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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

The House met at 1 p.m.

Prayers

• (1300)

[English]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada and we will be led by the pages.

[Members sang the national anthem]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1305)

[English]

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

ONTARIO FISHERY REGULATIONS, 1989

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.) moved:

That, given the importance of the fisheries in Ontario and the introduction of Bill C-52, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act (terms and conditions of permissions, leases and licences) by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans which addresses the concerns of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations, and pursuant to Standing Order 124 and subsection 19.1(5) of the Statutory Instruments Act, the resolution of the Standing Joint Committee providing that subsection 36(2) of the Ontario Fishery Regulations, 1989 be revoked, presented to this House on May 9, 2005 in its Second Report (Report No. 75 – Disallowance), not be adopted, and that this matter be referred back to the Standing Joint Committee for further study.

He said: Mr. Speaker, may I say at the outset that while the House has many strong and mellifluous voices, I do not think we have ever heard O Canada sung quite so well.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Geoff Regan: I see that members on all sides appear to agree with me on that.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today to respond to this disallowance motion tabled by the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations. I would like to thank members of the committee for the important role they play in closely examining Canada's legislation and regulations.

The government places a high value on what they have to say and that is why I take their concerns about the Ontario Fishery

Regulations very seriously. The committee feels that greater clarity and certainty are needed on matters of legislative authority with respect to certain Ontario Fishery Regulations. Specifically, its concern lies with the requirement for compliance with fishing licence terms and conditions. The government is of the opinion that the provision in question is legally sound and within the authority of the Fisheries Act.

[Translation]

Fishing licences are, in many regards, the key fisheries management tools in Canada. They regulate fishing activities by setting the following terms and conditions: total allowable catch, authorized fishing gear, timeframe and areas where fishing can occur.

[English]

These conditions are crucial for conservation and orderly management of not only Ontario's fisheries but of fisheries throughout the country.

The fishery is a highly regulated industry. This high level of regulation is necessary. A valuable natural resource like fish needs to be managed carefully, with an eye to the future. Mechanisms must be in place to ensure conservation and that rules of the fishery are being followed. Fishing licences provide this mechanism. The conditions that they provide are key elements in proper management and control of the fishery, as well as for the conservation and protection of fish on behalf of all Canadians.

The Government of Canada has a clear legislative power to ensure conservation and protection of fish stocks, and the issuance of fishing licences is a demonstration of this power. The Ontario Fishery Regulations require that the holder of a commercial licence comply with licence terms and conditions. The government continues to maintain that this provision is in fact legally sound.

Having said that, I agree that greater certainty and clarity could be provided for the requirement to comply with the terms and conditions of fishing licences, and that is why I introduced Bill C-52 in the House last week.

The bill includes an amendment that would add a new section to the Fisheries Act dealing with compliance with terms and conditions of fishing licences. Specifically, the amendment would clarify that it is a requirement of the act to comply with fishing licence terms and conditions. We believe the amendment would provide a measure of certainty and clarity, the kind of measure sought by the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations.

Orders of the Day

As members know, Bill C-52 was debated at second reading on Monday. Regrettably, the Conservatives and the Bloc indicated they do not support a bill that addresses the concerns identified by their own colleagues on the standing joint committee. After two days to consider the bill, I hope they have reconsidered because enacting Bill C-52 would certainly be a preferred approach to dealing with the committee's concerns rather than adopting the disallowance resolution.

If the disallowance resolution is adopted, subsection 36(2) of the Ontario Fishery Regulations would be revoked. This would create a serious legal gap in Ontario's ability to enforce licence conditions and to manage the fishery on behalf of all Ontarians. Ontario's fishery would be put in considerable risk. It would send a dangerous signal that Parliament is not supportive of requiring licence holders to abide by their licence conditions. Imagine what a terrible signal that would be.

This is a great concern to many groups in Ontario, including the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters, who have written several members in this House over the past two days urging them in the strongest possible way to support this issue.

Each year the province issues some 500 commercial licences and 1,400 commercial bait fishery licences. Ontario's commercial fisheries represent an annual landed value of over \$40 million. They contribute anywhere between \$250 million and \$500 million to the economies of both Ontario and Canada. Economics aside, disallowing the provision in question would also jeopardize conservation.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

As we can see, compliance with licence terms and conditions is essential to ensure that fishing practices are coordinated and focussed on conservation. All the provinces—that is, Ontario and the others—rely on compliance with the rules and need an efficient regime to deal with instances of non-compliance.

[*English*]

I should add that Ontario's minister of natural resources has written to me asking that the Government of Canada do everything in its power to protect the provision in question. In his letter he stated:

Without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to enforcement of commercial fishery. It is entirely likely that the revocation of subsection 36(2) would result in chaos in this sector and threaten the sustainability of our fishery resources.

The conservation and orderly management of the fisheries are vital components of a strong, viable fishing industry. The Ontario fishery regulations help ensure that these components are in place.

I should also point out that the passage of Bill C-52 will not change existing practices on the ground. Allow me to be clear on this. The requirement to comply with licence conditions remains. Bill C-52 would move that requirement from the regulations into the act. That is all it does. As I stated Monday, this bill stands as an effective transitional measure to a broader initiative to review the Fisheries Act, as I hope my colleagues will want to do in the near future.

On May 17, I met with the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to reiterate that I am very serious about updating the act. This 137-year-old legislation needs to be modernized. Canada's fisheries have changed and evolved over the years and I have asked the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans a number of times for its input on how they should be reformed. I look forward to receiving it, I hope, before too long. I look forward to it taking an interest and my colleagues across the way showing an interest in reforming of the act.

In particular, I requested input in four areas: allocation, co-management, compliance and sanctions. Sanctions, of course, is an area of particular interest in the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations and really what we are talking about here today.

I plan to move forward with a broad reform as quickly as possible and I hope to have support from members across the way for that. In the meantime, Bill C-52 would address the standing joint committee's concerns and make disallowance unnecessary. It would ensure that the Province of Ontario has the certainty it needs as it manages and conserves its fisheries on behalf of its citizens and it will provide an effective transitional measure as we examine more comprehensive changes to the Fisheries Act.

That is why I filed a motion that the committee's resolution not be adopted but referred back to it for further consideration.

• (1315)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one thing I can agree with the minister on is his remarks in relation to the tremendous job done by the pages on O Canada. It was a rendition of O Canada, the likes of which we certainly have not heard in this place. I do not want to run down the singing abilities of my colleagues but today's version certainly was the best I have ever heard. I congratulate the pages. That would be my final point of agreement with the minister.

When we debated Bill C-52 a few days ago I thought the minister had received such a trouncing on it from all parties, not just from the Bloc and ourselves, but also from the NDP. What happened of course is that they pulled it right off the legislative agenda. I do not know why we are even debating the motion today.

However, having said that, instead of my wandering way of dealing with this, I will read some stuff into the record that might educate the minister as to exactly what is happening here.

The Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations, the minister says, expressed a real concern, but it also gave a fair amount of comfort to the fact that the concerns raised by the minister from Ontario and brought forth here by the minister, although I am not sure who went to whom first, were certainly not valid. The committee stated:

In closing, the Committee wishes to briefly address the statement by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources that:

Terms and conditions [of licences] are currently the only mechanisms by which Ontario can establish allowable quota, areas where fishing can occur, designates who can take fish under a licence, reporting for commercial fishing licences.

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To the extent this comment suggests that disallowance of section 36(2) would impair the ability to impose terms and conditions of licences, it does not reflect a clear understanding of the nature of section 36(2). Disallowance of that section may change the manner of enforcing compliance with terms and conditions of licences, but would certainly not affect in any way the ability to impose such terms and conditions.

In the same letter, the Minister goes so far as to suggest that the disallowance of section 36(2) would "threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources".

And this is the point upon which the minister hinges his argument. The committee goes on to state:

Whether or not section 36(2) remains in the Regulations, the authority to issue licences and to impose terms and conditions on the licence would remain unimpaired, as would the ability to enforce observance of those terms and conditions. The imposition of a fine or a jail term for breach of a licence condition, as opposed to suspending or cancelling the same licence, has nothing to do with the sustainability of the fishery resource.

While your Committee understands that the federal and provincial Ministers favour the enforcement of terms and conditions of licences through fines and imprisonment rather than licence suspensions or cancellations, the Committee would be remiss in its statutory responsibility if it allowed this policy preference to override the principle that the Executive may not create offences punishable by criminal sanctions without clear authority granted by Parliament. It is the responsibility of the Executive to ask the Houses for that authority.

Parliament has a duty to examine regulations to determine that they do not exceed the authority delegated under the law.

Since 1987, 18 years of dealing with this very issue, the joint committee has drawn attention to the improper character of subsection 36(2) of the Ontario fisheries regulations. In March 2000, the joint committee reported in part:

Section 36(2) of the Regulations provides that:

36.(2) No holder of a commercial fishing licence shall violate any of the terms or conditions of the licence.

This provision was created with a view to making a contravention of a term or condition of a licence an offence under the Fisheries Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. F-14.

• (1320)

Section 78 of the act provides as follows:

78. Except as otherwise provided in this Act, every person who contravenes this Act or the regulations is guilty of

(a) an offence punishable on summary conviction and liable, for a first offence, to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars and, for any subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both; or

(b) an indictable offence and liable, for a first offence, to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand dollars and, for any subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both.

A term or condition of a licence is not a provision of the act or the regulations, and a violation of such a term or condition does not constitute a contravention of the act or regulations within its meaning. The enactment of a general prohibition against contravention of a term or condition of a licence as part of the Ontario fishery regulations, 1989 is designed to attract the application of section 78 of the act.

While the person contravening the licence term or condition is not liable to the penalties set out in the Fisheries Act, following the enactment of subsection 36(2) of the regulations, that person would be liable for a breach of subsection 36(2) of the regulations. Subsection 36(2) then is intended merely to bridge the gap between a

contravention of a term or condition of licence and the penalties provided for in the statute. In effect, this regulatory provision is intended to do indirectly what could not be done directly, namely to impose a criminal liability for the breach of a term or condition of a licence.

There is not a commercial fisherman in the country who, if he understood what was happening here, would agree with the minister in imposing such a rule.

We can go on with technicalities but as my time is running out I will just make a few other points. This issue has been with us for 18 years, not since 3 days ago when the minister tabled a bill without giving anyone any information about it and hoped to ram it through the House because it was supposed to be a minuscule bill. We see how minuscule it with the outcry that we have seen across the country.

However since no corrective action has been taken by the Department of Fisheries in the past 18 years, the Joint Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations has presented a report that regulations should be repealed. The government says that Bill C-52 would fix the problem. We disagree. Bill C-52 is a power grab by the department to give itself sweeping authority to create imprisonable offences within licences and to remove those licences from the scrutiny of regulations committee.

Licences are not examined by the cabinet and are not passed by Parliament and yet people could be imprisoned for violating a licence.

The government has known for 18 years it was acting without authority. The Liberal government now asks Parliament to ignore its failures and to allow the regulations to stand. It asks Parliament to say that Canadians should be fined up to half a million dollars and imprisoned for two years less a day, without the authority of law, only on the basis of a violation of a licence.

Bill C-52 has not passed the House, may never pass and we probably will not see it again, and yet the Liberal government wants to continue with its illegal regime because it has introduced the bill.

The rule of law and the rights of Canadians to be subject to laws passed by Parliament are at stake. That is the big question. The rule of law is what we are trying to contravene. The Liberal government knows that the regulation is illicit. It knows it has not passed enabling legislation and it knows it has had over a decade to fix the problem.

Parliament should report the rule of law, protect the rights of Canadians and tell the department and government that they have run out of time. The regulations should be repealed. It dishonours the Crown. The rule of law should trump government inaction.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in my capacity as a member of the Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations.

I want to say at the outset that we will be supporting the government motion. Obviously, we would not want to create a legal gap that Ontario is not prepared to deal with.

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We are extremely concerned about the concerns expressed by the Ontario Minister of Natural Resources to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

I would like to read a short excerpt from the letter, because I believe it is important to know what it says. It reads, "As you know, subsection 36(2) is the offence section under which Ontario enforces terms and conditions on approximately 500 commercial food and 1,400 commercial bait fishing licences. Terms and conditions are currently the only mechanisms by which Ontario can establish allowable quota, areas where fishing can occur, designates who can take fish under a licence, reporting for commercial fishing licences. Without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to enforcement of the commercial fishery. It is entirely likely that the revocation of subsection 36(2) would result in chaos in this sector and threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources".

Being very concerned about the Ontario minister's reaction, as a responsible political party, we have decided to support the motion calling on the joint committee to review this whole interpretation.

This does not change our position on Bill C-52. We are opposed to it for legal reasons. We do not believe that public servants should have the legal authority to send people to prison. We find it is not reasonable to act that way. Thus, we are still opposed to Bill C-52.

On the other hand, it would be interesting to have the witnesses appearing before the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations explain to us exactly what is happening. I would like Ontario's minister to meet with us, as well as the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans here in this House today, to give us a full account. That way, all the parties could sit down together and look directly at what is happening.

We have to be responsible. Knowing that the parliamentary session will end shortly and that the fishing season has already begun, we have to make sure that Ontario can apply the regulations this summer. That is why we will vote in favour of the motion.

We must also ensure that the committee's decision is applicable in practice. We need to have enough time. Let us make sure that all the players will be able to act under the circumstances.

We must shed light on this. This exceptional motion has been presented to the House today because this is not clear to everyone. We must take another stab at it. The minister must appear before the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations. I would appreciate it very much if an invitation were also sent to Ontario's minister so that we can clarify this highly important matter. It is a significant resource for Ontario and for all the provinces, including Quebec. It seems, however, that revoking subsection 36(2) would cause chaos. We will support the government's motion.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to debate the concerns of Bill C-52. At the outset, we in the NDP Party will be supporting Bill C-52, getting it back to the SJC committee for further debate.

The Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations has been at this since 1987. I remind my Conservative colleagues that

from 1987 to 1993, they were the government and they failed to do anything about this. The Liberals have continued that failure.

One of the concerns of course expressed by people is the sudden rush to get this done. One thing that cannot be accepted is the failure of government to enact concerns addressed to it by a committee, especially a joint Senate-House and standing committee.

We should not be in the pickle we are in now. The Ontario minister of natural resources, David Ramsay, should not have had to write the following words when he wrote to the Minister of Fisheries:

Without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to the enforcement of a commercial fishery. It is entirely likely that the revocation of subsection 36(2) would result in chaos in this sector and threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources.

The annual sale of commercial fishery in Ontario is estimated to be anywhere from \$40 million to \$50 million.

The Government of Ontario, the fishermen of Ontario and especially the resource of Ontario should not be under this type of pressure. It is unacceptable. I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to take a bit of a break and move on this issue very quickly so fishermen in Ontario and across the country can get on with it.

It is important to note that the NDP takes credence to this important matter. The particular bill will not provide the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans with any new powers. It will not change the way the fishery is administered or enforced in Canada.

We find this to be very important. When look at the enforcement of our fisheries regulations, to say that DFO is doing a good job in terms of enforcing the regulations across the country would be ludicrous. The reality is DFO does not do a good job of enforcing the regulations. To allow something with an unregulated fishery, as the minister has said, would put great strain on the resource and would allow rampant illegal fishing to go on with no scrutiny or enforcement. We simply cannot accept that.

As the vice-chair of the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans, I find it rather incredible that the Conservative Party stands up and shows concern about enforcement, when report after report it has supported the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP. It has screamed and yelled for more enforcement. We have said that we have to put more money and people on the ground, on the rivers, lakes and oceans and we have to enforce the Fisheries Act to protect the resource.

We have screamed and yelled for that since 1997, when I came to this place. Report after report, most of them unanimous, have screamed at four different fisheries ministers, "You have to get tougher actions on the water. You have to be stronger in enforcing the Fisheries Act". Because of a technicality or whatever, they cannot now say that they no longer support that initiative. We find this amazing.

The ability to enforce the licence conditions is a key part of management. We agree DFO is not doing a good job of that now. However, we absolutely agree that we have to enforce the conditions of the licence set forth by the government when a commercial or aboriginal fisherman is allowed to fish under certain parameters. Our fish stocks are at an all time dangerous low in many cases. We need proper conservation measures for sustainability and economic opportunities in the future. What is most important is that the government do its job and enforce the regulations.

I could not help but notice that the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters have pleaded with parliamentarians, including myself and others, to quickly pass Bill C-52 so they can get on with the job of enjoying the opportunities in recreational and commercial fishery, not only in the province of Ontario but I am sure in many provinces across the country.

I am pleased that the Bloc Québécois, although accused many times of being just a separatist party, has paid very close attention to this matter and has agreed that it should go back to the committee for further study.

• (1335)

I agree with my hon. colleague when she indicated that the ministers of Ontario should appear before the committee as soon as possible in order to achieve this goal.

I impress upon the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and on future ministers again to not ignore various committees. That is why we are in this situation today. That is why the House had to open a little earlier today in order to debate this and get it through. Again, no one should have to face this pressure.

We effectively agree with Bill C-52. We know that it has to get back to the SJG for further consultation. As vice-chair of the committee, I would encourage my colleagues in the House of Commons on the fisheries committee to do what the minister has asked us to do, which is a complete review and study of the Fisheries Act. This is probably one of the few things on which I agree with him.

The act is almost 138 years old. It contains many flaws and many concerns. I agree with many of my colleagues on the committee who are very upset with the way DFO does its business. In fact, a lot of people say that the DFO is the department for oil, playing around with the acronym in that regard.

I agree that the next time the committee gets together, probably in the fall, it should review the entire act from top to bottom. That will be a very big job for the committee to do. I encourage my Conservative, Bloc and Liberal colleagues to support that. We in the NDP definitely support a complete review of the act, to overhaul it, to modernize it and to give it some teeth. I always say we should have a dentist appear before the committee so we can have more teeth in the legislation and to ensure that the government has the enforcement and financial capabilities to do its job.

We will support Bill C-52 going back to the committee. However, we want to remind the government that the NDP and I am sure others are not amused at the way business is done within DFO. We want to ensure that the regulatory acts are enforced. We want to ensure that when the government announces a particular plan or

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program, that there is teeth behind it, that there is resources and people power to enforce the regulations that we have.

If we do not protect the fish stocks and we do not enact the legislation that we have now to protect those stocks for future generations, it will be a very sad day in Canada indeed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties concerning a recorded division that is scheduled to take place later today on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration moved by the member for Kitchener—Waterloo. I believe that you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration moved by the member for Kitchener—Waterloo be deemed carried on division.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*English*]

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

ONTARIO FISHERY REGULATIONS, 1989

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent to split my time with the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that the hon. member share his 10 minutes with the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Mr. Speaker, I rise not only as chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans but also as a member of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations.

I want to bring to the attention of the House the fact that we are having a very historic debate. This is the first time that we have come up with this kind of situation. That is why the House of Commons convened one hour earlier than it normally would. That is why we are going to be voting on this subject matter this evening: because of the provisions of the Standing Orders and certain sections of the Statutory Instruments Act.

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This procedure has been put into place to in fact empower members of Parliament, I believe, and I think it will be demonstrated how that has come about.

The report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations was unanimous. That committee is composed of members of all parties of the House of Commons. It is chaired by an official opposition member and a Liberal senator. There are Liberal and Conservative senators on the committee. The committee issued a unanimous report, which was presented in both Houses of Parliament.

I want to read a few excerpts from the committee report. First of all, in a nutshell, the report stated the following:

—the Joint Committee resolves that subsection 36(2) of the Ontario Fishery Regulations, 1989, as enacted by SOR./89-93, be revoked.

The committee recommended unanimously that this particular section of the Ontario regulations be revoked. Subsection 36(2) is very simple. It states:

No holder of a commercial fishing licence shall violate any of the terms or conditions of the licence.

That is a provision in a regulation, not a statute.

The joint committee stated as follows:

This provision was enacted with a view to making the contravention of a term or condition of a licence an offence under the Fisheries Act...

The committee went on to state:

It is accepted that regulations imposing sanctions or creating offences must be authorized by Parliament expressly or by necessary implication. Nowhere in the Fisheries Act is the making of regulations creating offences expressly authorized, nor can the existence of such a power be said to be necessarily implied.

Members have made reference to the letter from the Ontario minister in charge of fisheries. The committee was also apprised of the minister's views and dealt with them in the report which was filed with the House. I want to briefly reference what the committee said about that letter. The committee stated in regard to the proposal of the minister:

To the extent this comment suggests that disallowance of section 36(2) would impair the ability to impose terms and conditions of licences, it does not reflect a clear understanding of the nature of section 36(2). Disallowance of that section may change the manner of enforcing compliance with terms and conditions of licences, but would certainly not affect in any way the ability to impose such terms and conditions.

The committee concluded:

While your Committee understands that the federal and provincial Ministers favour the enforcement of terms and conditions of licences through fines and imprisonment rather than licence suspensions or cancellations, the Committee would be remiss in its statutory responsibility if it allowed this policy preference to override the principle that the Executive may not create offences punishable by criminal sanctions without clear authority granted by Parliament. It is the responsibility of the Executive to ask the Houses for that authority.

I agree 100% with what the committee has said.

● (1340)

Bill C-52 is the minister's response. It is the request of the executive to this House to give power to do what the executive wishes to do. In that way, Bill C-52 is responding to the report.

Unfortunately, a deadline has passed and if the minister's motion is not supported today, then a countdown begins, or may begin, to

deem this regulation revoked, in which case there would be no regulation. This would have serious ramifications for the fishery in Ontario in the summer.

I am running out of time, but I just want to say that because of this deadline we face I am going to support the minister's motion to refer this matter back to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, because if the minister and the government then do not proceed with Bill C-52, the committee can bring back another report identical to this one and then not budge.

● (1345)

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest for his remarks. I agree with all that he has said. I want to point out that he has served on the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations for an uninterrupted 16 years. I do not know whether that is a record, but I challenge anyone to improve on it. It is certainly worth a medal.

In any event, today's matter is serious. The standing joint committee has done its work. It has found a regulation to be ultra vires, essentially illegal, and it did so for good reasons, as explained earlier. Simply stated, this House, Parliament, cannot let the public service create offences unless they have authority from Parliament to do so. Our citizens would not allow us to do this and would not want us to do this. This is the situation that has existed for historic reasons.

The fishery in Ontario and in other parts of Canada has relied on this infrastructure of enforcement, which, in the view of our committee, is not properly founded. The minister and the ministry have taken steps recently to correct that by passing legislation. In fact, the bill to correct this problem, as before the House now, has only one section in it and all it does is put into statute form what was in regulation, thereby correcting the problem the committee found.

What is not comprehensible to me is why, when the source of the problem is technical but real and the bill put forward by the minister and the ministry to correct it is technical but real, the House would not pass this bill on an expedited basis. It seems as though there are some members in the House who wish to debate the bill in a bit lengthier fashion in a way that would not allow quick passage. The net result of disallowing a regulation, which will happen within 30 days of the debate here today if we do not adopt the minister's motion, and of not getting a correcting bill in, is that the enforcement regime in the Ontario portion of the Canadian fishery would be put in jeopardy.

It is not like there cannot be terms and conditions attached to licences after this, but the enforcement regime, as it exists there now, is based on enforcement of terms and conditions of licences in an offence regime. I do not think that we in this House should be disallowing a regulation if it is going to give rise to that type of public interest problem. Only in extreme circumstances should we do that, where rights and liberties are clearly at risk.

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In this case, although I stand firmly behind the report of the committee, as does my friend who spoke prior to me, and as other members of the committee would stand behind the report, we see the public interest reason in this case in referring that report back to the committee. That would have the effect of stopping the disallowance, or postponing it, I suppose, depending on what the committee chooses to do, but it would achieve the public interest objective in causing the government to fix the problem.

The fix is not in the report. The fix is in the statute, Bill C-52, which is before this House. I urge members opposite and those on this side of the House too, who may differ with me, to endorse quick passage of Bill C-52. That would solve the problem for the committee and solve the problem for the House. The government has already committed, prior to this, to undertake a comprehensive review of the Fisheries Act and its infrastructure.

I also endorse the comments of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore on some of the bells and whistles attached to that public policy issue.

I also want to note the historic nature of the debate today. It is the first time in history that this House has debated the disallowance of a regulation under the terms in the Standing Orders and in the statute. I trust we will deal with it appropriately. I intend to support the motion, but I do not intend to put the file away forever. I am sure the minister will act in good faith to have that bill passed and I encourage members in the House to please consider that option.

• (1350)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to debate Motion No. 15. I will begin by reminding my colleagues that it is Motion No. 15, not Bill C-52, that we are debating this afternoon.

We are debating the motion of the government that the resolution of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations revoking subsection 36(2) of the Ontario Fishery Regulations not be adopted.

That regulation simply states:

No holder of a commercial fishing licence shall violate any of the terms or conditions of the licence.

It seems to me that the question before us is pretty simple. Considering its legislative mandate, is the conclusion of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations right? The committee concluded that:

—this provision not only lacks legal authority, but trespasses unduly on rights and liberties and represents an unusual and unexpected use of the enabling authority.

The committee concluded that it should be revoked.

Is the committee's conclusion right? If the answer to that question is no, then we need to support the motion of the government. If the answer is yes, then we need to vote against the motion. I think that is the only question before us this afternoon. The question is not “is this regulation useful?” or “is this regulation helpful?” or even “does this regulation work?”

The question is also not the following: would there be any negative consequences without this regulation?

Those are the points made by both the Ontario government and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and even by some of my colleagues here. In fact, as has been quoted already, the Minister of Natural Resources from Ontario has written two passionate letters on the matter before us, one to the minister and one to Conservative members.

For example, he stated:

I am extremely concerned about the serious impacts on Ontario's ability to manage and ensure the conservation of fisheries should the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations table a Report of Disallowance regarding subsection 36(2) of the Ontario Fishery Regulations.

Without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to enforcement of the commercial fishery.

It is entirely likely that a revocation of subsection 36(2) would result in chaos in the sector and threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources.

These comments are interesting, even compelling, but with all due respect to the Ontario minister and to some of my colleagues here today, they are not answering the fundamental question before us, that is, is this regulation legal? His comments might be relevant to the debate on Bill C-52, but they are not relevant to the question before us.

Is the standing joint committee right when it says the following? It states:

—this provision not only lacks legal authority, but trespasses unduly on rights and liberties and represents an unusual and unexpected use of the enabling authority.

Is the committee right when it says it should be revoked?

Are the committee members right? Is this regulation legal or not? To answer that question, we need to briefly consider the mandate of the standing joint committee. It is covered in the Statutory Instruments Act in sections 19 and 19.1. Section 19 states that every statutory instrument:

—shall stand permanently referred to any Committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament that may be established for the purpose of reviewing and scrutinizing statutory instruments.

Section 19.1 states that once this is done, when the committee reviews a regulation it can make a report to the Senate and the House of Commons “containing...a resolution that all or any portion of a regulation...be revoked”. That is why we are here today.

The Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, which I also serve on, as well as serving on the fisheries and oceans committee, fleshes out that mandate a little more in its first report of October 21, 2004. It applies certain tests. The committee members are looking to see whether any regulation:

1. is not authorized by the terms of the enabling legislation or has not complied with any condition set forth in the legislation;...

5. imposes a fine, imprisonment or other penalty without express authority having been provided for in the enabling legislation;...

9. trespasses unduly on rights and liberties;

10. makes the rights and liberties of the person unduly dependent on administrative discretion or is not consistent with the rules of natural justice;...

12. amounts to the exercise of a substantive legislative power properly the subject of direct parliamentary enactment;...

• (1355)

For almost all those criteria, the standing joint committee for years has felt that regulation 36(2) of the Ontario fishery regulations violates those criteria.

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The terms or conditions of a licence is not a provision of the act or the regulation, so the violation of a term or condition does not constitute a contravention of the act. Therefore, the offence and punishment section of the Fisheries Act, section 78, does not apply.

But this provision was created with a view to making a contravention of terms and conditions a violation of the act. That is its whole reason for being there. The committee stated:

In effect, the purpose of this regulatory provision is to do indirectly what could not be done directly, namely to impose criminal liability for the breach of a term or condition of a licence.

It should seem clear to us that this is not authorized by the Fisheries Act. The committee stated:

The only purpose of section 36(2) of the Regulations is to make the non-observance of the terms and conditions of a licence, which are not legislative requirements, punishable as if they were.

Now whether we want it to be that way, the act does not allow it to be that way: "It is beyond dispute that Parliament must authorize regulations imposing sanctions or creating offences".

The Fisheries Act does not. In fact, it does the opposite. It lists in the act those offences that are considered offences as set out in the act. The act also confers the power to make regulations providing for the suspension and cancellation of licences if someone violates the terms and conditions of a licence. That is the sanction the act currently allows the ministry to enforce.

The purpose of the regulation is to treat contraventions of licence conditions, which are administrative requirements, as if they were violations of legislative requirements. The clear and explicit enabling authority for such a provision cannot be found in the Fisheries Act in its current form.

Parliament is left with no alternative but to follow the advice of the standing joint committee and revoke this regulation. The government's motion that the standing joint committee's advice be rejected should be defeated.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will take just a moment to indicate first of all the work of the committee dealing with this matter, the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, of which I am a member. I am very proud to serve on this committee. It is a new committee for me and it has been a most enlightening experience, as is this debate today, a very rare debate in the history of the life of Parliament, and one that is being held today for a very good reason.

I want to remind the members of the House and the public who may be somewhat confused by the technicality of the debate at present that there is a fundamental issue at stake here. It has to do with the primacy of Parliament. It has to do with the right of Parliament, through statutes, to ensure that the laws of the land are upheld.

In this case, we have had a blatant violation of the provisions of this House and the legislative process in terms of allowing for regulations to do that which must be done through statute. It is as simple as that. It is about violations of fishing licences that must be dealt with through laws, through the law of the land, not by regulations which are not under the direct purview of Parliament. Nor have they gone through the rigorous process that legislation has.

It is clear that the committee on the scrutiny of regulations has done its job. This matter could have been handled very quickly if all parties had agreed, with a unanimous voice, to Bill C-52. The matter would have been dealt with. Unfortunately, the Conservatives blocked it. We are now at a point where we must proceed to rethink the disallowance report with the hope that this matter can be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

The Speaker: Order, please. It being 2 o'clock, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 126, the division stands deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for the consideration of government orders.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

BRAMPTON SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Brampton Sports Hall of Fame will add six new members this evening at its annual induction ceremonies at the Pearson Convention Centre.

In the builders category, Scott Abbott, for hockey, Bob Bartlett, for lacrosse, and Jim Miller will be inducted. In the athletes category, Patrick Husbands, for horse racing, Bill Swartz, for golf, and Gary Walker, for lacrosse, will have their pictures included on the Wall of Fame at the Brampton Centre for Sports and Entertainment.

Abbott is the founder-owner of the Brampton Battalion of the Ontario Hockey League. Bartlett has served as an executive member of the Excelsiors, while Miller was a founder of the Chinguacousy soccer club, now Brampton East.

Husbands, a jockey, has won the Queen's Plate, while Swartz captured the Canadian amateur golf crown in 1998. Walker has two Mann Cup championships.

My heartfelt congratulations go out to the Brampton Sports Hall of Fame's six new members.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, entering year three of the beef ban, Canadian cattle producers are struggling to survive. Consumers continue to support the beleaguered cattle industry, but its future rests with United States judges. Why? Because the Canadian government has not stepped up to open the key U.S. border or even stood up for our producers in the court proceedings.

The Conservative Party is standing up for Canadian cattle producers. Sixty-nine Conservative MPs and senators have applied for intervener status in the R-CALF and USDA court dispute. If R-CALF is successful in expanding its injunction to include boxed beef and other ruminant products in addition to live cattle under 30 months of age, the possibility of a complete collapse of our cattle industry becomes a reality.

Farmers and cattle producers are a resilient lot, but when they are in dire straits, they and all the communities that rely on their success should be able to count on their government to help them fight for their livelihoods.

* * *

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre in Stratton, Ontario, and architects Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram of Winnipeg, Manitoba, who were recently recognized by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects with a regional citation award.

These awards of excellence recognize and encourage excellence in all aspects of the landscape architecture profession. I recently had the opportunity to visit the centre with Chief Albert Hunter of the Rainy River First Nation and was truly impressed by this massive impressive collection of aboriginal history and the beautiful landscape.

Also known as Manitou Mounds, this place was at the centre of a continent-wide aboriginal trading network. Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung is sacred to the Ojibway and to other first peoples of North America, thus marking an enduring spirituality.

I ask all members to please join me in congratulating Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre on this prestigious award.

* * *

[Translation]

ARTOPEX

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Artopex, a Laval-based furniture manufacturer, has acquired Standard Desk of Laval, which makes high-quality wooden office furniture, the only product missing from Artopex's line-up.

With this acquisition, Artopex's annual sales have reached \$70 million.

The company will keep the 135 employees of Standard Desk and has plans to hire more in the near future. As a result, Laval is now the company headquarters, with two locations and 265 employees.

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Artopex also has two plants in Granby and one in Sherbrooke, with a combined total of 500 employees.

Congratulations to the Pelletier family, which owns Artopex, on its success. In addition to being an employer of choice for residents, this company has ensured a thriving industry for Laval.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, May 31, 2005, the Inuit of Canada signed a historic partnership accord with the Government of Canada. It was signed on our behalf by Mr. Jose Kusugak, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national Inuit organization, with the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Similar accords were signed with the four other national aboriginal groups. The joint accords reflect the government's commitment to renewing its relationship with the aboriginal peoples of Canada in a manner that respects aboriginal and treaty rights and the unique place of aboriginal peoples in the Canadian federation.

The accords also reflect the government's commitment to strengthening the policy capacity of aboriginal organizations to contribute more effectively to public policy making.

I would like to recognize the Prime Minister of Canada for this bold measure as well as all the people involved in the process. I look forward to working with him and the cabinet's aboriginal affairs committee to move critical issues affecting Inuit forward.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has proclaimed the first full week in June of each year Seniors Week. I am sure all members of the House would agree that seniors play a very vital and valuable role in our families and communities all across this country, as they do in my riding.

The Conservative Party believes that the government could be doing much more for Canada's seniors. We are committed to ensuring that seniors continue to have quality of life, accessible health care and the ability to stay in their homes longer.

In order to make life better for Canada's seniors, we would end the discriminatory practice of mandatory retirement and let seniors decide when they want to retire. We would make it easier for seniors to get the care they need in their own homes.

We would take tough measures to prevent elder abuse and enact severe punishments for those who commit this crime. We would appoint a minister responsible for seniors to ensure that their unique needs are being properly addressed across government departments.

A Conservative government will stand up for Canada's seniors and do its part to recognize their invaluable contribution to our country.

S. O. 31

ATHLETIC EXCELLENCE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to praise the accomplishments of Stephanie Horner, a 16 year old swimming champion from Beaconsfield, Quebec, in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis.

Stephanie has been awarded a bursary from the Quebec Foundation for Athletic Excellence. The foundation was established to support worthy athletes in their quest for excellence. Recipients of this year's bursaries include Canadian athletes of world and Olympic calibre in a variety of sports.

In addition to her many swimming medals, Stephanie helped lead her team to a second place finish at the team championships in Quebec City earlier this year and hopes to qualify for the Canada Games to be held in Regina this summer.

Stephanie began swimming at age six with the Beaconsfield Blue Fins Swim Club and currently swims and trains six days a week. I join my constituents in congratulating Stephanie on her achievements and wish her great success in the future.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DRUMMOND DESIGNS

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to note that Drummond Designs, in Drummondville, placed among the top five residential architecture firms in North America.

Drummond Designs, the largest developer of house plans in Quebec, is on a roll. Since 1998, its sales have increased, on average, by 30% per year, thanks to its resounding success in the United States.

As proof, Hanley Wood, the single largest publisher of house plan magazines in the U.S., has just awarded this Drummondville company the top prize for the quality of its drawings. It was selected from over one hundred North American companies.

In 32 years, Drummond Designs has sold about 100,000 house plans. Today, this company has 40 employees and 55 associates who work in 20 regional offices.

Congratulations to Marie-France Roger, her husband, Yves Carignan, and their entire team on another amazing Quebec success story.

* * *

[*English*]

AIR CANADA

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Air Canada has been ranked as the best airline in North America in an exhaustive worldwide survey of more than 12 million air travellers.

The annual survey of air travellers was conducted by a U.K. based independent research firm, Skytrax, between June 2004 and May 2005, using 35 different aspects of passenger satisfaction for each airline's product and service standards.

[*Translation*]

The airline industry considers this independent survey as the main benchmark for world ranking according to passenger satisfaction.

● (1410)

[*English*]

As a strong supporter of Air Canada, I would like to salute Air Canada employees and the management for a job well done.

* * *

BRUCE PENINSULA BIOSPHERE ASSOCIATION

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of the residents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound to congratulate the Bruce Peninsula Biosphere Association on being the recipient of the Niagara Escarpment Commission Achievement Award.

This award recognizes the outstanding contributions it has made in the conservation of the Niagara Escarpment and its status as a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

I would especially like to welcome the students from Bruce Peninsula District School who are present in the gallery today. They are part of a very special partnership between a Biosphere Reserve Community Association and the UNESCO associated schools program in Canada.

They, along with St. Edmunds Public School, are the first schools in Ontario to be recognized as UNESCO schools and have added Cape Croker, an aboriginal school, to their group this year.

These schools have chosen to incorporate the four pillars of UNESCO which stands for United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization into their studies.

Congratulations to everyone involved. We are very proud of their accomplishments.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why would the Conservatives want to place the \$50 million a year Ontario fishing industry at risk? Why are they preparing to vote against critical regulations that help Ontario manage and ensure the conservation of fisheries in this province?

The Ontario minister of natural resources is gravely concerned about Conservative support for the removal of this key provision of the Ontario fishing regulations. The minister states, "without this provision, Ontario would literally have its hands tied with respect to the enforcement of the commercial fishery". He further states that this would, "threaten the sustainability of our fisheries resources".

The Conservative Party has a history of rejecting conservation when it comes to management of our fisheries. Their laissez-faire free market approach to ocean fisheries did not work when the Conservatives were in government and it is an approach that will not work for Ontario's inland fisheries either.

I would call on all MPs from all parties to support the government motion. It would be nice to see the Conservatives stand and support a sustainable environment, instead of employing empty rhetoric.

* * *

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today in Ottawa UN Special Envoy Stephen Lewis once again pleaded with Canada to live up to our millennium development goal commitment to set targets to reduce poverty, hunger, illiteracy, discrimination against women and environmental degradation by the year 2015.

Canada has the fiscal capacity to meet our international obligations. What is lacking is the political will. Canada must also address our failure to eradicate child poverty here at home, a commitment adopted unanimously by Parliament in 1989. Yet one million Canadian children still live in poverty.

Today we congratulate the Make Poverty History campaign dedicated to ending poverty around the world and here at home in Canada.

Let us sign on as full partners.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Clean Air Day to highlight the Conservative Party's plan to set Canada on a path toward reducing air pollution.

Unlike the smog blind Liberals, the Conservative Party of Canada has a real plan to deal with air pollution. We will legislate caps on smog-causing pollutants like nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide and volatile organic compounds. We will also propose a cap and trade system within Canada that will give companies incentives to actually reduce smog-causing pollutants.

The Liberals have spent billions of dollars on an unattainable Kyoto plan. This week four major Canadian cities woke up to heavy smog. A recent university study has shown that smog kills about 800 people a year in Toronto and Montreal. We should be dealing with that, rather than buying hot air from Russia, as that corrupt government proposes.

We have drawn up an effective and working made in Canada approach to eliminating smog and cleaning our air for generations to come.

* * *

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, June 5 through 11 is Canadian Environment Week, a time to focus on the importance of protecting our natural environment in our everyday lives.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Robert Litzer, of the College de Rosemont Committee on Environmental Action and Dialogue, on being awarded the Canadian Environment Awards gold medal in the Environmental Learning category.

S. O. 31

Two other Quebec initiatives also gained recognition. Silver awards in their respective categories went to Nina Blussé-Gould of the Committee for the protection of patrimony for Nuns' Island, and to Action Communiterre.

Quebec continues to play a lead role in environmental protection. As evidence of that, this week the Sierra Club of Canada issued its annual report card and gave Quebec "star pupil" rating for "solid performance in all subjects" related to the environment.

Environment Week provides us with an opportunity to continue our progress, and to hope that the federal government will stop talking and start acting.

* * *

•(1415)

[English]

AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate His Royal Highness, the Aga Khan, who became an honorary Companion of the Order of Canada on June 6.

Through his vision, the Aga Khan Foundation sees Canada as a permanent partner in international development. Operating in over 30 countries among some of the most disadvantaged communities in Africa and Asia, the Aga Khan development network agencies conduct their programs without regard to the faith, origin or gender of the people that they serve.

Now with the delegation of the Ismaili Imamate and the Global Centre for Pluralism being built in Ottawa, the Aga Khan Foundation is solidifying this partnership. I attended the ceremonies on Monday, with the leader of the official opposition, and I can truly say that everyone who meets the Aga Khan is truly moved by his vision and commitment to improve the world in which we live.

On behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, it gives me great pride to congratulate all Ismaili Muslims for their contribution to Canada and continued success to His Royal Highness, the Aga Khan.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Canadian Environment Week, a week to celebrate our environment and the actions Canadians can take to protect and enhance our natural legacy.

Our quality of life depends upon a healthy, sustainable environment and this year's theme, "Taking Action on our Environment", recognizes the important role we all play. There are hundreds of events planned across Canada and plenty of opportunities to get involved.

With \$5 billion in green economy environmental investments and the first phase of Project Green, the plan for honouring our Kyoto commitments, there is plenty to celebrate from coast to coast to coast.

Oral Questions

I encourage Canadians to take action this Environment Week. It could be something as simple as taking the bus, but we can all make a difference in our environment for generations of Canadians to come.

Parliament, foundations and organizations that spend taxpayer money?

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite would know, if he read the reports that we have been tabling, it is our intention to make all crown corporations subject to the Access to Information Act.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had 24 hours to think about the question I asked him yesterday. He has appointed one Minister for Democratic Reform and another Minister for Democratic Renewal.

What we need to do is bring forward to the House and pass the amendments that protect commercially confidential and sensitive information, and we have undertaken to do so.

* * *

HEALTH

Could the Prime Minister please explain the difference between the two, and who is responsible for the democratic deficit?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, multiple ministers have the responsibility for this, all working collaboratively, with the human resources minister coordinating the effort and overseeing the process.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government agreed in the House to fully fund the Canadian strategy for cancer control, which it knows is a commitment to provide \$260 million over five years.

If that is too difficult for the Leader of the Opposition to understand, perhaps we could give him private briefings.

By supporting yesterday's Conservative motion, the government has agreed to specifically allocate these moneys to the national cancer strategy.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is quite a job description, coordinating the effort and overseeing the process.

When will the \$260 million for the Canadian strategy for cancer control be delivered?

● (1420)

One part of fixing the democratic deficit is dealing with the government's addiction to secrecy. The Information Commissioner said that the government's discussion paper on access to information, "reveals a government preference for increasing secrecy and weakening oversight".

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's motion was about cancer control, mental health and heart disease. It was essentially about the major chronic diseases. I said yesterday in the House that we had \$300 million over the next five years for an integrated chronic disease strategy, and that is what we will do.

With a cloud of scandal over the government, why is the Prime Minister choosing secrecy over transparency. Could he get one of his ministers to answer this?

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer is in contempt of the motion of yesterday and it is a slap in the face for all cancer groups in Canada.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer the question, particularly because I would just reverse the order.

Although this House decided yesterday to fully fund the national strategies for mental illness and heart disease, the government refuses to pay. Despite 12 years in office, the government has lagged behind governments in other developed countries.

We are seeking transparency and not secrecy. We seek exactly what the member opposite said. We are seeking openness, accountability and transparency. That is what I said to the committee and that is what I repeat in the House today.

For the cost of a Liberal scandal, these national strategies could be initiated. Why is there money for Liberal corruption but none for specific strategies, for mental illness and heart disease?

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after 12 years I guess we keep on seeking.

[*Translation*]

Recently, the Information Commissioner commented that the sponsorship scandal would never have happened if the government had had a better Access to Information Act.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the \$41.2 billion that has been given to the provinces, additional over the next 10 years, we have also funded research in the last year to the tune of \$90 million for cancer. We have also given \$10 million to the Terry Fox Foundation. We will be putting \$300 million in a Canadian healthy living and integrated chronic disease strategy that will contain a significant element with respect to cancer control.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to allow the Information Commissioner to examine all crown corporations, officers of

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AUDIO TAPED CONVERSATIONS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the tape affair, we are inventing nothing. We are quoting the Prime Minister himself and not the tapes. On May 31, he said in this House, and I quote, “—when the member approached the government, I was obviously informed”. He added as well that an offer had been solicited. At that point, the Prime Minister knew there was a possible criminal offence and he failed to inform the RCMP of it.

I put the question once again to the Prime Minister. At what point did he know that the Conservative MP was soliciting an offer from his chief of staff? Was it during the negotiations or after them, once they had been made public?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, we are talking about altered tapes.

Second, we are saying very clearly that no offer was made.

Third, unlike the opposition, we do not launch accusations of malfeasance gratuitously. We are basing our action on the principle that all MPs act in good faith. We may be disappointed sometimes, but, still, that is the underlying principle.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will never believe that the Prime Minister was guilty of malfeasance. I am quoting him. These are his words. He is the one who said, “an offer was solicited”. I am not quoting doctored tapes; I am quoting *Hansard*. These are his words. I did not doctor them. He said: “—an offer was solicited”. It was he who said it. He knew.

I am asking him to stop avoiding the issue and answer us. When did he know that an offer had been solicited? During the negotiations or after them? That is the question.

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he was informed that the member for Newton—North Delta wanted to cross the floor. The Prime Minister said that no offer was made or was to be made and no offer was made.

The hon. member mentioned the RCMP. I would reiterate that the RCMP will determine whether there is anything to investigate in this matter. If the hon. member does have any information to provide the RCMP, then he should do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' attitude is always the same and consists in denying and ignoring the whole issue. But the Deputy Prime Minister told us what to do when she said it was our duty to contact the RCMP. It is obvious that the Prime Minister knew what was going on, since he said, and I quote, “—the statement is absolutely clear that no offer was made, that an offer was solicited”.

The Prime Minister makes this kind of statement, but he never contacted the RCMP. My question to the Prime Minister is clear. When did he learn that an offer was solicited?

● (1425)

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is essentially the same question. I understand that the hon. member also wrote the RCMP to lodge a complaint, I assume, or ask the RCMP to investigate. The RCMP will determine where there is anything to investigate in this matter. In fact, if the member has any other information he would like to provide the RCMP, then all members in the House would certainly encourage him to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will again quote the Prime Minister, who said in this House, on May 31, “—when the member approached the government, I was obviously informed”.

Knowing that the member's move might be a criminal act, why did the Prime Minister act like an accomplice by refusing to report it?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he was informed the member for Newton—North Delta wanted to cross the floor. The Prime Minister also said that no offer was to be made and no offer was made.

* * *

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Our auto industry workers are among the most efficient in the world. In fact, the GM plants in Oshawa are the leaders in North America when it comes to productivity and yet those workers now have to be concerned about the potential job layoffs announced by GM. They are also concerned, and all of us should be concerned, about the soaring trade deficit in vehicles in this country.

What plan does the Prime Minister have to increase the market share for vehicles that Canada and North America would share so that our efficient industry can be strong?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the General Motors plant in Oshawa is among General Motors' top plants in North America. If we look throughout the auto industry, auto plants in Canada are among the top plants in North America and indeed in the world.

The Canadian government and provincial governments have been very active in terms of providing money for help, research and development, and retraining. A number of announcements made this year point to that very fact. I believe that under those circumstances this will certainly strengthen the competitiveness of the Canadian plants which is very important in a worldwide industry.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are now facing an industry in North America that is in considerable crisis. Simply sitting back and resting on our laurels is not going to be good enough.

Oral Questions

The industry minister promised that we would have a plan for the auto sector by December. It is now June. When is the Prime Minister going to insist that his ministers deliver on these important issues on time?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would think the hon. member would be congratulating the government on getting ahead of this problem. Through programs like technology partnerships and some of the investments that we have made in the automotive industry, we now have the strongest automotive industry in North America. We are going to stay that way. We have a strategy. We have been working with the industry to fine tune it. I will be bringing it to the industry committee in the fall.

* * *

AUDIOTAPED CONVERSATIONS

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on some questions that were asked earlier because I want to cut through a whole bunch of the spin that has been going around here.

The Prime Minister and his agents have claimed that the member for Newton—North Delta was soliciting an offer from them. If that is the case, why did neither the Prime Minister nor any of his agents ever report this to the appropriate authorities?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question is coming from a member who supports tapes about which, frankly, every day more concerns are raised regarding their authenticity. Expert after expert comes forward and says these tapes have been changed in some way. The hon. member across the way does not have the courage to stand in his place and say that the member of Parliament from his party was wrong. What he does is stand in his place and defend something that is indefensible.

The Prime Minister made it very clear that no offer was made.

• (1430)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the question again of the Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister believed the member for Newton—North Delta was doing something wrong, why did he and his agents never report it to the appropriate authorities?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Leader of the Opposition sees nothing wrong in defending a member who has altered tapes. Jack Mitchell stated:

These tapes have been edited. This is not a maybe. This is not something that's unexplained. This is not, "Oh, this is odd". This is a definitive statement. The tapes have been edited.

The member opposite stands in his place and defends these tapes. John Doohan said:

This sounds to me, not only that this is an edit, but an edit done with something very crude.

He is an audio expert. The Leader of the Opposition sees fit to defend that. I do not understand why.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing cruder than the corruption over there.

The Liberal-NDP budget is making a bad situation worse. Some analysts are now saying that we could lose 100,000 jobs in the auto industry in Ontario alone. Meanwhile, many economists think the NDP budget deal will drive up job-killing interest rates. At the same time, the budget bill is going to kill tax relief for large employers like GM.

How much damage is the government prepared to do to the economy just for the sake of its deal with the NDP?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the journalists today that describe the tack being taken by the Conservative opposition as lurid speculation. I refer to the fact that when there was last a Conservative government in this country, federal spending as a share of GDP was as low as 15.3% and as high as 18.5%. Today it is less than 12%. We have the fiscal house of this country in order and it is going to stay that way.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think workers who are losing their jobs today are not really interested in the minister's self-congratulations.

A jump in inflation will drive up borrowing costs on mortgages. It will cost Canadians jobs. It will mean a cut in living standards for all Canadians. Is it not just a little ironic and sadly predictable that this deal with the NDP will hurt workers the most?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the lurid speculation continues on the part of opposition members. When they say we are succumbing to a gimme, gimme philosophy, I would ask the hon. gentleman, exactly whom is he referring to?

Is it the provinces to whom we are transferring over the course of the next number of years \$100 billion? Is it the municipalities who anxiously want the money from the new deal? Is it students who want better access to post-secondary education, so they can contribute to productivity? Or is perhaps the corporate community that wants some billions of dollars in tax reductions? The objective of the government is to balance fairly.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is expecting a \$2.3 billion reduction over five years in the employment insurance program, which means a reduction in services to the unemployed.

After diverting \$47 billion from the employment insurance fund, how can the government announce that it intends to reduce services to the unemployed and make access to that program even more difficult?

Oral Questions

•(1435)

[English]

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member that Canada has the lowest unemployment rate among all G-7 nations at 6.8%. In the last 10 years premiums have been reduced from \$3.07 to \$1.95 while benefits have been increased by \$2.5 billion.

There have been a number of programs put in place in the budget to help those unemployed get back to work. There are also programs for those who are looking to get into the workforce to build knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of this economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the government claim that the purpose of this measure is to improve the employment insurance program, considering that, as recently as yesterday, it voted against a minor improvement to the program, and that, last month, it rejected all of the 28 recommendations relating to the program that were made by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities?

[English]

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the standing committee produced a report with a number of very good recommendations, some of which were taken into consideration in this budget to strengthen the independence of the EI commission, and to strengthen the independence and transparency in the way we set rates.

In addition, there have been a number of pilot programs put in place, including the best 14 weeks, to strike a balance between fairness and the right to work including the incentive to work, and to allow for increased benefit calculations.

* * *

*[Translation]***HAITI**

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, June 5, the *Washington Post* condemned the failure of the UN and Haiti's interim government, and called for the American government to consider dispatching more marines. Haitian press and observers are also concerned about growing insecurity, while the provisional electoral council could still postpone the elections.

What measures does the minister intend to propose at the Montreal International Conference on Haiti, on June 16 and 17, in order to try to improve the situation in this country that has already suffered too much?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the hon. member's interest in the situation in Haiti.

These are extremely difficult times for Haiti, which comes as no surprise. We had expected insecurity to increase as the elections approached.

Our government, like the rest of the international community and the members of the Organization of American States, through the General Assembly, has reiterated its support for the election process, which we hope to keep as scheduled. However, there is work to be done to ensure security, so that the elections can proceed smoothly.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of witnessing the disarming of the "chimères" of former president Aristide, former soldiers in the Haitian army and rebels, Haitians are witnessing an increase in the number and sophistication of weapons.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend to make it clear to our international partners that effective disarmament—essential to orderly elections—must take place?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, naturally, our government believes that disarmament is absolutely essential. The mandate of MINUSTAH, the UN mission, must be renewed by June 24, and should be reinforced. Canada is pleased to contribute 100 police officers to assist with policing.

MINUSTAH must not only carry out its military obligations but also assist the police. I believe that is a priority for the international community.

* * *

*[English]***GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the public works minister denied his Liberal government paid \$100 million in rent without a signed lease, but his communications director contradicted him, later admitting to the *Ottawa Sun* that there was no lease. She explained away the broken rules as nothing more than a bureaucratic snafu.

The minister has admitted the Liberal rent for nothing broke the law. One hundred million dollars is at stake here. Could he please define the meaning of snafu?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, snafu would be very easy to define. It is typically defined by the hon. member's questions every day on the floor of the House of Commons.

Yesterday the hon. member said there was no contract. As I told him yesterday, it was an irrevocable contract that was signed in 2001. The contract stated that the anticipated date of the commencement of the lease would be on December 1, 2003. The contractors lived up to their contractual obligations by delivering the building on time and on budget. The government believes in honouring its contracts and paying its bills.

Oral Questions

● (1440)

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member admitted, when he was caught, having broken the law and then the government just went ahead and cancelled the law. Unfortunately, it did not do so retroactively, meaning that the period of the infraction still has a \$200 a day fine for a total of \$118,000 owed by a Liberal member.

Will the Liberal government collect that money or will it just continue to say to taxpayers “snafu”?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Senate code of ethics was approved by this House in 2003.

Yesterday the hon. member referred to the new Senate code of ethics by saying:

Here you have a group of fat-cat unelected politicians who have a job for life and now we find out that they're policing themselves.

That is the same old Reform Party Senate bashing rhetoric that Canadians are sick of.

After decades of work, the Canadian Senate has a code of ethics and an independent Ethics Commissioner, and that is to be congratulated because it is good for the Senate and it is good for Canada.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know what happens when public works fails to follow proper contracting guidelines. Ad scam happens.

On May 16 the Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruled that once again contracting guidelines were not followed for the federal relocation contract worth \$563 million awarded last November. Instead of accepting the tribunal's decision, the government's response was to appeal it to the courts.

Why should Canadians believe that the government is cleaning up its act when it will not even respect its own tribunal's rulings?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the contracts were awarded a complaint was launched by the unsuccessful bidder. The tribunal rejected two out of the three grounds set out in the complaint. This is a common procedure.

My officials reviewed the CITT ruling and determined that the appropriate course of action would be to file an application for judicial review with the Federal Court of Appeal. We look forward to that running its course.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again we just get more spin and convoluted explanations.

The truth is that Canada is earning an international reputation for underhanded deals and contracting corruption. We need to correct this reputation now.

Liberals originally re-tendered the contract based on an earlier tribunal ruling but now that they do not like the findings of this ruling they decide to challenge it in federal court.

How can anyone believe that the government will clean up the mess in public works when political interference continues on the minister's watch on a regular basis?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, these contracts were awarded in a fair, open and transparent process, a process that treated all bidders equally. It was overseen by an independent fairness monitor. The department chose a selection based on a combination of technical merit and price in order to get the best value for Canadian taxpayers while ensuring the delivery of the best possible services to Canadian public servants.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the House debated Bill C-52, a bill to correct legal defects in the enforcement provisions for the regulation and management of the Ontario fishery and brought to the attention of the House by the Standing Joint Committee for Scrutiny of Regulations.

It now appears that the Conservative opposition is refusing to allow quick passage of this one line bill in a situation where orderly management of the Ontario fishery could be put at risk.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans advise the House of his position and that of the Ontario government on this situation?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-52 addresses the standing joint committee's concerns. It is supported by, among others, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, which I understand has written to members of the opposition urging them, in the strongest possible terms, to support the bill.

I urge all members to do the right thing, support the \$500 million a year Ontario fishery and support Bill C-52 and the government's motion to oppose disallowance.

* * *

FOREIGN AID

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today Stephen Lewis spoke to delegates on the millennium development goals. He said that the Liberals' failure to set a timeline for 0.7% of GDP going to aid undermines everything that Canada does around the world.

Every witness before the foreign affairs committee has expressed complete bewilderment that the Liberals have not set out a date to reach 0.7%, including the man who has just been appointed the president of CIDA.

The millennium development goals of 0.7% are not just about photo ops and funding for concerts. The goals are an honest commitment to improving and saving lives.

When will the Prime Minister make that honest commitment? What is the date that Canada will reach 0.7%?

Oral Questions

●(1445)

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has mentioned, it is not just about the amount of money or the goals. It has a lot to do with the efficiency and effectiveness of the aid that we give.

Canada is committed to that effectiveness. We are committed to the 0.7% at a time when we are able to afford to do so. We have seen our aid budget increase 30% since last year. We have a government that is committed to doubling our aid budget by the year 2010. I think we are very clear on the priority we assign to international development.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's policy toward the environment seems to remain the same: that the solution to the pollution is dilution.

On April 29 of this year, a NASA booster rocket fell into the Grand Banks with two and a quarter tonnes of some of the most toxic materials known to humankind.

Will the weak-kneed government finally stand up for its sovereign protection of rights of our waters, demand the recovery of this booster rocket and insist upon environmental assessments of any future plans by the Americans?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly true that we need to decrease pollution and that is what we are doing. We are not only talking, as the NDP do, but we have taken action. For instance, PCBs have been reduced in the Great Lakes by 86%, mercury by 83% and dioxins by 84%.

We will continue to clean up to have a greener Canada and cleaner Great Lakes.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first we had the sponsorship scandal and now we have a scandal within the scandal.

Yesterday the minister responsible for the PCO was forced to admit that the government was actually spending more money to coach witnesses appearing at the commission than what was being spent on the inquiry itself.

Why is the Liberal government spending taxpayer money coaching public servants when all we want is for them to tell the truth?

Why are witnesses being submitted to administrative harassment from former CSIS employees like Ursula Menke?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Minister for Internal Trade, Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is gross disinformation of what was said at committee yesterday.

What was said at committee yesterday was that there was a coordinating unit in PCO to make sure all the responses from five

government departments were made at the appropriate time and in a timely manner to respond to the requests of the Gomery commission.

Over 20 million pages of documentation have been given to the commission via this group, plus all the monitoring and all the help to the Crown counsel to prepare the witnesses so they are aware of their rights and their obligations. That is what was said at committee yesterday, not what the member is insinuating today.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can refer all he wants to the quantity of documentation produced, but only a small part of this information came from the government. The documents are primarily from agencies that are accomplices of the government, and from the Liberal Party of Canada itself.

Will we finally know which law firms were retained to coach witnesses and how much they got out of the \$40 million?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Minister for Internal Trade, Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the lawyers representing the Liberal Party have been paid less than those representing the Conservative Party at the Gomery commission.

But enough is enough. What the member is claiming today is just the opposite of what was said yesterday. The unit in the Privy Council Office responsible for coordinating the responses of five departments to the Gomery commission responded in a timely and accurate fashion to the requests of the commission, which is said to have resulted in more than 20 million pages of documentation.

If the member did not understand the answers, or if he refuses to understand them, he can check the transcript of yesterday's testimony.

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MONTREAL GRAND PRIX

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada are concerned about the unity of their country and the international image of their ministers. They want to know today who the lucky ones to fill the Liberal paddock at the Montreal Grand Prix will be.

They also want to know whether helicopters, boats or just plain limousines will be made available to the distinguished guests of Canadian taxpayers to join the jet set of car suppliers.

●(1450)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to attend the Formula One race. My favourite car, the red one, is a winner and I would like to come first. But I will have to get there on foot. I am nonetheless prepared to go, if the House breaks a few days early.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if this is such a mundane question, why did the Liberals cave in to Legault and Ecclestone's blackmail in 2003, secretly diverting \$4 million from the Canadian unity fund to pay the czars of the automotive industry while Canadian workers were seeing their jobs flee to Asia?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the member did not get it the first time around. I will try again. We have a very competitive industry, which provides first class products to customers across North America and around the world. Perhaps the member is confused. We are talking about the industry in Ontario, but also about a certain racing event that draws international attention to Canada and brings us great enjoyment.

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APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House voted to improve the procedure for appointing federal judges and to create a parliamentary subcommittee to make recommendations in this regard. The Minister of Justice said that the vote would not change the government's approach.

Does the Minister of Justice intend to act responsibly and tell us directly today that he considers himself bound by the decisions of this House and that he plans therefore to thoroughly review the process for appointing judges?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I still say that the current process is excellent in principle, but I remain open to recommendations for its improvement.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can anyone have faith in the Minister of Justice, who is practically saying he will not honour yesterday's vote in this House? How does the minister reconcile this statement with the comments by the Prime Minister, who promised to rectify the democratic deficit?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to that part of the motion aimed at condemning the remarks of the chief justice of the Quebec court of appeal, I said that, because the motion did not comply with the Constitution, I would not respect it.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months we have been pushing the government to do the right thing, reclassify crystal meth as a schedule 1 drug and allow judges to impose serious penalties on those convicted of trafficking meth.

The justice minister told me this matter would be studied until June. June is here and many voices have united to demand action. The western justice and health ministers are meeting in Regina on Friday to discuss this issue. Will the minister commit to saving lives now? Will he commit to reclassifying crystal meth before week's end?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are as concerned as the opposition with respect to the saving of lives with regard to crystal meth. The matter is now in discussion not only among the justice ministers and the provincial ministers in the west, but as well with regard to my colleague the Minister of Health. As I indicated, we

will be responding appropriately with regard to that kind of classification.

● (1455)

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we need more than just concern and discussion. We need to see some leadership from the government and some immediate action to protect our citizens. Surely the minister recognizes that the only Canadians who would not support reclassifying crystal meth are crystal meth traffickers.

The FCM unanimously passed a resolution demanding that the government reclassify crystal meth. The western justice and health ministers are meeting Friday to push for this change. Will the minister listen to the chorus of voices advocating reclassifying this deadly drug and deliver this commitment this week?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the voices. We are responsive to them, but the matter is within the jurisdiction with respect to the particular legislation regarding the Minister of Health. In that regard, he has superintending authority. I am in discussion with him and we will bring forth the appropriate response.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while testifying before the finance committee, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers spoke in favour of the government's proposed technology fund contained in Bill C-43. Its president said:

Canada needs to increase its investment in new technology. The policy direction for LFE targets includes an innovative feature that recognizes the importance of technology development.

This initiative has the support of industry, it has the support of the environmental community and it has the support of government. Can the Minister of Finance explain why the Conservative Party turned its back on industry and defeated this initiative?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the short answer is no. I think it is impossible to try to understand why the Conservative Party would have turned its back on the industry. The technology fund is very widely supported. It is a key component of the strategy for reducing pollution. It is a key element of the budget of 2005. That budget was considered one of the greenest ever in history. This measure in the original bill provides industry with an additional tool to help meet the Kyoto targets.

Unlike the party across the way, we will not turn our backs on the industry. We are trying to bring business together with government to deal with environmental issues.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Clean Air Day. Our air quality has never been worse. People are dying from smog related illnesses in our major cities, in the Fraser Valley and in southern Ontario. Air pollution and greenhouse gases are on the rise.

How can the minister be happy presiding over a legacy of pollution?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how can the hon. member stand up and say anything about the environment when the finance critic of his party did not request a penny for the environment? The Conservatives want to kill the technology fund through their alliance with the separatists.

The separatists do not believe in Canada. They do not believe in climate change. Why are they together to stop the capacity for Canada to do its share for the planet?

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, even a Liberal member did not support the technology fund in the vote yesterday in committee.

Two years ago the OECD rated us 26th out of 29 industrial countries in terms of environmental integrity. Last year we dropped to 28th out of 29. We have boil water warnings. We have smog days. We have raw sewage going into the ocean.

When will the minister stop talking and do something about the environment?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last thing we would need to do is to do what the leader of the Conservatives wants to do. For instance, he does not believe that human activity has an impact on climate change. The Conservatives do not believe in it. They do not believe that we need to put the environment and the economy together.

We need to continue with the leadership of the Prime Minister to ensure that Canada will continue to go ahead with a cleaner environment.

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[*Translation*]

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the president of General Motors announced yesterday that the company is planning to cut 25,000 jobs in the United States, which could result in the loss of thousands of direct and indirect jobs in Quebec and Canada.

Can the government tell us whether the millions of dollars in subsidies made available to GM during the last election campaign were, and are, conditional on maintaining the jobs?

• (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to say that the GM Beacon project is expected to continue to go ahead. Not a penny has flowed to the project. Not a penny will flow until the project gets under way. GM has become in Canada one of the most efficient in North America.

Incidentally, our health care system into which the government has poured substantial resources has become a very important competitive advantage for Canada.

We will continue to grow the automotive industry in Canada as we continue to put money into our social programs.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for most major Canadian cities smog episodes are increasing, not decreasing. So far, Toronto has had 14 days under an air quality advisory. This is a serious problem that we can work to stabilize.

Can the Minister of the Environment share with the House what he said this morning at the Toronto smog summit?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at last a good question on the environment.

Indeed it is a very serious problem. It is why we have developed a regulatory plan that will reduce smog-forming emissions for new vehicles by 90% by 2010. The transportation regulatory plan will ensure that starting in 2007 bus standards will require a reduction of 85% from current allowable levels of emissions.

We are serious. We know it is a serious problem. That is why we need a serious government to deal with it.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the trade minister.

We are trying to get a sense in Canada whether the government will stand up for our farmers at the WTO. We want to know if it will invoke article XXVIII. We are hearing some prevarications from agriculture, but we want to know where trade stands on this.

Will the government invoke article XXVIII to protect our domestic market from the flood of modified milk imports?

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members would know, we had a four hour take note debate in the House last night on supply management.

We had an opportunity to have a very thorough discussion on article XXVIII. We made it very clear that our primary objective as a government is to achieve a result from the WTO negotiations that will allow us and allow our producers to choose supply management as their choice for domestic marketing.

That is what the government stands behind. It is what it stood behind for 35 years. It is what we will continue to stand behind as we move toward the future.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

BLOCKING OF FAX LINES AND THE REGISTRATION OF INTERNET DOMAIN NAMES OF CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS BY OTHERS
—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on Tuesday, May 31, 2005 and on Thursday, June 2, 2005 by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell concerning the blocking of fax lines and the registration of Internet domain names of certain members of the House of Commons by individuals or organizations with no affiliation to the House, which the hon. member claimed has prevented them from carrying out their work as parliamentarians

● (1505)

[English]

I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this matter. I would also like to thank the hon. deputy House leader of the official opposition and the hon. members for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, British Columbia Southern Interior, Cambridge, and Prince Albert for their interventions on May 31. In addition, I would like to thank the hon. members for Halton, Scarborough—Rouge River, Edmonton—Sherwood Park, Yorkton—Melville, and Elmwood—Transcona for their contributions to the discussion on June 2.

On May 31 the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell claimed that his right to carry out his duties as a member of Parliament had been interfered with by a group called Focus on the Family Canada which was blocking his and other members' office telephone lines by sending multiple computer-generated faxes.

To illustrate, he indicated that during the course of one day he had received over 800 facsimiles. Only a handful of these faxes had been from constituents, whereas on a normal business day his office would receive an average of 30 to 40 faxes from constituents. He argued that because of this, his constituents had been unable to communicate with him and that he had not had access to notices sent out concerning committee and House business. He further claimed that some of the faxes had been sent by someone who was impersonating a member of Parliament.

In his arguments, the hon. member cited the ruling I had given on a similar matter on February 12, 2003 concerning mass e-mails. He also referred to a judgment handed down in the Ontario Court of Justice by Mr. Justice A.L. Eddy on November 22, 2000 in the case of Her Majesty the Queen against a citizen of Ontario who was found guilty of harassing a member of the Ontario legislature.

In conclusion, the hon. member cited Marleau and Montpetit at page 84 which states that Speakers have consistently ruled that members have the right to carry out their parliamentary duties free from obstruction, intimidation and interference. He asserted that, by interfering with the work of individual members, the organization responsible was in contempt of the House. He indicated that if the Chair found a prima facie case of privilege, he was prepared to move the appropriate motion.

[Translation]

In his intervention, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles confirmed that his office had also received over 1,000 faxes and 2,300 e-mails in a span of 36 hours, thus monopolizing the tools provided to him as a member of the House, as well as the time of his staff. In addition, he argued that this action was an infringement on the privileges of members of Parliament because they are unable to carry out their parliamentary duties or remain in contact with their constituents

[English]

The deputy House leader of the official opposition challenged the claim of harassment, asserting that all Canadian citizens have the right to communicate with all members of Parliament on matters of public interest. He dismissed as absurd the contention that citizens wishing to communicate with members of Parliament on an issue of public moment constituted an attack on anyone. He maintained a logistical solution could be found to the problem and warned against censoring Canadians from communicating with their members of Parliament.

The hon. members for British Columbia Southern Interior, Cambridge, and Prince Albert contributed to the discussion by seeking clarification of certain points raised by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

On June 2 the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell rose again to bring to the attention of the Chair that in addition to the communication difficulties he and other members were experiencing as he had described on May 31, an organization called Defend Marriage Coalition had taken over the Internet domain names of approximately 40 to 50 members of Parliament. This, he alleged, was not a legitimate use of the domain names.

He also claimed that in the case of 15 of these sites, this organization not only was using the members' names to access the sites, it had also published information about these members of Parliament. These sites, he alleged, were designed to look like the official websites of the members concerned, of which he also questioned the legitimacy. He contended that this constituted a bona fide case of privilege.

In response, the hon. deputy House leader of the official opposition argued that it was incumbent upon members to register their domain names and that this matter was not within the purview of the House or the Speaker.

The hon. member for Halton, in his intervention, informed the Chair that he was one of the members whose domain name had been taken over by the organization in question and it was using his House of Commons photo on its site, thereby creating the impression that it was his official website. The hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River wondered if this might be a case of impersonation or identity theft, which would interfere with the duties of the members and the functions of the House.

I want to assure all hon. members that I consider this situation to be very troubling. Allegations of obstruction, interference and misrepresentation should not be taken lightly.

Speaker's Ruling

Over the years, members have brought to the attention of the House instances which they believed were attempts to obstruct, impede, interfere, intimidate or molest them, their staffs or individuals who had some business with them or the House. Since these matters relate so closely to the right of the House to the services of its members, they are often considered to be breaches of privilege.

That being said, members of Parliament come into contact with a wide range of individuals and groups during the course of their work and are subject to all manner of influences, some legitimate and some not.

First of all, I wish to address the matter of the blocking of members' fax machines and email systems.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell claimed that he had been obstructed from fulfilling his duties with respect to his constituents because of multiple computer-generated faxes that were preventing them from contacting his office in an expeditious manner. To support his contention, he cited the ruling I gave on February 12, 2003, at pages 3470 and 3471 of the *Debates*, concerning the disruption a mass emailing from a member's office had on the House's email system. I did not find that there was a prima facie question of privilege, but encouraged hon. members to use alternative means of communication and set in motion administrative changes to rectify the situation.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member also referred to a decision rendered in a court case before the Ontario Court of Justice in November 2000. I have now had an opportunity to review the particulars of the judgment and wish to share these with you.

[*English*]

In 2000 a resident of Ontario was charged with and found guilty of mischief by wilfully interrupting and interfering with the lawful use and operation of the property of Mr. William Murdoch, a member of the Ontario Legislature, by continually sending numerous lengthy facsimile messages to his Queen's Park and constituency offices.

The judge looked at the broad issue of what were the constraints, if any, on the right of a constituent to contact, consult and relate to his elected member of the provincial Parliament and whether it was open to the court to set reasonable limits.

The judge determined that the faxes were not sent by the accused in any realistic effort to inform and assist the member in carrying out his duties but, rather, they were sent in anger and in frustration in an effort to express his dissatisfaction.

In addition, the judge found that the citizen's actions had the effect of monopolizing the member's fax machines, thereby precluding the ordinary and reasonable use of them by constituents and others, and impeding the member and his staff from carrying out the orderly operation, activity and responsibilities of the member's office.

The judge ruled that the right of a citizen to communicate with a member is not without reasonable limits and that, when a

constituent, by his or her actions, affects the ability of others to access and exercise their rights, a boundary has been crossed. The judge found that there is an inherent responsibility on the part of the constituent in his or her dealings to act in a manner that respects others' rights of access.

[*Translation*]

In the matter raised on May 31, the Chair has examined all the material supplied by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and has found only one facsimile attributed to a member of the House. In the absence of any complaint from a member that he or she was or is being impersonated, the Chair will set aside the claim that facsimiles had been received from individuals falsely claiming to be members of this House.

• (1515)

[*English*]

With regard to the second issue raised on May 31, namely, whether or not the hon. member has clearly demonstrated that his constituents have been limited or prevented from contacting him in a reasonable and ordinary fashion, it is evident from its website that Focus on the Family Canada is encouraging Canadians to contact the members of the legislative committee and express their views with regard to Bill C-38.

Unlike the court case referred to by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, where only one individual was involved in a deliberate attempt to obstruct the Ontario MPP, with no intent to inform or influence, dozens or perhaps hundreds of individuals are contacting members as they are free to do. I must ask myself, is the intent of these communications to prevent the members' constituents from contacting them? This is impossible to tell.

While it is clear that large numbers of faxes and emails have been sent to the offices of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Charlesbourg—Haute-Sainte-Charles and others, and have interfered with the smooth functioning and ordinary routines of those offices, the hon. members and their constituents have still been able to communicate, albeit somewhat erratically, by facsimile and email, as well as by letter post and telephone.

Most certainly, the hon. member does have a grievance, but does it constitute a prima facie contempt of the House? As is pointed out in Marleau and Montpetit, at pages 91 to 95, there are numerous examples of members raising similar, legitimate complaints, but Speakers have regularly concluded that members have not been prevented from performing their parliamentary duties. Therefore, though the work and the offices of certain members may have been slowed, I cannot find a prima facie question of privilege in this regard.

[*Translation*]

I now wish to deal with the matter raised by the hon. member on June 2 concerning the cyber squatting of members' domain names and the creation of websites that resemble those of members.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

I am very concerned about this situation and the potential negative impact it is having on some members. When this situation was first brought to my attention, I visited the official website of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to see for myself what the problem was. On the website, listed under LINKS, I clicked on the link to the federal party association and up came the cybersquatting site. I worried at the time that this indicated that the hon. member's official site had been tampered with. Had that been the case, I might well have been inclined to find a prima facie case of privilege.

However, I have since learned that the offending link was not the result of some hacker, but that there was a far less sinister explanation. Simply put, the link occurred because the cybersquatters had bought the domain name when the hon. member's ownership of his name lapsed and the link, which predated the change in ownership of the domain name, had not been modified to take account of that change.

As a number of hon. members pointed out on June 2, like many things on the Internet, it may well be that it is impossible to resolve this. As was noted, it is incumbent upon members to register their domain names if they wish to prevent others from registering similar or even identical ones. I would urge all hon. members to take such precautionary measures immediately, for once a member's domain name has fallen into other hands, it is not easy to find a remedy to the situation.

In such cases, it appears to the Chair that hon. members may certainly have a grievance in this situation, and a serious grievance, but I cannot find that members have been prevented in any way from carrying out their parliamentary duties. Therefore, I cannot find that this constitutes a prima facie case of privilege.

The question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell raises important issues in an era where communications technology is ubiquitous and the demand for accessibility grows daily more aggressive. It is, of course, the right of all Canadians to communicate with their members of Parliament, but when does the exercise of the right to communicate with Parliament become unreasonable? What role, if any, should the House take in regulating such communication?

Similarly, with regard to "cybersquatting", is this a legitimate means of engaging in debate and holding a member accountable in the public square for his or her stand on an issue? Is the inconvenience to the member and the potential confusion in the minds of constituents and citizens irrelevant to that legitimacy? Or ought the House look at safeguarding the Internet identity of its members in the interests of ensuring clear democratic discourse? Or ought this situation simply be left to the forces of the marketplace, leaving members who have not taken steps to protect their domain names to bear the consequences?

In conclusion, it is evidence that the matters raised last week are serious and bear further discussion and examination. It seems clear to the Chair that, given the realities of communication technologies in 2005, members of all parties will doubtless be faced with similar situations in the future. As it happens, Standing Order 108(3)(a)(i)

mandates the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which is chaired coincidentally by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, "to review and report on the provision of services and facilities to Members".

Accordingly, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell may well wish to take these matters up with the committee to explore, at a minimum, the ramifications of new communication technologies, including the Internet, as they affect members in the performance of their duties.

• (1520)

[Translation]

I thank all honourable members for their interventions on this very important matter.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates regarding the failure of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services to appear before the committee, as he agreed to do. He broke his commitment twice. I intend to move concurrence in the eighth report later this day.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding the on reserve matrimonial real property. I want to take this opportunity to thank our members for the tremendous work done, as it is a unanimous report, as well as the clerk and the researchers.

FINANCE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-43, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget, tabled in Parliament on February 23. The committee agreed on Tuesday, June 7 to report it with amendments.

* * *

CHIEF ACTUARY ACT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-404, An Act respecting the establishment of the Office of the Chief Actuary of Canada and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, for seconding my private member's bill.

The purpose of the bill is to provide for an independent chief actuary of Canada, who would report directly to the House of Commons on the activities of his or her office. The chief actuary would provide such advice, opinion, analysis or recommendation in respect of any prescribed social insurance program or public pension plan established by law here in Canada.

The Canada pension plan, the public service pension plan, the pension plans for the RCMP and members of Parliament, as well as other important social programs are vital to our social safety net and to the Canadian values that we hold dear. We believe that an independent officer overseeing these programs as a watchdog reporting directly to Parliament is imperative in order that these programs be free from any political interference and also be safeguarded in the long term as governments come and go.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-405, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (foreign property rule).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce in the House today my first private members' bill, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, seconded by the MP for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

The bill would repeal the foreign property rule limiting tax free retirement savings. The bill would be of tremendous benefit to retirees and future retirees because it would remove the barrier to achieving a high rate of return on investments and reduce investment risk.

The rule is a holdover from the days following the second world war when capital for domestic investments was thought to be limited. With highly global capital markets that limitation has not existed for decades.

According to various studies by economists, the effect of removing the foreign property rule would be to give individual retirees an advantage of between a few thousand dollars and tens of thousands of dollars over a lifetime.

However even current retirees would benefit from the bill as they diversify their investments. Canadian retirees deserve this freedom and this bill would deliver it.

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

* * *

• (1525)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent to move the motion?

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

HEALTH CANADA

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition calling on the House to immediately commence an independent and public investigation into Health Canada's firing of the whistleblowers Shiv Chopra, Margaret Hayden and Gerald Lambert.

AUTISM

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of children suffering from autism disorder.

The petitioners say that whereas in Canada the rate of children being diagnosed with ASD is high and increasing at an alarming rate, they call upon Parliament to, first, amend the Canada Health Act and corresponding regulations to include IBI/ABA therapy for children with autism as a medically necessary treatment and require that all provinces provide or fund their essential treatment of autism.

Second, contribute to the creation of academic chairs at universities in each province to teach IBI/ABA treatment at the undergraduate and doctoral levels so that Canadian professionals will no longer be forced to leave the country to receive academic training in their fields, and so that Canada will be able to develop the capacity to provide every Canadian with autism with the best IBI/ABA treatment available.

HEALTH CANADA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting hundreds of petitions calling upon the House of Commons to immediately commence an independent and public investigation into Health Canada's firing of Shiv Chopra, Margaret Hayden and Gerald Lambert.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by over 250 leaders from the Saint-Hubert district who are asking the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to use his discretionary power to give permanent resident status to Mr. Sergio Orestes Loreto Garcia on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

[English]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present two petitions from literally hundreds of my constituents who have taken the time and effort to make sure they have contacted me to stand up for the traditional definition of marriage as defined by one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Routine Proceedings

This is part of a growing sentiment among Canadians to protect marriage, to urge their elected representative to do what is right, to represent them in this House and to vote against Bill C-38.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to table a petition on behalf of the fine people of Prince Edward—Hastings and surrounding area.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

[Translation]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to Standing Order 36, I table a petition signed by many residents of my riding of Manicouagan. The petitioners call on Parliament to adopt Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act to clarify the present definitions used for the words “food” and “drugs”.

[English]

SUDAN

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise in the House today to present a petition on behalf of a number of people from my riding, particularly young people, who have seen the crisis in the Sudan and are expressing their very serious concern about the situation.

They ask that the House of Commons assembled consider the situation and call upon us to take strong and decisive action to stop the violence, provide sufficient humanitarian aid for those in camps, hold the perpetrators accountable and establish conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of survivors to their homes.

I encourage these young people who have studied this situation and petitioned Parliament.

• (1530)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table in the House a petition on behalf of hundreds of my constituents in the South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale constituency who are concerned about the institution of marriage.

The petitioners request that legislation be passed that upholds the definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present, on behalf of constituents, petitions calling for the maintenance of the community access program, CAP, which provides Internet access to people who otherwise may not have that access.

My constituents, from Tofield in particular, feel that small communities in particular simply do not have the Internet access that many larger centres do and they call for the continuation of that program.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the people from Elkford and Sparwood who pray that Parliament pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

AUTISM

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to present a petition today on behalf of the great people of Vancouver Island who ask us to amend the Canada Health Act and corresponding regulations to include IBI and ABA therapy for children with autism as a medically necessary treatment and require that all provinces provide and fund this essential treatment for autism.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on behalf of the great people of Nova Scotia who petition us to build a better, fairer employment insurance system and to do so by making the legislative reforms as recommended by the House of Commons committee on February 15, 2005.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present petitions on behalf of constituents of Barrie, Ontario calling upon Parliament to do everything necessary to protect the traditional definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman. There are some 300 and some signatures there.

I have a further petition on the same issue signed by some 250 residents of Alberta, principally the city of Edmonton.

I would also like to table a petition from residents of Wyoming and Petrolia, Ontario calling upon Parliament to maintain the traditional definition of marriage as between one man and one woman.

I have a petition bearing the signatures of several hundred residents of Sarnia and environs in Ontario to the same effect.

Finally, I have a petition from residents of Manitoba calling upon the government and Parliament to maintain the traditional definition of marriage.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know you will be pleased that today I am going to ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Translation]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, my request will not come as a surprise. I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from May 31 consideration of the motion, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties with respect to the recorded divisions that are scheduled for later this day and I believe you would find consent for the following:

That the previous question motion moved by the member for Kitchener Centre affecting the motion by the member for Nunavut concerning the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development be deemed carried on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House that the motion on the previous question be carried on division?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1535)

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from June 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, an act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to address members of the House in regard to this important legislation. By virtue of the legislation the department will have subscribed to its legal status. The bill exemplifies the ways in which the government is working to strengthen Canada's social foundations and in so doing ensure that the best possible level of service is provided to all Canadians.

I support the bill because it means Canadians will benefit from a stronger social foundation. By introducing the bill in the House of Commons, it will demonstrate its commitment to serving Canadians in a fair, inclusive and efficient manner.

I am proud to stand here in support of Bill C-22 and I encourage all members of the House to join me in supporting the bill which represents so much for Canadians.

For seniors, the bill clearly states the Government of Canada's commitment to the provision of necessary support for seniors. This will help to ensure that they live with dignity. Budget 2005 provides \$13 million over five years to establish a national seniors secretariat. The secretariat would work with several federal departments that have seniors' related policies and programs as well as other levels of government and key partners to address the challenges of an aging population.

The federal government must prepare for a growing and diverse seniors population while continuing to address the issues facing current seniors in Canada. At present, several departments are involved in seniors' issues. As the lead department for seniors, Social Development Canada will be home to the secretariat and will coordinate efforts in partnership with provincial and territorial governments as well as other stakeholders. They will develop approaches to respond to the needs of seniors.

Fundamentally, the department will enhance the knowledge of seniors' needs and issues and it will establish partnerships with governments, academics, seniors' organizations and individuals. This will ensure that there are future initiatives to address the challenges and needs of all ages for current and future seniors.

Voting in favour of Bill C-22 is a vote in favour of our nation's children. Investing in children and families is one of the best ways we can enhance the social and economic fabric of the country, now and into the future. To this end, the Government of Canada has put in place a comprehensive set of initiatives that reflect and support the range of families, choices and circumstances, from tax measures to joint initiatives with the provinces and territories to improve programs and support services.

While these initiatives have been put forward, more work needs to be done. The majority of the families do not have access to the kind of quality early learning and child care programs that can help set their young children on the path of success. Indeed, even children who are cared for primarily by parents at home can benefit from taking part in nursery school program for a few hours each week.

With the introduction of Bill C-22, the Government of Canada believes that the time has come to develop early learning and child care in Canada. In the 2005 federal budget the government announced \$5 billion over five years to fund an early learning and child care initiative in collaboration with the provinces and territories. These initiatives will be guided by what is known as the quad principles: quality, universal inclusiveness, accessibility and development.

Government Orders

This new initiative builds on the success of the 2003 multilateral framework of early learning and child care and the 2000 early childhood agreement. Recently the government has been working with each province and territory to develop and announce bilateral agreements in principle. In the past few weeks the Government of Canada has signed agreements in principle with the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia that will support the development of quality early learning child care in these provinces.

The agreements in principle are based on a national vision which would build in the best practice and ensure reports on progress to Canadians. Canadians will be kept informed of the differences these new investments are making in the lives of children and families.

• (1540)

This will not be a one size fits all approach. We recognize that early learning and child care within each province and territory is at different stages of development and that the needs and circumstances vary. This is why provincial and territorial governments will have the flexibility to enhance early learning and child care support in the way that best meets the needs of their communities.

The mandate of Social Development Canada is straightforward. Its objective is to strengthen Canada's social foundation by supporting the well-being of individuals, families and communities through citizen focused policies, programs and services. Social Development Canada is the point of convergence for social policies and programs for children, families and caregivers, persons with disabilities and seniors. This department will also play a leading role in driving the social economy through programs such as voluntary sector initiative.

Essentially, Social Development Canada represents \$53 billion at work for Canadians. Most of the money represents income support for Canadians themselves, especially seniors and people with disabilities as well as children.

The new department is working in a number of ways to ensure key social goals are met. Some of these goals are set up to ensure that an effective income security system is in place for seniors, that we help people with disabilities to participate fully in Canadian society, that we focus on the needs and interests of families and children in a cohesive way and that the role and activities of the non-profit and community-based sector in our society are identified, recognized and supported.

Ultimately, by bringing together these social programs for seniors, families and children and persons with disabilities under one roof, the department is providing a focal point for social policy at the federal level. This is our commitment to delivering the programs and services that Canadians have come to expect from the Government of Canada. It is what they need and it is what they deserve. I encourage all members to support the bill.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to raise a question or two for the member on the government side.

To put my question in context, I am more than a bit interested that we are dealing with a bill that creates the Department of Social Development. My first job after I graduated from social work was to

work for the department of social development provincially in the province of Nova Scotia.

The member who has expressed an interest in having a focal point for social policy in the federal government will know that again today in question period I raised a question, probably for the 25th time in my almost decade here in the House, about the complete failure of the government to deliver on the 1989 unanimous motion approved in Parliament to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000.

The member represents a riding in Toronto. I am sure the member is aware that in numerical terms there are probably more poor children in downtown Toronto than any other city in Canada. There are appalling concentrations of poor children in many other communities, particularly first nations communities, in outlying regions and in the north of the country as well.

He talked about a new focus. Would it be his view that a number one priority to be tackled by the government should be the unmet commitment to move on the elimination of child poverty? Instead of having eliminated child poverty by the year 2000, under the government's watch and under the policies of the former finance minister now the Prime Minister, child poverty in numerical terms has increased to over one million children in that period since the 1989 parliamentary consensus that this should be the number one priority.

• (1545)

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, this is an issue with which I am familiar. I have been involved for a number of years with it. I served on the board of the Canadian Feed the Children for 10 years and we dealt with poverty issues, both locally and internationally.

Eliminating child poverty has to be a goal. Whether it will ever be attainable is a difficult question. However, to see children suffering and living in poverty is appalling to all of us.

The issue of poverty varies from province to province. In some provinces such as Ontario the rate of poverty is lower than the national average. This is also the case when compared to other countries in Europe. It is an issue that needs focus and attention. We have introduced a series of measures, including the national tax credit benefit. We have put in place moneys in our budget for parental leave.

My colleagues and the parliamentary secretary responsible for this portfolio have been putting forward the notion about the importance of a social economy and the building blocks of that. The measures that we have taken as government, both through the budget and through this initiative to set up this department, have put the building blocks in place so we can do our best to reduce poverty in our country.

I state once again that poverty is appalling, specifically child poverty. We must do everything possible to address this issue. I believe that the government has taken some serious measures to address it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Madam Speaker, I am somewhat worried by the answer of the member for Davenport. He said that while eliminating child poverty is a goal, and I do not know that he used the word laudable goal but I think that was the intent in what he said, it was questionable whether it could be attained.

Government Orders

This is exactly the mentality that has created the failure of the government to make progress in the elimination of poverty domestically. It continues to be the appalling position of the government with respect to its failure to commit to making poverty history, globally.

The reality is, in the absence of having serious targets and timetables and serious strategies to eliminate poverty, we will not do it. Post-1989 the government committed to the eradication of child poverty. At that time, and I hope I am correct, child poverty was at 16%. What happened under the watch of the finance minister, it went to 18% by the year 2000, the year it was supposed to be eliminated.

During the exact same time period, the government of Sweden, among others, set a serious goal of eliminating child poverty and put in place targets, timetables and a specific plan for implementing it. It reduced a child poverty level roughly equivalent to Canada's, maybe a little less, down to 2%.

Would the member not agree that in addition to the kind of building block approach that he talks about, we cannot be taken seriously and we will not make serious progress in eliminating child poverty unless we set clear targets and adopt a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy for eradicating child poverty?

• (1550)

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, I have looked at the analysis of what some of the European countries have proposed and put forward in their efforts to eradicate poverty and child poverty. It is always comparing apples to oranges. We cannot always say that it is the same situation in every country. There is a unique situation in Canada where we also have to deal with provinces. A lot of European countries do not have provincial legislation to deal with it.

Also it is a vast country where poverty measures differ in different situations. Where the poverty is very high, particularly child poverty, is in areas in our country where there are seasonal workers. Those are the issues that also need to be addressed. In areas where there is very high unemployment, there will be high rates of child poverty. In areas of the country where there is very low unemployment, there is a low rate of child poverty.

It is not comparing apples to apples. It is really apples to orange when we talk about what is going on in different countries throughout the world. However, I know the government has dealt with this issue quite effectively and has put in these measures. The poverty rates are lower in provinces such as Ontario, which is run by a Liberal government, than in the province of Manitoba, which is run by the NDP.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a question regarding gender-based analysis.

The parliamentary committee on the status of women heard from various departments when we were considering the impact of many policies and legislation on women. We found that often when policy and legislation is implemented there are unintended consequences for women and children as a result.

Is the member aware of any plans to integrate gender-based analysis within this new department in a fashion that would be

meaningful and result in perhaps some report to Parliament just like the immigration department has done?

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, this issue is certainly very important to our caucus. I have attended many meetings of the women's caucus and they have spoken quite strongly in support of this. There is an all-party group as well that is dealing with the issue. We are working to ensure that it is in fact the goal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak to this bill on social development.

I am very concerned as a citizen and even more so, as you can appreciate, in my duty to respond on behalf of the constituents of Lévis—Bellechasse.

Should the Bloc Québécois support the creation of a department whose mandate would interfere in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces? That is the question.

There is consensus in Quebec that social development is part of Quebec's jurisdiction, just like health, education, municipal affairs and so forth.

The Liberal government's attitude proves once again that its true goal is to interfere in the governance of Quebec and the provinces in order to gain even more power for itself. Need I remind hon. members that this is done to the detriment of everyone's well-being? It goes without saying that the Bloc Québécois cannot support such an abuse of power, especially since this area affects the public so directly. In any case, need I remind this House that Quebec never supported the 1999 framework agreement on social union?

As we all know by now, the Department of Social Development is the result of the split of the former Department of Human Resources. Its role will be to put in place a system that will ensure the elderly, handicapped, families and children have an adequate income.

Despite the fact that 97% of the funds from this department will be allocated for seniors, the fact remains that this jurisdiction should never have been given up by the provinces. The federal government inadvertently appropriated it and we regret that. By giving it up, the provinces opened the door to federal intrusions in social development and shot themselves in the foot.

Besides the worthy goal of protecting and possibly improving Canada's social foundation, how can we be sure we are not witnessing another violation of our jurisdictions? Judging from past experience, it is not hard to predict what will happen.

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As you know, Quebec has expertise in most of these areas. The Department of Social Development has the mission to support the well-being of individuals, families and communities through a whole series of adapted measures. So, once again, we will obviously see a duplication of costs as a result of the creation of this department. In view of the lack of will to consult, vital to success in the area and in the context, we can already assume that the results will be hit and miss and cobbled together.

It will take 12,000 public servants to run this new department. That represents a great deal of time, energy and, above all, money, when such duplication could be avoided. If there is \$53 billion for our social foundation, just think how much more we would have from all the direct and indirect costs of such duplication. Imagine how much more we could achieve. But, it takes humility to respect our jurisdictions and recognize the expertise and know-how of others.

The plan is to allocate 97% of this \$53 billion in the Canada pension plan and the old age security program.

● (1555)

Duplication must be avoided at all cost.

The Auditor General has validated the Bloc's concerns. For years she has pointed at the fact that some expenses, such as the Canada child tax benefit, can be found under tax spending but not under the department's expenditures. There is an obvious lack of transparency.

In order to create this new department, some legislation will have to be amended or simply repealed so that there can be new rules, such as those addressing protection of and access to personal information other than what is governed by codes found in the Canada pension plan and the Old Age Security Act.

There is therefore an additional problem with this new approach, one that is likely to complicate case assessment still further. It is far from a simple problem.

The Bloc Québécois has had a position on reimbursement of the guaranteed income supplement for some years now. We have demanded considerable sums for a number of Quebecers and Canadians who were deprived, if not cheated, of the GIS because they were not properly informed of the eligibility criteria.

In Quebec alone, the amount that did not go to eligible recipients since 1993 is in excess of \$800 million. In Canada, this amount is \$3.2 billion.

How can anyone dare ask the most disadvantaged in society to pay the debt of a country? Mind you, not much this government can do surprises me anymore.

The ruling party continues to deny entitled recipients full retroactive payment of all that is owed to them. We are opposed to any deadlines or cut-off dates. The money has to be paid back to whom it belongs, period. The government should implement Bill C-301 introduced by the bloc Québécois; we would be on the same side for once. As for the rest, accept once and for all that Quebec run its own business, as it does so well. That will save everyone time and money, and credit will be given where credit is due.

To avoid any confusion or interpretation, no one is in a better position than the Government of Quebec to do this properly.

Let us talk about the Canada-wide child care services. Need I remind members that this plan was already a federal election issue back in 1993? And it is still in its infancy, barely taking baby steps.

Quebeckers are served by one of the best day care systems in the world. So says, not Canada, but the OECD. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development states in its report that relations with the grassroots—that is, early childhood professionals—are essential not only to implement but also to develop appropriate policy.

It is even suggested that, in Canada, exchanging with Quebec planners, administrators and stakeholders would be most useful, if we really want to have a system that is centred on the development of the child. That sounds like a clear message to me.

Quebec's experience shows beyond all doubt that we have state-of-the-art child care. We definitely do not need more federal interference that might even be a nuisance, given the level of performance of our own system.

No elected representative in Quebec, particularly in that field, will accept federal interference without any assurances about the possibility to opt out with full compensation, and neither will the public.

Members will remember that the federal government committed to it in its 2004 throne speech, by approving the Bloc Québécois' amendment to an amendment providing that provincial jurisdictions would be fully respected and that financial pressure, called fiscal imbalance, would be reduced.

● (1600)

The Prime Minister made a commitment to that effect and promised that the Quebec government would receive the money unconditionally and would not be penalized because it is further ahead as regards this issue.

Let us now look at social development and vibrant communities. A few programs, such as the social development partnerships program, are particularly accessible to non-profit organizations. The voluntary sector initiative promotes the improvement of relations with volunteers, while the new horizons program is designed to meet more specifically the needs of seniors. It is true that these measures make life easier for their target groups. However, it is difficult to imagine that another level of government that is even more remote can manage things more effectively and come up with a policy that is better suited to the public's needs.

Government Orders

Quebec is already very familiar with the existing approach. We also feel that more interference is looming through the national child benefit. This is a program which guarantees financial support to low-income families with children by promoting a national threshold whereby payments would be calculated on the basis of income and expenses through the Canadian child benefit program. Unfortunately, this initiative is, again, resulting in political and economic interference.

This federal intervention falls under the agreement on the social union. If the federal government wants to continue acting unilaterally, it should at least have the decency to compensate Quebec, which already has well-adapted, successful programs in that area, as is generally recognized.

In order to circumvent that kind of problem, the Bloc Québécois is advocating a refundable tax credit for all families with dependent children, regardless of the family's income. This approach would be much fairer and would be more in keeping with the circumstances of Quebec families.

Social economy is, of course, an integral part of any society, and its importance cannot be underestimated. All areas of human activity are affected, which is why it makes a significant contribution to regional development.

In order to be efficient, all the levels of intervention must absolutely operate in a concerted fashion. This means that the federal government should adjust assistance programs to the realities of our businesses.

We advocate a refocus of the philosophy that applies to non-profit organizations. Indeed, we are proposing to eliminate the possibility for a single person to create such an organization. Why? Because we want to promote the principle of collective mobilization to achieve a common goal. In our view, the granting of partial funding goes against social goals, since it could compromise the independence of the organizations with regard to private businesses. This is why we are asking that this option be amended.

We also want to avoid having two categories of non-profit organizations in Quebec. However, this will certainly happen, given the possibility of incorporating under the federal act alone, without pursuing objectives outside Quebec borders.

We want Quebec's specific characteristics to be respected for the greater good of community life throughout Quebec. To this end, we will defend Quebec's progressive model.

Let us talk about manpower. We know how workers are important in any decent society. They are the cornerstone of society. How can we not recognize the need for them to receive the best training possible? For this, we need money.

• (1605)

Who has the money that is needed? The federal government. Why? Because these same workers feed it with taxes. However, my colleagues opposite will say that enormous amounts of money are being reinvested on behalf of these people.

Must we remind the House that there is a now-famous fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provinces? This

fiscal imbalance has been recognized by all the provinces. It has been denounced by Quebec and the Bloc Québécois members for many years.

We are not talking about a centipede or a millipede; we are talking about a billion dollar beast. We are talking about the evidence that the federal government is not giving back what is owed to the citizens. On top of that, this government is asking us to approve a major intrusion in sectors that are outside its jurisdiction. Why are they outside its jurisdiction? For at least two reasons.

The first one is that education falls exclusively under provincial jurisdiction. Exclusively! This is a word that the government should examine carefully. The dictionary provides a very good definition of it.

The second reason is that the people in the field are the most capable of examining, understanding and defining the situation and the needs, and of making recommendations accordingly, while ensuring the management of education per se.

Whether the measures are for young people, the disabled, older workers or immigrants, Quebec and the provinces are the best placed for efficiency and optimum effect.

The government has the funds, but acts in very bad faith when it comes to putting them in the right place. Its confidence in the abilities of Quebec and the provinces is severely lacking. But should we question whether its existence is justified? Canada exists because there is a federation of provinces. Theirs is the level with jurisdiction over education, health, family matters and so on.

We are fully entitled to demand the funds that are in federal hands, whether their source is taxation or employment insurance contributions.

As for health, which is also completely under Quebec jurisdiction, the federal government must respect the agreement on asymmetry and stop demanding accountability.

As for the environment, Quebecers have been aware of its importance for ages, and did not wait for federal action before they made changes. Proof of this: the BAPE has most certainly proven itself in Quebec.

Quebec's efforts to implement the Kyoto protocol have proven their worth. The funds that are to be invested in order to meet Canada's commitment when the protocol was ratified should be distributed fairly among the provinces. This means that Quebec will not be penalized, because it is already polluting less and is often in the forefront.

Quebec is the authority in municipal infrastructures. In city projects, it is in charge of setting priorities and distributing funds. We are very much aware that cities have to update their structures and improve their land use plans and we insist that Quebec remain in control at all times, because it is best at assessing the effort required of each municipality, without favouring some over others for any sort of consideration.

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Over the years, the Government of Quebec has established enviable policies for itself, both locally and internationally. It needs no advice. The government knows this full well, because it blithely copies Quebec's social development measures.

Quebec's jurisdiction is recognized and unanimously supported in Quebec. The system works, because the structure and the institutions linking the public, the organizations and the government make it possible to understand the needs and to act accordingly, whether by creating effective instruments or investing the necessary money to permit stable and long term funding.

You know what we are lacking. So acknowledge it: it is sufficient room to manoeuvre because of the fiscal imbalance.

• (1610)

You have the power to remedy this injustice. We demand you do it. The people of Quebec refuse to accept the federal government abusing its prerogatives to withdraw and keep funds that belong to them and are rightly theirs.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I want to congratulate my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse for that magnificent presentation on the need for the federal government to respect Quebec's jurisdictions at all times, as set out in the Constitution. The Liberal Party decides all too often not to respect the Constitution. They are masters at not respecting their own Constitution.

My colleague indicated that this new department would employ 12,000 public servants. Furthermore, it would be responsible for seniors. Our critic in the House has often stressed the importance of retroactivity. We have been able to shine some light on the Liberal Party's terrible approach, which has yet to be corrected, with regard to the guaranteed income supplement. Although there will be 12,000 public servants in this new department—and probably more than 40,000 in the current department—the feds have not yet managed to find a way to automatically provide seniors with their guaranteed income supplement. It seems that the federal government can always find us when we owe it money. But, it is probably the only government that cannot find seniors entitled to the GIS.

So, not only are they denied that right—in other words, they have to fill out a form—but also, unfortunately, a number of seniors are not getting their GIS, still are not getting it or have received it but are not entitled to retroactive payments for all the years they were entitled to it. So, this is how the Liberal Party treats seniors.

I want my colleague to give me an idea of how the 12,000 employees of this department could give seniors what they are owed, in other words, all the GIS payments the federal government owes them.

• (1615)

Mr. Réal Lapierre: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I imagine that his riding has the same problems as mine with this. It is really unacceptable to contemplate creating a new department and an additional twelve thousand jobs. It is not objectionable in itself, but we all, regardless of region, are confronted with the problem of seniors entitled to guaranteed income supplement retroactivity who cannot get what they are entitled to.

I think it would be desirable, at the very least, for the first task of these new employees to be to locate all those who have been penalized by the system. This would at least provide proof of good faith, in that the government could then say “This new entity is addressing a very specific task and will be providing eligible people with their entitlement”.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate my colleague for Lévis—Bellechasse on his speech.

This bill speaks to me, because I heard a number of women victims of poverty—I use the word “victims” advisedly—during the numerous sessions of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This is indeed a scourge and solutions must be found.

I am certain that the solutions best adapted to the needs of the population are developed by front-line agencies where the problems are clearly understood, and certainly not by 12,000 public servants issuing rules and monitoring the situation. All the money that ought to be going back to the people will get lost in the bureaucracy.

My colleague outlined a couple of solutions in his speech, including a refundable tax credit. I would like to hear some detail from him on how that money could be refunded. The problem of the fiscal imbalance is this: what is lacking is neither ideas nor solutions, but money. The money needs to be as close to the community as possible. This idea of introducing a refundable tax credit may be a new approach requiring less administration and will certainly be a bit more efficient.

Mr. Réal Lapierre: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I imagine that she is in somewhat the same situation I am. There is a city in my riding where 3,000 jobs used to be available in the shipyard. And then, one day, they all disappeared. This of course created a depression in our economy.

When we talk about a child tax credit, we first have to assume that people have to pay taxes. Then, I think that together we can find a fair formula for everybody.

The difficulty lies with the poor and the families who cannot even afford to pay taxes. Their revenue is so low that they do not even have the privilege of doing their share for the country by paying taxes. This is when non profit and social organizations become so important in our areas. The Bloc Québécois members are always in contact with those organizations. They do everything they can to alleviate day to day human misery. I know full well that in my riding, these are front-line organizations. There is only one problem though. We are lacking funds.

Instead of creating a new government body that could very well gobble up billions of dollars, we would be much better off using this money to help those organizations that are already established and known for their efficiency.

Government Orders

• (1620)

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse for his speech. He did mention the main points, but more importantly, he mentioned the problems.

My colleague is a former mayor and reeve. He is not the only one with municipal government experience in the Bloc. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel also has experience at the municipal level.

We know that the government wants to introduce a new deal concerning gasoilinc. Since my colleague is a former mayor and, as such, an expert in municipal affairs, I will ask him the following question. With which level of government is it more efficient for a municipality to conclude contracts and agreements? During his years as mayor, with which level of government could he best manage Quebec's affairs and interests?

Mr. Réal Lapierre: Madam Speaker, again, I thank my colleague for his question and for mentioning that our colleague and I have been active at the municipal level for a number of years.

What we can confirm is that the greatest accomplishments of municipalities are negotiated with the Quebec government. During my 21 years at the municipal level I saw very few central government initiatives that were really useful. In fact, all files are examined and supervised by representatives of the provincial government and that is the best guarantee we have that our projects will be carried out successfully.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, Sponsorship Program; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Pay Equity; the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, Fisheries.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-22, concerning the creation of the Department of Social Development.

First of all, there is always a need to establish a premise when dealing with legislation coming from the federal government. At the same time, one has to lay out the Bloc's stance, which is very clear and always inspired—as my colleague mentioned a while ago—by the defence of the interests of Quebec and that always involves the areas of jurisdiction.

Currently, of all federal parties, the Bloc Québécois is the only one that always defends its jurisdictions and guards them jealously. It always defends the regions and the economy of each riding.

The Bloc definitely, categorically and unequivocally condemns the systematic interference by the Liberal government. It is indeed a bad habit that has been going on for a long time. Suffice it to look at the context. It is a constant habit in regard to new legislation. The previous few bills are still getting one foot in the door and trying to pry it open, in terms of Quebec's jurisdictions.

This department, just like the others, has a mandate to interfere in the jurisdictions of Quebec and of provinces in general. There is an absolute need to denounce the creation of such a department, as much for the reasons of operations and effectiveness we outlined earlier, as for reasons having to do with interference.

A structure like the one being proposed, no matter how it is defined, does not achieve the desired effectiveness if there is not the political will to resolve the problems. That is what is lacking in the government.

Earlier my colleague spoke of poverty among women, seniors and children. It exists in Canada. The statistics are quite clear. In fact, the government is criticized for not having the will to do anything about it. So, it does not matter what structure is implemented, if there is no will to resolve the problems and defend the interests of the people, it will not work.

If the Canadian government put as much effort into defending Quebec's interests as it does into interfering in its jurisdictions, things would be much better and many problems would be resolved.

This government has a reputation that precedes it when it comes to interference. My colleague gave a number of examples earlier. Even though the government would have us believe that it wants to respect federal jurisdictions, as well as those of Quebec and the provinces, we in the Bloc are quite skeptical. We do not believe this government in the least, quite simply because it wants to cross the line, yet again, and grab powers that belong to Quebec.

There is no shortage of examples of encroachment. It happens regularly. Just look at labour force training—I will come back to this later—health, municipalities, or the millennium scholarships that caused so many problems. There is also child care, which my colleague mentioned, the environment, the community sector, volunteerism, social housing, education. The list goes on. The fact is that these problems have not been solved and the solutions provided do not necessarily correspond to the interests of Quebecers.

Take health for example, for which the vision is quite centralist. The government talks about plans. It is going to make the governments of Quebec and the provinces accountable. It will require certain indicators and evidence-based benchmarks pretty much everywhere. All that to implement a pan-Canadian system, which is what it has done in other sectors.

It is unfortunate, but the pan-Canadian system, whether for health or other areas, does not always correspond to the interests and desires of Quebecers. That is true for health. These problems are practically insurmountable because the real needs are not being met.

It is the same thing with the labour force. The federal government talks about an agreement with Quebec and the other provinces, but what kind of agreement is it?

• (1625)

If they say that it covers duplications, what about opting out? This is always done unilaterally. They do not know what they want to do with regard to the kinds of customers and the labour force. Indeed, once again, this is a Canada-wide idea, which is not necessarily relevant to Quebec's reality.

Government Orders

And so, from one bill to the next, the encroachment is systematic. We learn something new every day. Again, not too long ago, the Prime Minister announced that the municipalities would have other responsibilities. There was a vote on a bill designed to add cities to provinces. There is always this bad habit of systematically encroaching on Quebec's plans.

The same thing goes for the environment. The Kyoto Protocol is not a success. It is a failure for the minister. None of the efforts made by Quebec were acknowledged. The government gives the large polluters the freedom to pollute or to expand. It is very easy. None of the efforts made by Quebec were taken into account in that context. What they are doing for the environment is setting up some sort of environmental assessment process which, once again, does not meet the needs.

By nibbling away at Quebec's authority and jurisdiction, the government is drifting further and further away from Quebec's interests and the cure for its problems.

There are other examples. However, I will stick to municipalities. My colleague provided answers earlier. That is important. The proposed new agreement on transferring the gasoline tax is one more systematic intrusion. In my opinion, it is bad for Quebec, Canada and democracy. When a minority government arrogantly meddles in the powers of Quebec and the provinces, a dead end is reached at some point. The price must be paid.

Let us come back specifically to Bill C-22. Here again, the government talks of social development, which is not the federal government's prerogative. It is in fact under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction. Quebec developed social development. The federal government cannot, just like that, give itself powers and jurisdictions over health and education.

The Bloc cannot support this bill, because this would support the fact that the federal government has always played a role in social development. That is mistaken. We cannot ratify a bill that is erroneous.

If, for example, the Bloc agreed to the creation of this department—my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse mentioned it earlier—it would open the way to consolidation of federal intrusions in social development in the future. This is a field that it has, however, ignored.

Over time, this would also mean accepting the waste that will occur. This was mentioned several times. In fact, my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel has mentioned this in his question earlier. How will we be able to control this waste of money?

I said at the beginning of my speech that this is not about explaining a structure and putting public servants into it; the government must have the political will to solve the problems. Otherwise, this is totally useless.

We cannot approve this. It is unfortunate because, in the beginning, we had come to some agreements and the federal government had made commitments. Indeed, the government and the Prime Minister had said that they would respect Quebec's jurisdictions. They did exactly the opposite.

For example, they had accepted the Bloc Québécois subamendment that required the government to fully respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, while promising more money for social programs. This was not followed through. We cannot rely on this government in any level of intervention, whether it is political, social or economic. It does the opposite of what it must do, or it does not respond. It avoids the problems.

We were also supposed to sign agreements on parental leave. We are constantly asking questions to know where we are on this. We have seen judgments. In this regard, Quebec's jurisdiction is extremely important.

• (1630)

We talked about exclusivity. This is very significant.

The Bloc Québécois has always defended, and still defends, the interests of Quebecers and, as I mentioned earlier, the interests of the regions. The jurisdictions must be respected. We, Bloc Québécois members, are not the only ones defending them. There is consensus at the National Assembly, where this principle is well recognized. We are very protective of our jurisdictions.

It is important to point out that these areas come under the jurisdiction of the Quebec government, which is often close to the public, which knows the structures well, which monitors the institutions effectively, and which maintains a very close relation with the organizations. This means the Quebec government has the expertise and the tools necessary to develop relevant policies and to provide, based on needs and following consultations, the funds required to implement these policies.

The federal government must recognize once and for all that Quebec—and the provinces—although its leeway has been considerably reduced by the fiscal imbalance—and we could talk about this at length—has nevertheless managed to implement internationally renowned quality programs. It has succeeded in establishing ties with international stakeholders, and in creating valuable models. We set an example. I will not talk about child care, because it was mentioned earlier. But it is not just child care. We are also a world model, we have an influence at the international level as regards business operations. Quebec manages to do that by fully exercising its authority in its own jurisdictions.

The Bloc Québécois will never agree to the creation of a department that has the mandate to duplicate and copy Quebec's avant-garde policies, to use them and to fiddle with them for its own purposes. Moreover, this also prevents Quebec from fully developing its own potential. Agreeing to the creation of such a department would be going against the interests of Quebec and against its development. This is not about visibility, but about respect for the integrity, security and health of all individuals.

• (1635)

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, first I would like to congratulate my colleague for Mégantic—L'Érable on his learned remarks. Our colleague was formerly a member of the National Assembly of Quebec. Therefore, I think this House could benefit from his experience.

Government Orders

All Canadians and Quebecers who are watching this debate must understand that the situation in Quebec is different. I am always amazed when provincial governments make requests of the Government of Canada, whether it be to address the issue of child care or any other matter. What they want are pan-Canadian standards.

The problem is that in Quebec no one ever asks anything of the Government of Canada. Why? Because we deal with the Government of Quebec.

I think that, regarding child care, we should draw on the experience of my colleague, who was a member of the National Assembly. We never think of asking the federal government to deal with the issue of day care in Quebec. For Quebecers, the government is the Government of Quebec. It is the one which solves all real life problems: health, education, day care, social issues. This is the job of that government.

Let us look at what is going on elsewhere in Canada. I do not want to be critical, but at least six Canadian provinces have a population under 1 million. I can understand that they feel incapable of acting on their own and therefore ask for federal government's help. In Quebec, however, requests are made to the Government of Quebec.

I would like my colleague for Mégantic—L'Érable to explain, based on his experience, how the child care issue is being dealt with. As a matter of fact, requests were forwarded to Quebec. He was in the middle of the action. How was the issue dealt with? What negotiations were held with the Government of Quebec on day care?

Mr. Marc Boulianne: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for his question.

It is very simple; this is what happens in our National Assembly. With respect to child care for example, consensus is created and organizations are in direct contact with the population and the board of directors. The same happens in Quebec's other areas of jurisdiction, for instance, in education. Such consultation and involvement suggest an extremely high level of participation.

As far as child care is concerned, there was a consultation process at the child care level, involving the child care centres, individual parents and their associations, and other stakeholders. These people and all the organizations involved in Quebec put proposals forward. From there, we assessed our needs.

This is what we do. We assess the needs in tangible terms by meeting with people. This is done in a easy, open and natural way. Then, the legislation is prepared according to the needs, since within the structure of its institutions the Quebec government stays in contact with the organizations, the community and their needs. Thanks to very precise consultations, the action of the Quebec government is focussed on the needs of individual people.

• (1640)

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada—U.S.), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard some members of the Bloc caucus maintain that Quebecers do not want the federal government to get involved in the issues, for example, in child care. Moreover, they maintained that Quebecers rely only on the National Assembly.

Yet, since I have been in politics and even before I did volunteer work in community organizations, I have received requests from Quebecers. On the child care issue, they wanted a Canada-wide system. Indeed, they were relying on the federal government, since it had a role to play. Provincial governments must deliver the service. However, the federal government has a role to play to ensure that all children and their families, throughout Canada, are entitled to this service.

What is the hon. member's response to all the Quebecers who come into my office and the offices of several other Quebec MPs to ask the same question? How does he answer these people?

Mr. Marc Boulianne: Madam Speaker, with the British North America Act, the Canadian federation was created. At that time, jurisdictions were clearly divided between the federal government and the provinces, among others, Quebec. What we want is for the government to respect these jurisdictions. The reason we do not accept federal government encroachment on Quebec's jurisdictions is because we have the tools, the expertise and all the knowledge we need to respond effectively to these requests in the best interests of Quebec.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to ask the member for Mégantic—L'Érable a brief question. I listened very carefully and as someone from Nova Scotia, a smaller have not province, I appreciated the comment from his colleague that even though Quebec does not seem to think it needs and does not want the federal dollars, which surprises me, that are required for child care—

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: Not Quebec. The party, the Bloc Québécois.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Madam Speaker, I thought I heard him say “we didn't need it”. He had some appreciation for the fact that some of the smaller provinces and the have not provinces do indeed need to be sure that the federal government is there to assist with advancing more progressive social policies than would otherwise happen. We can think of a number of provinces in which that is true.

I would like to pursue further the position as expressed by the member opposite that one recognizes there are less prosperous and less populous provinces that do need the assistance of the federal government. If that is the case, how does the Bloc Québécois justify taking the position that it has no interest in ensuring the adoption of a budget that would make available not only significant funds for child care, but for affordable housing which is desperately needed in have not provinces, for better post-secondary education and training, moneys which are desperately needed in less prosperous and less populous provinces? I could go on.

Those are all things that are very much recognized as priorities in Quebec. There is no question about that. I have no trouble acknowledging, and often have, that in social policy terms the Quebec government very often is in the lead with respect to recognizing the human priorities.

Government Orders

How can the Bloc Québécois members of this current Parliament deny the flow of resources that are desperately needed in those other provinces as they are doing by taking a position to try to defeat the better balanced budget that has been negotiated by the New Democratic Party?

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We have no intention of turning down the money that is owed to us. We want that money back. However, we want to choose the way this money will be managed. We do not want pan-Canadian standards imposed on us. We want to manage this money within our organizations and according to our priorities and the needs and interests of Quebecers.

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to talk about Bill C-22, to establish the Department of Social Development. With all the questions and odd things heard recently, I believe it is very important to put certain elements back in their proper context.

When we say we are interested in obtaining the money we pay in taxes in order to develop the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, we are not begging or asking for something that does not belong to us. It is about delivering services to the people policies are designed for, and not about duplication, encroachment, petty politics or the development of very complex, piecemeal programs within huge departments that duplicate public services. That does not help anybody.

I understand the NDP is having considerable difficulty with these data, because it thinks Ottawa knows best. It is not surprising that often, despite its sometimes noble objectives, it is so far removed from the heart of Canadians and so misunderstood by the public.

The New Democratic Party has the sort of vision that whatever comes from Parliament Hill and flows toward the provinces is a good thing. Rather than debate things where they have to be debated, they think that in the case of whatever is called local development, whatever comes out of the communities or whatever is done in the provinces, a short cut, a national standard, a national program, the great department will replace an integrated approach, proximity of services and provincial accountability. However, they are mistaken, and this is not the way to get support from people.

Maybe it is the way it is done in certain ridings on the west island, I do not know, but I have a hard time imagining someone in my riding saying: "I am suffering from my missing pan-Canadian program. It is hurting me. I have a big problem. You know, I never got my pan-Canadian cheque. I do not have my pan-Canadian day care. I have a fine Quebec day care. The people are nice, but it is not pan-Canadian. It does not have a Canadian flag, and my children are suffering. Public services are suffering too".

I do not think so and I cannot imagine people asking me for a pan-Canadian system, duplication or Canadian day care over Quebec day care. I do not know how they do that. Do they want a Tim Hortons beside a Dunkin' Donuts? What are they trying to do?

If they are trying to help people in need, to undertake real social development, really increase resource efficiency, do they need to create department after department? Do they need to create little program after little program? Do they have to create things that already exist? Do they need to negotiate 10 years each time over financial compensation for day care and parental leave? Is that serving the public? I do not think so. Really, it is doing the public no service.

And what about the creation of the Department of Social Development? With respect to programs for people with a disability, yes, everyone supports virtue and opposes vice. We all like apple pie. However, we do not agree with having a number of cooks making different apple pies in different ways for the same person. In the end, it does not work. It produces bad results. It is expensive and cumbersome. So, the government wants to create Canadian departments, especially to promote its importance and not with a view to efficiency in areas of respective jurisdiction.

So, there is a fundamental problem because the federal government has spent more—the Comité Léonard proved this—in areas under the jurisdiction of the provinces and of Quebec then in its own areas of jurisdiction.

Given what happened with the HMCS *Chicoutimi*, the Halifax class frigates or the HMCS *Toronto*, would it not have been better to what it has to do instead of trying to do what others do very well? Why not apply this to post-secondary education?

I had hoped that this would be clear to the NDP as well in terms of Bill C-48. There is no need to duplicate departments responsible for education and standards. Why duplicate, why redo what is being done well? For the pleasure of saying, "I am in education too; I am in social development too" or for the pleasure of seeing the Canadian flag everywhere?

• (1650)

There was the sponsorship scandal; will there be a social sponsorship scandal? More money will be spent, less and less effectively, on regional development simply to show that it too can spend, even if it makes no sense, even if it has nothing to do with integrated management policies, even if it is removed from the public, and even if it causes both systems to fail. There is a will to centralize.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard: The Gaspé will be a model, things will be done just like in the Gaspé.

Mr. Christian Simard: The former Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, even if she lost her department, should allow me to continue. We listen when she speaks, so I would appreciate it if she would do the same for me. I will be happy to answer her questions in due time.

Government Orders

What matters is not to seek visibility through one small-scale initiative after another. I have worked in the community sector. I have also worked with community organizations, particularly cooperative housing corporations. Applying for every program under the sun and trying to please everyone, one can lose sight of what matters and, in community organizations, what matters is to provide services to the public. An inordinate amount of time could be wasted wondering whether this little federal program with this little goal requirement or that little provincial program with that little goal requirement should be applied for, when the agreement is only for one, two or three years, after which there will be a new fad.

My experience of these applications is that what the federal government requires makes you feel like saying never mind. They are very complicated, take a very long time to fill out and, more often than not, are rejected. That is a huge waste of time. And the public is not well served by that. This is true for community organizations as well as for those working with persons with disabilities and even child care centres and agencies dealing with parental leave. This kind of duplication wastes a great deal of energy. It may give government employees work, but that is not the objective. The objective is to use the allocated money properly.

Initially, this megadepartment with 12,000 employees will basically be responsible for managing seniors programs; 97% of its budget is earmarked for that. Unfortunately, straightforwardness and clarity are not this government's strong suit, and neither is administrative efficiency.

There is something on file about that. According to the Auditor General, the department's data did not provide an accurate picture because certain programs are netted, which makes it difficult to know what exactly the expenditures and the tax revenues were. Netting diminishes actual program expenditures. The Auditor General offered many comments and suggestions to remedy the situation. So, we do not have an accurate picture.

According to the available picture, however, the budget is essentially allocated to seniors. On the other hand, there is always this will to re-create, through this structure, little visibility programs, which I call future social sponsorship scandals. These scandals will not necessarily flow from kickbacks to the Liberal Party, this time around, at least I hope so, nor from small gifts given to the ad companies. The source of those scandals will rather be that money is being spent uselessly, without an integrated policy, through small one-year, two-year or three-year programs which, generally speaking, are set up based on the front pages of newspapers and on the flavour of the month, rather than being based on an integrated approach to fight child poverty.

We know that the federal government is far from the objectives in that area. It will not fight in an integrated fashion against poverty, or social inequities. It will design small, high-visibility programs, which is very costly for society. We cannot afford such duplication.

I am saddened by the creation of these megadepartments of national encroachment, these social propaganda machines. They have no social purpose. The responsibility for social development and related issues related has been handed over, and rightly so, to governments which are closer to the people. These governments have acquitted themselves quite well. I feel that the Quebec

government is really an outstanding example. Over the last 20 or 30 years, it has been a trailblazer.

• (1655)

Every time Quebec does something, it is penalized in a way because it has funded its excellence on its own. Then the Canadian government comes along far later and tries to copy the program nationally. The Government of Quebec says it already has this program and asks for money, for full compensation. This is our money, from our tax dollars. This is nothing laughable. We want nothing more than our own tax dollars. We are not looking for charity.

We are hearing things here that are disdainful and shameful. We hear laughter when we say we want money. What we do not want is intrusion and imposed standards. We do not want just any old money. This is our money. We would not like to have to go begging for it, nor to have to negotiate for 10 years to obtain something so very obvious.

We have a program that does what it is intended for perfectly. For example, Quebec's child care services are a source of pride, and we are known for it elsewhere to some extent. Even within a capitalist framework, our society has been able to help its children, to help women get into the work force, to do things for society, without letting families suffer. Our accomplishments have earned a proud reputation both nationally and internationally.

But how is that, every time we do something like this, we have to do it totally in Quebec and at the expense of the Government of Quebec, without all the needed funding because it has gone to the federal level? When the federal government tries to do something that is not under its jurisdiction, it tries to impose standards on us, when we are the ones who have been innovative and creative, and have set the standard of excellence.

Then we get short-changed. I idolized the Minister of Social Development when I was a boy. He was an excellent goalie. One might say he is not so good at offence, where Quebec is concerned. He ought to be able to defend the federal jurisdictions without going over the blue line. That is out of bounds for him. When he crosses the blue line, when he is ragging the puck, he pulls some plays a hockey referee would not allow. He tells us that we will be compensated with no strings attached and then he says the negotiations are still going on.

How can it take months to negotiate financial compensation with no conditions? That is really something. Perhaps in the new position he is playing, he has decided, or imagines, that slower is better. I do not know. It seems to me that, if this were hockey, we would be in never-ending overtime.

What is very important is to be efficient in operations and to avoid encroaching on provincial jurisdiction and creating programs that nobody needs but are deliberately enticing to make a big impression on people who do not closely follow politics.

Government Orders

Yesterday, motions for the creation of a national cancer strategy and a national handicapped persons strategy were introduced. There already is one in Quebec. Provinces do have those strategies. They have jurisdiction over health. If we corrected the fiscal imbalance and gave resources proportionate to their responsibilities to those in charge of education, health and social services, do you not think that we would serve people better than by federalist chest thumping?

They come up with bite-sized programs that last only a few years, that are ill adapted, poorly conceived and whose only objective is to confuse people and waste energy.

The worst thing is that we are talking about social development. While we are talking, child poverty does not diminish and the services we would like to provide for our population in Quebec remain in the planning stage. All issues of social solidarity, women's rights promotion and the integrated fight against diseases stall. Tobacco control measures do not move ahead either. Why? Because the central government has a pathological need to prove its usefulness when responsibilities rest at the local level, at the provincial, community and day care levels. The federal government has a pathological need to interfere and it does so at the expense of the most disadvantaged.

That is all I have to say about that topic.

• (1700)

What is just as outrageous is that, in establishing this Department of Social Development as a new flagship or tool for intrusion, the government can use money it has taken away from the most disadvantaged for that purpose.

It is safe to say that the money is in Ottawa, while the needs are in the provinces and in Quebec. Sadly, this money was taken out of the EI fund.

My colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain mentioned that this money was taken away by denying full retroactivity to those seniors who were entitled to the guaranteed income supplement, which is directly under the purview of this department. More than \$45 billion was taken out of the EI fund, tens of billions at a time. This money taken away from the most disadvantaged is used to finance programs supposedly designed to help them, help them by duplicating provincial programs with programs that are a bit of a fad, implementing national strategies for the sake of it, and expanding Health Canada, which controls hardly any hospitals except in Aboriginal communities. So, what does the government do? It generates revenues on the backs of the most disadvantaged.

In my field, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has generated a \$3.5 billion surplus, while 1.7 million households in Canada and Quebec are continuing to pay too much for bad housing. This means that this surplus has been created by not meeting needs. In this instance, the government had every opportunity to meet these needs, but did not. The Bloc Québécois even had to introduce a private member's bill to try to remedy the situation. I hope that Bill C-333 will have the support of the House. The government has been generating surpluses on the backs of the most disadvantaged. It dreams up very expensive departments and inefficient programs, and then comes out with its little announcements.

There is something immoral here. Discipline and morality seem to be lacking. There is a lack of discipline in management because of all the duplication, and there is a lack of morality when you knowingly take social measures that are inefficient, redundant and outside your jurisdiction. All of that raises the level of cynicism towards politics: What are these guys doing in Ottawa? Are they supposed to help people? Are they supposed to manage the public finances efficiently? Are they supposed to support local communities and provinces in their main roles? Or is it just bluffing, political one-upmanship, and flag waving? Are they just looking for personal political capital or grand ministerial tours, a bit like the recent one, when they spent \$22 billion in ten days not for good reasons based on principles, but because they feared an election?

The Prime Minister said as much to the business community. This was not a matter of principle but of cold calculation. They decided to invest this money or promise to invest it. There were some cases of recycling. Just about the only thing that is green with this government is its constant recycling of programs. That is the kind of thing they do.

Out of cold calculations, this increasingly centralist government creates structures, departments, programs and envelopes to the point where we cannot understand anything anymore.

I was listening to a journalist who said Parliament Hill felt like Alice in Wonderland. I might change the word "Wonderland", but we are truly living in the surreal. Just look at the government's social programs or the CMHC. Although on the Internet the programs might look wonderful, often, in reality, they are no longer being funded. All the money has been allocated. The government creates programs with catchy titles using a piecemeal approach, but they never last long and are never integrated with the responsibilities of Quebec and the provinces, never in support of those working in the field. There are people in our ridings who tell us that when it comes to problems with social assistance or employment insurance, the government is the government.

They do not come asking for a pan-Canadian program, but they come asking for help for their children, for jobs to be created or the EI program to be fixed. We tell them our hands are tied because the Canadian government is withholding the money. The government announces artificial programs and creates departments instead of supporting the work of the provinces. That is what we are forced to tell our constituents, who are not asking for a pan-Canadian child care system, but for services from their government.

• (1705)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the presentation by the member for Beauport—Limoilou, and to the speeches by the members for Mégantic—L'Érable and Lévis—Bellechasse, all very strong and very eloquent. But enough flattery; now for the criticism.

Government Orders

I was totally surprised and stunned to see this condemnation of the budget and of the NDP amendment by the member for Beauport—Limoilou. He said that defending the interests of Quebecers is indeed defending the interests of the Quebec government. However, one has to wonder which government he is referring to. Is it the Charest government, which made cuts to education, housing and social programs in Quebec? Certainly not. This is not the government that he is defending.

So, he attacked the NDP amendment. We happen to know that there is an increasing number of Quebecers who are living in poverty, who are having a hard time getting an education, and who are getting more concerned about the environment. All this is largely due to the cuts made by the Charest government and to the federal government's inaction.

It is for all these reasons that the NDP has proposed amendments that will bring changes, that will finally provide funding for housing which has been going through a crisis for more than a decade. The Liberal government did not do anything at the federal level and, as we know all too well, it is not doing anything at all in Quebec.

As regards the environment and post-secondary education, we need changes and we need more funding and investments. This is why I really cannot understand the Bloc Québécois' opposition to the NDP amendment. The purpose of this amendment is precisely to provide assistance to these sectors. Quebecers have been waiting for this for years. On the one hand the Bloc Québécois opposes this amendment, while on the other hand it agrees to join the Conservatives to undertake the tax reduction process for big business.

Big business got \$4.6 billion. We are well aware that big corporations are making record profits in Canada. Yet, the Bloc Québécois is teaming up with the Conservatives to block the changes that are proposed by the NDP and that would reduce these tax reductions, because big business does not need them. That would mean that, at last, the money would go to housing, post-secondary education and the environment.

I am stunned by the Bloc's position, and I am surprised by the attacks of the member for Beauport—Limoilou regarding this measure, which offsets the cuts and the inaction of the federal Liberal government, and the cuts made by the Charest government in Quebec.

I am asking the member: How can he reconcile these contradictions, which, in my opinion, are very serious?

• (1710)

Mr. Christian Simard: Madam Speaker, I will seize this opportunity. I do not know how the NDP member can explain to the unemployed that he has abandoned them. I do not know either how he can think that the fiscal imbalance is of no importance when it is directly responsible for poverty. It also creates shortfalls in the health system. In fact, it prevents the provinces from having an integrated social system.

The NDP had the opportunity to do it. Negotiations took place between the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP on some budgetary amendments. The NDP chose to go its own way, to support a corrupt government and to give it some sort of political

virginity based on future promises. It is a choice that this party made and people will judge it according to this choice.

We cannot say—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Christian Simard: I think that this is something that we have to examine. The NDP member will explain to the unemployed and to his colleague from Acadie—Bathurst how these sweet deals work, these arrangements made with a government that never paid any attention to social programs while it had the means to do something, in the housing area for example, given the huge surplus.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, first I congratulate my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his fine speech.

As the member for Halifax did earlier, I will help my NDP colleague to move forward a little. Basically, the only problem is that Quebec has set the standard. Then, the federal government wants to impose standards to us, and the NDP is the champion of standards. This is why it will never work between the NDP and Quebec. It is for this same reason that Canada has a problem. For us, the big problem is being part of Canada. Why? Because no one ever understands us. We see to our development ourselves. The government of Quebecers is the National Assembly of Quebec, not the federal government.

I would like to ask my colleague this question. How can he explain that, in child care, for example, the federal government is deciding once again not to give the money to Quebec and to impose standards?

Mr. Christian Simard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I have already had this debate with environmental organizations protesting on Parliament Hill. Generally, they supported the NDP, even with regard to legislation on environmental protection. Apparently, Ottawa knows best. How can we change this mindset? I have heard some horrible stories. For example, people told me that, since Ottawa is far away, it was far from the lobbies and, therefore, insensitive to the business lobby. They thought that, as a result, the federal government would be more objective than the provincial governments when it came to adopting national standards, since it was not involved in business. To be fair, this was before the sponsorship scandal.

If it was not so sad it would be funny. But it is sad, because imposing national standards and having endless discussions in order to impose its dictates diverts funds from those who are able to provide public services.

Certain things must be fixed. The Charest government in Quebec has renewed the housing program. Pressure is being exerted. We are holding debates and ensuring integrated policies. We do not need our big brother in Ottawa, who usually leans far to the right, as we know.

Government Orders

The budget, otherwise known as Bill C-43, which we also oppose, provides \$13 billion for national defence and nothing for social housing. Of course, the federal government has managed to postpone its own end, thanks to a party that unfortunately traded its morals and integrity for promises and commitments that respect neither the provinces nor the unemployed. Unfortunately, the public will punish that party for having lent or tried to lend credibility to a government that had none.

• (1715)

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague and I learned a lot from him, even though I was familiar with a number of things he was talking about. He confirmed what I already knew.

One thing I notice about this government, and that I find totally absurd, is that, in my personal opinion, it is paying off the national debt on the backs of the poorest in society.

For example, the government took \$47 billion from the employment insurance fund. Over the past 11 years, it has deprived the poorest of our seniors of \$3.2 billion. In addition, as my colleague already mentioned, there is a \$3 billion surplus in social housing that has not been used. There is no point in adding to the budget since it is not being spent. The government is paying off the debt on the backs of the poor.

I want my colleague to indicate whether I have truly grasped the meaning of his speech.

Mr. Christian Simard: Madam Speaker, when we say that the money is in Ottawa, that the needs are in Quebec and that the money is being misspent, we should specify that the money is being mismanaged in Ottawa. We have seen it. These surpluses do not help in the effective management of public funds.

There is a great temptation to interfere, to create a homogeneous country instead of individual communities. A nation is being held back because of the state and its programs. That may in fact be the point of the operation. We denounce the fact that the government is spending the money of the least fortunate just to stifle a people.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Augustine): The division on the motion is deferred.

* * *

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-26, An Act to establish the Canada Border Services Agency, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There is one motion in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-26.

Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

• (1720)

MOTION IN AMENDMENT

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved:

That Bill C-26, in Clause 144, be amended by replacing line 13 on page 62 with the following

“(b) Schedule IV to the Financial Adminis-”

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a technical error was recently discovered in Bill C-26, an act to establish the Canada Border Services Agency. The error was located in the coordinating amendments in subparagraph 144(4)(b).

In subparagraph 144(4)(b) of Bill C-26, the Canada Border Services Agency was added to schedule V in error. The Canada Border Services Agency should have been added to schedule IV, the list of organizations considered to be part of a core public service for which Treasury Board is the employer.

The Public Service Modernization Act adds new schedules to the Financial Administration Act indicating which departments and agencies have the authorities of separate employers, schedule V and which remain under the auspices of the Treasury Board, schedule IV. The PSMA, or Public Service Modernization Act, comes into force later this year.

[*Translation*]

The amendment will have no effect on the main part of the bill, nor will it have an effect on Bill C-26, until the entry into force of the Public Service Modernization Act. If this mistake is not corrected, the Canada Border Services Agency will be deemed to be a separate employer when the Public Service Modernization Act comes into force.

[English]

This was never the intent, as the orders in council creating the CBSA in December 2003 clearly established CBSA as an organization under which Treasury Board is the main employer, nor was it the intent of the subcommittee on public safety and emergency preparedness which reviewed this legislation.

Treasury Board does the collective bargaining and sets the terms and conditions of employment for the core public service currently including the Canada Border Services Agency and the policy intent behind Bill C-26 is for that relationship to continue.

For these reasons, I believe that should you seek it, Mr. Speaker, you would find unanimous consent in the House to adopt this amendment and proceed immediately to third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion No. 1 agreed to)

Hon. Aileen Carroll (for the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in with a further amendment.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1725)

Hon. Aileen Carroll moved that Bill C-26, An Act to establish the Canada Border Services Agency, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the short time I have before the bells ring, I would like to tantalize the House with a few remarks, so that members will come back tomorrow and hear the conclusion. I will just have a chance to get members interested in this very important topic.

I am proud to rise in the House today to promote Bill C-26, an act to establish the Canada Border Services Agency. I would like to begin my remarks with a word of appreciation for the chair and members of the subcommittee on public safety and national security.

Recently the subcommittee held in-depth discussions on this very important piece of legislation, discussions that have enriched our understanding of issues pertaining to border services and integrity.

[Translation]

Let me begin with a brief description of the Canada Border Services Agency. It is part of the portfolio of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. Its role is to manage the country's borders by enforcing some 90 domestic laws and regulations, as well as international agreements governing trade and tourism.

Upon their arrival in Canada, whether by air, sea or land, people must report to a port of entry of the Canada Border Services Agency and declare any goods. Employing a workforce of some 11,500 civil servants, the Agency is present in 100,369 service points throughout

Routine proceedings

Canada and in 39 locations abroad. In addition, some particularly busy offices are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[English]

I would like to speak briefly about some widely held but spurious notions surrounding the integrity and security of Canada's borders. I would like to recount for my hon. colleagues the work being done on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border to ensure we are all safer. I know this will surprise members, but some myths do exist.

Take for example the myth that the 9/11 hijackers had entered the United States illegally from Canada. Ultimately, the former U.S. attorney general admitted himself at a press conference in December 2001:

—the stubborn facts are that these individuals did not come to the United States through Canada.

The U.S. justice department confirmed a year later in *The Washington Times* that all 19 hijackers had legally entered the U.S. on tourist or student visas.

The day America's sense of security collapsed cannot easily be forgotten, so it will not surprise anyone in this House that our American neighbours are still asking themselves if they are any safer. What the scores of experts and officials agree on is that as safe as we have become, we still have much farther to go and I look forward to discussing it in more detail tomorrow.

• (1730)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5.30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 31, 2005, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1750)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from May 31 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier this day, the previous question is deemed carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the main motion.

[English]

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.

Orders of the Day

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it being adopted on division?

Some hon. members: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: Adopted on division.

(Motion agreed to)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1755)

[*English*]

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

ONTARIO FISHERY REGULATIONS, 1989

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Government Business No. 15.

• (1800)

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

(*Division No. 100*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Angus	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Beaumier
Bélanger	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brison	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carr	Carrier
Carroll	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Christopherson	Clavet
Cleary	Comartin
Comuzzi	Côté
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin

Dryden	Easter
Emerson	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Galloway	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kotto	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lastewka
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Loubier
MacAulay	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
Owen	Pacetti
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Powers	Proulx
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stoffer	Stronach
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Torsney	Tonks
Valeri	Ur
Vincent	Valley
Wappel	Volpe
Wilfert	Wasylcyia-Leis
Zed— 189	Wrzesnewskij

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Benoit
Breitkreuz
Carrie
Casson
Cummins
Devolin
Duncan
Finley
Fletcher
Gallant
Gouk
Hanger
Harrison

Government Orders

Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Johnston	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Penson
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
Stinson	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Loan	Vellacott
Warawa	Watson
White	Williams
Yelich — 89	

PAIRED

Members

Barnes	Duceppe
Efford	Lemay
McLellan	Perron
Sauvageau	Scott— 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, an act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-22.

• (1810)

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

(*Division No. 101*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Batters
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua

Bezan	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Cuzner
Day	DeVillers
Devolin	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Galloway	Godbout
Godfrey	Goodale
Goodyear	Graham
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hanger	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Johnston
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Mark	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Mathews	McCallum
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Mitchell
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Owen
Pacetti	Pallister
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Poillievre
Powers	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rajotte	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Saada	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Sgro
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stinson
Stronach	Szabo

Private Members' Business

Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Torsney	Trost
Tweed	Ur
Valeri	Valley
Van Loan	Vellacott
Volpe	Wappel
Warawa	Watson
White	Wilfert
Williams	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Zed- — 210

NAYS

Members

André	Angus
Asselin	Bachand
Bellavance	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Boire
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boulianne	Bourgeois
Broadbent	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrier
Christopherson	Clavet
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Faillie	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Guay
Guimond	Julian
Kotto	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée	Layton
Lessard	Lévesque
Loubier	Marceau
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard	Roy
Siksay	Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
St-Hilaire	Stoffer
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thompson (Wild Rose)	
Vincent	Wasylcia-Leis- — 68

PAIRED

Members

Barnes	Duceppe
Efford	Lemay
McLellan	Perron
Sauvageau	Scott- — 8

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1815)

[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-261, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (voter and candidate age), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today as the youngest member of Parliament in Canada to discuss the matters before us related to the proposal to lower the voting age in Canada. There are three key messages that I want to attribute to this debate on how I think we can reinvigorate the interests of young people in our democratic process.

To begin, I would like to make some overall observations about the bill before the House that calls on the reduction of the voting age to 16.

First, I can understand the frustration that some young people might feel with the possibility that they might not be allowed to vote. A federal election could arrive before they reach the age of majority. I recall that in 1997 I turned 18 the day after the election. I missed the opportunity to vote by one day, and remember how deeply frustrated I was at that time.

With age and a few grey hairs along the way, I have come to learn a few things and to believe that along with rights come responsibilities. Certain responsibilities are afforded to our young people at the age of majority. The responsibility to work and pay taxes usually arrives around the age of 18. Until that age, most citizens of our country have the vast majority of things provided for them. The values such as thrift, responsibility and hard work are most exemplified in the years that follow, having reached the age of majority.

Why is this important to the overall discussion before us? We want our voters who choose the government to have all those values I just described. It is very difficult for that to happen until young people have reached the age of majority. As I try to balance rights with responsibilities, I have come to believe that the age of majority is a good age at which to give voting rights to our young people.

That being said, I encourage young people from all across the country to do what many in this Conservative caucus did in their teenage years, which is to join a political party, become politically active and engage not only at a partisan level but in issues that matter most to them. As a young person and as the youngest member of Parliament in Canada, I proudly say that I do not support reducing the voting age but rather increasing political involvement on other levels among young people.

I also will make note that I am part of the youngest caucus in the history of Canada on the Conservative side. We have 20 members of Parliament under the age of 40. We have five members of Parliament 30 years of age and under. When I look across the way, what do I see? I see another generation. I see yesteryear. I see yesterday's government. We on this side of the House see tomorrow. We see the future and I proud to be part of that future.

Let me say a few other things that might interest young people and get them involved in the democratic process.

One issue that concerns young people and young families in general is the fact that there is a minister on that side of the House who would take away their right to choose how to raise their own children, who would impose upon them the costs of an institutional day care bureaucracy that they must pay for even if they do not want to use it. This \$10 billion day care bureaucracy will affect young people more than anyone and will discourage them from partaking in the democratic process because of the cynical nature that underlies it.

Young people want choice. They want a party that will put child care dollars directly into their pockets, allowing them to decide how to raise their own children. That is a hopeful policy. That is a policy of the future. That is something young people in our party could really get behind, and we should applaud that.

● (1820)

My hon. colleagues around me should never feel badly about interrupting my remarks with their applause. However, I will move on to something else that deals with involving young people in the democratic process.

When young people turn on the television and they see that their government has spent their tax dollars to pay ten months of rent for an empty building, two months without even a signed lease, to a company that just happens to be run by a Liberal senator, that kind of cynical politics, that kind of Liberal corruption, turns our young people off the political process.

I suggest that a second solution for involving young people would be to put an end to Liberal corruption, to Liberal theft and to Liberal bribery. If the government wants to get its priorities straight in a way that would truly inspire our young, instead of spending millions on rent for an empty building, it would give the Queensway Carleton Hospital control of its own land. Imagine how people in west end Ottawa, particularly young people, would view such an act of integrity. They would be surprised but also honoured to see their government do the right thing and allow a community hospital, which serves my constituency, to have control over its own land. It would no longer pay rent to a federal bureaucracy. All the revenues it could generate on that land would go back to patient care and innovation. That would truly inspire young people in my riding and get them interested in the democratic process.

I have mentioned three very practical examples: giving child care dollars to parents; ending rent payments for empty buildings; and giving a community hospital control of its own land. Those are three altruistic acts the government could undertake that would truly inspire the nation's young and make all of us proud to serve and to be in this place.

The final suggestion I will make is that all political parties, if they want to attract young people into the democratic process, should do what the Conservative Party has done, which is to put its money where its mouth is and act out that goal rather than just talk about it.

When young people turn on a television and they see only people of a generation distant from their own, they begin to believe that politics is not for them, that politics is for somebody else, that it is for another generation, that they will start to get interested in it in

Private Members' Business

about 30 or 40 years. When they start to see people their own age who speak their language and talk in terms that they can appreciate, they would get interested in the democratic process.

That is why I will reiterate my congratulations to our leader and his effort in a very democratic way to involve young people in the leadership of the party as opposed to sidelining them in a youth wing which makes them second class citizens.

I look around this place today and I see a number of young people in this chamber. They are here because they were given a chance to be equals. They were not set aside to be second class citizens in a third tier sandbox as other political parties have made them. We have 20 members of Parliament under the age of 40 in this caucus. We have five members of Parliament who are 30 and under. The Conservatives have the youngest caucus in the history of the country, and the best I am proud to say.

I will conclude on a hopeful note that we in this caucus will continue to build policies that inspire the next generation, that we will work toward a future free of Liberal corruption and one that is dedicated to the interests and the values of the next generation of entrepreneurial young Canadians, of which I consider myself a proud member.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all I have heard is empty rhetoric with no basis in reality. Boasting about having a caucus comprised for the most part of young people is not enough to get young people more interested in politics. I was elected to this place at age 28. I belonged to the statistical category of youth. But I never regarded that mere fact as an opportunity to get young people more interested in politics.

In *Le Cid*, Corneille has his hero say:

Young I may be, but to those well bred
Worth is not measured by age.

I think that this goes to the heart and core of our debate today on Bill C-261, to lower the voting age to 16.

I have heard arguments put forward to oppose this bill similar to those heard when considering lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, the same kind of slightly paternalistic argument suggesting that young people are cynical, not interested and not mature enough to make an informed decision. I do not believe a word of that. I will explain why I believe it would be appropriate to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote.

Before going any further, I would like to thank our colleague from Ajax—Pickering and commend his initiative. It was his idea to bring the issue of lowering the voting age to 16 back on the floor of the House. The issue was debated in this place previously. Two similar bills or motions have been put before this House by members of the New Democratic Party, including our colleague from Churchill.

Private Members' Business

The member for Ajax—Pickering therefore took up the fight again with this initiative, but had the brilliant idea of making it non partisan. He wanted a multi-party initiative. So he involved a number of colleagues from the various parties: the member for Newmarket—Aurora, a Conservative member until the events we know about occurred; the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, of the New Democratic Party, and myself, of the Bloc Québécois. Many members from all the political parties joined us. I want to recognize and congratulate our colleague for Ajax—Pickering for his highly honourable initiative.

As parliamentarians, we must be deeply concerned about voter turnout, which is tending to become, as in most western countries, increasingly anemic, election after election, to the extent that the latest voter turnout, in the June 28, 2004, election was among the lowest in Canadian history.

In view of this disturbing situation, we must take vigorous measures to correct the situation. They include lowering the voting age to 16. I will explain a little further on why such a measure could have a positive effect on the outcome of things.

Needless to say, the trend will not be reversed by the measure to lower the voting age to 16. The government and public authorities have to establish a series of measures to create an interest in politics. They will have to cultivate an interest among the very young in public life and bring the provincial and territorial governments in on it. Civic education, political and history courses will have to be introduced very early in the schools.

That said, why should we lower the voting age to 16?

● (1830)

There is a whole series of justifications of a philosophical nature that have to be brought into it. For example, in Quebec and most provinces, the legal working age is 16 years. Consequently, that is the age at which young people can be required to pay taxes. In keeping with the principle of no taxation without representation, it seems normal to us they would also be able to help choose the people in government who will be involved in administering the tax dollars their work provides.

People can drive when they turn 16, and that activity has far greater potential consequences than just entering a polling booth and performing one's duty as a citizen by voting.

As soon as young people turn 17, they can enlist in the armed forces, and potentially serve in theatres of operations at risk of their lives. It seems to us therefore—and this is an argument I had thought our Conservative friends would support—that, as we have always thought, a young person prepared to risk his life for his country should be given the right to choose those who will control the destiny of his country.

There are a number of purely practical considerations as well. Studies have shown that the earlier a young person gets involved in elections, the more likely he is to continue to exercise his franchise throughout his life. This is the reasoning behind reducing the voting age to 16. If a young person develops the habit of casting his ballot early in life, it can be presumed that he will continue throughout his life to be a citizen actively involved in public life, even if it is only by casting his vote.

It has been found that young people not allowed to do so are likely to drop out. This means a very long period of opting out of the electoral process. This is the explanation for the poor showing among 18 to 25 year-olds. We have not managed to attract their attention and give them a taste for getting involved. We have not got them interested.

As my colleague from Ajax—Pickering was wont to say—and rightly so, in my opinion—the major corporations have clearly understood that to create consumer habits you need to start young. Nike, McDonald's and the like focus on youth. Why not use the same approach to create positive habits of civic duty?

Political parties understood that young people were mature enough, responsible enough and interested enough to take part in public debate. Most political parties in Canada accept members as young as 14 or 16.

We have this contradiction where a young person can participate in the selection of the person who could eventually become prime minister of the country but where that same young person is not allowed to choose his or her member of Parliament at the riding level. We must end that contradictory situation.

We often hear that young people are not interested in politics. That is true. They are more or less interested and they do not know if or for whom they would vote if they had the right to vote. In fact, they do not feel they have to choose because we do not even care to ask for their opinion. When asked if they would vote for the Conservatives, the Liberals, the New Democrats or the Bloc, they do not know. However, when asked if they have an opinion on the environment, Kyoto, globalization or the war in Iraq, they do have very clear opinions. It so happens that political parties are the vehicles of those opinions. When we make them realize that, the young recognize that in the end, they have a great deal of interest in politics.

I will conclude by saying that in 1991, in its report *Reforming Electoral Democracy*, the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing concluded that Parliament should review the question regularly. The time has now come. On March 27, 2004, the chief electoral officer himself declared that lowering the voting age to 16 had some benefits. We could not say that our chief electoral officer does not have an informed opinion on the issue.

● (1835)

I would have liked, and I would still like, to see the House adopt the bill.

[*English*]

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate once again the issue of lowering the voting age to 16.

I want to start off by acknowledging the comments by my colleague from the Bloc who talked about the paradox of how someone, and I believe the age is 14 years in most political parties in the country, can vote for their party leader. This includes, unless things have changed in the last couple years, the Conservative Party. There are people who can vote for their party leader who—although I think it is very doubtful we are going to see this with the Conservative Party—could become the prime minister and those people do not have the right to vote for that person within a normal federal election. It is a paradox. It is absolutely hypocritical.

I was taken aback by the comments made by the Conservative member that somehow being younger is better, as if everyone else does not count. That is not how I look at it. I look at it as representation within the House of as many as possible, recognizing the experience and wisdom that comes from every age group. His comments came across as very derogatory, that somehow anyone who is of another generation does not count.

That is not what I want to see in the House. That is not why I believe that young people should be given the opportunity to vote. They should be given the opportunity because I have seen over the course of time the intelligence that they offer, the differing opinions and different perspectives that they offer. As I met with them in high schools and throughout my riding, I grew more and more committed to the fact that they should be given the opportunity to vote, not because somehow I thought all those older people did not have any respectable qualities, or any good qualities or any great options for the country. That was not it.

I certainly got a very uncomfortable feeling from the Conservative member.

It is important that we give the representation to as wide an age group as possible within the House.

As I indicated, I have seen a great response from young people in the riding. We can always debate about whether the age should be 14, 16 or 17. Generally we tie it to different things that happen in the lives of individuals.

I mentioned how at age 14 most individuals can vote within their parties for their leader. I have listened over the years to comments that 10 year olds should be moved up to adult court. Again, it came from the Reform-Alliance and I think probably some of it has hung over to the Conservatives. In all reality there were actually comments that 10 year olds should be moved up to adult court. Where is the hypocrisy of moving a 10 year old up to adult court but a 16 year old should not be able to vote in an election?

Even if we went beyond that, we know that 16 year olds can be moved up to adult court. If we expect that they are responsible for their actions at 16, enough that they can be moved up to adult court for a particular crime, certainly we should acknowledge they should have the right to vote in an election.

A number of 15, 16 and 17 year old men went to war in the second world war. They laid their lives on the line for this country and did not have the right to vote. How many 14, 15 and 16 year olds are working adding additional income for their families? It is a rough time for a lot of people on minimum wage, so there are family members who are working.

Private Members' Business

It is not because of our age that we pay income tax. It is when we reach a certain level of income that we pay income tax. One can be 14 and be paying income tax, but at 14 one cannot vote municipally, provincially or federally. It is time that changed.

Young people have access to more information now than ever before. They are more knowledgeable about things happening throughout the world. We need to recognize that and give them the opportunity to vote.

I want to emphasize the comments by my colleague from the Bloc about how businesses and corporations know that they have to target young people if they want to get them hooked into doing something.

● (1840)

We have accepted that we can hook them in for buying certain products, eating certain foods, and smoking and drinking, but somehow it is wrong for us to suggest that they get involved in the political process and vote at that age. It is an excellent time. They are in their senior years in school.

I do not know about the other provinces, but in the province of Manitoba grade nine has a basic component of the curriculum in which the students study governments. I often get called into the schools to speak to the students. I know it is going to shock members, but I really try not to be partisan and I really make an effort to build an understanding. I am amazed at the questions that come from the students.

An hon. member: Not partisan?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: No partisanship, I am telling members. I was a school trustee and I know that if someone goes into a school and starts getting partisan, that person will not be back there. It just will not happen.

I stand firm on the commitment that I do not get partisan, but I can say that I have been in the schools in my riding and have entered into discussions on the trade agreements and how they affect the farm situation. We have had discussions about the BSE crisis. That was with grade 9 and grade 10 students. There are a lot of adults in this country who do not have the same type of knowledge that I was experiencing in those classrooms and we still give them the right to vote. And well we should. We expect that individuals take time to learn about what they are going to be voting on and to understand the different parties.

I think we have reached that fork in the road where we make a decision as a country to go a bit further, to take that leap and to put the trust in the young people in our country. I think that time is now.

I was involved in this in the last Parliament. I had a private member's bill on this. I remember having discussions with one of the former Conservative's daughters, Catherine Clark. I think it was with one of my colleagues from the Conservatives, the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, I believe, that I had discussions about the age group. We acknowledged some of the dynamics of what was allowed within parties at age 14, but somehow people still say we should not allow 16 year olds to vote. I think we have a lot of hypocrisy involved in this and we need to go beyond that.

Private Members' Business

I also want to make a point of mentioning that within the first nations communities we have a situation: not a lot of people go out and vote. Many Canadians do not realize that aboriginal people in Canada, certainly first nations, did not have the right to vote until much later than everyone else. Sometimes there is criticism that if they do not want to get out and vote it is their own fault, but again, let us recognize that sometimes people have to get into the habit of voting. They need to see that voting works and they need to be able to see change.

First nations people have not been given the same length of time to get into that process, so I think it is crucially important in the first nations communities that 16 year olds have the opportunity to get involved in the election process. They will be in their schools and they can take the time to learn about the different political parties and the different policies of those parties. That can be done in a non-partisan way. We can get the information out there and then they can make a decision and become involved in the electoral process.

A number of first nations communities elect junior chiefs and councils. That is the area of government they see firsthand, the chiefs and councils in their communities. A number of those communities have junior chiefs and councils who try to be actively involved in how their communities work.

If those young people are taking the time to see themselves as junior chiefs and councils, I also think they would take the time to see themselves involved in the whole political process within the country. From the perspective of encouraging first nations and aboriginal youth to become part of the electoral process, I also think it is crucially important.

I have just a few minutes left. I want to thank my colleague from Ajax—Pickering and my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for pursuing this issue in this Parliament. I certainly support this motion. I would encourage everyone else to take that extra strong leap and support young people having the opportunity to vote, because they have shown that they are active participants in Canada. We should give them the opportunity to be actively involved politically.

• (1845)

Mr. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-261, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act. The purpose of the bill is to reduce the voting age in Canada for federal elections from 18 to 16.

I want to be crystal clear from the beginning. I support the premise of the bill and I think it is a sound bill.

I support the bill on the premise that I believe reducing the voting age to 16 would increase youth involvement in the political process and, as a result, would increase voter turnout in Canada.

The youth in Canada represent the future of our country. They are the foundation upon which our country will be built. Therefore, I believe it is vital that they are involved in the political process from the time they are receiving education, especially at the high school level.

Over the past few months I have visited various high schools in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. I have had many

discussions with students on a whole host of issues, including some issues brought forth by the members in terms of BMD, Kyoto, foreign affairs, and even human rights. There is a sound interest when it comes to that area as well.

I have come to the realization and understanding that they have a sound grasp of current affairs and, more important, the political process, the political structure and the political parties.

At present the voting age stands at 18, but with elections occurring every four years on average, it is likely that many of the young adults I have talked about will not have an opportunity to vote until the age of 21 or 22.

An example was brought forth today in the House. If somebody who wants to vote has just turned 18 but has just missed the election and there is a majority government—I know that things are a bit different now—he or she will not get an opportunity to vote until the age of 22 or 23. I do not think that is a fair opportunity. It is of major concern to me.

They should have the right to vote. It can be argued that voting is like a habit. Like many other things, it is a habit that needs to be developed at a very young age. If we were to encourage youth to get involved at a very young age, especially at the age of 16 or 17, it would really help to address the issue of major concern, which is the democratic deficit and the fact that we want to get more people engaged. What I am supporting today is the notion that starting to vote at a younger age will help the youth in our country develop better voting habits at a very young age.

At the age of 16, many Canadians are still studying in secondary school or high school. At school they are provided a platform on which to discuss the issues and debate the policies. I believe that above and beyond that they will receive a fair amount of encouragement from their teachers, from the local councils and from parents to go out and vote. I think it is very important to acknowledge that as well.

Therefore, they will become more aware of their government and current events. They will feel more involved with the process and will be more interested, because they will have a meaningful and sound voice and they will feel like they have contributed. I believe that voting will empower our youth at a younger age and really develop the sound voting habits that I have addressed before.

In my riding, approximately 4% of individuals are 16 or 17 years old. That age group constitutes about 4% of my riding, as I have stated, and approximately 3.4% of the eligible voters across this country of ours.

Considering that in the last federal election the voter turnout was at 60.9%, I believe something needs to be done in order to change that low voter turnout. If we target the youth in our country, that 4% who are 16 and 17 years old, with the expectation that we deal with them and encourage them to get involved in the political process, I truly do believe that we can increase the turnout of voters in both the short term and the long term.

At present, we allow a 16 year old to drop out of high school, as has been stated. A 17 year old Canadian is allowed to join the Canadian Forces and die to protect our country. I think it is fairly intriguing that they are not able to vote. A very interesting point was brought forth by my Bloc colleague, who indicated that they can technically pay taxes and they should have representation at that age as well. That too is a very important theme to acknowledge. It is very important to acknowledge that they need to have the opportunity to vote.

It would not be the first time in our history that we have reformed our country's voting laws. I think the shift to reduce the voting age from 18 to 16 really reflects the shifting dynamic in our society. Times have changed. I do not need to state that, but it is important to acknowledge it. Access to information is readily available. The youth know and understand the issues. They have the ability to gain insight to the issues more easily. By using the Internet and so forth, they can access information more readily now than youth could in the past.

• (1850)

There are many instances of major electoral reform. For example, in 1918 women acquired or were given the right to vote. In 1950 the Inuit were included. In 1960 the first nations people living on reserves received the right to vote.

Then, in 1970, the voting age was changed from 21 to 18. The issues being brought forth by my colleagues on the other side of the House were as prevalent then as they are today. I still believe that even though there was all that resistance it was a move that benefited many Canadians and engaged Canadians from a very young age to get involved in the political process.

This change would not be a radical change, as some have argued. There are partisan concerns, but I do not believe partisanship should drive politics or policy when we sit in the House. I know there are concerns that the younger voters will tend not to vote for certain parties. That should not be the issue. The issue has to do with encouraging youth to get involved.

Since I have become a member of Parliament I have continuously worked with the youth in our country, with the intent of engaging them in the political process. I have attended many events, the majority of them organized by the youth themselves. I have hosted many meetings in my riding and I have listened to their concerns.

The overwhelming response that I receive from youth, especially the youth of Mississauga—Brampton South, is that they feel disconnected and disengaged from the political process. They feel that politicians do not really care about them or listen to their needs and concerns. I think that today would be a prime example of showing that we do care and that we do value their opinions.

Part of the problem is that 16 and 17 year old voters understand the issues and they feel that if they were able to vote then those issues or concerns would be a priority for the government. Because they are unable to vote, they are very disenchanting. I believe this must change.

I am supporting this bill because I believe it will increase voter turnout. It will engage more youth to get involved in the political

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process. In addition, it will allow us as members of Parliament to really address some of their concerns.

I think we have a very clear choice to make today. As I have indicated, we witnessed in 2004 a very low voter turnout, where 60.9% of the voters actually came out. We need to do something. It is a major concern. Low voter turnout is unacceptable. It is not the kind of country we want to build. It is not the type of democracy we want to build.

The democratic deficit we talked about is a major issue, so I believe that changing the voting age from 18 to 16 is the right thing to do. It is a sound step toward addressing the democratic deficit. I hope I can count on the support of many of my colleagues for this as well.

• (1855)

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill C-261 brought forward by the member for Ajax—Pickering which would lower the voting age from 18 to 16.

In the debate today we heard a great deal of talk from the other parties, not the Conservative Party, about getting young people involved in politics. In the Conservative Party we have young people involved in politics. We have young people in Parliament and in every position in riding associations, from boards of directors through to riding presidents and national executive members.

On the last national executive we had three members under the age of 20. I can say that in the other parties that was not the case. The other parties see fit to have affirmative action type programs for youth but we believe that all members of our party are equal and they have succeeded by being equal.

The Conservative Party has the youngest caucus in the history of Canada. We have 20 members under the age of 40; fully 20% of our caucus under the age of 40. We have the member for Nepean—Carleton, the youngest member of Parliament in Canada at 25 years of age, who gave an address earlier in this debate. He has done an outstanding job as a member of Parliament. His career prior to that was as a small business owner. He is an educated young fellow and a guy who has done a heck of a job here.

We also have the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle who was elected at 25 years of age and who also had a career in the private sector. He is educated, ran for a nomination as an equal member with everybody, won his nomination and was elected to Parliament.

I was involved in academia for quite some time. I completed university degrees in political science, Canadian history and in law. I worked as a political staffer. I worked in the forestry industry in northern Saskatchewan and served in the Canadian Forces. I ran for my nomination on the same basis as everybody else, won my nomination and was elected to Parliament.

We keep hearing from the other side about how they would like to get young people involved in politics but I look across the way at the Liberal Party and the NDP and I see no young MPs. They do have a few members over there who are young at heart, I will give them that, but in terms of age they cannot match the Conservative Party for the youth of our caucus.

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We have other members. The member from Coquitlam was elected at the age of 24. He is now in his second term and is a senior critic. He has done an excellent job for his constituents. He was the youngest member in the last Parliament. We have a number of members, now in their third terms, who were elected in their mid-20s in the 1997 election. We have the member for Edmonton—Strathcona who was elected at the age of 25, was re-elected twice and who has done an excellent job as an MP.

We have the member for Calgary West who also was elected at 25. He is now in his third term and has done an excellent job as an MP. The member for Calgary Southeast was elected at 27 and is now in his third term. He is a caucus officer in the Conservative Party and a senior critic and, like many of these other young people, has done an excellent job.

Where are the young people opposite? They talk about having young people involved yet where are they? They are not in Parliament.

The other parties see fit to segregate their young people. They put them into a sandbox, into a youth wing, and tell them to go play in the youth wing, play in the sandbox with other young people and then tell them to come back when they are 35. That is not the attitude we have in the Conservative Party.

In the Conservative Party we tell young people to run for a nomination or for the national executive at age 20 or 25. If young people were to tell a senior member of the other parties that they were thinking of running, the answer would be that they should first run for a VP membership of a youth wing and then come back to see them when they are 35.

• (1900)

If anyone wonders why we have young MPs, that is the reason. We have a culture in this party of giving young people real responsibility and real opportunity. It does not exist in that party.

I am not supporting Bill C-261. We have talked about the reasons. I know in the first hour of debate on this my colleague from Lanark—Carleton debated in great detail the reasons that he did not believe the bill was worthy of support and I have to say I agree.

If we look at all the great democracies in the world, Great Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, India, none of these countries have voting ages below 18.

As I said earlier, one only has to look at our caucus. We walk the walk. We have young people involved.

It was interesting to hear the remarks of the member for Newmarket—Aurora, who had previously made a great deal out of lowering the voting age and was one of the seconders of the bill, but who now has obviously crossed the floor and is sitting on the other side. I wonder if her tone will change. I wonder if she will still believe that the voting age should be lowered and will be voting for the bill. We will see. I have a hunch that she will not be. Maybe she just will not show up. I will tell members that I will be shocked if she shows up and supports the position that she took with great fanfare in favour of lowering the voting age.

As I said, I am not supporting the bill. I think the proof is in the pudding. We have the youngest caucus in the history of Canada. Our party is very much a friendly party to young people and it is shown by the people we have in this caucus.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with the substance of Bill C-261. Ten minutes does not permit me to name all of the young members of Parliament who are on this side of the House.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-261. My understanding is that the hon. member's major motivation in bringing the bill forward stems from his desire to do something about declining rates for voter participation, particularly among young persons. That is obviously a laudable objective and one that I am confident we all share.

Just allow me to predicate my remarks by saying that the member for Ajax—Pickering is very well regarded on this side of the House, I dare say on all sides of the House, and represents his constituents in a very exemplary fashion.

He is aware, as we are, that declining voter participation is a trend that has afflicted many western industrialized countries in recent years, and Canada is no exception. For a long period after the second world war, voter turnout averaged 75% and, as recently as the 1993 election, the participation rate among the electorate was 70%. From that point on, turnout has been in steady decline, falling to 67% in 1997 and 64% in 2000.

The Chief Electoral Officer recently released the participation rates for the election last year and it is not a positive picture. Turnout has declined to a level of 60.9%. In 10 short years we have gone from 70% turnout to less than 61% turnout. I dare say that we cannot afford to go much further without raising fundamental questions about the nature of our democracy.

If one looks at the province by province breakdown, the figures become even more alarming. Newfoundland and Labrador, for example, had a turnout rate of only 49.3%. A number of other provinces are only marginally better. I think we all can certainly agree that there is a problem that needs to be addressed and quickly addressed. The question is whether Bill C-261 would do that.

The legislation before us today raises a number of questions: Is lowering the voting age a good idea? Are we confident that citizens younger than 18, on the whole, possess the necessary knowledge and maturity that is required to make an informed decision? Is lowering the voting age to 16 part of the solution? Are there better ways of achieving our objectives? I do not pretend to have the answers to all of these questions but I have had the opportunity to give the issue some thought.

In examining any policy issue it is always illuminating to look at what other jurisdictions are doing. Of the 191 member states of the United Nations, the vast majority, including all the European Union member states, Australia, Canada and the United States, have a minimum voting age of 18 years. There are only a few which have minimum voting ages less than 18: Iran, Brazil, Cuba and Nicaragua.

It is interesting to note that several countries have minimum voting ages greater than 18. For example, Japan has a minimum voting age of 20 and Singapore has a voting age of 21 years. As we all know, the provinces all have a minimum voting age of 18 years.

These inter-jurisdictional comparisons give a strong indication that 18 is generally regarded as an appropriate minimum standard. Let me be clear. The point is not that Canada should use 18 years because everyone else does, but that our own assessment echoes a widespread consensus.

The next question is: Why does there seem to be such a widespread view that individuals should be at least 18 years of age to cast a vote?

I found it worthwhile to refer back to the work of the royal commission on electoral reform and party financing, the Lortie commission, which examined this issue in detail in its 1991 report. This report is the most comprehensive look at our electoral system that has ever been undertaken. It is the bible of electoral reform as it were.

Lortie examined the evolution of the franchise in the context of four criteria which have been used implicitly to determine who should be allowed to vote. These criteria include: holding a stake in the governance of society; the ability to cast a rational and informed vote; conformity to the norms of responsible citizenship; and the need to maintain the impartiality of election officers.

• (1905)

Throughout our history, these criteria have been used to include certain groups in the franchise. By the same token, these criteria have occasionally been used to wrongly exclude certain groups, the exclusion of women from voting in our early history being a primary example and the more recent exclusion of aboriginal peoples being another.

One of the key assumptions underlying the criteria, of course, is that voting requires the exercise of independent judgment and the capacity to engage in political discourse with other citizens. While wrongly applied in some cases, the Lortie commission concluded that these four criteria remain the cornerstone of electoral law in regard to determining who should vote. They provide a benchmark against which to assess whether an exclusion from the franchise is justified in a free and democratic society as required by the charter of rights.

It was against these criteria that the Lortie commission examined the issue of minimum voting age. The commission noted that any decision on voting age involves the judgment of society about when individuals reach maturity as citizens. The report noted that under most statutes a person is not considered an adult until having reached the age of 18. It also noted that a minor requires parental consent for many important decisions, such as applying for citizenship, getting married or seeking certain medical interventions.

Following its comprehensive review, Lortie concluded that the evidence for reducing the voting age to 16 years was not sufficiently compelling. The final recommendation was that the voting age remain at 18 years. Of course, it is trite to say that societies and understandings change, so it is useful to revisit these questions occasionally. Electoral reform is fluid, a work in progress and

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nothing is cast in stone. For my part, however, I remain convinced that the analysis and conclusions of the Lortie commission remain sound.

At the beginning of my remarks I raised a number of questions that need to be asked in the context of this proposed legislation. While I certainly do not purport to have even scratched the surface, my own examination of this issue has led me to conclude that the time is not yet right to lower the voting age to 16. There seems to be a consensus which extends across nations, cultures and various political systems that 18 years is the appropriate age of majority when it comes to having the capacity to make a decision about whether to cast a vote and which candidate or party one should support.

Of course, not being able to vote until 18 years of age does not mean that young people are excluded from the democratic process. On the contrary, the years between 16 and 18 provide a critical time in the development of overall political knowledge and civic values, both of which foster and form decision making in the polling booth.

We all know firsthand the invaluable contributions which young people make to our own political parties and local organizations. It is a two way street. Knowledge about how the system works and about the key participants is, in my mind, critical to making an informed decision. Rather than lowering the voting age, we should be doing whatever we can to ensure that young people are receiving the education they require and that they are encouraged to contribute to the civic life of their communities.

I congratulate my colleague, the member for Ajax—Pickering, for bringing this important issue before us today. I will be voting against this bill, but I believe it is essential that we get to the bottom of why young people seem to be increasingly disengaged from the political system.

• (1910)

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it came as news to me that I am only young at heart. It certainly will come as news to my constituents. I was elected in the last election at the age of 29. Frankly, I think that really misses the point. I will speak to that a little bit later.

I wish to thank many of my hon. colleagues who worked along with me on this bill, particularly those that travelled to different schools across the country and talked to students. I want to thank the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes, a member from the Bloc, who spoke with great passion earlier. He certainly spoke with great passion in the schools. I am deeply appreciative of all the work he did. I also appreciated the work done by the NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley who did a tremendous amount of work.

I think we were able as a group, along with the member for Newmarket—Aurora, who is now the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, to be a team that went out and showed how we can work in a non-partisan way about engaging youth. That is an excellent starting point, to say that we got together from all different parties and were able to get into classrooms, put our partisanship aside and ask, how can we get youth interested in politics? We were very successful in that regard. I would also like to thank the NDP member for Churchill who had previously introduced this bill.

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I would also like to thank from the Conservatives the member for Selkirk—Interlake and the member for Edmonton—Strathcona who also took part in those discussions in schools, and the member for Mississauga—Brampton South for the discussions he held in schools in the Brampton area.

There were a tremendous number of members who participated in this process. As I was going around and participating with other members there were some additional thoughts beyond what I first said that really struck me.

The first thing that really struck me was the incredible opportunity that we have in that classroom. Here we have a group of individuals that will go on to become plumbers, tradespeople, doctors or perhaps politicians and who will go into all different fields. Yet, this is the one time in their life that we have them in one room.

We have this unique opportunity to engage them and talk with them about the political process, not in some vague academic way but to give them support in a very real and tangible sense about how they can participate in the electoral process.

We look at why 18, 19, 20 and 21 year olds and older are not voting. It is often because they have considerations such as: do they vote at home or do they vote at their school? How do they find out about their candidates?

They ask questions about issues because they do not have a formal venue. For example, politics does not come up for those studying marine biology. It is not part of the formal education. We have lost the opportunity.

Therefore, in that classroom, it was done right. My hon. colleague from the Bloc hit the nail on the head. Reducing the voting age unto itself does nothing. It is incorporating it with that opportunity that we have in that classroom to have all candidates' debates, to provide them with information and to have discussions. They can have a more informed opinion and decision, frankly, than their peers who are 18, 19 or 20 and do not have that opportunity.

This provides them with a base which will last a whole life. We have seen time and time again that if we can get young people to vote once, they are going to vote again and again. It is about giving them that opportunity in a supportive network.

We talked earlier about the fact that the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party and I believe the Bloc as well, all allowed 14 or 16 year olds to vote in nomination meetings and in leadership contests. They were allowed to select the leaders and through the leaders who the prime ministers were going to be. In that forum they actually have a larger say than in a general election where their vote would be more diluted. We allow them to vote in that forum, but not in the general forum. I think that is contradictory and causes problems.

The second thing that really struck me, when I was in those classrooms, was the energy and the enthusiasm and the excitement of those young people. What a wonderful thing to be able to go into a classroom and have young people being responded to and actually listened to. Not only do we value what they had to say, but we wanted to them the opportunity to express it in a vote, to be part of

the broader system of how governments are selected, and how their country is run.

In that process we have to look at it as a chicken and egg scenario. In order to show young people that we are taking them seriously, we have to give them a voice. We have to stop patronizing them, and telling them that they are too stupid and they do not know enough.

In my youth wing that I have in my riding the young people who are there and also sit on my executive provide tremendous impetus for many of the things that I do. They are equal players. If there was not a youth wing when I started, I am not sure that I would have become a member of Parliament. These things are vital. As we seek ways to engage young people, this as an important step and an important piece in that tool kit.

I thank all members for the opportunity to work with me on this bill and provide the level of debate that has led the bill to this point.

• (1915)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 7:16 p.m., the time provided for the debate has expired.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

An hon. member: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost, on division.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today in response to a question I brought up in the House on May 4. In the minister's answer regarding pay equity, he indicated that he is now developing a number of options with stakeholders and people to fully implement the recommendations of our task force. This is specifically in regard to the pay equity task force. I felt it was important to bring this back to the House for some clarification.

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We have since had a letter from the Minister of Justice that indicates that the pay equity issue is a complex and sensitive one, which I would absolutely agree with. It is a very complex issue. He also indicated in that letter that there was a range of options for consideration and I want to provide a little context.

Pay equity itself is an important issue for women in this country. The objective of pay equity is to ensure that women and men who are performing jobs of equal value receive equal wages, even if their jobs are different. The federal law dealing with equal pay for work of equal value is found in section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act established in 1977.

Statistics show that despite the recognition of pay equity in the Canadian Human Rights Act today, almost 30 years later women earn 71¢ on the dollar compared to men. Education is no guarantee that women are going to fare any better. For women who have university degrees, the number is no better. These women still only earn 67.5% of men's salaries.

The current complaint-based system means that women are going through a convoluted process in order to receive justice in the system. In the minister's own letter, he indicates that he perceives pay equity as being a fundamental human right, yet when we are talking about human rights we are talking about a situation of unequal pay which takes years and years to resolve.

For something that is supposed to be a fundamental human right, we have cases, for example, where CEP versus Bell Canada has been going on 15 years and is still being fought. Within our own government system, we have the Public Service Alliance versus Canada Post which has been going on for 20 years. It is still fighting for equal pay for work of equal value.

Why is pay equity important? The National Council of Welfare has indicated that it knows, from years of research, that the inequality between the genders is a major factor of poverty in Canada. We believe that it is crucial that the federal government take a strong position to end all aspects of discrimination against women.

The poverty of mothers is the most significant factor underlying child poverty in Canada. Older women are twice as likely to be poor as older men. In this context, we are seeing the continuing challenge for women when they cannot even get paid the same money for work of equal value.

The pay equity task force itself was instituted and announced in October 2000. It commenced its study in 2001 which continued until 2004. There were extensive consultations that took place in this context. This included hearings across the country, but trade unions and employer groups worked together with the task force in areas of concern and specific parts of the legislation.

The task force also commissioned 29 external research reports on different technical questions regarding the implementation of the report. Surely the consultation that took place in this context is extensive enough. The report covered 500 pages.

I have three questions that I would like answered today. What actions specifically have been taken on implementing the recommendations, including timeframes? Why are further consultations necessary, given the consultations that went on in the task force for a

final report? Why has the government not gone ahead and acted upon its own legislation?

• (1920)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join in this short debate with my colleague. I greatly appreciate her interest in this important matter and the fact that she has gone to this trouble to raise it.

The Government of Canada is firmly committed to fairness in the workplace. We want to close the wage gap, which she mentioned, between working women and working men. We want to create fair and equitable workplaces right across Canada. The government firmly believes in the fundamental principle of equal pay for equal work of equal value and so do I.

Pay equity is recognized as an important element of fair and stable workplaces. It means evaluating and compensating jobs based on workers' skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions, not on the people who hold the jobs. It is a solid solution to eliminating wage discrimination and closing the wage gap in Canada.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, pay equity is an issue that I am most interested in and quite passionate about.

The report of the pay equity task force, which my colleague mentioned, contains over 110 recommendations dealing with, as she said, very complex issues that have very broad implications.

For example, the task force recommended that the pay equity regime apply to members of visible minorities, aboriginal peoples and disabled workers. It also calls on the government to set up new oversight agencies. Clearly the task force report is a substantial piece of work with far-reaching recommendations.

If we are to move forward with the implementation of a proactive regime, it is fundamental that all potential implications are well understood and that the new system be set up in a most effective and efficient way.

The Minister of Labour and Housing is current considering a number of options to implement a pay equity regime that would strengthen Canada's commitment to equality. Discussions are underway with stakeholders and individual Canadians to determine the best way to implement a new regime in the federal jurisdiction.

Since pay equity legislation falls within the mandate of the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Labour will be working closely with him to develop a package of reforms for Parliament to consider, and I know my colleague mentioned the letter from the Minister of Justice.

The government is committed to making a real practical difference in the lives of Canadian workers. We envision a Canadian workforce where no worker is left behind; that is one where every person can participate, where jobs and opportunities are available to everyone who wants to work and where every worker can reach his or her full potential.

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Canada's workers are the backbone of our national economic strength and the government is committed to ensuring that our workers remain the most diverse, the strongest and the best skilled in the world.

• (1925)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear the hon. member and I share the same goals around ensuring that no worker is left behind.

In broad consultation with the women's committee, a number women's groups came forward. The committee has put forward a motion asking for draft legislation to be brought forward by the end of June. Women want to know when, they want to see timelines and they do not want more talk.

I would like to hear when women can expect legislation to implement the full recommendations of the pay equity report.

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, as I have said, not only here in Canada but around the world pay equity is recognized as an important element of a fair and stable workplace.

I know my colleague and the women's committee have a particular emphasis in pay equity, but pay equity in Canada extends beyond that to the variety of groups that I have mentioned. We need to know and understand what best changes should be made now so we can in the end have a system which protects and encourages all the groups that are concerned.

We want to create a fair and equitable workforce in Canada where no worker is left behind.

FISHERIES

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans whether he would assure the House that he would accept the recommendations of the unanimous report of the fisheries committee and properly enforce the Fisheries Act and regulations.

He answered by saying that he took the conservation of salmon very seriously. He had launched a post-season review and was looking at reports. We are now well into June and I wonder if the minister is done looking at the reports and ready to act on their recommendations.

In his blueprint for change speech from April 14, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced that it was his intention to improve the economic performance of our Pacific fisheries and most particular salmon. In that document the minister goes on to say that, "I also care about the salmon fishery. I've made it a top priority, and am committed to making the necessary changes".

Despite the fanfare and the promises, British Columbians are still waiting to hear of any concrete plans the minister may have up his sleeve to implement actual changes. No details have emerged regarding any sort of increase of enforcement on the Fraser River on the eve of this year's sockeye salmon fishery.

Twelve unanimous recommendations were provided for the minister from the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. They include establishing an enforcement branch in DFO Pacific region, headed by a regional enforcement director who would be

capable of developing a level of coverage that would ensure the minister's mandate to conserve and protect Canada's Pacific fisheries resources would be fulfilled. Also, it recommended that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans restore the number of fisheries officers in the lower Fraser River area to at least the highest level of the 1994 to 2003 period and that they be given all the necessary resources to carry on their enforcement activities.

The committee's recommendations were intentionally formulated to ensure that the problems that led to the collapse of the Fraser River sockeye salmon fishery would be addressed fully.

The committee asked that the minister respond within 60 days to ensure a different result from the 2004 Fraser River disaster. After well more than 60 days, the minister continues to hide behind vague promises and assurances that he will do something, but British Columbians have no idea what that something will look like or when it will be announced or implemented. Indeed, it makes us wonder whether it will have anything to do with the recommendations that the minister received.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans indicated that he had launched one report and received another. With both in hand, he told Canadians that he was looking forward to looking at them and taking them both into consideration in a move toward reform of the salmon fishery. I wonder what the phrase "look at" really means. Does it mean read or does it essentially mean ignore? The minister appears to be much better at receiving reports than he is on acting on them.

I would also ask of the minister what he has in mind when he uses the word "reform". Does he suppose that his empty promise to move toward reform will inspire any confidence among the many British Columbians who depend upon this fishery to earn their livelihood?

It has now been well more than 60 days since the minister received the recommendations of the standing committee and we are 60 days plus closer to the 2005 season. The minister continues to hide behind vague promises, generalizations and a misplaced confidence that everyone involved in the process will mind their manners and behave themselves.

Will we need to watch another entire season of non-enforcement come and go so that another million sockeye mysteriously disappear? Or will the minister get specific about plans to increase the number of enforcement officers on the Fraser River and increase the resources they need to properly enforce the Fisheries Act and regulations? By this late date, the minister must have an approved enforcement plan. Could he tell us what it is?

• (1930)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today to say a few words on this very important issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

I also appreciate the concern of the member opposite for the future of Pacific salmon. It is a concern, I want to assure the member, that the minister and myself wholeheartedly share. In fact, the member opposite and I both sit on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans and we each attended three days of hearings in British Columbia last December on this very important and troubling issue. We saw the situation first-hand.

As the member has indicated, the minister now has our report on the issue. It contains, as he said, 12 unanimous recommendations. I know he appreciates the effort that went into this report and certainly values, as does the department, our advice. I am sure the member opposite joins me in looking forward to seeing how the minister addresses our recommendations. However, as the member opposite knows, it is a complex issue and there are no simple solutions.

I am pleased to say that the minister and his department are very much at work on a number of fronts to address this situation and have been for a long time. The minister has made this issue a top priority. He has visited British Columbia on a number of occasions over the past year and a half and has put in place a number of initiatives to help build a brighter future for the west coast salmon.

To deal with the most fundamental issues, the minister issued a blueprint for change for Pacific Canada's fisheries in April. The blueprint outlines the department's approach to improve the economic performance for our Pacific fisheries, especially salmon, to work with the first nations and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to explore options for greater commercial access for first nations in a manner consistent with the treaty processes and to ensure that Pacific Canada's fisheries are sustainably managed in the years to come.

While this blueprint responds specifically to the joint task group and the first nations panel reports, it also puts us in a good position as we respond to the report of Bryan Williams on last year's salmon fishery, as well as the SCOFO report. I should also add that these two reports make many parallel recommendations.

As the member opposite is aware, southern British Columbia suffered some very low returns for salmon during the 2004 salmon season. A number of factors were blamed for the low returns, including poor environmental conditions, concerns about unauthorized harvests and the accuracy of the salmon abundance estimates.

To help get to the bottom of this, the minister appointed Mr. Williams to lead an independent review of the management of salmon in southern British Columbia for 2004. The minister is reviewing this report and will officially respond to both this report and the SCOFO report in the very near future.

The upcoming responses to the Williams and SCOFO reports will address concerns about enforcement on the Fraser River. Let me be very clear on this front. The minister is committed to taking steps to improve compliance levels and strengthen enforcement in the region this season, which the member has already pointed out starts in a few

weeks. He has asked his officials to develop an option to do this as soon as possible.

The blueprint announced in April will also benefit from the new conservation approach being finalized through the long awaited wild salmon policy. Clearly we are standing at the edge of a new era in fisheries management on the west coast. This is good news for the first nations, commercial and recreational fishermen and community members. In short—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission.

• (1935)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I know the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Ocean also has a real concern for fisheries. Even though he is from one of the other coasts, he has an interest in the Pacific fisheries as well.

My problem is that we have heard these assurances but we are not really confident. We keep asking what the plan might be. If the plan is similar to last year's plan, then we are not likely going to have a different result.

We are on the verge, as the member mentioned, of the 2005 season. Even though he has talked about creative and innovative solutions, we have not heard any. Is the minister ready to admit that he is waiting until 2006 at the earliest to address the aftermath of the 2004 crisis. If that is not the case, we are still waiting to find out what the enforcement plan looks like for 2005.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his concern. As I stated earlier, the minister and his department are taking the concerns about the west coast salmon very, very seriously.

A number of processes are in place: the calling for and the tabling of the Williams report, the release of the wild salmon policy, which now is in the process of being finalized as we speak, and the recommendations proposed by the SCOFO committee.

Taken together, these initiatives, along with the blueprint for change the minister announced in April to reform the management of Pacific fisheries, represent the Government of Canada's plan to build a brighter future for our west coast fisheries.

Like the member opposite, I look forward to the results of these processes and hope to work closely with all members of the House to ensure strong, sustainable fish stocks in Pacific Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:37 p.m.)

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