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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 3, 1998

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 3, 1998

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH AND MACHINERY SHOW

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year the 85th International Plowing Match and Machinery Show, IPM '98, will be held in Sunbury near Kingston in my riding of Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington from September 15 to September 19.

This is the largest outdoor agricultural exhibition in North America. The theme for the five day event is "Quality Living, a partnership" which points to the interdependence between urban and rural communities.

More than 125,000 people are expected to view the approximately 1,000 exhibits ranging from farm, gardening and recreational equipment to antiques, educational displays, crafts, magnificent farm animals, demonstrations, and live country music.

Plowers from age 7 to 70 will take part. In addition to the regular classes, this match will also feature the Canadian plowing championship. I particularly like the federal-provincial plowing competition for elected officials.

Mr. Speaker and honoured colleagues, I throw down the gauntlet and challenge you to pit yourselves and your furrows against me in September and help make IPM '98 a great success.

REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today the Reform Party of Canada begins its second year as Her Majesty's loyal official opposition. We will continue to hold the Liberals accountable for their mismanagement. The Liberals use closure to debate and prevent free votes. Many MPs only look through the lens of political stripes, not the lens of issues. Partisan politics is applied to compensation for hep C victims, Senate reform, rebalancing Confederation, the CPP and the YOA.

Debate is about sharing and listening to different viewpoints. Yet the official opposition has to regularly call for quorum forcing Liberal members to participate in debate.

Canadians are getting value for money from Reform MPs because our performance springs from true grassroots democracy as demonstrated at our London assembly.

Let us work together and make Canada a better place.

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TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's awards for teaching excellence began five years ago to honour science, technology and mathematics teachers.

The award recipients come from all parts of Canada. I am delighted that one of our own teachers in Guelph—Wellington is an award winner.

I would like to extend special congratulations to Ms. Patricia Bell who was awarded a certificate of excellence by our Prime Minister for her teaching excellence. Ms. Bell is a Latin teacher at Centennial Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Guelph. A sign on her classroom wall reads "Latin is more than a language". She encourages activities that highlight the relevance of Latin today.

Guelph—Wellington is the best place to live in Canada because of teachers like Ms. Bell. Ms. Bell, your contributions are truly appreciated. Guelph—Wellington is really proud of you.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Environment Week in Canada, I wish to acknowledge the work of environmental groups and the contribution of pollution control industries.

Environmental groups have remarkable expertise and offer very relevant suggestions, which may be useful to governments, industry and the public in making decisions.

In addition, tens of thousands of people in the environmental industry work on a daily basis to clean up our environment and to develop strategies and technologies aimed at cleaning up the mess or, better yet, at preventing pollution and protecting our biodiversity.

Since this week is Environment Week—and tomorrow UN World Environment Day—I as a parliamentarian would like to commend all the people who, as volunteers or employees, make every week Environment Week and every day Environment Day.

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[English]

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurship is growing. It is flourishing among Canada's youth. During the past week there were two events involving Kitchener Centre which demonstrated this fact.

Team 5 founded by Kitchener residents Abhi Ahluwalia, Arvinder Ahluwalia and Way Tang received the Students In Free Enterprise of Canada first prize for the wholesale distribution category in the 1997-98 National Business Plan Competition for Young Entrepreneurs, as well as the Spirit of Entrepreneurship award at a ceremony here in Ottawa last Thursday.

Team 5 creates and distributes a unique line of message clothing and accessories promoting equality, justice, respect and wellness.

In addition to receiving a number of noteworthy awards, their innovative idea has also provided them with the opportunity to meet Her Majesty the Queen.

In Kitchener this past weekend I along with the hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew had the opportunity to participate—

The Speaker: Colleagues I would just remind you that we should not use each other's names while we are in the House. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

SENATE

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, once again our upper chamber has made a case for Senate reform.

Yesterday the supreme court convicted a Tory senator for influence peddling. Next week this Mulroney appointee will be sentenced and faces up to five years in prison.

The Constitution Act, 1867 lays the foundation for the resignation of this senator. The Criminal Code calls for resignation if he is convicted for more than two years in prison.

• (1405)

We should take note it took the supreme court to hold this wayward senator accountable. Now it is up to the Senate or the senator himself to act responsibly and do the honourable thing which is to resign.

Should the senator not resign, the Senate has only one option and that is to deal with the senator's criminal conviction. Canadians do not want a senator from prison any more than they want a senator from Mexico. So resign, Senator Cogger, and resign now.

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REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party is worried about its dropping membership numbers and the impact it will have on its ability to fundraise. This is at a time when it is supposed to be attracting busloads of new members to its so-called united alternative campaign.

But fear not. At its convention last week the party announced a bold new strategy to address this problem. Just like K-Tel records, Reform is offering free giveaways to entice Canadians to join the party.

Buy three memberships and get an additional one absolutely free. Even better, Reform says "Act now and we will give you discounts for a stay at the Travelodge or a free trial subscription to an open-minded publication like *Alberta Report*".

I can only imagine what is next. Buy a Reform membership and get a free Ginsu steak knife or a can of spray-on hair, or maybe a copy of the Reform Party platform entitled "Hits of the Fifties".

The Reform Party will soon realize that gimmicks do not sell—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

MEMBER FOR TÉMISCAMINGUE

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months now, the Bloc Québécois member for Témiscamingue has been secretly touring the Canadian provinces with Reform members. The Bloc Québécois member for Témiscamingue is in favour of bringing their two parties closer together.

Today, the people of Abitibi—Témiscamingue are starting to realize that there is a double agent in the Bloc Québécois.

It seems to me that this member is trying to follow in the footsteps of former agent Claude Morin.

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[English]

TIANANMENSQUARE

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the ninth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre.

On the night of June 3, 1989 the Communist People's Liberation Army surrounded students and workers rallying peacefully for democracy in Tiananmen Square. In the early hours of June 4, troops and police opened fire. Tanks rolled in. Armour-piercing bullets tore through human flesh.

Three thousand died that morning. Hundreds of young people who were arrested are still being held in Beijing's brutal prisons today.

On this anniversary the Chinese people demand a new China, a democratic China with a free press, a China that respects human dignity. But their voice is stifled as more dissidents are arrested every week.

Pathetically the Chinese communist government said today that the massacre of pro-democracy students at Tiananmen was a correct conclusion and that there is no need to reassess the issue.

Let us never forget the brave young people and workers who died and those who are still in prison for no crime except for expressing their belief in democracy.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, more than 225 workers in the Mauricie region have forwarded a petition to me in which they call for the federal government, which is acting in a manner prejudicial to them, to increase the maximum insurable earnings for EI to \$49,750.

These same workers describe as discriminatory the provisions in the bill concerning the number of weeks of regular benefits accumulated since June 30, 1996 as well as those imposing a 1% penalty each time they reapply.

In the text accompanying the petition, they state as follows: "We do not go on employment insurance by choice—we do not choose to lose our jobs, yet you penalize us still further—as if we had a choice— You are committing genocide on the middle classes, and taking away from others any hope of improving their lot".

The petitioners rightly point out as well that there is a whole family behind every signature.

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[English]

REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform-separatist alliance seems to be moving ahead now. The meetings between the Bloc and Reform MPs have been officially endorsed by Lucien Bouchard. Who knows, if this courtship period is successful, we might see the creation of a brand new party. The Re-Bloc comes to mind.

What is entirely clear is that if this is the Reform's idea of how a united alternative will work, then it already appears to be falling apart.

● (1410)

As one commentator put it "It is extremely unwise for a federalist party to say it wants to attract separatists or sovereignists whether they are called hard or soft". This comment was made by none other than Stephen Harper who used to be a Reform MP. Perhaps he foresaw the desperate lengths that his former leader would go to to try to become Prime Minister.

Canadians rejected this scheme when Brian Mulroney and the Progressive Conservatives tried it and they will reject the Reform-Bloc coalition just as quickly.

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[Translation]

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last May I took part in the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic, accompanied by other parliamentarians and Canadian navy and air force veterans.

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest and most important naval campaign of the entire war. Great Britain's survival and the liberation of Europe depended on the supply convoys of the merchant marine, protected from marauding enemy submarines by the Canadian navy.

Oral Questions

This battle was costly in Canadian lives: 2,024 lives lost, including 752 Royal Canadian Air Force members and 1,200 merchant mariners.

I salute the courage and determination of these veterans and thank them on behalf of us all. We shall always remember them.

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[English]

ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Forum on Climate Change reports many immediate steps can and should be taken to respond to the Kyoto commitment and to address the issue of climate change.

The contribution of these distinguished Canadians, Order of Canada recipients, are to be congratulated. They have studied the issue and reached a decision: act now.

The commissioner for the environment's annual report described the Liberal government's failing grade on the environment and especially in the climate change commitments. The report included references to a lack of leadership and political will. The lack of action on climate change could be disastrous.

The finance minister stated yesterday that the environment is very important. As the environment commissioner said, lots of talk, but little action.

Canadians are fed up with the Liberal environment failures on CEPA enforcement, climate change, harmonization, pesticides, POPs. As Canada's distinguished citizens stated today, enough talk, more action, act now.

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REFORM PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party has finally come out of the closet. It wants Quebec out of Canada.

Canadians knew that Reform's leader could never be Prime Minister of a Canada that included Quebec. He does not have the support. Now by working with the separatists he has made it clear. Becoming Prime Minister of a rump Canada that has no Quebec is more important to Reform's leader than taking measures to keep Canada whole.

To be sure, Reform's leader has the approval of none other than Lucien Bouchard who called Reform's plans one of the most positive proposals in years. When Bouchard says an idea is positive, we know what he means: a step closer to an independent Quebec.

When Reform has allies like Bouchard, it is clear they are working together to break up Canada.

[Translation]

BLOC QUEBECOIS

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is now official: Lucien Bouchard has approved a Reform-Sovereignist alliance.

Here is the constitutional menu for this evening.

The appetizer will be Sovereign-Reform membership cards; the main dish, constitutional cookies with green and blue chips, in which not even Mr. Christie would be interested; a salad with Reform vinegar dressing; but no meat to sink your teeth into, because the plan lacks any content.

And the masters of ceremony are none other than the internationally renowned comedians Preston Duceppe and Gilles Manning.

• (1415)

The Speaker: Once again, I would ask all my colleagues not to use members' names in the House.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, when the largest service contract ever awarded by the Canadian government was given to the Prime Minister's favourite company, then the government's contracting guidelines should have been followed to the letter, but they were not. There were no competitive bids, there was no public notice and the government refuses to answer access to information requests.

My question for Bombardier's favourite relative is this. If the deal was so good on its own merits, why did the government find it necessary to bend the contracting rules?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this contract had been discussed and everyone had knowledge of it.

In fact, yesterday Don Chynoweth, the director of business affairs of Frontec Corporation of Edmonton, said "We have kept the Reform Party informed of this for three and a half years. The former Reform member of parliament responsible for Moose Jaw up until the last election", who is presently the member of parliament for Blackstrap, "was more than involved in it and more than encouraging to us, as we were keeping him briefed".

Oral Questions

For years they were informed and now they are complaining.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is the taxpayer who has the right to see the information exchanged between the government and Bombardier that led to an unsolicited, untendered and unadvertised \$2.85 billion contract.

It has been seven months since the official opposition formally requested the government to disclose how this contract was arrived at. We have repeated this request every month since then and all we got was a worthless verbal briefing from the government.

If this deal is really as clean as the Prime Minister says it is, why has he been suppressing the relevant documentation on this deal?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have absolutely nothing to hide. Perhaps I will keep reading from this well informed person.

He said "By Reform putting forward the notion that it should have been tendered, I guess what they are saying is perhaps they wanted it in a foreign company's hands because there was no other Canadian consortium or company that was interested or capable of pulling this together".

This is a western company which wanted to work with the Canadian government to make sure the Moose Jaw base was kept open.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, if what the Prime Minister says is true, if this deal is really that beneficial to Canadians, then the Prime Minister should have no difficulty at all in proving that point to the House. All he has to do is lay before the House the documents that show how this contract was arrived at and how it led to this \$2.85 billion deal.

Why does the Prime Minister not back up his claims that this is a great thing by tabling in the House the documents, not excuses, that will prove his point?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Works and Government Services are willing to give all of the information that they should already know because they were part of the deal, through their members of parliament.

I know the problem of the Leader of the Opposition. He wants to talk about something else because he has had quite a year.

• (1420)

First he moved to Stornoway. Then he jumped into bed with Lucien Bouchard. Now we should check his feet to see if he is wearing Guccis.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: My colleagues, I would urge all hon. members to please stick to the issues as much as they can.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, with that kind of rhetoric coming from the Prime Minister, obviously they do have something to hide.

Bombardier got an untendered, unadvertised, non-competitive contract amounting to \$2.85 billion. The government says that it did not have the time to make this contract competitive. However, Public Works' documents show that it took three years to close the deal.

My question to the Prime Minister is: Three years? Why no competition?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my department wrote to the Reform Party on March 24 of this year and offered it access to every document involved in this whole endeavour. What was its response? Silence. Absolute silence. Reform members were not interested at all in looking at the details of this arrangement, which will create jobs in western Canada, jobs which they are now willing to give up. There are over 5,000 person years in jobs. Ninety per cent of them will be in western Canada. The base in Moose Jaw will be saved.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we still do not have any foreign NATO customers using Bombardier's training school. It is obvious, too, that NATO was willing to extend any deadline before this process was finished. Obviously NATO was in no rush.

Again I ask the Prime Minister: Three years? Why no competition?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact NATO extended the deadline. But NATO clearly indicated that it would have to know from us by June 1996 whether or not we were going to be in a position to provide this training facility. Otherwise it would have looked at alternatives. We had to move very quickly to make sure that we could provide this service.

Are there foreign customers? At this point in time none have signed. However, a lot of interest has been expressed.

Let me tell members that all of the risk will be in the private sector. All of the risk will be borne by the consortium.

* * *

[Translation]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health intimated yesterday that the discussions in Edmonton would lead to a definitive settlement of the hepatitis C issue.

Oral Questions

However, at that moment, the representatives of the victims were slamming the door as they left the meeting, exasperated by the federal government's refusal to compensate all victims.

How does the Prime Minister explain the optimism of his Minister of Health, when the victims' representatives are saying that the discussions in Edmonton have gone nowhere because of a lack of clear commitment by the federal government to compensate all victims?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, we had an agreement in this matter, signed by all the provinces, the territories and the federal government. Two governments broke the agreement and want another proposal.

At the moment, the provincial representatives are meeting to find out what can be done in the matter as it stands. People should not jump to conclusions before the negotiations are over.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is saying it has shown leadership in this matter.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, if he wants to show leadership, he must make his intention to compensate all victims clear from the start, as the governments of Quebec and Ontario have done?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec offered nothing. It said "We will send the bill to the federal government". That was how they co-operated. It is easy to say "You will be compensated; someone else is going to pay". That is Mr. Bouchard's type of courage.

Again, I think those people have a problem with their marriage. They want to arrange a marriage between the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois, but the bride wants to talk about separation even before the wedding.

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Edmonton yesterday, a representative for hepatitis C victims said that the working group cannot improve the compensation options because the federal government has not yet agreed to provide compensation.

What guarantee is there that the federal government truly wants to see the hepatitis C compensation issue move forward, when it had to be prodded into sitting down with the provinces to discuss the issue and its officials lacked any mandate?

[English]

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is patently untrue. The mere fact that there were discussions over the course of the last couple of

days in Edmonton is a clear indication of the federal government's commitment to listen to everybody and to bring all the parties together to arrive at a solution.

The fact that the working group has received several submissions and has now got them on the table, is working on them and considering them with all the deliberation that they merit is an indication of leadership that is functioning.

[Translation]

Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we think the discussions have gone on long enough; it has been two months.

Can the Prime Minister at least give us an official assurance that his government's strategy is not to drag out the negotiations until the summer and then quietly wrap things up after the House has recessed for the summer?

[English]

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no strategy to prejudge anything and there is no strategy to thwart anything.

The member opposite will recognize that the process has been extremely open and it includes, as well, the victims and their representatives.

Once the working group is in place it will come forward with a presentation which will be the presentation that will be acted on. I know she wants to make the process work and I think she should allow that to happen.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Tens of thousands of women in Canada and the United States are suffering severe health problems from breast implants. Yesterday in this House the health minister made it clear that he is totally unconcerned, so unconcerned that he authorized his own officials to go to the United States to serve as expert witnesses in the courts, defending the manufacturers of these hazardous devices.

What is the Prime Minister prepared to do about those irresponsible actions of the health minister?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member would get away from bombast for a moment and listen to some of the facts she would understand that there has been responsibility all the way through.

The minister of health of the day, a Conservative minister, conducted two audits of the department and its methods and approaches to the regulatory process. The first audit, an internal

audit, indicated that the department was following the regulatory process to the letter.

The second audit, which was conducted by Peat Marwick Thorne, gave an indication that there was an assiduous following of the rules and regulations—

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the New Democratic Party.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unbelievably these saline breast implants about which this member does not want to talk are in widespread use in Canada today. To quote one expert “All such devices have the same leaky valves that don’t hold water. They grow algae and fungi like a dirty aquarium”.

Why does this government continue to allow this threat to women’s health?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fear that the member is more interested in fearmongering than in the facts. Since this party came to government there has been no sale allowed in Canada of silicone gel-filled implants at all. In fact, if credit must be given, there has not been any such sale permitted in Canada since 1991.

• (1430)

I do not know whereof the hon. member speaks. We are conducting ourselves in a most responsible fashion. We are requiring all manufacturers to meet the safety and quality standards required by health protection—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I would encourage members that if the question is asked they have the courtesy to listen to the response.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George’s, PC): Mr. Speaker, federal government offices in Newfoundland and Labrador from Port au Bras to St. Anthony are shut down today by protesting fishermen and fish plant workers.

In 1995 fishing industry stakeholders in Quebec and Newfoundland negotiated a sharing arrangement for turbot, 82% for Quebec and 18% for Newfoundland.

I have a question for the Prime Minister. Why has the federal government discriminated against Newfoundland and Labrador turbot fishermen by taking fish from them and giving them to Quebec? Why has the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans arbitrarily changed a successful negotiated sharing arrangement?

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been no such decision made on the basis of being discriminatory. In fact the 1995 sharing arrangement was a temporary arrangement.

Oral Questions

Despite efforts by the department to work with both sides and facilitate a long term agreement, the minister had to make a decision because the parties were unable to agree. That decision has been made.

Mr. Bill Matthews (Burin—St. George’s, PC): Mr. Speaker, let me say to the parliamentary secretary that this agreement has worked successfully for three years. It is only now that the minister has arbitrarily broken this negotiated sharing agreement that we have protests in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will the Prime Minister intercede with the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to restore the sharing arrangement agreement to 82% for Quebec and 18% for Newfoundland and everyone will be happy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly look into the request of the member. There must be a very good reason. I have not had a chance to talk with the minister of fisheries because he is not able to work today.

I will talk with him. Probably he has a very good reason, but I will transmit to him the representation of the hon. member and the member of my caucus from Newfoundland who raised the problem this morning.

* * *

TOBACCO ACT

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government promised us real good, tough tobacco ad legislation back in October. Now we find that the legislation will not kick in until the year 2003.

The Prime Minister broke his first promise. Why should we believe that this promise will be kept?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister will make an announcement at 3.15 and give the details.

The bill will be before the House very soon. If members want the bill to pass they should vote for it very rapidly.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it would not make very much difference how rapidly we voted for it. It will be five years before the ad ban comes in, five years of negotiating and fighting in courts by the tobacco companies, five years of big money finding solutions so that they can get around it, and five years of kids smoking who should not have to smoke because the government is too weak.

Why should every Canadian not say that the Prime Minister has nicotine stains on his hands?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member’s silliness is getting away from him.

One of the things the member wants to do is to wait until House procedures allow for the tabling of the legislation. Then he will be

Oral Questions

satisfied, as he was with the last one, with the very vigorous approach to dealing with a serious health issue.

He will find that he should be applauding the total ban when it is brought forward if that is in fact what he will find. I am confident that he will be happy the minister will have shown such vigour.

* * *

[Translation]

MILLENNIUMSCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even the *Montreal Gazette*, not exactly a separatist publication, has just come out in support of what the students of Quebec think, what the educators think, and what the Bloc Québécois thinks, which is that the government ought to give up on its millennium scholarships.

• (1435)

When will the federal government finally admit that it is barking up the wrong tree with this, by insisting on ramming this project through regardless?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have set aside \$2.5 billion, thanks to the government's good financial performance up to the end of the fiscal year on March 31.

This we put in trust so that it would be administered by people totally independent of the government, with only one objective, namely to give all Canadian students the chance to have a millennium scholarship.

Every year for 10 years, 100,000 students, even those from Quebec, will be able to benefit from the federal government's good management.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, after telling us with a straight face that the employment insurance program is a good one, even if 60% of the unemployed are no longer eligible, after telling us that unemployed young people should be glad that three-quarters of them are no longer eligible, now he wants to shove his millennium scholarships down our throats, even if nobody wants them.

By refusing to heed the wishes of the public, is the Prime Minister himself not proving that he is unable to respect Quebec's wishes?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that, when I am travelling around Quebec, young Quebecers tell me they want to have the same advantages as others, and they are totally determined to get the education they need to be competitive in the 21st century.

They are very glad to have a government that has their interests at heart and is not just using their future as an excuse for petty politics.

* * *

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his health minister have been telling us for some days now to wait for the results of this week's hepatitis C working group in Edmonton.

The meeting is over and the hepatitis C representatives describe it as a huge disappointment and as a bureaucratic runaround. Those are their words.

Is it not true that all along this Prime Minister wanted these talks to fail?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess it must be a day for being down and being a bit of a fearmonger.

We said that we were to receive all submissions, consider all ideas, bring all the partners together and try to fashion a consensus because that is the only way things can work. We have received those. We also invited the representatives of the hepatitis C victims groups who made their submissions.

Now it is time for us to let the working group digest that material and fashion something that can be worked out to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary knows that it was a stall tactic, pure and simple.

These victims will not be playing golf this summer because they will be waiting for them to come back with some supposed answer in the fall and stall it further.

The Prime Minister is holding on to the no new money option, which is why the representatives walked out yesterday. The Prime Minister can hardly be proud of himself. What will he do now to honour the commitment he made in a vote in the House on May 5 to "address the financial needs of all those hepatitis C victims?"

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has not entered into any discussions with any preconceived or predetermined notions.

The mere fact we are there is an indication that we take our commitment seriously. I repeat for members on both sides of the House that we brought all the partners together so we could consider all the options people brought to the table to give the working group something to work with.

After the working group deliberates and digests all the suggestions—and there have been many—and completes its study there will be something for implementation. Why not let the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

This morning's edition of *Le Devoir* reported that the way the transport minister decided to carve up air routes had Air Canada dismayed, while Canadian was jubilant.

How can the minister justify his department's attitude on the air route issue, when Air Canada, headquartered in Montreal, is always losing out to Canadian, which is using the government's generosity to expand its operations?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to say that for the last nine months my officials have been working with Air Canada and with Canadian Airlines to strike a balance on new international air routes.

Those discussions were quite fruitful in some cases such as the trade-off for Canadian to serve Osaka from Vancouver and for daily service to Hong Kong by Air Canada from Toronto. On other issues there was disagreement.

The government believes that Canada needs a competitive airline industry. We believe in the viability of two air companies. We want to make sure that any new routes are fair and equitable to both companies.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister say he is being fair to Air Canada, when the Hong Kong market, which is estimated at 500,000 passengers, is still hard for it to access fully, with the number of passengers required for a second designation set at 300,000?

[English]

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we brought in a policy three or four years ago in terms of when a market reaches 300,000. Then we designate a second carrier.

Oral Questions

In some cases such as with Taiwan, which Air Canada wants to serve, we just do not have the figures to confirm that the 300,000 passenger mark has been reached. I expect that will be reached this year and therefore Air Canada will probably be allowed to service Taiwan as of next year.

This is an evolving file. We want to make sure that each company has access to the international routes, but we believe that Canadian Airlines has to be allowed the time for its restructuring plan to bear fruit.

* * *

THE SENATE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Michel Cogger is a convicted criminal who spends part of his time being a senator. Yesterday he was convicted of bribes of more than \$200,000 to influence Senate decision making. Mr. Speaker, do you know what his defence was? He said "Nobody told me it was wrong".

Legally his salary is guaranteed and his seat is secured. The Prime Minister wrote a letter to Andy Thompson asking him to resign. When will he do the same for Michel Cogger?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to members of the other house, they have rules and regulations there. We have a system of law in Canada and we do not know if he will decide to appeal or not.

We have to respect the system and the other house is in charge of its own procedure. We will see what the end result is of these proceedings which have not been completed at this time.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not hesitate at all to write a letter to the upper house about Andy Thompson. There are some amazing similarities between the upper house and the big house.

Here are a few of them. It costs about the same to house a prisoner as it does a senator. Both are full of colourful characters who are serving a life term and do you know what, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: You have to give the Chair a little room in the preamble. I ask the hon. member to go directly to her question.

Miss Deborah Grey: Mr. Speaker, I will. Thank you very much. Canadians will get an elected Senate sooner or later, by hook or by crook. When will it be?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when there will be an elected Senate there will be an elected Senate for all Canadians at the same time.

If we were to elect the Senate today, it would be ensuring forever that there will be only six senators in Alberta. I do not understand

Oral Questions

why those who have 30 seats in the east would want to let that power go. They received it at the time of Confederation. [English]

If we want reform of the Senate we need a complete one with equality and effectiveness. I do not think a little scheme to score political points is in the best interest of the people of Alberta or Canada.

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

ASBESTOS

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétiën (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

Yesterday, as a result of a Bloc Québécois initiative, diplomats visited the Lac d'Amiante mine in Thetford and had an opportunity to learn about the product and its safe use.

Why does the federal government not follow the Bloc Québécois' lead and also take the offensive in order to reassure countries—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for International Trade.

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I regret to inform the member that he and his party are actually late, because my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, has already implemented the safe principle plan.

* * *

[Translation]

FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the separatists there are no minority francophone communities.

Would the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us about the state of the French language in the rest of the country and especially in the west?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members will join me in celebrating the fact that, in recent years, the number of French speaking Manitobans has grown to over 100,000.

It is unfortunate, however, that the Bloc Québécois is joining with the Reform Party in a Pontius Pilate type policy to isolate and assimilate all minority languages outside Quebec, because they do not want French spoken in Canada.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that was not a bad question from that Liberal backbencher, but it certainly was a pathetic answer.

The Speaker: Colleagues, please, you are pushing it now. I want the hon. member to give us his own question.

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the justice minister.

The official opposition is very supportive of crime prevention programs, in particular for our youth. However, 50% of the \$32 million earmarked for the minister's crime prevention program is going to administration.

Why is the minister giving this money to bureaucrats rather than spending it on children in need?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where the hon. member got that information. In fact, over 90% of the \$32 million my colleague, the solicitor general, and I announced yesterday will go directly to communities to ensure they have safe streets and safe homes.

* * *

VETERANS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, secret documents just released by War Amps Association prove that the Liberal government of 1955 was involved in a cover-up of Hong Kong war veterans' claim rights. Forty-three years later another Liberal government is continuing this injustice.

Will the veterans affairs minister apologize for the 1955 cover-up of Hong Kong veterans' rights and get on with the task of getting compensation for slavery by Japan in World War II?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised the same question yesterday. A treaty was signed between two countries. Compensation was given at that time.

If the hon. member has any other information to pass on, we are quite prepared to look at it and investigate. Once again, by making this kind of assertion and allegation he does dishonour to the people who gave their lives in Hong Kong.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

TOBACCO PUBLICITY

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

The health of Canadians warrants an immediate ban on tobacco company sponsorships.

• (1450)

The Minister of Health is today proposing a five year postponement. Why wait? So that young people can take up smoking?

What is the government's intention—preventing or promoting the use of tobacco?

[English]

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister will table the legislation before the House in about 25 minutes and I am sure the member opposite will be anxious to examine that legislation and see whether her allegations would withstand a test of ink on paper.

I dare say she may find herself in total surprise because the interests of this government are, have been and will continue to be the health of all Canadians, nothing else.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty clear that what the government plans to do today and what we are dealing with is the sad truth of a cave-in to the tobacco industry and a cop-out to the health and well-being of Canada's youth. Why are we dealing today with giving more time to the tobacco lobbyists, giving more time for kids to get hooked on cigarettes?

If a ban on tobacco sponsored advertising is a good idea five years from now, why is it not the right thing to do today?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member in her research will probably have come across a supreme court decision that reversed the situation as it was a few years ago.

Our government, since we were elected in 1993, has been addressing these issues. In the last parliament just before the session ended we presented legislation that addressed specifically the health of young people and smoking habits. It dealt with promotion. It dealt with sponsorship and we are continuing in a balanced approach that will withstand the scrutiny of the courts as well as the scrutiny of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice will spend \$133.9 million this year launching the unworkable long gun registration system, an outrageous sum when compared with the scraps allocated by the Minister of Justice in her crime prevention strategy announced yesterday.

The minister said in Calgary on May 20 we should be embarrassed by this announcement. Can the minister tell the House now if the \$32 million announced yesterday is new money or part of the same embarrassing crime prevention announced in the youth justice strategy two weeks ago?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me clarify for the hon. member that what I said was that as a society we should all be concerned about the fact that we spend over, conservatively estimated, \$32 billion a year on the back end of the justice system to investigate crime, to prosecute it and to keep people in jail. My point was that we as a society need to take leadership in preventing crime, and that is exactly what this government did yesterday.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General of Canada chose to hide from parliament once again by making their crime prevention announcement outside the House.

Once again the Liberal government has put its own political spin doctoring ahead of presenting substantive policy here in this House. Members of parliament have to cool their heels until tomorrow or read it in the paper to find out what this is all about.

Will the Minister of Justice commit today to stop treating members of parliament and the public like nobodies and present substantive policies here in the House of Commons?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one, including the solicitor general and I, has hidden this policy. We have been talking about this for months.

Yesterday we made that announcement at a youth centre in this city where an entire community has turned itself around because of that youth centre. That is why we were there. That is an example of what this government stands for.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Oral Questions

A constituent of mine, Mr. Patrick Jay Green, has served over half his sentence in a Costa Rican prison. Under terms of agreement with the host country Patrick, who is ill, should have been in Canada already.

What assurances can the minister give my constituent and his family that he will soon be transferred to Canada?

• (1455)

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to compliment the hon. member for the active work he has undertaken on behalf of this case.

I am pleased to report that the authorities we met with in Costa Rica have now agreed to the approval of the transfer and Mr. Green will be back in Canada shortly.

* * *

JOB CREATION

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, for the last 10 days the minister of human resources has been asked to account for the scandals with his transitional jobs fund.

Millions of dollars of job creation money has been wasted for politics. One hundred and twenty-four jobs have been lost, one million dollars has been lost on BPS, one-third of a million dollars has been lost on Cape Shore Sea Foods. Ten days have come and gone. Pleading ignorance will not do. What is the minister's excuse?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no scandal. The member has been making false statements in the House all the time saying that the Cape Shore people had not been paid a cent. They have been paid for seven months by our program.

The vast exaggerations the member is bringing to the House are not going to change our mind. We have gone through serious assessments of the transitional job fund and we are very proud that out of 700 projects there were perhaps problems in 6 or 7 of them that did not work.

* * *

[Translation]

MAPLE SYRUP INDUSTRY

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last February 16, the Minister of Human Resources Development announced the creation of a \$40 million fund for special employment measures, in response to the consequences of the ice storm.

At this time, the fund has been exhausted and not all maple syrup producers have received the announced assistance, despite the government's commitments.

When and how does the minister intend to come to the assistance of the 600 maple syrup producers in the Montérégie and central Quebec regions whose trees are endangered by his inaction?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as soon as the ice storm was over, everyone commented on how extremely efficient and prompt our government was in implementing a \$40 million emergency fund, to which we added subsequently and which was intended particularly to assist maple syrup producers and others in difficulty because of the ice storm.

The fund was so popular that, in Quebec, we exceeded the envelope that we had in mind when the fund was announced. This shows how well the program worked.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has yet to take action and seek reparations for the 26 RCAF officers condemned by the Nazis to Buchenwald concentration camp.

Governments of 19 other countries have taken action, yet this Liberal government sits alone and silent still, assessing after so many years.

My question is to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Will this government take action now on behalf of these men who served Canada, yes or no? Justice delayed is justice denied.

Hon. Fred Mifflin (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I know he has taken this on as an issue for veterans.

We were made aware of this fairly recently. I think we are all appalled by the idea that this has not been addressed until recently although it dates back over 50 years.

As the advocate for veterans, I will work very closely with my colleagues to get all the information and do the proper research so that appropriate action will be taken in a timely manner.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

The last two plane crashes in Canada occurred at Fredericton and Clarenville, Newfoundland and neither plane was equipped with an

emergency locator transmitter, one because it was not required to in the first place and the other because it was removed for service.

Now that several weeks have passed since the last crash will the minister tell the House what new regulations he has introduced regarding emergency locator transmitters, and will he give his assurance that all scheduled passenger flights in Canada will have emergency locator transmitters, which I understand cost approximately \$500?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate accident in Fredericton did give witness to the fact that there were some improvements needed to aviation safety. That is why I appointed Dr. Vervon Grose, an expert from the United States, who will be reporting to me within the next week on various aspects of airline safety.

On the specific question with respect to the transmitters, the hon. member is right. There will be regulatory changes put in place very shortly that will make it compulsory on all planes.

* * *

• (1500)

JUSTICE

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent years many disturbing property crimes occurred in B.C. such as home invasion, mugging and robbing of homeowners.

Yesterday the government announced our crime prevention initiative. Could the Minister of Justice inform the House how this initiative will assist our communities to prevent such crimes?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a government that puts the protection of society first. It is also a government that believes the prevention of crime in the first place is the best way to protect society.

That is why my colleague, the solicitor general, and I announced the government's new crime prevention initiative yesterday. It involves 32 million new dollars to work with local communities to get at the root causes of crime—

Some hon. members: Order.

The Speaker: The minister still has some time if she wants to use it.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of the House to take this opportunity to work with their local communities to develop grassroots crime prevention strategies.

Points of Order

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Sergio Luis Henriquez Diaz, Minister for Housing and Urban Development of Chile.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMENTS DURING QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the heat of debate and my answer I confused the name of two companies. I meant to say that it was BPS Imaging that has been paying its 121 workers for seven months, not Cape Shore.

I want to correct the record. The TJF is a very successful program for which we have leveraged a lot of private—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

THE ATLANTIC GROUND FISH STRATEGY

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland is now in possession of the government's post-TAG policy even though this policy has not been presented in the House. There has been no tabling of a document and no ministerial statement.

• (1505)

The government has broken an important convention of the House that any policy involving public expenditures must be presented in the House first. It breaks with the specific pledge by the Minister of Human Resources Development to develop the post-TAGS policy in the House.

The Speaker: As I have on many occasions, I encourage all hon. members that if they are to make reports they should be done in the House if at all possible.

I do not know of the circumstances but once again I urge all hon. members, if they have reports or statements to make which are germane to the House, to do them here.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. The government has not made an announcement in that regard.

Any consultations the federal government may have or has had with its provincial counterparts to elaborate a policy is strictly that if in fact the provinces have in their possession such a document.

Routine Proceedings

I would hope that all parties in the House would support the government in attempting to negotiate and to co-operate with provincial counterparts. Heaven forbid that one of us in the House would think the opposite.

The Speaker: I think we are getting a bit into debate here. We have heard from two interveners. I would find that it is not a point of order.

I have reiterated what I would hope would happen in the House. I would like to let it sit at this point.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

TOBACCO ACT

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of proposed tobacco regulations concerning seizure and restoration and copies of proposed tobacco access regulations.

* * *

[Translation]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table in the House today, in both official languages, a number of order in council appointments which were recently made by the government.

Pursuant to Standing Order 110(1), these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 19 petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian section of the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians, as well as the financial report of the meeting of the IAFSP political and administrative committee, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, April 16 and 17, 1998.

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 34th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the allowances of members of the House.

I intend to move concurrence in this report later this day.

* * *

• (1510)

TOBACCO ACT

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-42, an act to amend the Tobacco Act.

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

* * *

LOUIS RIEL ACT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-417, an act respecting Louis Riel.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill is the result of many years of hard work by dozens and dozens of people: representatives of the Riel family, Metis leaders from across Canada, members of the House, lawyers, historians, and even a former chief justice of Manitoba.

The bill will not bring Louis Riel back to life. Nor does it change our history. What it will do is change our heritage, change what we learn from our history. It will do this by removing the stain of treason from Louis Riel's name.

At this time I ask for unanimous consent of the House, because of the unique nature of the bill, to broaden the names of the list of members supporting the bill.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The hon. member will now read the names and then we will take it from there.

Mr. Reg Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I served notice to all the House leaders and I appreciate their agreement.

Routine Proceedings

Because of the unique nature of private members' bills in that they stand in one person's name, I would like to add the names of Mr. Denis Coderre, the member for Bourassa; Val Meredith, the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley; Suzanne Tremblay, the member for Rimouski—Mitis; Lorne Nystrom, the member for Qu'Appelle; and Rick Borotsik, the member for Brandon—Souris.

The Speaker: Does the House agree to proceed in such a way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to make clear that this is in no way an agreement by all parties. It is just the individuals who are referred to on that bill.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX CONVENTIONS IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 1998

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-16, an act to implement an agreement between Canada and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, an agreement between Canada and the Republic of Croatia and a convention between Canada and the Republic of Chile for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that you would find consent in the House to concur without debate in the 34th Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

• (1515)

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have hundreds of petitions to present on behalf of my constituents. The petitioners want to draw the following to the

attention of the House: That the visa requirement between Canada and Poland is becoming a barrier in furthering economic and social development between the two countries; that the visa requirement hinders potential growth in business for about 500,000 Canadians of Polish origin living in Canada; and that there would be vast improvement in economic, political and social relations between Canada and Poland if legislative measures were taken.

Therefore, the petitioners ask that parliament take action in the near future to eliminate the visa requirement between Canada and Poland.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from a number of people from my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster who wish parliament to enact Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act and the Interpretation Act so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single man and a single female.

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise to present a petition that calls upon parliament to amend the Canada Labour Code, Part I, to prevent any disruptions in essential services to the gulf ferry service as a result of strikes or lockouts and to ask Transport Canada for an increase in the federal funding available to Marine Atlantic for this essential service.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of 49 constituents of the riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands. The petitioners request that parliament support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of an international convention which will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

SENIORS BENEFIT

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present this petition which was given to me by a seniors group at Royal Leigh in Wyoming. The petition is signed by the citizens of Petrolia, Sarnia, Wyoming, Kitchener and Cambridge. The petitioners call upon parliament to change the seniors benefit so as not to remove incentives such as RRSPs which encourage Canadians to save for their retirement.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present this petition on behalf of my constituents. The petitioners call upon parliament to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of consent for sexual activity between a young person and an adult from 14 years to 16 years.

Routine Proceedings

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition which calls upon parliament to impose a moratorium on Canadian participation in the MAI negotiation until a full public debate on the proposed treaty has taken place across the country so that all Canadians may have the opportunity to express their opinions and to decide on the advisability of proceeding with the multilateral agreement on investment.

MARRIAGE

Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition from people in Wilberforce, Highland Grove and Tory Hill. The petitioners call upon parliament to support Bill C-225, an act to amend the Marriage Act and the Interpretation Act so as to define in statute that a marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female.

• (1520)

TOBACCO

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36. The petition is presented on behalf of Canadians from all across this country.

The petitioners point out that tobacco products cause addiction, cancer, emphysema, heart disease and early death. They show that the World Health Organization recommends a total ban on tobacco sponsorship advertising and refer to a number of countries where laws have been passed banning all sponsorship advertising. They show that tobacco sponsorship advertising is a way for tobacco companies to associate a positive lifestyle image with a deadly product.

They call upon this parliament to reject any bill which would weaken the sponsorship provisions in the Tobacco Act.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present two petitions from over 60 residents of the riding of St. Paul's and the greater Toronto area.

The petitioners call upon the government to enhance funding for the Canadian Multicentre Osteoporosis Study through the Medical Research Council.

It is important that this study receive adequate funding, as health care restructuring has limited access to care providers and rehabilitation programs for those injured or debilitated by osteoporosis.

The petitioners believe that it is important that everyone be protected from the effects of broken bones and the crippling effects of osteoporosis.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, which is signed by a group of constituents from British Columbia who are deeply troubled by the government's plans to continue with the MAI negotiations in October. They point out a vast number of reasons for which they think the MAI is not in the best interests of Canada and Canadian sovereignty.

The petitioners ask parliament to reject the current framework of the MAI negotiations and instruct the government to seek an entirely different agreement by which the world might achieve a rules based global economic regime for trading that protects workers, the environment and the ability of governments to act in the public interest.

SENIORS BENEFITS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition which I wish to present is signed by constituents who are deeply concerned with and indeed very troubled by the government's intention to change the retirement system even further. The petitioners are concerned about all of the rumours and speculation floating around about these draconian changes and simply ask that the government not proceed until full and complete public hearings are held so that seniors from across the country and others have a chance for full input into this decision.

INCOME TAX

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a third petition which I wish to present to the House today.

The petitioners say that they have just filled out their tax returns and feel that the tax system is basically rotten. They want the government to undertake complete tax reform.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have oodles of petitions from hundreds of Canadians who are protesting the stance that the Canadian government has taken with respect to the multilateral agreement on investment. The petitioners are opposed to the MAI.

They celebrate the fact that the MAI has been stalled, but through these petitions and others they urge the government to reconsider its position on the MAI. They call upon parliament to reject the current framework of MAI negotiations and to instruct the government to seek an entirely different agreement by which the world might achieve a rules based global trading regime that protects workers, the environment and the ability of governments to act in the public interest.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[English]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise with respect to the delay of the government in answering Motion No. P-8.

Motion No. P-8 deals with the Bombardier NATO pilot training contract. I have raised this request on the Order Paper for the last seven months and I have raised four previous points of order on the matter.

I sincerely hope that the auditor general's investigation is not going to be stonewalled like I have been. I demand that Motion No. P-8 be called.

Motion No. P-8

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documentation related to the awarding of a 20-year deal with Bombardier Inc. to train Canadian and allied fighter pilots in the NATO Flying Training in Canada program.

The Deputy Speaker: Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-8, in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, will be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

• (1525)

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-19 to be called.

Motion No. P-19

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of a poll referred to by the Prime Minister during question period on May 5, 1998 in which he stated that "Only 10% of Canadians think the Reform Party members are doing this because they are compassionate but 75% of Canadians think they are doing it for politics."

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Coquihalla, I would like Motion No. P-18 to be called.

Motion No. P-18

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of the Corrections Canada report into the 24-hour delay by Corrections Canada officials in reporting the disappearance of Kevin Machell from day parole on September 6, 1997.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-25 to be called.

Motion No. P-25

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House a copy of all correspondence, notes, minutes of meetings, and briefings between the Government of Canada and SNC-Lavalin, Bombardier Inc., AGRA Moneco Inc., GEC Alsthom Canada, Axor and Ellis-Don concerning a potential high speed-rail service in the Toronto-Quebec City corridor.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Randy White: Mr. Speaker, would it not be easier if they just answered our questions?

I would like Motion No. P-26 to be called.

Motion No. P-26

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence and invoices relating to the request for approval of construction made for a golf driving range made by the warden of the Ferndale Penitentiary.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motions Nos. P-21 and P-22 to be called.

Motion No. P-21

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence relating to the Privy Council-led group entitled "Option Canada" from 1994 onwards.

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Motion No. P-22

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, polls and correspondence relating to the Calgary Declaration.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that these Motions for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: These motions are transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-27 to be called on behalf of the residents of Langley—Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Motion No. P-27

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence and invoices relating to the construction of a golf driving range at the Ferndale Penitentiary.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Productions of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-28 to be called.

Motion No. P-28

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence and invoices relating to senior citizen access to the nine-hole golf course at the Ferndale Penitentiary.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Is it agreed that the remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***JUDGES ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Judges Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are two motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Judges Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

[Translation]

Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted on separately.

[English]

Motion No. 2 will be debated and voted on separately.

[Translation]

I am now going to put Motion No. 1 to the House.

• (1530)

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-37 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-37 is to amend the Judges Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

The Bloc Québécois is generally in favour of this bill, but has many reservations about certain aspects of it. The motion I am moving calls for the deletion of clause 5 which, in my view and in the view of the Bloc Québécois, gives unreasonable salary increases to judges, in light of the financial situation and the cutbacks that have taken place in various departments and sectors in Canada and Quebec.

I see no need for a 40-minute speech about this. It is very easily understood and I will give figures to make it clear.

My motion reads as follows:

That Bill C-37 be amended by deleting Clause 5.

If members examine the bill, they will see that clause 5 deals with the determination of judges' salaries after June 1, 1997.

In committee, an attempt was made to convince me that Bill C-37 is not a retroactive bill. An attempt was made to convince me that judges in courts under federal jurisdiction, that is the Quebec Superior Court, the Ontario Supreme Court, appeal courts, as well as the Supreme Court of Canada, were not being given a retroactive increase.

If members read clause 5, however, they will clearly see that the period used to determine the salary goes back to April 1, 1997. The government should be aware that it is now June 3, 1998 and that this bill has not yet been passed. In other words, when it is passed, judges' salaries will be determined retroactive to April 1, 1997.

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The poor judges did not have a big enough increase. Under the Judges Act, they received an increase of 2.08% on April 1, 1997 and of 2.08% on April 1, 1998. However, the government in its great wisdom thought it a good idea to ask a committee to look into judges salaries.

A report was released—the Scott report. From it and its study the government is proposing, in addition to the 2.08% for two years, an additional increase for the judges of 4.1% as of April 1, 1997 and 4.1% as of April 1, 1998. Thus, once parliament passes Bill C-37—today or in a week from now, it does not much matter—the judges will have a retroactive salary increase of some 13.8%, if we add up all the percentages.

For someone earning \$25,000, 13.8% is not a whole lot. But federal judges currently earn, before the increase, between \$165,000 and \$210,000. That means that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, because he earns the most and it is the highest court as well, earns about \$210,000 today. The 13.8% increase amounts to between \$25,000 and \$27,000—I do not have the calculations here—in retroactive increases as of April 1, 1998.

• (1535)

I do not think such increases are justified at the moment. Do not get me wrong. I am not saying that the judges of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Superior Court, the Court of Appeal or whatever do not deserve a salary increase. That is not what I am saying. I am saying that, right now, with the state of public finances and the terrible cuts the government opposite is imposing on the most disadvantaged, a salary increase of about 13% for people earning \$165,000 to \$210,000 is indecent.

While the government will have cut over \$30 billion in transfer payments by 2003, it is considering increasing the salary of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada by \$25,000 to \$27,000. While the government is pocketing approximately \$700,000 an hour with the employment insurance plan we discussed last week and again this week, accumulating a surplus in excess of \$19 billion—

Mr. Yvan Loubier: That it will pocket.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: That it will pocket. A 13.8% wage increase is contemplated for judges.

On the one hand, cuts are made in health and in transfer payments to the provinces for education, but on the other hand, a 13.8% wage increase is contemplated for judges.

Frankly, I think this is not the right time to give them a raise, the same way it is not the right time to give one to government employees. In the committee, judges were compared to senior government officials for the purpose of increasing their wages. In a

few weeks or months, senior government officials will compare themselves to judges to get a raise. Where will this all end?

At present, we have good, well paid judges, earning between \$165,000 and \$210,000, plus a number of paid expenses like the ones the members of this House and the Prime Minister get. Perhaps the Prime Minister is not paid well enough, but we must also look at who is paid for the zero deficit the government has been so eager to achieve and rightly so.

Each of us must do our part. I do not think that it is appropriate to give the judges a raise on top of the one already provided for, because the existing legislation does provide for a raise for them, while many people have not had any raise in recent years. Under the Judges Act, they already have a 2.08% increase. I believe 2% is within the normal range, and reasonable.

But to add onto that, under the bill we have before us, 4.1% effective April 1, 1997 and another 4.1% effective April 1, 1998, is unreasonable in my opinion.

Mr. Yvan Loubier: That is four times the inflation rate.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: My colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot tells me it is four times the inflation rate. I think this should be taken into consideration, given his expertise in the matter. I am sure the government did not take it into consideration and, since we now say this is four times inflation, I think this is one more argument in support of my calling it unreasonable.

Since I have only one minute left, I would like to make it clear that, if we are to have quality judges, they must be paid accordingly. But I believe that a salary of \$165,000 to \$210,000 is plenty to ensure that we get judges of the quality we have at present. I have practiced law and I am the justice critic. I am very attentive to their rulings and I believe that, at the present time, the salary judges get is sufficient to get quality judges.

• (1540)

I am sure that members discuss these appointments within the Liberal Party. We know how appointments work in the judiciary, they are political appointments. If members look at the list of people waiting to be judges, they will agree with me that all of them feel that a salary of \$165,000 to \$210,000 is sufficient.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is well aware, since he sits on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, this issue was discussed on a number of occasions when we reviewed the bill.

The government is following up on the recommendation made by an independent commission appointed by Parliament, the Scott commission. Such commissions play an important role, that is to preserve public confidence in the independence of the courts. This

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is a role to which the Supreme Court of Canada gave constitutional stature in a recent decision.

We took a very close look at the recommendations of the Scott commission, and we decided to follow up on the ones we felt were legitimate, which include raising the salaries of judges.

Judges are not considered public servants, even though they are paid by the Treasury Board. Canadian judges must receive an adequate salary that reflects the importance of their role in our society and the constraints related to their responsibilities.

In determining whether the recommendation was reasonable, the Scott commission—which, again, was an independent commission—took into consideration the specific constitutional role of the judiciary and other factors, such as the need to attract and to keep the best qualified candidates to carry out the responsibilities of a judge.

I want the House to know that there is a procedure in place, but it is not political one, contrary to what the hon. member suggested. Indeed, there is an independent commission which submits to the minister the names of the best qualified people.

Judges also made a contribution to the reduction of the government deficit, since their salaries have been frozen since 1992. The increase provided in Bill C-37 only applies in the future. I repeat, judges should be recruited from various groups, including lawyers in private practice.

Considering the salaries paid to lawyers in private practice, we have to be able to attract the best lawyers. We want our courts to be run by the most qualified people in Canada. The salaries paid to judges simply do not compare with those paid to lawyers.

Still, we will have to offer salaries that will not deter the best candidates from applying. The proposed raise, recommended by the Scott commission, will bring judges' salaries in line with those of senior deputy ministers. For example, on April 1, 1997, a deputy minister at the DM3 equivalent level was paid between \$140,000 and \$170,000. The lowest salary a judge could earn is \$165,500. As of April 1, 1998, public servants received a 5% salary increase. Their salaries are now between \$173,000 and \$203,000. For judges, it amounts to almost \$176,000. This compares reasonably, given their level of responsibility.

We could talk a little about salary increases approved in some provinces. I will give a few examples. For Newfoundland, the rate of increase is 13%. For Saskatchewan, it is 16%; for Nova Scotia, it is 25%. For Newfoundland, as I said, it is 13%. I must add that for Newfoundland—

• (1545)

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur: And Quebec?

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: I am coming to Quebec.

For Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, this increase is retroactive. For the other two it is not.

As for Quebec, if my information is correct, a committee is now looking at judges' salaries. There has been no increase since 1992. The salary of the chief justice of the Court of Quebec is \$132,786, and that of the associate chief justice \$130,516. As I said, there has been no increase yet because it is before a parliamentary committee. We do not know the percentage increase.

I would once again like to emphasize that the government looked carefully at the recommendations of the Scott commission and that it was guided by them in its recommendations to committee members. If we wish to attract the best candidates to judgeships, and I repeat that we want the judiciary to be independent, I think that these recommendations are very reasonable.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the motivation for this bill is very unusual. I want to speak to this bill and to this particular amendment.

I begin by pointing out to the House that when this bill was before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights only two witnesses appeared. We had Mr. David W. Scott, the author of the Scott report which had the recommendations that my hon. colleague across the way referred to, and we had the commissioner for federal judicial affairs. Only two witnesses.

We had asked for other witnesses. We asked for two constitutional lawyers who would have been able to answer some of the questions I had concerning the contents of the bill and the motivation for the bill. Even though the committee had time we were denied that. It had originally scheduled time to hear 10 witnesses. It appears that at least six refused to appear to give testimony to the committee on this bill. The witnesses we had asked for were not asked to attend. This was a decision made by the Liberal majority on the committee.

What do we have in this bill? I support my hon. colleague's motion. I will not spend as much time as my colleagues and others in this House will on the raises the judges will be receiving if this bill is passed without this particular amendment.

Over the next two years, the Chief Justice of Canada will receive a \$17,000 increase in pay. The other justices will receive the same. The chief justice and associate chief justice of the Federal Court and Tax Court of Canada will receive a \$15,000 increase in pay. Justices of the federal court will receive \$13,000. When we get to the superior courts, the chief justice and associate chief justice will receive a \$15,000 increase in pay over the next two years. Justices of the superior court will receive a \$13,000 increase.

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I agree with my hon. colleague that that is quite a raise in pay, considering that at this particular time there are families with children who are struggling to make ends meet. They are making \$35,000 and less. The chief justices now make \$208,200. Other justices of the Supreme Court of Canada make \$192,000. I think a lot of Canadians would agree that that is a pretty comfortable salary.

• (1550)

Yes we have to attract top qualified people to the courts but nevertheless this is a subject that should be discussed in this House. I think my hon. colleague brought forward this amendment for that very purpose, to enable this matter to be looked at and debated and not rushed through this House unexamined as the bill was rushed through the justice committee.

I want to touch for a moment on the motivation for this bill in the first place. It was motivated by a ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada on the P.E.I. and Alberta cases where it was determined that a commission must be set up by all provincial governments as well as the federal government to examine the benefits and pay of judges. Recommendations must go to the government.

The problem with this is that it has been determined, if I understand correctly and I believe that I do, that if the government of a province or the federal government does not follow through with the recommendation, it can be taken to court. It can go to the Supreme Court of Canada. If the decision of the supreme court indicates that the decision of that government is not reasonable and that the raise or other benefits should be provided, that can be construed as interference by the Government of Canada or the government of a province into the judicial independence of the courts.

When I read Justice LaForest's dissenting opinion he said clearly what I think the common sense of this country would support. He indicated that any interference in any decision by any government, whether federal or provincial, that deals with judges pay or benefits that is not satisfactory to a court, including the supreme court of this country, ought not to be considered as an interference with the judicial independence of the court.

There is another area of grave concern which this bill raises. If the Parliament of Canada goes along with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, there is also an interference, an abridgement or an encroachment upon the supremacy of parliament to tax because the pay of judges comes from the public purse.

Suppose that the economic conditions of this country are such that everyone must take a pay reduction and the courts feel that that pay reduction is unacceptable or unfair, their subjective assessment is that it is not fair. According to that decision if the governments of this land do not want to face the consequences of the inference that that decision to reduce their pay interferes with the judicial

independence of the court, then they are going to have to be guided by a decision of the court to tax the people in order to pay their salaries and benefits.

This is wrong. I agree with the dissenting opinion of Judge LaForest in this particular area. For the House of Commons to bring in this kind of bill in response to that decision of the Supreme Court of Canada is wrong as well. When they do that and refuse to bring in witnesses who could address some of the concerns that I and other members of the committee and perhaps this House have on that issue, this is wrong again.

• (1555)

What we are seeing is an encroachment by the powers of the judiciary into the supremacy of parliament not only to pass laws but also in the area of taxation. This is very serious. This is why I cannot support this bill.

My recommendation to members of the House, certainly my caucus but the rest of the members of this House is that we had better examine this very carefully because of the consequences of moving in concert with that judgment. If it is not challenged, where is it going to end?

I see that my time is up. I appreciate the indulgence of the Chair and the House. I will continue my debate when we arrive at the next amendment to this bill.

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too rise to address the motion before the House. I indicate to the House that we will be supporting the motion from my colleague from the Bloc Quebecois.

I listened carefully when the member was presenting his arguments for this motion. He argued against an increase at this point in time for the members of the judiciary which this act to amend the Judges Act provides for. I concur with him on all of those remarks.

When this bill was first introduced in the House, I spoke against the bill. I said that at this point in time it was essential that moneys be returned to the provinces for support for those who are working in the courts.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice stood up and quoted statistics from other provinces. She said that there has been an increase in judicial salaries, and quoted my home province of Nova Scotia and said some 20% or 25%. She is right.

On Monday of this week I walked the picket lines with the crown attorneys for the province of Nova Scotia. They did not want to stop working but after four years of negotiations with the provincial government they could get nowhere in terms of talking about support services. They took the extraordinary step of work stoppage, of not attending court on Monday and Tuesday of this week. That is an extraordinary event in the history of my province.

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On my way here today to speak to this bill, in fact walking across the street I was speaking on a cellphone with a lawyer in the Nova Scotia legal aid system. That lawyer has not been in court the last three days. It is because the judges have just received their 25% increase in salary and are on a judges conference. That lawyer cannot deal with the crushing caseload that has ended up on his desk in the last few days. It is to the point where they are spending their time answering complaints that have been written to their superiors. They do not have time to return calls. They do not have time to answer letters. They do not have the resources to cope with the crushing burden that the courts are faced with.

One of the examples that the crown prosecutors used is that they are still keeping file stats on those they are prosecuting on recipe cards. They do not have access to the Internet. They do not have up to date computers on their desks.

I know these matters all fall under provincial jurisdiction.

An hon. member: Right.

Mr. Peter Mancini: The hon. member from the government says right.

But the reality is that the reason these dedicated public servants cannot access money from their provincial governments is that her government has cut the payments to the provinces for the last four years. This government has cut and cut and downloaded on the provinces. She sits there proud of that, laughs and takes pleasure in it.

These people cannot perform their functions but the money can be found to provide substantial increases for the federally appointed judges to the extent of over 8%. It is a substantial increase given the crushing burden that those who serve the public in the provinces are facing.

• (1600)

The parliamentary secretary talked a little about the appointment process which she defended. I questioned the Minister of Justice on this issue when she was before the standing committee on justice. She said there are committees in place and there is wide consultation. She is right that there are committees in place. It has been some time since I looked at the last committee in my own province. When I looked that committee was composed of a former campaign manager for the individual who had been the Liberal cabinet minister from my province.

I come from a small community where people wear their political affiliations on their sleeves so I knew who sat on that committee, I knew who was likely to get appointed. The last federally appointed justice was a good friend of mine and a good

fellow. He had also been the collector of campaign contributions for the same cabinet minister.

That is not to say there are not good judges. I do not want to mislead the House or anyone who reads this. There are some very good judges who work long hours and deal with difficult cases and make good law. But there are some other judges. Part of the problem in the Judges Act is that there is no mechanism to keep in check or to make accountable or to separate the good judges from the bad or to separate those who are political appointees who do not perform their functions well from those appointees who go above and beyond their necessary work.

I thank the hon. member from the Bloc for bringing forward his amendment. I will be supporting it, because I think at this point it sends the wrong message. If the courts are struggling, as they are, with a backlog of cases and if the individuals going before the courts have not had increases, the lawyers I have mentioned, the crown attorneys and the legal aid lawyers, have had their wages either frozen or rolled back for nine years. At this point to suggest the judiciary ought to receive this salary increase is difficult for the morale of those who work in the courts and it sends the wrong message. And so I will be supporting my colleague's amendment.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion No. 1 which would amend Bill C-37 by deleting clause 5, a clause that outlines the calculation of a judge's salary for the 12 months commencing April 1, 1997 and April 1, 1998. Not only should this clause be deleted but the whole bill should be deleted.

This is the third time the Liberals have amended the all important Judges Act. During the last parliament in 1996 they introduced Bill C-2 and Bill C-42, both which were inconsequential pieces of legislation of little significance to Canadians who were more concerned about their safety.

Here we are again spending precious time on judges' salaries and benefits when this Liberal government has failed to introduce anything that addresses the victims bill of right or the Young Offenders Act. They failed to limit the use of conditional sentences for violent offenders. They have failed in so much and here we are debating this kind of bill regarding judges' salaries.

It occupies the justice committee's valuable time with these administrative matters at the expense of more important issues like amending laws on drinking and driving or a lot of things that would so much more protect society. That whole thing has to change. At the heart of this legislation is that it increases judges' salaries retroactively from April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998 by 4.1% and by an additional 4.1% from April 1 1998 to March 31, 1999. In other words they will get an 8.2% increase over two years. I understand the average salary of a judge is approximately \$140,000. This will

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mean the average will go up to in excess of \$151,000. That is a substantial increase. The salaries are \$208,200, \$192,900, \$177,700, \$162,300, another \$177,700.

• (1605)

Those wages are going to go up in the amounts that were described by my colleague from Crowfoot. They are going to end up really making big bucks.

The whole thing that is really perturbing about this is that we have people called public servants who have not received a pay raise for a long time, certainly not a pay raise of 8.2%.

This government continually awards judges and senior bureaucrats, including its own ministers, with large pay raises and bonuses while frontline police officers and low level public servants receive little to nothing. This government does not care about frontline peace officers who risk their lives every day to protect Canadians. It does not care about the lowly prison guards who put their lives on the line constantly, every time they show up and go to work in these penitentiaries. They are at high risk and we do not talk about a retroactive pay raise for them. That would be the wildest of dreams to these people. These frontline workers have not had a pay raise for many years and here we are talking about the elite once again getting more money.

I have seen Liberals in this House, including the two who are here now, at one time or another every week since 1993, through a member's statement or through some kind of process, bringing forth the topic about the millions of children, thousands and thousands of families suffering in this country, living below the poverty line, having a tough time making ends meet. Some of these raises are \$17,000 or \$15,000. I know people with families of two or three children trying to get by on a salary that big, let alone an increase.

These members keep talking about what a shame it is and that we have to do something about it. Here it is 1998 and they have done diddly squat. They have not done one thing to help the people who are living in poverty. Those same numbers are still out there. People are still suffering. Young families are still being evicted from their homes because they cannot meet the high rents now or they cannot meet the mortgage payments. People are eating meals that would not even compare to half as good as what prisoners in penitentiaries get. People are not able to play in a big park or shoot pool or take in any movies because they cannot afford to go out.

We spend time with legislation that says to people who are drawing anywhere from \$170,000 to \$200,000 and down to \$130,000 that we have to do something for them, we have to get them a raise. What kind of hypocrisy is that?

I will almost guarantee that before we leave here some Liberal member will stand and boldly say we must do something about the poverty in our land and help these people who are suffering.

I am really getting tired of their constantly making those kinds of statements and then turning around and taking \$25 million to give away free flags and saying "aren't I a nice girl?" or boy, or whatever.

In the meantime, imagine what \$25 million would do for children on the streets of Ottawa and how people who work in child services and in child poverty situations would love to have a little teeny chunk of that \$25 million. I do not understand where they are coming from. The last thing we should ever talk about is how much more money we should make in a raise without addressing the problems that face this country because of poverty stricken people.

• (1610)

For that reason alone it is a really sad day. It is of extreme importance, though, that judges' needs be met. We have to address this issue immediately. I do not know what their needs are. I would like to have a little problem with some of those needs. I do not understand.

We hear about all these difficulties. Why are we not addressing that? Why are we not standing to talk about those who are genuinely suffering out there instead of talking about things like this? It is because we have a greedy Liberal government in charge. It is all yap, yap, yap. It talks but does not act.

It acts all right. It acts on giving judges raises. I know some fine judges, people who work hard in their profession and they deserve to be paid for what they are worth. But I also know what some of these fine judges would say, "why do we not try to help out some of these people who are standing in my court every day because poverty sent a lot of them there?". Why do we not do that? Because it is not in the Liberal philosophy. They all went to university. Most of them are lawyers. They majored in bleeding heart 101 and tear drop 102 and they do not think of anything but themselves, so it is difficult for them to understand.

The Minister of Justice is able to table a copy of the commission report but parliament is given no opportunity to respond. This is the reason for my honourable colleague from Crowfoot's motion that is coming up next to rectify this situation.

The creation of this commission also provides the federal government with, guess what, more opportunities for good old fat cat patronage appointments, making more positions available to those little boys and girls out there in our wide country who have been good little Liberals. What a sick way to run things. It is absolutely pathetic.

That member over there talking now and heckling would stand on her feet and say is it not a shame we have all these starving children. If it is a shame, she should get up and say cancel these things and let us look after the real needs of people instead of heckling over whether judges should get pay raises. Here we go again, patronage heaven coming back.

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Liberal philosophy has to go, and the sooner the better.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak on this motion from my colleagues from the Bloc, which I will be supporting.

My colleague from Wild Rose just asked what are the needs of these judges. One judge in Alberta said he should be able to go on holiday every year. That is their need.

When I ran in the election to represent the people of Calgary East they told me I was the custodian of tax dollars. "Remember we elected you, we who every day go to work and come home and who have not seen a pay raise for a long time, who have a hard time putting food on the table". They represent small business. They represent workers. The average earnings in my riding are not more than \$30,000. Lots will do with less than \$17,000.

I am here representing them and therefore I cannot agree to this substantial increase that would be granted to judges. The money being granted here, as many colleagues of mine have pointed out, a \$17,000 increase over two years, would feed a lot of families in my riding. A lot of families earn less than that. Here we are giving a substantial increase to judges who, by all standards, are earning a reasonable and fair wage.

• (1615)

The parliamentary secretary said it was the right time for such an increase. Is it really the right time for such an increase when increases have been frozen and workers have received an average increase of 2%? Here we are proposing increases of 4.1% for one year and 4.1% for the second year, which will be retroactive. Nobody is offering retroactive pay to the workers who are fighting for an increase. Why are the judges being offered this?

In all aspects, morally and everything else, this substantial increase is not, in my view, an acceptable situation.

As my colleague from Wild Rose said, I have a lot of friends who are judges. They do a tremendous job. My speech is not an attack on judges. What I am talking about here today is this reprehensible increase that has been given to judges in such a short time. It is a huge amount of money which will be spent at a time when we could better utilize the money for other causes which need urgent attention, as my colleague has suggested.

The member is right to ask why we are debating this issue. Why are we debating in the House of Commons a bill which will give Canada's elite, who are already earning a reasonable and fair sum of money, an increase that under any normal Canadian circumstance is way out of line.

The bill also recommends the creation of a judicial compensation and benefits commission. If we are to rely on anything that the government has done in the past, we can bet there will be some Liberal appointees on that commission. This is just another patronage appointment commission being formed by this government.

This increase, averaging \$13,000, within such a short period of time is not a reasonable increase. It is actually an unreasonable increase. I find it extremely hard to swallow. If I went back to my riding and told working Canadians that I approved an increase of \$13,000 for judges, they would look at me and ask "Where do you live? Do you live in Canada? Do you live in this riding? Why are you supporting the elite receiving such a substantial sum of money?"

We all recognize the job the judiciary is doing and the fine work the judges are doing and we agree that they should be compensated fairly. Nobody has a quarrel or an argument with that, but we certainly do have a major difficulty when it comes to such a substantial increase in such a short period of time. It should not surprise me that this is coming from a government that knows how to compensate its friends and the elite in this country.

• (1620)

The Reform Party would like to reform the appointment process for judges by removing the patronage appointment process. Of course the parliamentary secretary, who is sitting over there, would not agree with that because she is one of the people who proposed these increases for her friends.

The Reform Party would like to reform the patronage appointment process by making it more transparent and publicly accountable. If we did that, fair compensation for judges would also become transparent. That is the key. The most important aspect is that compensation for judges should become more transparent.

Therefore, I will wholeheartedly support Motion No. 1, put forward by my colleague from the Bloc, to amend the bill by deleting clause 5.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I wish I could say that it is a pleasure for me to rise today to address the report stage of Bill C-37, but I must confess that following my comments and the comments of others when it was before the House for second reading, I had hoped the government might rethink this legislation instead of bringing it back.

Today I am here to speak to Motion No. 1, which was put forward by my colleague from the Bloc Quebecois. The motion would amend Bill C-37 by deleting clause 5. We have heard previous speakers address this particular clause because it is controversial. I certainly feel that it is controversial insofar as it deals specifically with an increase in judges' salaries. It is duly noted that judges, on average, make about \$140,000 a year. This will amount to an 8.3% increase over the next couple of years.

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When I rose to speak to Bill C-37 the last time it was before the House I noted that it was April 1. I thought it was perhaps a cruel April Fool's joke which had been foisted upon the Canadian public by the government of this country at a time when Canadians were increasingly concerned about judgments that were being brought down by the justices of Canada. Rather than debating some of the judgments, which I feel quite confident do not carry the judgment of the Canadian people, we find ourselves today, as we did on April 1, discussing a very substantial salary increase, amongst other things, in Bill C-37.

As other speakers from the opposition have noted, I support the motion put forward by the hon. member of the Bloc Quebecois to entirely delete clause 5, which would increase judges' salaries, at least at this particular time. As I did at second reading, I would draw the comparison for the viewing public at home between the salary increases for judges and the more recent salary increases that were granted to our RCMP officers. Those increases amounted to a mere 2%, which was retroactive to January 1, and a subsequent 1% increase on April 1, which, ironically, was the day we were debating the second reading stage of this bill. Another .75% will become due to the Mounties on October 1.

The starting salary for a third year constable will go from \$50,500 to a little better than \$52,000. These are the people who every day put their lives on the line to protect society, yet we find that in the eyes of this particular government they only warrant a small increase. The judges, who increasingly are returning violent convicted criminals back to the streets, will enjoy this 8.3% increase over the next two years.

• (1625)

As a number of my colleagues have indicated, I want to put it on the record that I am not casting aspersions upon all justices. That is not the case. We had somewhat of a heated debate on April 1 when certain members of the government felt that the official opposition, the Reform Party, in citing certain examples of judgements that have come down were doing exactly that. I want to say at the outset that is not the case.

It has been indicated by a number of my colleagues in the Reform Party that many of the judges in Canada today, both at the provincial and federal level, do great work. They bring down many judgments which carry the confidence of the Canadian people. However, unfortunately, a lot of them do not.

In referring to this issue today I would like to mention three cases that happened either in my riding of Prince George—Peace River or very near to it.

The first case I would like to cite is what has become known as the Feeney case. Michael Feeney was convicted of second degree murder in the bludgeoning death of 85 year old Frank Boyle in his home in Likely, B.C. in June of 1991. Likely is a small community just outside Williams Lake, which is outside my riding. Ironically,

the lawyer who took the case to the supreme court is a lawyer from Prince George, which is in my riding, so I am fairly familiar with the case.

This unfortunate victim was smashed in the head five times with a crowbar and his truck and \$400 in cash was missing. RCMP officers, following up on a tip that Feeney had been seen near the victim's stolen truck, went to Feeney's trailer to investigate. They entered his trailer and found his shirt splattered with blood. Subsequently they arrested Mr. Feeney.

However, the supreme court judges ruled that the police did not have reasonable grounds to arrest Feeney when they entered the trailer without a warrant. All evidence gained as a result of the arrest and the subsequent search which was conducted with a warrant were ruled inadmissible. It was a majority decision. It was not unanimous. The evidence included the bloodied shirt and his fingerprints, matching prints which were found on the victim's refrigerator, money hidden under a mattress and cigarettes similar to those found in the victim's house. I would suggest that it is going to be very difficult for the crown counsel to obtain a conviction, if it ever goes to retrial, without the use of this evidence.

I will draw to the House's attention another case which was known as the Sullivan case. This happened in the city of Prince George. Wayne Richard Sullivan of Prince George was found non-criminally responsible by reason of a mental disorder in the January 1992 shooting death of his wife and the sexual assault at gunpoint of another woman. After a night of drinking, Sullivan proposed a threesome between himself, his wife and the other woman. His proposal was rejected. He then shot his wife in the temple, pointed the gun at the second woman and ordered her to remove her clothing.

The trial judge instructed the jury on the law relating to mental illness and criminal responsibility. The B.C. court of appeal judges ruled that the judge was correct in his instruction. The verdict of December 11, 1993 meant that Sullivan was confined in a secure mental facility, but subsequently would be released once it was determined he was no longer mentally disordered. Sullivan's punishment was a conditional release.

That judgment has raised a lot of concern not only in the community of Prince George, but in communities across our country. I raise it today as another example of how the judgments brought down by our justices certainly do not at all relate to what average citizens in our communities would feel is right, fair and just.

• (1630)

The last case I would bring forward today is the Baldwin murder. Here we have a case of an elderly gent in the city of Dawson Creek located in the southern end of my riding of Prince George—Peace River. The elderly gentleman was set upon in a park by six local teenagers and kicked and beaten to death. Six local teenagers were charged in the murder of James Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin, a homeless

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person, had set up camp in the park less than a dozen metres from where his body was found.

I guess I am already out of time, unfortunately. The point I am trying to make is that all of these judgments reinforce the view of the general public that there is something seriously wrong with our justice system. In fact they do not even refer to it as a justice system any more, but a legal system.

It is pretty hard to defend an 8.3% increase when people see these types of judgments coming down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): 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 Halifax West, Aboriginal affairs; the hon. member for Verchères, Varennes Tokamak; the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton, the North American Free Trade Agreement; the hon. member for Charlotte, Hepatitis C; and the hon. member for Churchill River, the Environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on remarks made earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and member for Ahuntsic, which did not sound right to me.

For instance, she said that, at the federal level, judicial appointments were not political appointments. I will remind her that these appointments are made by a committee of seven members, four of whom are appointed by the Minister of Justice, and that the majority prevails. So the minister can make appointments with the support of four out of seven committee members, which form a majority since all it takes is 50% plus one—as members need to be reminded once in a while. Therefore, judicial appointments are political appointments.

In addition, the parliamentary secretary cited some figures on Quebec which are not quite accurate. With respect to judges' salaries, I will remind her that, when he was elected premier of Quebec in 1995, Lucien Bouchard ordered a 6% salary reduction for all government employees, including judges. This means that judges' salaries have been reduced by 6%.

Contrary to what the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice said, and this is my third point, the fact that a huge increase—a 13.8% compounded increase over two years—is recommended in a report does not mean that it must automatically be approved.

The Blais report recommended that the salaries of members of Parliament be raised, but everyone on this side of the House said no. That is what the report recommended, but we said no. Why?

Because we find it indecent to be talking about raising judges' salaries by 13.8% over two years, retroactive to April 1, 1997, when, on the other side of the House, since the Minister of Finance tabled his second budget, in 1995, there is a plan under way to cut back transfer payments to the provinces for welfare, post-secondary education and health. By 2003, \$30 billion will have been taken away from the recipients of social assistance, the sick and the students in higher education.

• (1635)

Furthermore, those on the other side of the House are happy to steal an accumulated surplus in the employment insurance fund, which will reach \$25 billion by the end of next year and which comes from the excessive contributions of employers and employees. The Minister of Finance is blithely dipping into it. He will continue to take up to \$25 billion by the end of fiscal year 1998-99.

After all the sacrifices required from the population, all the theft from funds that do not belong to the federal government, it now wants us to agree to compound salary increases for judges of 13.8%.

I find the way the parliamentary secretary put it to us indecent, saying that such a monumental increase in judges' salary was needed to ensure quality candidates. With their annual salaries between \$170,000 and \$230,000, I imagine people are knocking the doors down in an effort to get a judge's position.

I would remind the House that salary increases are awarded in large measure to reflect changes in the cost of living. The cost of living is reflected in the consumer price index, and in the past three years the rate of inflation has moved between 2% and 1%. This means that the 13.8% salary increase given to judges over the next two years is 13 times greater than the current inflation rate of about 1%.

This makes no sense at all. How can we justify such a decision to people who have been subjected to indirect tax increases totalling \$23 billion over the last three years? How can we explain to them that, with all the sacrifices they made in the areas of social welfare, post-secondary education and health care, with the minister having failed to index the tax tables—there was an increase in tax receipts, and that is an indirect form of tax increase—judges will now be getting a 13.8% increase? How can we justify maintaining the status quo while judges' salaries will be increased prodigiously, at a compound rate?

It is totally unacceptable. I add my voice to that of my distinguished colleague from Berthier—Montcalm, who did the right thing in bringing this scandal to light. It makes absolutely no sense to present things in this fashion, especially with the kind of arguments we just heard.

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Lucien Bouchard, Premier of Quebec and leader of the Parti Québécois, has understood that. That is why, two or three years ago, Quebec ordered a salary decrease rather than a freeze or an increase. It is only logical.

When one asks people to make sacrifices and makes budget cuts to reduce the deficit and create annual surpluses, as the finance minister did on the back of the poor, one does not give judges a 13.8% salary increase. It is totally unacceptable, and we will all fight against that.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-37. I would like to say right off the bat that I am in absolute opposition to this bill as are my colleagues but perhaps for different reasons.

My reasoning is that nowhere in this government's philosophy, nowhere in any type of justice legislation it has brought down pertaining to judges and the judiciary have I ever seen the word accountability. The fact is there is zero accountability for judges in this country. There is no effective mechanism that this government or the previous Tory government have put in or would be prepared to use to remove judges from the bench.

In many cases in their fuzzy logic they have let violent criminals walk out of the courtroom with little or no penalty. Judges have used the conditional sentencing law that the Liberal government brought down in the most insane ways we could possibly imagine. Judges have continually bewildered our society with some of the decisions that have been made in this country.

• (1640)

I can give the example of something which is near and dear to my heart, the issue of people who choose to drink and then to get into their cars, drive and kill people. Judges have a latitude of sentencing from zero to 14 years. Historically the sentences have been on the low side of three and a half years.

There is no way to hold these judges accountable for the insane decisions they make. Now this government has the audacity to bring in Bill C-37 to give them more money. The insane legislation in Bill C-37 takes no back seat to some of the insane decisions that are made by the judges in this country. They do it and there is no accountability. Before this House begins to even consider any type of salary increase or a compensation increase for judges, the government had better darn well do what it should do. It should bring in some legislation that will make judges accountable before it even considers giving them a single cent more.

Then they have the audacity to suggest an 8.3% increase over two years plus they want to talk about annuities, payments and survivor benefits. It is very clear these are the very people who are

setting the bad guys free after the RCMP have worked their butts off to get them to court. The RCMP are getting little or nothing by way of salary increases, the ones who do all the work, only to see all their work for naught because the bad guys are set free by some judge with some fuzzy logic in his head about what his or her definition of justice is.

Never in my lifetime would I ever support this package on Bill C-37 until there was an ounce of accountability brought in by this Liberal government. Never.

I want to get off judges for a minute and talk about the way this Liberal government deals with the justice system or, as my colleague from Prince George—Peace River said quite appropriately, the legal system in this country.

All over this country people are upset about the legal system and is it any wonder when we look at the Liberals in government and the Tories before them. A good percentage of them were lawyers anyway in their past life. Not their real life; they say their past life. Why would they do anything else but support their friends who are still in the system out there? That is what they have done.

The legal system, the so-called justice system we have in this country is not doing what it is supposed to do. It is not protecting society. It is not punishing the bad guys. It is feeding the coffers of the legal people who make a very good living defending the scoundrels who come before the judges. They are very good at it and they charge lots of money. Why would a government want to do anything to hurt its buddies out there in the legal business?

This government should be making the number one priority in the criminal justice system the protection of law-abiding citizens and the protection of society. That is what it should be doing. The former Minister of Justice, now the disgraced Minister of Health, said in this House last year that the number one criteria in the justice system is the rehabilitation and reintegration of criminals back into society.

That made us all sleep well that night. It made Canadians feel really good that the Liberal government was looking after the safety of their homes, the safety of their streets, the safety of their families, the safety of their wives and their husbands. It gave them a really empty feeling inside that they were not living in a safe society and they had little hope of it because the Liberal government under the former Minister of Justice had no concern about the safety of their streets and their families.

• (1645)

Government members would do well to listen to Canadian people instead of their lawyer friends out there in legal land. They would do well to get out in the street and talk to the people instead of drinking cappuccino with their lawyer buddies in the restaurants beside the law courts. They would do well to listen to the real

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people out there. If they did they would start to address some issues where there is a huge void.

Let us talk about our prison system. In case anybody does not know, a prison is a place where bad guys go when they are incarcerated to pay a penalty for committing crimes. That is what prisons are supposed to be for. Prisons are not supposed to be places where there are prisoners' unions which tell the warden what kind of meals or what kind of recreation prisoners should have.

I understand that people are not supposed to have drugs in prisons. Safeguards are supposed to be in place to make sure drugs do not get into prisons. Canadians know that many times it was the drugs they obtained outside prison that got them into prison in the first place.

Logic would tell us that if there were no drugs inside the prisons people might get better. They might be rehabilitated so they could somehow go back into society. Drugs put them there. Liberals have a hard time making that connection: drugs put them there so let us give them more drugs so that when they get out they will be better citizens. They do not stop the flow of drugs. They say they will give the poor guys in there clean needles so they can use their drugs in a safer fashion and condoms so they can have sex—

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I fail to see what jails, penitentiaries and everything else the hon. member has referred to in the debate have to do with the motion before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Dick Harris: Madam Speaker, the Liberals hate to hear the truth. I was talking about things that go on in the prisons which tie into the judicial system. Pornography is rampant in prisons but according to the Liberals that is okay because prisoners need some form of entertainment within the prison system.

We could never support the bill until the Liberal government put some form of accountability into the legislation to deal with the insane decisions of some judges. If the Liberals are serious about fixing things in the justice system, why do they not fix the things that are wrong and not give the judges more money?

I will not support the bill. My colleagues will not support it. No one in their right mind—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in today's debate. Quite honestly I did not plan to speak but I was provoked. I felt it was important not only for the constituents in my riding of Thornhill but for people across the

country listening to the debate to understand what the legislation is all about. We need someone who will speak on the topic of the bill and explain to people why the government is taking the action it is taking.

The independence of our judiciary is important. As a matter of principle I believe judges must be independent of political interference, and they are. Those who call for accountability of judges should know that accountability is through judicial councils which review the work of judges.

They cannot have it both ways. They cannot support the principle of judicial independence and at the same time use the word accountability in anything other than judicial review of judges' decisions.

• (1650)

I stand in my place today to say that I stand for the principle of judicial independence. I believe that judges should be accountable through the judiciary. Those who have complaints can go to the judicial council to ask for a review.

I have to further say that as a second principle I want leaders in the legal profession to come forward and apply to be judges. I do not want us to have people other than those who have years of experience and respect within the profession to have the opportunity to apply. I do not believe there should be a financial penalty for people who choose to serve. Being on the bench is a form of public service and I believe they should be well paid. If we want to attract those who are in leadership position among the profession, we have to make sure there is no deterrent to those who wish to serve.

I would also like to comment on the issue of courts administration. For the people who are watching and for my colleague across the House in the New Democratic Party who spoke at length about courts administration I point out that this is entirely a provincial jurisdiction. Courts administration is a responsibility of the provinces. They determine what resources they wish to put into courts administration. Anyone who has concerns about that should address their concerns to the attorney general of the province they live in or to their premier.

Since we see many provinces such as my home province of Ontario reducing their revenues through tax decreases of some 30%. costing in excess of \$5 billion, anyone who wants to know where the money has gone that could have gone to courts administration, improved health care or improved education must look at the policy of tax cuts. Since that is the policy of the Reform Party opposite I find it heckles interesting on this matter. The responsibility for courts administration is entirely a provincial jurisdiction. It is inappropriate for us to take time of the House discussing matters that are clearly a provincial jurisdiction.

Regarding Bill C-37, the facts are that federal judges have not received a pay increase since 1992. They contributed to the deficit reduction plan which resulted in the first balanced budget in 30

years being tabled this year by the finance minister. That is something I am very proud of.

We also know that there are provincial judges across the country and there were remarks raised about what was happening on the provincial scene. While that is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, many of the provinces are adopting the same method the federal government has adopted, the establishment of an independent commission. For example, the Province of Quebec at the present time has a commission studying judges' salaries.

My assumption is that if a government establishes a commission it will look very carefully at the recommendations of the commission. That is exactly what the federal government did. We established an independent commission to make recommendations to the government so that we could ensure we were attracting the very best and the brightest, the leaders of the profession, to sit on the bench. They make very important and difficult decisions which affect not only public policy but public life.

The commission was called the Scott commission. The government accepted its recommendations on pay increases for federally appointed judges. I believe that is appropriate. It reinforces the notion of independence of the judiciary, which was my very first point.

If we are to determine salaries it is a very good process to engage people who are expert in understanding the role and ask them to advise the government. They did that and the government took that advice. While some may believe that number is too high, I am sure others believe that number is too low. The government has made the decision to accept the compensation recommendations of the Scott commission and I believe that is appropriate.

• (1655)

I also believe that the process for the selection of judges is a good one. We have public representatives on the committees who review the applications. There are also consultations with the law societies. Just for the record, I think people watching this debate should know that Bill C-37 is supported by the Canadian Bar Association.

We have those who are aware of the role of judges, how hard judges work, not only from the Canadian Bar Association but also from an independent commission established to review the matter agreeing that the government's action is appropriate.

I ask those in opposition to think about the implications of arbitrarily making decisions without seeking advice from those who know like the Canadian Bar Association or an independent commission that would review the workload and so forth.

My view is that there will always be debate. Salary issues are always contentious. There are always different points of view, but

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it is a responsibility of government, a responsibility the government takes very seriously. Bill C-37 reflects the appropriate balance between judicial independence and the obligation of government to set a salary level which will attract the very best, the very brightest and leaders in the profession to sit on the highest courts of the land.

The actions taken by the Minister of Justice are appropriate. The legislation deserves support. Our process in coming to this conclusion has been one that has been filled with integrity. As the member for Thornhill I feel it is not only in the public interest but in the interest of my constituents in Thornhill.

I am pleased to support the legislation because it responds not only to the principles I have articulated but to the needs of the judiciary and the judicial system. That is good public policy.

For those who stand in this place and use this opportunity to vent, I think it is completely inappropriate on this type of legislation. We should be talking about how we reward through compensation and remuneration those people who sit in judgment on the most difficult of subjects frequently and mete out justice in a way which is impartial and which should be wise and thoughtful.

How do we say to federally appointed judges that we appreciate what they do? On behalf of my constituents of Thornhill I say to them that we believe they provide a very important service to the people of Canada. We thank them. I believe the debate, much of what I have heard, is an insult to the judges of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Berthier—Montcalm. He is a lawyer himself and could become a great judge. However, he is an MP today and represents his fellow citizens as I do mine, and he is totally convinced that clause 5 should be deleted. And that is what he is proposing.

Earlier it was said that the chief justice of the supreme court could have a retroactive increase of \$25,000. Most of the people in my riding do not earn \$25,000.

• (1700)

When we put poverty insurance on trial here, the members opposite laughed. Today these same people are prepared to give judges increases. We are not criticizing judges. We all know that judges, some of them at least, are fine judges. They work very hard. That is a fact, and everyone is aware of it, including us. But that is not what we are talking about today.

We are saying that, in a society where people suffer, where children in certain schools do not eat enough, where parents suffer from depression because they run out of money for food at the end of the month, everyone should be treated fairly.

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When a person earns \$150,000 a year, I think he or she can manage to buy groceries, to go to hospital, to buy prescription drugs.

When a person earns \$15,000 or \$20,000, that is something different. In my riding I have seen many forestry workers who start work at 5 a.m. and finish at 5 p.m.; they work for four or five months a year and, even with poverty insurance, do not manage to earn more than \$25,000 or \$28,000. They have children, and it is hard for them to manage their budget and meet the needs of every family member.

Now they are proposing to raise judges' salaries by an average of \$17,000. Tell that to the people in my riding of Matapédia—Matane. This is unacceptable. A little raise, fine, but this one makes no sense. I am therefore asking my colleagues on the other side of this House to reflect on this and to accept deletion of clause 5. I think everyone stands to gain as a result.

I am sure that the judges themselves, those who are really not in it for the money, but to serve their fellow citizens, will understand that the House is not giving them the increase recommended by the commission.

On the other hand, it must be realized that a lot of lawyers put their names on the waiting list. They know what their salaries will be and what conditions they will be working in. If they really need more money, let them stay in private practice and leave room for others, for there are many interested in the position. Money must always be secondary, it must never come first.

[*English*]

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to say that I will be voting against Bill C-37 and that I will be supporting this amendment from my Bloc colleague.

I do not think the government is in touch with the average Canadian. It is not listening to what Canadians feel about this issue. If it were it would not bring in a bill like this.

I want to share this afternoon three reasons why the government is out of touch with the Canadian public and three reasons why the Canadian public does not support this kind of wage increase at this time.

If Liberals were truly in touch with the grassroots of this country they would be hearing what we are hearing when we go back to our ridings about the desperate needs of Canadians in the areas of health care, education and crime prevention. These are all very serious issues and priority issues that face Canadians today.

• (1705)

Canadians are telling us as parliamentarians that we have to get back in touch with the priorities, the most important things that concern them.

They see the federal government, as it has over the past number of years, continuing to cut back on the amount of money going to the provinces. In turn, the provinces have a smaller amount of money to put into important areas like health care.

Members should talk to a person who has stood in line for over a year for an operation, or talk to parents who need to have bingos to raise funds for things in the classrooms, or talk to victims who have been caught in some of these consequences of serious crimes being committed. Those are the Canadians who are asking why in the world we would give money to judges who are making \$177,000 a year already when we do not have money to put into those priority concerns that certainly all Canadians are worried about across this nation. It does not make sense.

Canadians are angry about this. We as parliamentarians need to remember that it does not really matter what we think about these issues here in the House. This is not the court that settles the issue. It is the court of public opinion that settles the issue. Come election time they will let us know how they feel about this and other issues.

Canadians have another concern about something like this. The government is sending the wrong message to law enforcement officers, the men and women on the frontlines defending us against the criminal element every day. They are the ones who have to do the dirty work for us. They are the ones who have to clean up the messes that are made by crime and criminals.

There are a lot of angry police officers out there who are looking at the 8.3% wage increase for judges while members of the RCMP have had a five year moratorium on their wages. When they finally got the government to act on it what did they get? They got a pittance. These are the people who are actually out there on the firing line.

If this government wants to continue to drive the wedge between those who are actually law enforcement and those who are sitting on the benches meting out the law, then this kind of legislation does that even more. It makes law enforcement officers angry. It increases their frustration of the inability of judges in many cases to actually bring the full extent of the law against the criminals these law enforcement agents are working so hard to apprehend and bring to court.

During the election and after I have had law enforcement officers tell me about their frustration of working so hard to bring the criminals to the courts and then the criminals get off on a technicality or are given a soft sentence. That is not right and

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Canadians know that is not right. There is a frustration and anger against some judges who do this sort of thing.

We now come to this House to give those judges a raise. The Canadian people are not happy with our giving them that kind of raise.

RCMP officers finally received a 2% raise retroactive to January 1, 1998. They will receive a second increment of 1% on April 1, 1998 and an additional .75% in October 1998. What does that add up? If my math is correct, it will be 3.5% over two years.

• (1710)

What are the judges going to receive? A supreme court justice's salary will go from \$208,200 a year to \$225,700 by April 1, 1998. I do not think the Canadian people think that is just.

Before anyone on the other side says I am against judges, that is not the case at all. We know there are many good judges who do fine work and work long hours to do their work well. We commend them for the work they do. But in this present economic climate when most Canadians are not receiving an increase at all in their wages or at the most the wage increase is indexed to inflation, this kind of obscene raise does not sit well with Canadians.

It does not sit well with us in the Reform Party. It obviously does not sit well with my colleagues in the Bloc. I am happy our Bloc colleague brought this motion to the floor because it needs to be debated. The government's legislation needs to be challenged and I want to serve notice that I will be voting with my Bloc colleagues in support of this motion.

I think that when we do this there will be a chorus of Canadians across the country saying we voiced their concerns in the House of Commons today and they will be supportive of where we as opposition members stand.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege for me to enter the debate on this Bloc motion to delete from the proposed bill clause 5. I will be supporting this motion.

I want to address a couple of the points made by one of my Liberal colleagues opposite. She made the point that we want judicial independence so that it stands clear and will interpret and apply the law in the way that the legislators of this country both federal and provincial intended it to be enforced.

I could not agree more. I think we all agree on the independence of the judiciary. I think we want to commend those people. I think we want to recognize them for what they are. In order for them to do that and to have the kind of respect we want them to enjoy, they must be competent and able and must demonstrate solid judgment.

A lot of judges fit into that category. Not all of them do. But the important thing to recognize is that we want competence. We want to trust our judges. We want to depend on them. We want them to interpret the law as it ought to be interpreted. Where we have difficulty is when judges decide that what they think about the law is more important than what the House thinks the law is to be. We have difficulty when judges think they can write the law for Canadians, when they can reinterpret what the House of Commons said and when they can tell the House of Commons this is what we should be doing.

That is when the judges have stepped outside their independence. They have now taken over a position they had no business taking over. Let us never forget that a judge is a servant of the people to preserve the justice of the nation, to ensure the laws are applied fairly and with the intention and the spirit within which legislation was passed. Judges should not tamper with the sacred right of the people and the responsibility the people have given to them to represent their interests, to make sure the safety and the justice of the people are preserved. That is a point we must underline.

This raises the point of how a judge is appointed. The process of appointing a judge in Canada today leaves a lot to be desired. We want to appoint people who have demonstrated that they can be wise in their judgement, who have the courage to take on very difficult situations and ensure the principles of justice, fairness and righteousness apply in the administration of that justice. To do that means we have to step completely outside of patronage appointments. We must have a process that guarantees that. Unfortunately the process we have today does not guarantee this kind of independence. How can we expect to have an independent judiciary if the process itself is not one that guarantees or at least has the potential of bringing forward those people who are competent and who have demonstrated they can be trusted?

• (1715)

That brings us into the actual provision of this motion, the elimination of clause 5, which means to give to the judges a retroactive pay raise of 4.1% and another in the year following of 4.1%, a total of about 8.3% from the salary base from which they have come today.

My concern is not that judges are going to get a raise. They deserve to be adequately compensated. But it has to take place in the context of what else is happening in our society.

I draw attention to the context within which this proposal is being brought forward. My hon. colleague has just talked about the RCMP having received a pittance. Perhaps it is a pittance but it is what it is. Let me refresh our memories as to what it is. On March 27, 1998 RCMP officers secured a pay raise of 2% retroactive to January 1998. They received a second increment on April 1 of

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another 1% and an additional .75% in October 1998. That is not exactly a pittance but it does not even come close to what is being proposed for the judges.

Let us look at what the officers do for us. They are the ones who are at the front line, who are there to detect the criminal and try to find out who committed the crime and to do what is necessary to bring that criminal to justice. Those officers did not get the kind of raise they deserve. If they did, the judges should receive something similar.

More important is a totally different issue. The government has decided in Bill C-3 to deny the police officers who are to enforce the law one of the basic fundamental tools in order to detect who actually committed the crime, to make sure the identification is accurate. We are talking about DNA samples. They ought to be given that kind of authority, the tool that allows them to unequivocally determine who was at the scene of the crime. That is one area of the context, but there is another one.

Recently the Minister of Justice provided a fund of \$32 million for crime prevention. It is a wonderful, noble idea to prevent crime. It is excellent. But what happened? Did any municipality, any province receive any additional fund so that it could apply and get the people out there to enforce the law? No. Should we prevent crime as much as possible? Yes we should, but we are not enforcing the law as well as we could and the police are not able to do their job simply because in many instances there are not enough of them.

Let me tell the House why there are not enough of them. Even if we could use all the RCMP officers for crime detection, that would be one thing, but the government in its wisdom passed Bill C-68 which establishes a firearm registration. Who has to administer the registration of all these firearms? The police.

Is that their primary function? Will that help them detect crime? Will that help them to make our society safer? Will that help them to bring to justice the people who have killed others, who have committed violent crimes?

It is not a small amount of money, \$133.7 million per year estimated by the director of the new firearms registration unit. Where is the logic in all this? That is our context.

We can go one step further. We can go to the Young Offenders Act. We have been told for almost two years now there will be new legislation. What did we get? A proposal. Put that in context. It begins to look a little strange.

• (1720)

We have the RCMP officers getting a raise. We have civil servants getting a raise. We have other people in our private sector getting a raise. None of them are getting a raise anywhere close to what is being proposed for the judges.

These are the people we want to administer the law, to enforce the law, to pass judgment on criminals that is fair, just and righteous. Then we turn around and say they are in a special class and deserve more money than anyone else. If we really want to listen to the people, we should be doing things that are fair and equitable.

We have created a special class of people who deserve a raise over and above what anyone else is getting. I want to raise a point that has to do with the definition of spouse.

It is very interesting that this legislation says a surviving spouse in relation to a judge includes a person of the opposite sex who has co-habited with a judge in a conjugal relationship for at least one year immediately before the judge's death.

It is very interesting that this definition is different from the one that recently came out of the appeals court defining spouse. For judges a spouse is a partner of the opposite sex. It is interesting that we have that kind of definition here and we have another definition for the rest of Canadians.

What will happen now? Is an appeals court going to say this act is ultra vires or are we going to change the other legislation? It is fascinating that we have these kinds of things in legislation.

I propose to the government that it take this bill back, rethink the whole thing and figure out something that makes sense to Canadians.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to speak on Bill C-37. I think the public would find it very interesting to know that this is not the first time, not the second time but the third time that the government has revisited the Judges Act.

When we have issues such as victim rights, health care, aboriginal issues, economic issues to deal with, this government has tied up this House for the third time through committees to deal with the Judges Act. Why?

It is costing the taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars to deal with this act when we have people out there, as my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan mentioned, who cannot even get health care, when we have a judicial system that is clogged up, that denies justice to people, where justice has been absent for too long. The government has failed to take the bull by the horns and address these issues in a substantive and meaningful way.

Even with the Judges Act it had an opportunity to get it right. Instead of dealing with the substantive issue of putting accountability back in the system, transparency, scrutiny, we have the same old system where the prime minister appoints the people he or she sees fit to the Supreme Court of Canada.

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That is not what we want. That is not what the public wants. It can be done. It is possible to enter accountability into the judicial system.

We can look at California. California has introduced elected judges. Judges can be elected. They run every six years. They do not run in the traditional sense as we run but they run on their record. They are forbidden to actually campaign. The purity of the system is that the judges are judged by their peers, by the public, on their record alone.

In this way judicial independence can continue. It is very important in a democracy. I would ask that if the government is going to revisit the Judges Act again, heaven forbid, that it consider this a substantive and positive issue rather than tinkering around with issues that have very little meaning or impact on the Canadian people.

There are other things we could have done. It has been intelligently proposed that lower court judges come under scrutiny in provincial or federal legislatures by the judicial justice committee. This would provide some element of scrutiny as to the qualifications of the individuals concerned. This would be a reasonable and cost effective way of ensuring that judges are the best we can attain and are not merely buddy-buddy with the political elites.

• (1725)

There are other issues that can be dealt with and should be dealt with and the government has failed to do this with our justice system. I will present some of the challenges and some of the solutions the government can tear apart and make better for the benefit of all Canadians.

The first thing is to streamline the judicial system which is getting clogged up. We have a system right now where there are ways in which a person can go through the courts for an extraordinarily long period of time while the victims wait in earnest to try to find some end to the situation they are in, some end to their victimization. This could be done if a committee were formed to find effective ways to expedite the judicial system from arrest to conviction.

A DNA databank should be put forth that is effective, cost effective and based on the good science we have which would enable the police force to have the tools and power to arrest and convict those who are guilty in an expeditious way but also enable them to exonerate those individuals who are innocent. The DNA databank cuts both ways. It will be a good decider in trying to differentiate between those individuals who are guilty and those individuals who are innocent.

We have to put justice back in the justice system. Justice delayed is justice denied. Now we have a system where we have enormous delays and procedural influences that can be put forward by clever lawyers who can clog the system for the benefit of their client. The

judicial system today and the wars that take place within our courts have little to do with justice and everything to do with how clever and able lawyers are to manipulate a legal system that has more to do with how you can manipulate the system than whether justice is truly being served.

Sometimes I wish I were a lawyer so I could put forth some suggestions. I would implore those who are in the judicial system today who feel frustrated about the system they labour under and who want the best for their clients and the Canadian people to present those solutions to members from all party lines in this House so they can work to develop better solutions so that those individuals who are working in the courts are able to work more effectively.

Give the tools to the police. They are hamstrung in so many ways and they are getting increasingly frustrated as they put their lives on the line to make our streets safe.

I applaud the minister for putting forth her suggestions on crime prevention. A Reform motion was passed in the House of Commons that called for a national headstart program. That was supported by everybody but the Bloc. The minister could use her resources and power and call together in Ottawa her provincial counterparts in human resources, justice and health. The minister could put on the table all the programs today, take out what is not working and keep what is working.

This could be integrated with the medical community, train mentor volunteers in the middle, as was done effectively in Hawaii. Child abuse was reduced by 99%. We could use schools and the educational system for children between the ages of four and eight, use the parents and integrate them into the system. We would have a headstart crime prevention package that would be the most effective way to decrease crime.

We know criminal behaviour in many cases results from a fractured psyche that is a result of situations of child abuse, violence, sexual abuse, improper parenting, absence of proper parenting, and improper nutrition. A combination of all these during that sensitive first eight years of life fractures the development of the psyche and causes future problems, everything from personality disorders to conduct disorders and sometimes criminal behaviour.

The legal aid situation is getting out of hand. It is far too expensive. The system right now is untenable. A creative solution would be to go to a public defender system.

• (1730)

California developed a public defender system where individual lawyers were on salary. The question one had to ask was did this provide the defendants with an adequate defence as compared to the previous legal aid system. This has been analysed and the answer is very conclusive. It demonstrated that those individuals

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who were being defended under a public defender system had as good or better defence as they had before.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.) moved that Bill C-366, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction of mechanics' tool expenses), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am absolutely delighted today to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the 100,000 or so Canadian mechanics who pretty much keep our world turning.

Most little children by the time they are two or three years old have figured out that wheels make the world go round. Wheels get things moving and keep them moving. Anyone who has watched a child grow up would realize that at a very early age they figure out that engines make cars, trucks and airplanes move.

The private members' bill which I have prepared and presented and on which I speak today is about keeping engines on which we depend so much moving. More specifically Bill C-366 is dedicated to the mechanics or technicians who assemble, maintain and repair the cars, trucks, heavy equipment, recreation equipment, airplanes, trains and items of convenience which add so much to enriching our lives every day. If anyone has any doubt about that they should just ask their 16-year old son or daughter who has just received their driver's licence what their wheels mean to them.

Every one of us depends on the work mechanics do every day of our lives. We depend on them to keep the wheels turning so that we can go to and from work. We depend on their work to keep the wheels turning so that we can get our groceries delivered from the supermarket, go to the hospital, bring our families together, grow our food and so much more. Now because of unfair tax treatment we may well face a shortage of mechanics which may keep us waiting for all of these things. The passage of legislation as outlined in Bill C-366, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, deduction of mechanics' tool expenses, could help to ensure that this does not happen.

Since introducing Bill C-366 in March I have received over 6,000 letters of support for this bill. I am sure many members of the House have received letters of support as well. The letters are from mechanics, from various types of motor vehicle dealers and from many other companies and organizations involved in the automotive industry, with heavy equipment, any kind of equipment that requires mechanics to maintain and repair to keep them on the road or in the air.

I have received many thousands of letters from mechanics from every province, from British Columbia to Newfoundland. These people are frustrated that even though mechanics are required to spend huge amounts on purchasing tools to get and keep a job, they are not receiving a tax deduction for these costs. As a result there is a growing shortage of mechanics, a problem that will increasingly affect all Canadians who own or lease vehicles or any equipment for that matter.

• (1735)

I will explain what this bill does. Bill C-366 amends the Income Tax Act to allow mechanics to deduct the cost of providing the tools for their employment if they are required as a condition of employment. The deduction encompasses maintenance, rental and insurance costs, the full cost of tools purchased for under \$200, inflation adjusted, and the capital cost allowance for tools over \$200.

During my presentation I will explain what my bill would do if implemented. I will demonstrate the broad support for this change. I will explain how this more than anything else is an issue of tax fairness.

This bill is necessary for several reasons. First there is the investment needed to get and keep a job. To get and keep a job, mechanics must invest an average of \$15,000 in tools. Some may invest as much as \$40,000. We have heard from some of these people. They must make annual replacement purchases of up to \$1,000. For example, the purchase of diagnostic hand tools which are required to work on anything newer than a mid-1980s vehicle would cost between \$1,000 to \$1,500. Regular upgrading of software for these tools alone may cost \$300 a year. This amount is disproportionate in comparison with amounts in other employee groups that are required to provide their tools as a condition of employment.

The extent of this expense is exacerbated by the relatively modest wage level of mechanics. The average income for mechanics in Canada today is \$29,000 a year. Clearly this kind of extra expense without the corresponding tax deduction is a great burden. If anyone needs convincing of this I will quote from a few of the letters I have received from mechanics.

Blair McKinnon, a mechanic from Lloydminster, Alberta said "A mechanic without tools is like a secretary without computer

skills. Presently, I have about \$7,000 in tools. To move up in my career, in two years the amount would double. As technology changes, tools change at my expense. The tool becomes a special tool and the price goes up”.

Eddie Sagal, president of Sagal Brothers Sales Limited, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan said “I am the New Holland dealer in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. I employ about 10 service technicians, depending on the vagaries of business. These technicians have a great deal of money tied up in their tools. They can easily have \$10,000 invested in a starter kit, while most have \$15,000 to \$20,000 worth of tools. They have to buy these tools themselves and they need them for their employment.

Jay Sinclair of Clandonald, Alberta said “I have been in the automotive trade for seven years now and plan to continue for several more. I have purchased approximately \$8,000 in new tools, not including replacements. Due to the rise of electronics in newer vehicles, not only is there a call for more specialized tools but also more costs in the necessary tools. I feel it is unfair that the trade that requires the most tools purchased to stay employed is not considered as an expense on an income tax form. I know my employer does not adjust my wage or any others due to the purchasing of tools”.

We clearly have a problem: low wages combined with the high cost of purchasing tools which is not deductible.

This is a tax fairness issue. In its prebudget report in December 1997 the House of Commons finance committee stated:

The Committee believes that all Canadian employees should be allowed to deduct from their income the cost of large mandatory employment expenses. Special provisions in the Income Tax Act already apply to artists, chain saw operators and musicians.

To deny this tax treatment to apprentices and technicians in the automotive industry is not only unfair, it also imposes an impediment to employment, especially for the young who might choose to work as apprentices. Revising the tax treatment of such expenses would remove the impediment that exists under the present tax rules.

● (1740)

That is from the finance committee. It fully supports this move.

As well, this legislation is also completely consistent with the treatment of others, for example, small business people, including farmers and other independent business people. Farmers can claim for maintenance, rental, insurance and the full cost of tools under \$200 and a capital cost allowance of tools over \$200. That is what I used as the model for this bill. The mechanism for handling this is already in the tax system. This change will clearly make the system more fair.

Is it not funny, is it not interesting that with this government and with this finance minister tax fairness always means an increase in

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taxation. Tax fairness always seems to mean a tax hike. This is one case where tax fairness should mean less taxes for mechanics who need to have this tax deduction available to them.

Again, referring to some of these letters that I received on the issue of tax fairness, I will quote Richard Gauthier, president of the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association “The Canadian Automobile Dealers Association was disappointed that the 1998 federal budget did not provide technicians with the tax changes that they deserve. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure that equity and fairness is restored to the Income Tax Act by providing technicians the ability to deduct the cost of their tools as an employment expense”.

Ross Ulmer, the general manager of Ulmer Chev Olds in Lloydminster said “Every journeyman mechanic is required to have from \$8,000 to \$15,000 of owned tools in order to continue their trade. Most other professions, from musicians through plumbers and doctors, which require this amount of investment to continue their profession have tax incentives to allow them to deduct capital cost allowance on those items that are essential to the employment in their profession. These men and women are not asking for a break to take advantage of the tax system; they are simply asking for fair consideration given most other Canadians in similar circumstances”.

I have a whole stack of other people I could refer to, but obviously I do not have time.

The third issue is the shortage of skilled mechanics. The automotive industry is predicting that the lower enrolment rates in apprenticeship programs combined with high attrition rates in the existing workforce will soon place the industry in a severe shortage of skilled labour. Because employers require mechanics to supply their tools and because of the size of the required investment, it is difficult for young graduate mechanics to enter the labour market.

Can we really take a chance on allowing the wheels to stop? Many say no, including the House of Commons finance committee. The finance committee has stated that allowing mechanics to deduct the costs of their tools would increase enrolment rates in apprenticeship programs and would reduce what the industry considers to be a severe shortage of skilled labour.

With youth unemployment as high as it is and the fact that there is a real shortage of skilled mechanics, talented young Canadians should be able to see a career in the automotive industry. It is unfortunate a change which could be made by this government will not be put in place to ensure that this can happen.

I will quote from a letter I received from Ken Myhre, president of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. He says that students who enter the automotive programs at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and other technical institutes in Canada face a significant outlay in tool costs as a part of their

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training program. Only when fairness is restored to these new entrants in the workforce will we see the technicians needed to meet Canada's workforce in the automotive sector.

• (1745)

Farmers and other businessmen and workers employed as artists, musicians and chainsaw operators can claim their tools. They are deductible. Obviously mechanics should be able to do so. The frustration felt by mechanics across the country is highlighted by the fact that I have received well over 6,000 letters in support of the bill in about two months.

Bill C-366 gives mechanics fair tax treatment and in so doing helps to reverse the shortage of skilled labour in the automotive industry and other industries requiring mechanics.

I conclude with a quote from a letter by Sandy Warrington of Paradise Valley, Alberta, who is writing on behalf of her son Scott who has just completed his apprentice motor mechanic papers after four years. Four years ago when she and her son went to the office in Vermilion they were warned that as a parent she would have to help support Scott since as a starting mechanic he could not afford to buy his tools. No kidding. That was the understatement of the year.

I will get five minutes at the end of this hour to wrap up. I am looking forward to hearing the members who will speak on the bill.

Mr. Tony Valeri (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lakeland for providing an opportunity to address the issue of making mechanics tools deductible.

On a personal level I inform the member that I am certainly quite familiar with the issue. I have met on several occasions with the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association that has consistently raised concern regarding deductibility of tools as well as with individuals in my own constituency who own dealerships and employ mechanics that find themselves in this situation. They have also been very effective in advocating the case for the deductibility of tools.

I also assure my hon. colleagues that the government has been working on this issue and has found the interventions made by mechanics, their related associations and members of parliament to be quite helpful.

Having expressed our willingness to find solutions that will assist mechanics with regard to this issue, I want to spend a few moments outlining where some of the difficulties need to be addressed with respect to Bill C-366.

Tax recognition generally is not available for work related employee expenses because employers normally provide the items required for employees to perform their duties. While this is true as

a general rule, individuals in some occupations including mechanics incur substantial expenses as a condition of employment.

However, mechanics are not the only occupation that incurs substantial expenses as a requirement of employment. Other expenditures for which tax recognition might be sought include personal computers purchased by employees, reading material, professional journals, business clothing, uniforms and construction safety clothing, home office expenses, and tools for employee trades persons, just to name a few.

Due to these realities we must look at adopting a more all encompassing approach than is proposed by the bill if we are to be able to be justified in providing the requested tax relief for mechanics. Any change in the tax treatment of employee equipment expenses would need to address all employee expenses incurred as a requirement of employment in a fair and consistent manner.

This private member's bill would also provide tax relief to all mechanics irrespective of the size of their expenditures instead of targeting relief to those incurring extraordinary expenses.

There are also a number of other issues which this private member's bill fails to consider that must be addressed before such a measure could actually be implemented. For example, provisions would need to be developed to ensure that tax relief is provided only for those items genuinely required as a condition of employment and not for those purchased for personal use. I am sure all members of the House would agree a tax deductibility or tax expenditure for personal use items would not be something they would support.

• (1750)

Given this consideration, providing full tax recognition as proposed by the bill would be unwarranted. The provisions needed to address these issues would inevitably be complex as they would need to account for a large variety of items for which tax recognition may be claimed and the different work situations in which such items are used.

To put the problem in context, consider the expensive provisions needed to ensure the equitable recognition of automobile expenses. Provisions governing the deductibility of employee equipment expenditures would apply to hundreds of disparate items and numerous occupations.

We need to take the appropriate amount of time and consultation. Some of that consultation has taken place with respect to the prebudget consultations in the finance committee which, as the hon. member so rightly pointed out, recommended this item be considered. We need consultation with respect to the affected sectors and to work through how such a tax deduction might work, minimizing its complexity while providing effective relief.

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In light of what I have discussed it is clear that the government is serious about undertaking further studies on this matter so that a just and workable solution can be found for mechanics, taxpayers and the government.

I want to restate that the intent is one that would provide tax recognition not only for mechanics but for all those occupations that may find themselves in the same situation as the situation of mechanics described by my colleague across the way that have to make substantial expenditures and are not able to deduct them because they are employees and are not incorporated organizations.

The issue is one that the government will continue to work on. The interventions today by the hon. member are helpful in assisting the government to continue to pursue the issue. We will continue to speak with associations like the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association which has made numerous interventions, which I am sure has consulted with the hon. member across the way, and which has spoken with the department and myself in particular.

We are continuing to work on the issue. I thank the member opposite for bringing this important issue to the floor of the House for debate. I also thank him for the work he has done on the bill so far. I assure him and other members of the House that we will continue to work together to address the issue in a meaningful way. I say this in a non-partisan fashion.

I noticed in his opening remarks the hon. member was somewhat partisan, but I assure him we want to ensure the issue is dealt with in the most effective way, one that would reduce complexity, ensure efficiency and be in the best interest of the taxpayers, the government and the particular sectors that may be affected by it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Saint-Eustache—Sainte-Thérèse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today to the bill of the Reform member for Lakeland, Alberta, which is aimed at allowing mechanics to deduct the cost of tools they have to buy for their work from their taxable income.

I am pleased to speak to this bill, which affects one of the most important industrial sectors of our economy, the automotive industry. As we all know, the automotive industry is constantly evolving, in order to meet new challenges and to keep its dominant position in our economy, which is of considerable advantage to all Canadians and all Quebecers.

In this sector independent business alone employs more than 150,000 automotive maintenance and repair professionals. There has been much debate about some major issues in the automotive industry, and now it is time to address the matter of the automotive maintenance and repair professionals, who are required as a condition of employment to purchase their tools and to maintain them in perfect condition, not to mention that they need to insure them as well.

• (1755)

This is a heavy financial burden because, on top of the normal wear and tear, technological progress also forces these technicians to continually update their equipment.

An apprentice automotive technician who is starting out must spend between \$2,000 and \$5,000 to purchase the tools he needs for his trade. That same technician, who could not start work without a set of up to date and well maintained tools, will have to spend over \$15,000 on tools in his first 5 to 10 years. If he specializes this could be as huge a sum as \$30,000 to \$40,000. This is far from peanuts, and justifies a tax deduction.

At that level of work related expenses, there is no risk of creating a precedent, since this tax treatment is already applied to farm producers, forestry workers, artists and musicians.

Needless to say that the high cost of this kind of equipment accounts for the current shortfall in automotive service technicians, which is a major impediment to young people entering that field. That is not right.

The Minister of Finance is aware of the problem, since he recently wrote to me, saying "While some workers do incur extraordinary expenses in their jobs, finding a solution remains difficult".

Since he recognizes that these are extraordinary expenses, the logical next step is to apply extraordinary deductions. That is the only solution.

Moreover, there is food for thought for our finance and revenue ministers here. Here is an field of work which must not be overlooked for our young people, especially knowing how high youth unemployment is.

The government must look at this problem very seriously. It must not argue that granting this deduction to mechanics would lead other trades to demand similar deductions. As I said, mechanics incur enormous costs buying tools.

Work tools are works tools, be they the virtuoso's violin, the lumberman's chainsaw or the mechanic's numerous tools.

Let me reiterate at this time the purpose of Bill C-366. First of all, the bill seeks to ensure that mechanics benefit from the same fair tax treatment as farm producers, one in line with the treatment of chainsaw operators, artists and musicians.

Second, it seeks to relieve mechanics of the financial burden that is imposed upon them since they are required to buy their own tools under their terms of employment.

Third, the bill seeks to alleviate the serious shortage of labour in automotive trades: enrolments in apprenticeship programs will be

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on the rise and an increasing number of mechanics will be able to continue working in this field.

Fourth, it seeks to create jobs for young unemployed Canadians and Quebecers, since talented young people will become aware of the fact that a career in automotive trades is affordable.

Fifth, it is intended to allow mechanics to continue to provide the usual level and quality of vehicle maintenance and repair services, which will benefit all car owners.

For all these reasons, I think this bill is good for the economy and for the creation of jobs. The Bloc Québécois and myself support the measures proposed in this bill.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-366, an act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a deduction for mechanics' tool expenses. I want to congratulate the member for Lakeland for bringing this legislation forward and to tell him and members of the House that the New Democratic Party caucus fully supports this concept and we will be supporting this bill.

I agree, for the most part, with the parliamentary secretary that this is a non-partisan issue and to that effect note that this is not the first time such a bill has been presented in this Chamber. On many occasions, in fact, members of parliament have proposed amending the act in this regard.

Joy Langan, a former distinguished member of this caucus from British Columbia, who we talked about earlier today with respect to the breast implant issue, had a private member's bill back in 1992 which dealt with this topic and proposed the same amendments to the act. In addition, in 1992 the member from Manitoba, who I believe is currently the parliamentary secretary responsible for western diversification, among other things, put this issue before the House. The last attempt was made in 1996.

It is also interesting to note that my colleague, the member for Qu'Appelle, back in February tabled a similar piece of legislation to allow workers to deduct the cost of providing tools for their employment. That particular bill addressed the unfairness and injustice inflicted by the current tax system on workers required to provide tools as a condition of employment. In the case of mechanics, for example, the current tax system does not take into account that just to get into the trade, as has been noted by others, a mechanic needs \$5,000, \$15,000 or \$30,000 worth of tools.

The member for Qu'Appelle noted that we have seen the benefits of allowing artists, musicians and others to deduct the cost of

supplies and equipment and it is high time that we extend similar tax treatment to include the tools of all trades persons.

I listened intently to the parliamentary secretary. I heard him say that there are some difficulties. Tax recognition is not generally available for specific groups. We need an all-encompassing approach. He noted that he and his government would be seriously undertaking further studies.

I sincerely hope that is the case. It is high time that we did something about this issue. It is a non-partisan approach, although I am reminded of the old Irish proverb "You can vote for whomever you like, but the government always gets elected".

I hope this government will act seriously on this particular bill. To that end, I remind the House and anyone who happens to be listening that government members opposite are taking a lot of credit for having balanced the books and working on debt reduction. But on whose backs were those books balanced? I would suggest that it was not on the backs of the captains of industry or the big banks. It was on the backs of ordinary Canadians who got hit with higher taxes, surtaxes and higher user fees. I think it is time to acknowledge the debt that is owed to those people and to repay them.

One of the ways that the government could accomplish that is by look seriously at helping ordinary folks who incur heavy costs to go to work every day and, as the member for Lakeland noted, make the wheels of this country turn.

Under the present tax system the favourable treatment of tools and supplies is subject to two conditions. First, tools supplied must be a prerequisite of employment. Second, supplies must be unusable after they have been used in the work for which they were purchased. For example, explosives supplied by a miner or gasoline supplied by a chainsaw operator are currently deductible.

• (1805)

Let us consider the various advantages of such an amendment to the act for the 150,000 mechanics and apprentices who are subject to the present tax system.

First, as I noted before, mechanics must invest between \$15,000 and \$30,000 in tools, an amount disproportionate in comparison with amounts invested by other employee groups who provide their own tools and equipment. Given the size of this investment, mechanics consider more favourable tax treatment entirely fair and reasonable.

Second, as noted, mechanics consider that they should be given the same tax treatment as musicians, artists, painters and the aforementioned chainsaw operators. More favourable tax treatment for mechanics' tools would eliminate a situation that mechanics perceive to be unfair.

Third, more favourable tax treatment would allow mechanics to purchase better equipment and provide better service.

Fourth, more favourable tax treatment would encourage more young people to become mechanics and trades persons, as has been noted.

Finally, more favourable tax treatment would facilitate the mechanics transition from school to work. Because employers require mechanics to supply their tools and because the size of the required investment is considerable, few young graduate mechanics can enter the labour market. Based on this argument, as was noted earlier, the House of Commons finance committee recommended in its last pre-budget consultation report that the tax treatment of mechanics' tool expenses be reviewed.

The government ignored this recommendation when delivering the 1998 budget, but we feel that now is the time to act.

I also want to note that I have received some correspondence on this from Sagal Brothers in Moose Jaw and the good folks who work at Nelson Motors in Avonlea at the John Deere dealership. There is a lot of interest on this particular topic. I sincerely hope that the government takes this bill seriously, does the necessary work and brings in something meaningful very quickly.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is nice that you could join us this evening, and myself particularly, because I know that you will be hanging on every word I am about to utter, as you like to listen very closely to what is being said.

I would like to pass on my thanks to the member for Lakeland who has once again brought forward a private member's bill to deal with what I consider to be an injustice and an inequity that has been around for too long.

I find it very interesting that the issue that is being debated tonight is so very logical. So logical, in fact, that I would have thought the government would have been able to deal with this change to the tax legislation itself without continually having private members bring forward this particular issue.

I certainly wish that the government would listen to what is being said and, if not pass this private member's bill, at some point in the not too distant future, because the issue is a very important one, change the legislation itself.

As has been mentioned before, this is not the first time this issue has been before the House. It is definitely non-partisan. This does not have anything to do with party politics. It simply has to do with logic and correcting an injustice.

In 1992 an NDP member brought forward a private member's bill to deal with the issue. As a member of the government in 1992,

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a Liberal brought forward legislation to deal with it. In fact, a Bloc member brought forward a piece of legislation in 1996 which unfortunately was not dealt with.

It is a very simple situation. One sector of our society, a very important sector, those mechanics and technicians who look after everything from our automobiles to very heavy duty equipment which is necessary for industrial development in this country, are being mistreated. Because it seems so logical, I am sorry to say that we have to stand here constantly to try to convince the government to make these changes.

• (1810)

What is actually happening is that a mechanic or a service technician is required by their employer to invest capital contributions of anywhere from \$5,000 to \$40,000. These are not pliers or simple screwdrivers. This is mechanical equipment that is very sophisticated. The automobiles and the heavy duty equipment that is available right now to industry is very sophisticated equipment.

A mechanic, whether a journeyman, an apprentice or a full-fledged mechanic, is required to have the proper tools to fix those pieces of equipment. These tools can cost upwards of \$40,000.

We have heard that certain pieces of technical, computerized equipment can cost anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,000. The problem is that when the mechanic goes out to buy the equipment, he does so and does not have the opportunity to deduct it from his taxable income. That in itself is an injustice.

When a business buys a piece of equipment, whether it is computer equipment or any other type of mechanical equipment, the business can write it off. It gets what is known as a CCA, a capital cost allowance. The business can write it off, but the individual mechanic cannot do so.

If members of government have ever walked through a mechanical bay, they would have seen the service technicians and the mechanics along with their tool bins. I am sure government members would be very surprised to see the type of sophisticated tools that are required to become a mechanic or a service technician in today's society.

In a previous life I was with a municipal government, which supplied certain tools, but each individual mechanic was required, as a requirement of employment, to bring with them their own tools and equipment. Those tools and equipment, unfortunately, are not at this point in time tax deductible.

We heard the parliamentary secretary say that the government, he and his department were somewhat concerned about this issue. He said that, in fact, there was an inequity and that the government would continue to look at the possibility of change.

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He also mentioned two reasons we should be very careful when discussing this piece of legislation and supporting it. First, he said that if we do it for the mechanics we may well have to do it for other employees who are required to have some piece of equipment in order to perform their job.

If there is a possibility of correcting other inequities and injustices, that does not mean this one should be continued. If there are other inequities and injustices they should all be dealt with.

Second, the parliamentary secretary said that we have to be very careful because we have to make sure that these mechanical tools and pieces of equipment cannot and should not be used for personal use.

We talked about the farm equipment that can be deducted as a capital cost allowance. We talked about musicians who can deduct the purchase of a very expensive piece of musical equipment. We talked about chainsaw operators. They have already been dealt with by legislation and can write off their equipment.

I ask the parliamentary secretary "Do you not think that maybe a chainsaw operator will use his chainsaw once for personal use?" Perhaps a musician who has a very expensive French horn, who uses it to generate revenue, will sit down some evening to play it for guests.

An hon. member: Or the bagpipes.

Mr. Rick Borotsik: I appreciate that, but I would prefer the French horn as opposed to the bagpipes. It can be done in a much smaller location with the French horn.

Does the parliamentary secretary not think that perhaps these musicians do not use their musical equipment for some personal use? They still have the right to deduct this from their taxable income because it is necessary for their employment. Those two excuses do not really cut a lot of ice. They certainly do not have enough behind them to refuse this request to make mechanical tools a tax deduction.

• (1815)

We also talked about what would happen if tax deductibility were allowed by government. The first and foremost issue is that it will develop additional employment. It will allow people to enter into a workforce where there is a desperate need for people. We are not just talking about automotive service technicians, although they are very important. As other speakers have indicated, I have received substantial support from automobile dealers who suggest the inequity should be corrected.

We can also look at heavy duty mechanics. In my area, in particular in the farm industry, we are getting much more sophisticated and larger equipment that requires people who have been properly trained and who have the proper tools to fix the equipment. We have a shortage in this industry. Why does the government think we have a shortage in this industry although jobs

in this industry are very good? There is a good wage base, a lot of job security and a lot of opportunity.

Why would young people coming out of high school not want to go to a tech school to take heavy duty mechanics or automobile mechanics and servicing? Because in order to get a job they have to invest \$15,000 to \$40,000 for equipment and tools. That is the same amount that cannot be written off on a capital cost allowance, a CCA, as one would normally deduct in a business. That would allow them to afford to go into that industry which is a very good industry. Maybe if we did that we would encourage people to get into the industry and we would not have a shortage of mechanics and technicians.

We have a community college in my community which has some very good programs with respect to mechanics. It has difficulty filling those programs, not because there are not competent people who would like to do it but because they cannot afford to do it. This is one of those areas in which the government could look to help the unemployed.

The government says it is looking at it. However, it has been looked at for many years even with previous governments. When members of this government were in opposition, they would have liked to see some changes but now that they form the government it seems that changes move very slowly.

The one thing that moves very slowly in this government is tax relief to Canadians in general. We could get into the very excessive payroll taxes in place now, the increased CPP which we have talked about ad nauseam in this House, the increased EI premiums and EI surpluses which have not been given back. So maybe we could start with one very small opportunity to have government support this private member's legislation so that one inequity and one injustice would be corrected.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak today on behalf of the many mechanics and technicians of Battlefords—Lloydminster in support of my esteemed colleague's private member's Bill C-366, an act to amend the Income Tax Act to allow for the deduction of mechanics' tools.

It is only fair that young men and women working to advance their careers in this growing field should be treated the same way by the tax code. There is quite an inequity here. We see no logic or common sense in denying these young people that tax deductibility. The only thing we can see holding this up is that there is no desire from the government at this time to implement any kind of tax relief for their situation.

As the parliamentary secretary said so eloquently a short time ago, there have been interventions on this issue. I was at the finance committee with him during those interventions. It has been done for the past number of years and no one has really taken the bull by the horns and made it happen. I am wondering with such logic and common sense in place to put this tax code in place, why

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are we waiting. We talk about complexity of the act, that this cannot happen. The Liberal government says don't worry, be happy, we are studying it, something is going to happen somewhere down the road. I wish to tell young mechanics and technicians not to hold their breath. Their tools are going to be old and rusty before the government ever gets off its duff to make this happen.

• (1820)

My son is a mechanic. He is 19. Already he has over \$6,000 worth of tools and it is a prerequisite of the job. The total is well over \$6,000 which is a big chunk of change for a young guy starting his career in the workforce. If that were tax deductible there would certainly be an incentive to expand what he has and to work a little harder at the job.

There is a tremendous pride in the ownership of the tools. It is very self-evident in the workplace that they do. They keep the workplace neat and tidy because of that, because they own the equipment. My son has a little sticker on the side of his tool box that really says it all, "Don't ask to borrow my tools. The only thing we loan out belongs to the old tomcat and he always brings it back". That is kind of evident of the way these kids feel about these tools. They worked hard to own them, so there is a pride of ownership. Why can we not extend that to being tax deductible as we do for all the other instances that were presented with here today?

There are differences in mechanic and technician tools deductibility. It is a growth industry. There is a tremendous demand for young apprentices. Exceptional expenses are involved. As opposed to a pair of shoes to feel better when you are working in a store, we are talking right off the bat of thousands of dollars of input.

Also we are looking at programs in our community colleges to get the young people into the workforce. A two year program puts them into a mechanic or body shop situation. They are earning money and paying taxes. It is only fair that there is an incentive to make that happen.

There is a shortfall in the job sector for youth employment that the government is so intent on addressing. There is a tremendous opportunity out there and making a deductibility for mechanics' tools and technicians' tools would certainly add to that. We would see many jobs filled in that sector. We have seen numbers as high from some interveners as 100,000 positions could be filled. It may take just this little incentive to make it happen.

The objective of the bill is fairness in taxation. I applaud my colleague's desire to see this done. He is the latest in a long list of people from all political parties who have tried to put this act before parliament and have it acted on. I have to stress the youth employment potential. It is economically positive. It is an excellent

bill and I urge the government to act accordingly and have it implemented immediately.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted for the opportunity to add to the debate today since I too have had representations from people not only in my riding but from other areas around the country on this issue.

It is an issue of fairness. Professionals, even lawyers, are able to deduct the cost of office equipment which he or she needs in order to do their business. A doctor, a dentist or any professional is able to deduct the cost of equipment or have it apply in capital cost allowance schedules on income tax.

Why do we discriminate against certain groups of people like mechanics? That is the topic we are dealing with today, although I hasten to add there are others who are discriminated against in this way. It is a matter of great urgency that we actually get the government to move on this.

My colleague who just spoke was too negative. He said the tools will be all be rusty before the government will move on it. I take this occasion to appeal to the Liberal members on the other side who right now are in a majority. I beg them to act on this. It is so obvious and self-evident. The previous speakers have all spoken about this. All the different groups from the finance committee to others have heard presentations. It is a solid argument. There is no reason to hesitate on it.

In my riding there is a major shop and a number of other jobs that work on car repairs. The one I am thinking of is Peterson Pontiac in Sherwood Park in my riding. I had a letter from those people saying they need all this investment and they are among the only ones who cannot reduce their income tax payable by the amount of those tools. They actually have to buy those tools with after tax income. This for most of them effectively increases the cost by about 50% to 80% depending on how much money they are making.

• (1825)

To buy a \$50 tool they have to earn \$80 or \$90 so that after they pay the tax on it they have enough money left.

I urge this government to do something about this. It is time to stop sitting on our duffs. We cannot do that anymore. We must get moving. We must do what is right. We must give fairness in taxation to mechanics.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank the members from all political parties who have spoken in support of this bill. I thank the parliamentary secretary who gave general support and some good reasons to support the bill but who

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also unfortunately came up with a few excuses as to why it has not happened, one being that other technicians should be included.

I agree with that but the government has had five years to make that happen. The parliamentary secretary also showed a concern regarding personal use of tools. That is an issue regarding any item that is allowed for deduction under tax regulations, so it just does not wash at all.

I thank the member from the Bloc Québécois who spoke on this, gave his full support and made some very good comments. The member from the New Democratic Party said this is not a partisan issue, that it has been brought up before, which is the case. I thank the member for that.

I thank the member from the Conservative Party who gave full support and hit on several of the key issues. This member also pointed out that the government has been very tardy on this. I thank them all for their comments.

Our finance critic, the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, a member of the finance committee, pointed out reasons employers require mechanics to own tools, which I think is a very important point. Anyone who has employed mechanics or who has worked with tools knows that tools tend to walk. This is not only because people steal them but tools get left on a piece of equipment, the equipment gets driven away and the tools disappear. Certainly they would pay extra attention if they were their own tools. I thank the member for making that important point and the member for Elk Island who showed his support for this bill.

We have what appears to be unanimous consent from the people who presented on this bill. I cannot understand why it has not happened before now. This is not a new issue. This issue has come up from MPs from all parties in the past, MPs such as Joy Langan, NDP, in 1992 and the Liberal member for Saint-Boniface. A Bloc MP in 1996 put forth a bill that would at least do some of these things.

This is not a new issue. This government has had five years to act on it. It has not acted and it is too bad. It is very unfortunate, particularly for the mechanics who really need this piece of legislation. I do not think we can wait any longer.

This is clearly a tax fairness issue. I find it surprising that just because it is a tax fairness issue that actually requires a reduction in taxation, it is not going to be acted on, at least through this bill.

I want to tell mechanics this issue is not dead. I have the 6,000 to 7,000 letters. I have the lists of groups and businesses that have supported this. I am going to keep going with this.

Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to make Bill C-366 votable.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the item is dropped from the order paper.

[*English*]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

May I ask the unanimous consent of the House to briefly revert to Routine Proceedings and Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its unanimous consent to revert to Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion P-24 to be called.

Motion No. P-24

That a Humble Address be presented to His Excellency praying that he will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, correspondence relating, prosecutions and issues related to extradition concerning the bombing of Air-India 182 in 1995.

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 97(1), I would suggest that this Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate pursuant to Standing Order 97(1).

Is it agreed that the remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on May 1 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development responded to my question on the New Brunswick forestry crisis. He said "We are working with New Brunswick". Well, nice words but empty words it seems.

Early last month the minister said "We have always said we will assist the province and the First Nations". The truth of the matter is that the active federal government involvement should have happened a long time ago. Just like other actions taken on aboriginal issues by this Liberal government, it is a matter of too little way too late.

Does the minister expect First Nations peoples of New Brunswick will easily leave the forest and reduce their logging ambitions? Does she expect that they will easily part with productive jobs and incomes to return to social assistance in many cases? I expect not.

Why then has the minister abjectly refused to issue a reply to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples tabled over 600 days ago? This report outlined a number of initiatives in forestry which may have helped prevent the current crisis. However, this government continues to hide its head in the sand when it comes to aboriginal forestry.

When issuing the landmark Delgamuukw decision last December, Chief Justice Antonio Lamer stated "Let us face it, we are all here to stay". By refusing to provide leadership, this Liberal government appears to be hoping the aboriginal people will simply go away.

Early last month Elizabeth Weir was quoted as saying "The province should be using this time to actively request the federal government get involved". She is right. But this government should have been actively involved long ago. It appears that this government is so deep in the pockets of the Irvings and the other logging mega corporations that it refuses to act on the recommendations of the aboriginal peoples commission.

Six years ago the national forestry strategy called to increase "the involvement of aboriginal peoples in forest land management". Six years later there is precious little except maybe a real crisis in the forests of New Brunswick to show for this government's efforts.

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The government has a responsibility to explain what it has done on each of the following 10 points, or why it has consistently refused to act. These 10 points are based on the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

This federal government should already have taken steps to: one, work with other governments and aboriginal communities to improve aboriginal access to forest resources on crown lands; two, promote aboriginal involvement in provincial forest management; three, give continuing support to aboriginal peoples forest resource associations; four, encourage the provinces to work with their large timber licensees, like the Irvings, to promote forest management partnerships with aboriginal firms; five, encourage joint ventures between aboriginal forest operating companies and other firms with wood processing facilities; six, promote less intensive aboriginal forest management practices and traditional land use activities; seven, work to provide for special roles for aboriginal governments in reviewing forest management and operating plans within their traditional territories; eight, work toward ensuring that aboriginal land use studies are a requirement for all forest management plans; nine, ensure that forest management expertise is available to First Nations; and ten, consult with aboriginal governments to develop a joint policy statement delineating their respective responsibilities in relation to Indian forest reserves.

● (1835)

Each and every day that this government refuses to actively pursue these recommendations of its own royal commission it shoulders a greater part of the responsibility for the current logging crisis in New Brunswick and for other crises that might develop elsewhere.

Just this morning there was news about a potential crisis brewing in B.C. Maybe now this government—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development has the floor.

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member for Halifax West concerning aboriginal access to forest resources on crown lands.

The key issue in this matter is the involvement of New Brunswick aboriginal people in the forestry industry in New Brunswick. The New Brunswick appeal court found that there was not sufficient evidence in the case concerning Mr. Peter Paul to support a treaty or aboriginal right to commercial use of the forests. In any event, court decisions in this case will not close the door forever on the question of aboriginal or treaty rights in the maritimes.

Including aboriginal people in economic activities throughout Canada can go a long way toward promoting economic development in aboriginal communities. This will help raise the standard

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of living and hope for the future among a group of people who remain the most disadvantaged in Canadian society.

The Government of Canada recognizes that this case deals with an issue that falls under provincial jurisdiction. The government is pleased to see that the Government of New Brunswick is amenable to negotiating immediately interim arrangements that would enable First Nation communities to participate more fully in the province's forestry industry.

The province's initial proposal is being reviewed by a coalition of aboriginal leadership and loggers. It is our understanding that a counterproposal will be submitted to the province shortly.

In addition, the province launched a task force led by former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, Gerard La Forest. The mandate of this task force is to consider the immediate issues related to forestry, but also a broader agenda of concerns to the province's First Nations such as education and economic development.

We believe that this task force will help bring all parties together to support peaceful resolutions to this issue. While respecting the primary responsibility of First Nations leadership and the province to resolve these issues, the federal government is open to considering how it could assist the parties to facilitate a resolution. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and her departmental officials will continue to discuss this with First Nations and the province of New Brunswick.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on May 5 I raised a question in this House concerning foreign workers entering Canada under articles 1601 and 1701 of the North American Free Trade Agreement, known as the NAFTA. The reason for raising this was a result of complaints I was receiving, complaints of abuse of the NAFTA provisions, complaints of blatant stretching of the rules, all of this to the detriment of Canadian workers.

The application of articles 1601 and 1701 is reasonable and straightforward. It recognizes that sometimes citizens of the U.S. and Mexico may want to enter Canada to sell products, or to service products, or to install products manufactured in one of those countries. In doing so it is quite a reasonable and simple idea.

Suppose an American company sells an automated painting machine to a Canadian company that manufactures something like wooden doors. When the equipment is delivered the American manufacturer may, pursuant to articles 1601 and 1701 of NAFTA, send a person knowledgeable in the installation and startup of that machine to supervise its installation. What is presumed and expected is that Canadian electricians and millwrights will move

the machine into place and hook up the electrical service but the technical expert is simply there to direct and supervise the work.

What appears to be happening, or what is being suggested to me, is that this is being abused. It is being abused by the Americans who become more than technical supervisors, but who in fact become tradesmen. They start doing the work of people such as electricians, pipe fitters and millwrights. They pick up the tools of these trades and in doing so they put Canadians out of work. They take Canadian jobs from Canadian trades. This cannot be tolerated. The department of immigration must be vigilant.

My concern involving this arose from a series of complaints I received in my office. Quite simply, a number of tradespeople came to me and told me that there were at least 25 Americans posing as technical consultants on a job site in southwestern Ontario. The complaints were the same. These outsiders were working as tradespeople. They were doing whatever was required.

● (1840)

Subsequently the regional immigration office in London advised me there were 40 Americans on the site, 40 so-called technical consultants. When I asked whether immigration had investigated, I was advised no. To date it has not done so and the complaint was first laid on December 9 of last year.

This in my opinion is a sad commentary on the state of the immigration department. In fact the reason given was unbelievably weak. The department did not intervene because it did not have hard hats or safety boots for its employees to enter the worksite.

In her response to me on May 5 the minister stated "I would encourage any member who is aware of a situation to refer it to my department". I hope that the minister today is re-evaluating the resources of her department. I hope that all of these potential abuses are being dealt with immediately.

In this case four months after the initial complaint nothing was done and to date nothing has been done. This is a tragic and sad commentary on how Immigration Canada protects Canadian jobs for Canadians.

I hope the minister will move more decisively and quickly to change this. On behalf of Canadian workers I hope that the minister will enforce the true spirit and intent of the NAFTA. Finally, I hope the minister will stand up for Canadians.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for his question. It reflects the commitment and concern he has for his constituents.

First let me state that in our increasingly global economy the need to knock down trade barriers assumes greater importance.

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That is why the North American Free Trade Agreement in addition to other international agreements are crucial to the government's agenda for creating jobs and growth.

NAFTA commits Canada to work together with our U.S. and Mexico partners to expand trade and investment and to facilitate the movement of legitimate business persons.

Success in the new economy increasingly relies not only on the ability to move products but also to move people across borders quickly and efficiently. This is not to say we are throwing the door open to all workers from the United States and Mexico. We are not. The categories of certain business persons permitted by the agreement from the three countries to have access to each other's countries to conduct certain types of business activities are strictly regulated.

Unfortunately, we may at times encounter those who try to bypass the regular system and attempt to abuse our programs as the member had raised. I want to make it clear that this government will not tolerate this type of behaviour.

In fact the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has said on several occasions that anyone who has information regarding potential abuses of the provisions of NAFTA and/or the Immigration Act is encouraged to contact the department. Hence, on hearing the question on this issue let me assure the member that again this matter will be brought to the attention of the department so that the member may be posted as to developments to ensure that indeed the problem raised has been solved definitively.

[*Translation*]

VARENNES TOKAMAK

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in adjournment proceedings.

On May 12, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources why the federal government was withdrawing its financial support from the Varennes Tokamak. I denounce the inconsistency of the government's decision, and its lack of vision.

The end of this major project is a considerable loss not only for Quebec, but also for Canada, in terms of developing an expertise in the high technology sector. The Varennes Tokamak, Quebec's number one R and D project in the energy sector, will shut down for good in a few days. The precarious state of public finances when the decision was originally made was used as an excuse for rationalizing.

Today, the Minister of Finance boasts about having put the country's fiscal house in order and having managed to eliminate the deficit. However, the argument of rationalization is no longer valid, now that we have a budget surplus that was created essentially

because of the efforts of the provinces and the most disadvantaged. The government can no longer invoke this fallacious argument to justify such an illogical and regressive decision.

The Liberal government now has the means to continue its modest annual contribution of \$7.2 million to the Varennes Tokamak. In its last budget speech, the Minister of Finance said, and I quote "the more R and D that is done in Canada, the more jobs that will be created for Canadians".

How can this statement be reconciled with a decision so disconnected from Canada's future needs in the energy and technology sectors, for which we must prepare right now?

• (1845)

The research on nuclear fusion in the Tokamak project in Varennes is part of a concerted international effort. Four of the major partners in this international project, namely, the United States, Japan, Russia and the European Union, invest nearly \$2 billion in research on nuclear fusion.

A full member of the select club working to develop a renewable, clean and safe form of energy, the federal government spent only \$7.2 million annually on research, while enjoying all the benefits of the knowledge and technical and scientific expertise in the field of nuclear fusion.

With the closure of the Tokamak project in Varennes, Canada will now be deprived of the scientific and technological benefits. Not only will it lose its internationally recognized expertise in microwaves to achieve a modest saving of \$7.2 million, but it will destroy the links it had with an international network of contacts in cutting edge scientific research.

In an article in *La Presse* on May 11, Tom Dolan, the co-ordinator of the world fusion research program with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency, said he was very disappointed to see Canada drop its nuclear fusion research program.

How can such a project be shut down, when the minister was recently claiming to be concerned about the development of clean and renewable energies, and when this objective is part of his strategy for managing climate change?

But since the phenomenon of climate change will have very long-term effects, something the Minister of Natural Resources has just begun to admit, furthermore, research and development of forms of energy such as the one the Tokamak team was working on helps prevent the emission of greenhouse gases and avoid the risk of nuclear accidents presented by the Candu reactors, for instance.

Why would Canada no longer participate in the development of a source of energy such as nuclear fusion? We are told it is a question of priorities. Is it not a priority for Canada to be among world leaders in the research and development of clean and safe

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renewable energies, rather than limiting its role to that of a passive spectator?

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Human Resources Development has the floor.

[English]

Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this important issue and I welcome the opportunity to speak to the matter.

The federal government has provided \$90 million to Tokamak de Varennes from 1981 to 1997. The government chose, however, not to terminate funding abruptly. This would have been unfair to the scientists and researchers.

When the government decided to terminate its support for fusion at the end of March 1997 it provided a lump sum payment of \$19 million to Hydro Quebec thereby absolving the government of any future liabilities for this project. Hydro Quebec agreed to operate the facility for an additional three years, complete the experiments in progress and allow for an orderly shutdown of the facilities.

Hydro Quebec announced in May that it would be shutting down this facility earlier than anticipated because of budgetary pressures. It seems that Hydro Quebec has decided, like the federal government, that fusion cannot be a priority at this time.

Federal funding of fusion research has been a difficult issue over the years as the funding requirements kept escalating. Fusion research is expensive and equipment had to be kept up to date with advances in fusion science to be able to make meaningful contributions to the knowledge base. Although the science was very good the technology was very expensive and has a payback that is at least 30 to 40 years in the future. It is not certain the technology could be successfully developed.

Natural Resources Canada decided that fusion could not be a priority given the spending cuts that had to be made and the limited resources at our disposal. In energy R and D the government is focusing on those areas that have the greatest promise for reducing greenhouse gases and for helping to meet our commitment to the Kyoto protocol.

Many accomplished dedicated scientists were associated with this project. They are to be commended for their contribution to this field of research. The Government of Canada has a responsibility to Canadians, however, to manage public investments prudently and to establish strategic priorities in energy research. It simply does not have the means to fund all research, as worthy as it may be.

HEPATITIS C

Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to have an opportunity to put some more comments on the record with regard to hepatitis C. There have been numerous questions to the minister over the past few weeks.

• (1850)

The parliamentary secretary is here tonight. I guess maybe in an unusual sense we will have a little debate here if it is allowed. I will put a question or two to the parliamentary secretary which perhaps he could answer. I do not think that is breaching the rules too much.

My last question to the minister on this issue had to do with the working group established after the breakdown in talks between the federal health minister and the provinces regarding compensation for all victims outside the 1986 to 1990 package. No one would argue with that package in and of itself, but obviously the problem is that we have many victims prior to 1986 who were not compensated. Therein lies the problem.

We want to see this issue resolved. We want to see all pre-1986 innocent victims of the tainted blood supply compensated. It is as simple as that. Some provinces have indicated since the breakdown of the federal-provincial negotiations that they would compensate. They are on record and have obviously dedicated some funding to it.

I am hoping to get tonight basically a sense of what is happening at the meetings in Edmonton which are presently ongoing. We have heard everything from a complete breakdown in the negotiations to things are moving on, they are still talking and meeting and so on. We are hoping the latter is the case and that negotiations are continuing. I have to refrain from using the word negotiations because the minister says they are meeting and discussing. At the end of the day we are hoping that something will happen.

I hope the parliamentary secretary can bring us up to date on this issue because it is an issue that will not go away. I do not think Canadians will be satisfied until there is a compensation package that includes all the victims prior to 1986, some of whom contracted hepatitis C since 1990. Possibly the parliamentary secretary could bring us up to date.

In a country as generous as Canada and in a country which as I told the Canadian public time and time again in the House is rated No. 1 in the world we are seeking fairness for all victims.

Maybe the parliamentary secretary could deviate from the script a bit tonight and bring us up to date.

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased my colleague opposite has at least recognized the compensation package that was fashioned thanks to the leadership of the Minister of Health for Canada

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together with his colleagues at the provincial and territorial level. It has finally been acknowledged as something that in and of itself is very good. In fact I think he said unquestionably acceptable.

We all know what has transpired since the package which deserves all those adjectives was placed before the House and before the Canadian public. To be more specific, to get to a resolution of some of the things that have transpired in the last couple of months, as the member has indicated the federal authorities together with the provincial and territorial counterparts met in Edmonton for two days.

I remind members in the House and those watching the proceedings that the victims were also present through their representatives. Some positions have been floated through the press. Some have come before the House and others have been addressed by interested parties with respect to how to deal with those who fall outside the package that we placed before the House and the Canadian public some two months ago.

• (1855)

Those positions were discussed. They were evaluated. I dare say they were probably placed in some kind of balance so the working group could consider substantive issues and deal with short term and long term implications, cost implications, health delivery system implications and jurisdictional implications.

That is where the working group is now. We hope it will conclude its study in short order.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 12, I asked the Minister of the Environment if Environment Canada had sufficient resources to fulfil legal responsibilities and to enforce regulations contained in the current Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

The minister replied that his department had sufficient resources to deal with every element of environmental protection under the current act. The standing committee was contrary in its findings. On February 26 Environment Canada's deputy minister responded to committee questions by indicating that the environment enforcement program lacked adequate human and financial resources.

The standing committee report entitled "Enforcing Canada's Pollution Laws: The Public Interest Must Come First" raises concern that crown liability for failure to enforce environmental legislation may lead to actions against Environment Canada for regulatory negligence. It also highlights the need for more human and financial resources.

The environment minister stated on national television that there had not been recent cuts to the environment enforcement program. Following the interview Canadians could read the figures for themselves.

In 1995 there were 28 investigators to protect Canada's environment from pollution and assorted environmental impacts and infractions. Today there are 17 investigators or a loss of 11 investigators.

The environment minister stated time and time again that the Liberal government provided the highest environmental standards for Canadians. It is a convenient answer when opposition members call the government to account for the deterioration of environmental standards across the country.

The Canadian public does not know the critical state of Canada's environment. Most Canadians would be shocked to learn that entire sections of CEPA are not enforced in some provinces.

The minister re-signed an agreement with Quebec to monitor pulp and paper effluents. The next day it was reported that at least 20 infractions were not being enforced in that province.

Most Canadians would be shocked to know that the entire CEPA budget for Atlantic Canada above salaries and operating expenses is \$150,000 for the region.

The Pacific-Yukon region where 16 people are expected by the government to cover an approximate 17,200 possible sites where federal regulations may apply will lose a third of its budget this year.

The government has more parking enforcement officers on Parliament Hill than there are six field inspectors for the entire prairie and northern region, an area larger than Europe.

Before the program reviews which slashed an estimated 40% from Environment Canada's budgets since the Liberal took office, an internal Environment Canada report recommended 300 enforcement personnel would be needed to protect our environment. In reality today there are fewer than 70 people.

The environment minister stated the benefits of voluntary compliance and reporting programs. Canadians should know that report after report has stated otherwise. Voluntary alone does not work. Industry complies when federal regulations are applied.

We are not saying there is a lot of bad apples but there are a few that require monitoring. For instance in this wonderful land we call home, Canada, the harsh climate does not allow us to leave any window or door open without compromising everybody's comfort or safety.

The standing committee received numerous presentations from Canada's environment community which concur that voluntary programs are insufficient for environmental protection. Why would

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the minister continue to pursue a policy that people in her own department stated does not work? Who is the government trying to protect?

A lack of leadership and political will was highlighted—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister has the floor.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are committed to a clean environment in its many dimensions, knowing that a clean environment is one determinant of good health of the citizenry. That is why Canadians want strong and effective environmental laws to ensure a clean environment for Canada. That is why on March 12 the Minister of the Environment introduced Bill C-32 to renew the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The bill represents a shift from expensive efforts to try to clean up pollution after the fact to preventing it from occurring in the first place.

• (1900)

In the bill all substances used in Canada will be screened for their effects on the environment and therefore human health. Strict deadlines for action will be in place. The government is committed to putting the most dangerous toxic substances on the path to virtual elimination. One of the innovative features of this bill is the authority to require pollution prevention plans for toxic substances, a first for Canada.

Pollution prevention is good for both environment and business. Companies that have voluntarily adopted a pollution prevention approach have found it improves the bottom line. At the same time, sound enforcement of the law is essential to creating a level playing field that supports environmental leaders while penalizing polluters.

The renewed act will improve enforcement by expanding inspector powers, including the authority to issue on the spot orders and ensuring that the financial and human resources needed are in place.

The new act is founded on the principle of partnership, not on devolution of federal powers to the provinces and territories but on close co-operative work with them. The federal government remains firmly committed to safeguarding the health of Canadians from the threat of pollution by strengthening environmental protection in Canada.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7.00 p.m.)

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