our caregivers have escalated the protection they have in the hospitals from what they previously had as a necessary precaution simply because, as they have learned more and more about the patterns of SARS, this is responsible action for them to take.

My message to Canadians is to listen very carefully to the advisories and to the information being given by the health care system in Canada. Canadians should make themselves aware of the resources and contacts available to them should they have any questions so we can help them have a comfort level that there is someone they can talk to if they have questions or concerns.

• (2230)

Through the media and other forms of communication, Canadians have had a wealth of information and knowledge available to them. We have to be very sensitive to the fact that there are some sensitivities. We should continue to take every opportunity to communicate with Canadians in the vehicles available to us as parliamentarians about the safeguards, about the information they need to know. We must keep them informed on a current basis so that we address those sensitivities. It is extremely important. We should take nothing for granted, particularly as it relates to the more vulnerable in our society who may not be as easily informed as others. I would encourage people with family members who may not be aware for one reason or another of the current information or some of the safeguards that should be taken, that they take their family members under their wings and inform them and give them the comfort and the confidence of the information that is readily available.

I raise that simply as a call to Canadians to rely on our health care system and our health care providers. All Canadians who are concerned about this should be especially vigilant for members of their own family and to take necessary precautions until this matter is resolved, which we hope will be very soon.

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every time a great emergency comes up, whether it is September 11, the Iraq war or SARS, it does not mean that there are not a lot of other Canadians in need in various ways. I do not want those Canadians to think that we have forgotten them, even though Parliament, the media and all of us are concentrating our efforts on the SARS emergency, which we should do. We still recognize that there are many other Canadians in need. For instance, we can see by this ribbon that it is cancer month. As a former cancer canvasser, I am very appreciative of the people who worked so hard this month to help those other people in need. My thoughts and prayers are with some of my close friends: Keith, Jim, Barb, Al, Claudia and Sandy.

However, tonight we are here to talk about SARS, severe acute respiratory syndrome. Obviously in some parts of the world, although not in great numbers yet, this is a human tragedy. Taiwan just had its first fatality yesterday. It is a tragedy especially for those people in the health care system, the heroes who have gone out to help people and have themselves become afflicted or died. We think of the people going through such intense tragedy and of their families and friends.

Under those circumstances this is obviously not something to play politics with. I have not been able to listen to most of the debate and I hope that my colleagues here have not tried to play politics with this but have tried to offer positive suggestions to help us deal with this crisis.

Of course these evening debates, which I think are excellent, will work only if the people in the ministers' offices, the offices of the Minister of Health, for instance, and of the minister responsible for emergency preparedness, those bureaucrats who have these responsibilities, are listening, sift through these debates, take all of the positive suggestions, evaluate them and put them into play so that these debates will be productive and useful.

As usual I am here again as always to speak of the north, and in particular my riding of Yukon, and to outline some of the unique differences that we have in such a situation. Of course, there always seem to be unique differences that have to be pointed out so that those situations are covered and dealt with appropriately. In particular, we have one major hospital in Yukon. It is the same in the other territories. Yellowknife, Iqaluit and Whitehorse each have one major full service hospital. That puts us in a situation that is entirely different from that of other parts of the nation.

When we go to Toronto we see hospital beside hospital beside hospital. In Yukon and in each of the three northern territories, each of which are larger than any country in Europe, there is one hospital to go to and that is it. The next one could be 1,000 miles away. This adds a very important dimension to planning and precautions. When these situations happen in our society, health care is concentrated in hospitals, and this particular affliction has had a severe effect in hospitals. If that were to happen in the territories in the north there would be far more of a crisis than in a city setting where people just go to the next hospital, because there is not a next hospital.

Fortunately we have taken excellent precautions in the north. I have been through our hospital because I was visiting patients there. Even to get into the hospital one must go through a screening and receive a card. One will not be allowed in if one is a risk to that hospital. I commend the people who have made the plans for our hospital. There is a special outside ventilated room if we were ever to get someone with SARS. There is no one in the northern half of Canada yet afflicted, but if there were to be there is an isolation ward with the particular ventilators that would be needed.

The point I want to make is crucial. If we do get an infection in one of our hospitals in the territories everyone in the territory is at risk, because everyone who would be going to the hospital for an emergency or for any other disease or any other accident would not have any place to go to if a hospital had to be closed, as has occurred in some locations.

S.O. 52

● (2235)

The second point that is unique to the northern half of our great nation, which is probably about the size of all of Europe, is that for very serious surgery and other ailments all the people have to be medevaced out in small or other planes. It is a very important fact when planning for emergencies and health. Our hospital, although it does some surgery, does not do major surgery and there are certain very severe conditions it cannot cover.

Therefore, each and every citizen in the northern half of this great nation, if they are in a severe situation, has to be taken out by specially equipped and usually small airplanes. This is a very important factor to consider for emergency preparedness and health care planners, as they conceivably could have to medevac huge quantities of people in a few small planes. Of course the planes themselves are a very confined environment if one happens to be in a situation where the affliction is communicable. We are very lucky in our situation that our medevac plane is a King Air plane. All the air circulation vents to the outside. There is no internal circulation in that plane, so in that respect it would be quite safe if we ever had to use it.

Another unique quality of our particular area of Yukon, I think, is that we travel more than most. There is a lot of travel done by our few citizens compared to citizens across Canada. In fact, this week there are probably at least two dozen Yukoners in the nation's capital. There is a student I met with tonight for a forum. There will be another student here Wednesday for the Encounters with Canada group. Gary Lee is here from the Yukon Chamber of Mines. The president of the Yukon placer miners, Tara Christie, is here with another official. The Yukon Chamber of Commerce's Rob McIntyre is here. Grand Chief Ed Schultz is in town. Delegates from the Kaska and Kwanlin Dun first nations are in town, as are delegates from the association of municipalities. They are all here for valuable input to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act, which is going before the Senate tomorrow. We also have people here for forestry and I am sure for a number of other reasons. We have three of the 737 type of jets going in and out of Yukon every day to places all over the world, so it is critical for us that these precautions continue and are researched and that people are handled appropriately.

The president of the Association of Yukon Communities, the mayor of Dawson City, is also in the nation's capital and he has pledged any assistance that Yukon and the federal government need, because his organization covers all the municipalities in Yukon. I also want to express my appreciation to Dr. Bryce Larke, the Yukon medical health officer, and Dr. Wayne MacNicol, the president of the Yukon Medical Association, for the information and cooperation they have provided to me and for the tremendous work they are doing in protecting our citizens.

Something else that is unique to Yukon, my area, is that the biggest private sector employer at the moment is tourism. It may be the only province or territory where that is the case. Of course a crisis like this one, which affects tourism, has a huge effect on us. I was at the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon conference on the weekend and I want to commend the management, staff and the delegates of the association for being so positive and creative and trying to work through these tremendous challenges they have.

The president wanted to remind us of the size of this great nation when we are dealing internationally, to remind us that if something happens to one part of this nation to make sure that in the future it does not affect the entire nation of Canada. Most of my colleagues here know that I go home every weekend. It usually takes me two days to get home, so something that is happening around this part of the nation is not necessarily going to have a negative effect on our part of the nation. Hopefully in any tourism marketing people will realize how isolated, protected and beautiful the northern part of this nation is.

● (2240)

As I am sure others have done today, I would like to commend health care workers around the world. These are the real heroes, putting their own lives at risk to help and comfort those who have been afflicted with this new disease.

I would like to commend the northern pilots who have agreed, if it were to occur, that they would once again be prepared to be in a confined environment in order to Medevac these people to hospitals in the south which could save their lives or at least give them comfort in their last days.

In closing, I would like to make a plea to those people in the world who have been asked to stay home to quarantine themselves because they may be at risk. I would ask them to follow those demands. I know it is not easy. If someone is a rebel like I am, we do not like to be told what to do, and we do not like to be confined or ordered around. But every law, every regulation, and every quarantine in our society is a constraint on our personal freedoms. Hopefully people can see that in this situation when these laws and regulations for quarantine are put into effect, it is indeed for the common good and the good of those people we care about and love.

I know that if we were to walk into a store and then find out later that a person who had been asked to stay home with some affliction had inflicted us with something that would end our life or a family member's life, that we would not appreciate that. It is a terrible inconvenience, but it really is a great duty to society that we protect our fellow citizens if there is a chance that we could pass that disease on.

I ask for everyone's cooperation and help, and continued care for those in need. I want to express, on behalf of Parliament, our tremendous appreciation and thanks to everyone for what they have done and will do until this is conquered, and for putting in the extra effort such as those health care workers on 12 hour shifts in heavy, hot uniforms which are almost unbearable. Because of these efforts we will surely win.

● (2245)

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe the debate is over. I declare the motion carried.

It being 10:47 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agree?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*S.O. 52*

**Some hon. members:** No.

(The House adjourned at 10:47 p.m.).

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