CANADA

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**OFFICIAL REPORT**
**(HANSARD)**

## Wednesday, March 11, 1998

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

**Wednesday, March 11, 1998**

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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● (1400)

[*English*]

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

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

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to join Canadians and the world in marking March 8 to 14 as International Women's Week.

The theme for this year's celebration is: The Evolution of Women's Rights: A Lifelong Commitment. This theme highlights the importance of women's human rights while emphasizing the long term commitment necessary to further women's equality.

In my riding of Kitchener Centre we celebrated the contributions of women to Canadian society by holding the first annual International Women's Day breakfast featuring two women who have demonstrated vision in their fields.

As we honour International Women's Week, let us reaffirm our dedication to the challenge of promoting fairness, equity and respect for human rights here in Canada and around the world.

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### RED DEER CONSTITUENCY

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, like so many MPs, I toured around my riding last week to find out what the people thought. The people of the riding of Red Deer gave me four messages to bring back to this house.

The first one was to demand lower taxes. They do not accept the finance minister's glib comments about tax cuts and how he is helping people.

Second, unlike the Liberals they understand that debt and taxes kill jobs. They expect the national debt to be paid off.

Third, the people of central Alberta demand an elected Senate. It is obvious the days of patronage are quickly coming to an end in the upper chamber.

Finally, the people of the Red Deer constituency are proud Canadians. They are proud of their two Olympic athletes who competed in Japan and they are proud of the Canadian flag. Their message echoes across this country that they want to see the flag honoured in this place.

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[*Translation*]

### CANADA-FRANCE INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

**Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the 28th annual meeting of the Canada-France Interparliamentary Association was held last week in France. Nine of our parliamentarians from both Houses attended this meeting.

Discussions focused on our health services, the Kyoto agreement, women and politics, the proposed multilateral agreement on investment, the building of the European Union and the role played by the Canadian Armed Forces during the second world war.

Our two countries share many concerns and interests: efforts to restore fiscal health through deficit reduction of course, but also through strategic social investments; the realization that some so-called national problems can only be addressed within the context of strengthened international co-operation, particularly as regards the environment; common values and interests to uphold in negotiating the multilateral agreement, with respect to the cultural exemption in particular.

Finally, we noted our French counterparts' conviction that the future of our societies is dependent on the strengthening—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Jonquière.

*S. O. 31*

## QUEBEC GOVERNMENT

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals saw the light. The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine recognized that the sovereignists were doing a fine job of managing Quebec's finances, since investments there will grow by 8.4% in 1998, as compared with 6.2% in Canada and 5% in Ontario.

The Bloc Quebecois applauds both these pieces of good news: investments for Quebec and the Bouchard government receiving acclaim from the Liberals. After discovering that there is water on the moon, it is very encouraging to see that members across the floor are waking up.

● (1405)

I have also noticed that the Liberals admitted this week that sovereignists are doing a good job in Quebec, and they also support a Conservative to lead the Quebec Liberal Party.

Can you believe, Mr. Speaker, that the members across the way have finally realized that behind every problem in Quebec there is a Liberal?

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[*English*]

## RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the 150th anniversary of responsible government in Canada.

In marking it, we must remind ourselves that our role in this House, our ability to represent our constituents in this great democracy, has its roots in the work in 1848 of those who fought for the principles of representative government.

[*Translation*]

Today, it is our duty to salute the efforts of three men: Joseph Howe, of Nova Scotia, as well as Robert Baldwin and Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine, of the United Canada.

When we reflect on the achievements of these men it reminds us of our role as members of Parliament. And when we reflect on the efforts of Baldwin and Lafontaine, two friends united in their fight for democracy, we realize that this country was built through the joint, hard work of francophones and anglophones.

I respect their memory and I believe the best way to celebrate their democratic victory is to make sure the country they loved so much remains strong and united.

[*English*]

## INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the National Research Council's successful industrial research assistance program is one of the most important mechanisms for supporting innovation and helping small business create and adopt new technologies.

Every year IRAP provides technical advice to more than 10,000 companies and provides financial assistance in support of research and development to more than 3,000 companies.

The industrial research assistance program supports a national technology network that involves 150 public and private sector organizations.

It is for this reason that this government will increase this successful program by an additional $34 million to $130 million this year, an increase of 35% from 1997.

IRAP will provide greater support to small businesses in adopting new technologies and developing new products for commercial markets.

This new investment, along with other initiatives such as technology partnerships Canada and the Canadian foundation for innovation, complements this government's continuing commitment.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Kelowna.

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## THE SENATE

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the recent appointment of Ross Fitzpatrick of Kelowna to the Senate of Canada is an excellent example of why the Senate should be reformed.

Mr. Fitzpatrick is a very successful businessman. He has been a friend of the Prime Minister for many years. They are golfing buddies. They are political buddies. Mr. Fitzpatrick was influential in the Prime Minister's leadership campaign. The Prime Minister comes to Kelowna and stays at his friend's house.

Mr. Fitzpatrick was not elected. He is in the Senate because of his friendship with the Prime Minister. He is not accountable to the people of B.C. He is accountable only to the Prime Minister who appointed him without consultation of the people. This is not a voice of the people of B.C. It is a voice of the Prime Minister in the Senate. Enough of such patronage.

Yes, the time has come to elect senators and establish accountability to the people, not the Prime Minister.

## CAMBRIAN SYSTEMS CORPORATION

**Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday I was pleased to announce a $2.28 million investment by technology partnerships Canada in a Cambrian Systems Corporation project. The project will create up to 220 jobs directly in the Ottawa region and approximately 71 indirect jobs across Canada by 2001.

This repayable TPC investment means that the Government of Canada is partnering with Cambrian Systems Corporation of Kanata in the design, manufacturing and marketing of fibre optic communications transport equipment which will revolutionize information highway connectivity.

As the need grows for networks to carry more information, Cambrian will act as a catalyst in the development of a new system using individual colours of light to transmit information over fibre optics. Known as DWDM based photonics networking, this technology is expected to become an important means of communicating in the next millennium.

This investment by Industry Canada will ensure that this important communications system will reach the marketplace sooner, to the benefit of all Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

## RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, the government wishes to commemorate the inception, in 1848, of the first responsible government in the United Canada.

The government is right in saying that the victory of the Lafontaine-Baldwin coalition is an important step in the evolution of democracy in Canada, and that this coalition is an example of co-operation between francophones and anglophones.

● (1410)

But what this federal government does not tell us is that the very foundation of the alliance between Lafontaine and Baldwin was their willingness to recognize as equals and partners the two peoples living side by side in a united Canada. In other words, when Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin joined forces, what moved them was a recognition of, and respect for, the two founding peoples.

Since the unilateral patriation of the Constitution in 1982, the federal government has denied that reality. Since then, it has ridden roughshod over the principles of 1848. It seeks to deny the very existence of the Quebec people. It prefers arrogance and confrontation to the recognition and respect that prevailed at the time.

For this reason, we shall not be participating today in this commemoration of 1848.

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[*English*]

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the last several years this government has put in place key building blocks for renewing Canada's innovation system.

In 1996 we announced technology partnerships Canada, a program to promote technological development and to make Canadian firms more competitive. In 1997 we announced the Canada foundation for innovation, aimed at investing in infrastructure for research and development in universities, colleges and hospitals. We also stabilized funding for the networks of centres of excellence.

In the budget just a few weeks ago we increased funding to the granting councils. This new funding will increase support to graduate students engaged in research through scholarships, post-doctoral fellowships and project grants. This new funding will also help the granting councils expand partnerships between university researchers and the private sector.

I am proud that this government is committed to making Canada more innovative by supporting science, technology and the creation of knowledge.

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## RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the 150th anniversary of responsible government in Canada. On March 11, 1848 the great ministry of Baldwin and Lafontaine was sworn in, forming Canada's first elected and accountable cabinet.

Who were Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine? They were not members of the autocratic, top down family compacts who thought it was their God given right to govern Canada forever. No, they were the leaders of the Reform Parties of Upper and Lower Canada.

What united these people, one a francophone and one an anglophone? Not expediency. Not love of patronage. But a deep commitment to reforming the outmoded government system of their day to make it more democratic and accountable.

[*Translation*]

Long live the memory of Lafontaine. Long live the memory of Baldwin. Long live the spirit of reform.

### CANADA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on March 2, the body known as the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec became the Economic Development Agency of Canada for Regions of Quebec, or simply Canada Economic Development.

This new title will better reflect its mission and our government's strategy for ensuring the growth of Quebec's businesses and regions.

Today's economic context offers businesses in the regions of Quebec the possibility of expanding their influence throughout the entire world. Canada Economic Development will therefore devote itself fully to supporting their efforts to develop their potential and gain their fair share of the world economy.

This is one more example of an excellent initiative by our government to create employment, enhance collective wealth and ensure the economic development of the regions of Quebec.

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[*English*]

### MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly concerned about the multilateral agreement on investment being negotiated by this government.

The MAI was hatched in secrecy. It could deal away our sovereignty. Canadians do not believe they are getting straight answers.

In the face of government evasion, citizens are taking matters into their own hands and educating themselves. For example, a group in Regina is organizing a conference to be held in 10 days time.

A member of that group, Dr. Joseph Kos, has been trying for five months to get some answers from this government or to have somebody from the government participate in the conference. So far Dr. Kos and his fellow citizens have come up empty handed.

The federal government has been unwilling to provide a speaker, despite letters to the Prime Minister, to the Minister for International Trade and to the Minister of Natural Resources in whose constituency this conference will take place. They do not have any answers.

This kind of stonewalling is not an isolated occurrence. It is occurring in other jurisdictions as well.

We urge the government to begin taking its responsibilities seriously and to provide a speaker for this conference.

• (1415 )

### HIGHWAYS

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, in September 1995 the federal Minister of Transport signed a contract to pay $16.2 million to build a highway in New Brunswick between Moncton and River Glade on the one condition that the provincial government also contribute $16.2 million to the highway.

Both the province and the federal government paid their $16.2 million, but immediately the provincial government took its share back out. Now tolls will be charged to make up for the missing money. The result will be that one truck making one trip per day for a year from Fredericton to Truro will pay over $27,000 a year in tolls.

I have received almost 1,000 letters from people from the affected area. They request that the Minister of Transport demand the Government of New Brunswick to restore its share of the money and honour the terms of the contract it signed.

I will deliver these letters to the minister today, which reflect the outrage of the people in the area, and demand that the minister provide the same treatment for the people of New Brunswick as for the rest of the country.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, when the government presented the budget a few weeks ago, many Canadians suspected that the finance minister had used creative accounting to avoid showing a surplus. That way the government could say there was no money for major debt reduction or tax relief.

Now the auditor general has confirmed those suspicions. He is threatening not to sign off on the budget because of serious breaches in accounting practices.

Why is the Prime Minister not following proper public sector accounting principles in the preparation of the budget? What is the government trying to hide?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when we took office in 1993 we discovered to our amazement that there were a number of obligations of the government that had not been accounted for. There were commitments looking ahead which had not been booked into the numbers. In fact a fair amount of

clean-up had to be done. I wish the auditor general at that point had insisted on a far greater degree of transparency.

We took the decision at that point that the books of this government would be more transparent than anybody else's books and that Canadians would understand exactly the financial situation of the country, and that we would not hide numbers. That is what we have done in this particular case.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister is unwise to criticize the auditor general. The auditor general says the Prime Minister is breaking the government's own accounting rules. This is the third time he has said it. If the auditor general cannot trust the budget, how can the public or this House trust the budget?

Here are the facts. If the Prime Minister had followed acceptable accounting rules, there would have been a $2.5 billion surplus. But the books were cooked to show no surplus, meaning less tax relief and debt reduction for Canadians.

Is not the real reason the books were cooked so that there would be no surplus left for real tax relief or real debt reduction?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that because of the good management of this government and the Minister of Finance, we were able to take $2.5 billion and put it aside to make sure that the millennium project will mean scholarships for 100,000 Canadians over 10 years.

**Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, this explanation does not wash with the auditor general. When the number one watchdog for the budget starts to bark, this House had better listen.

The auditor general said he cannot approve the federal budget without a major disclaimer. He says the government is guilty of ''serious breaches'' of accounting rules. This is a very serious charge and it demands an explanation from the Prime Minister.

Were the books cooked to hide the surplus from tax weary Canadians? Is that not the real reason?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time in my public life that I have been accused of telling everything ahead of time, and telling too much of the truth by telling the people that we are putting $2.5 billion aside in a special account to give to a special group 100,000 scholarships a year.

I will accept the blame that I am too open with the Canadian public, but I think it was the right thing to do under the circumstances.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's chief accountant, the auditor general, says the finance minister is cooking the books. That is a fact. This is so serious that the auditor general is now saying that he is very reluctant to sign off on these books, an action which he says ''waves a red flag that the government is misrepresenting or distorting its financial position''. I ask the finance minister again why he has decided that his own political agenda is more important than the integrity of the public finances.

● (1420)

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, why is the Reform Party advocating hiding the government's clearly committed obligations? What does the Reform Party have against transparency?

The fact is that accounting principles evolve. In the private sector if you incur an obligation you book it right away. It may be that the private sector's accounting principles evolved faster than the government's in the fact that we are always ahead.

We are with the private sector. We are with openness. We are with transparency.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that $2.5 billion have been removed from taxpayers' pockets. The surplus belongs to them. They want tax relief.

The auditor general says that he will not sign off on the government's books because the finance minister's accounting cannot be trusted, $2.5 billion for the millennium scholarship fund.

Why will the finance minister not admit the real reason he has done this is that he is preparing for his leadership run and he needs this for a slush fund?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, finally the truth comes out. It is not the accounting that bothers members of the Reform Party; it is the millennium fund.

They are against 100,000 Canadian students getting $3,000 a year. That is what they are against. They are against recognizing that jobs come from education. That is what they are against. They are against us spending money on the future of young Canadians. That is what they are against.

If they are against young Canadians, why do they not admit it and not hide behind a bunch of accountants?

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[*Translation*]

## OPTION CANADA

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on January 8, the auditor general asked for additional information from Heritage Canada on the $4.8 million funding for Option Canada.

The office of the auditor general wrote ''We consider it vital to obtain specific information on what in fact was done, produced and obtained with the funding provided by Heritage Canada''.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell us whether she acted on this request and what exactly the funds given Option Canada were used for?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have written the chairman of Option Canada, and I expect an answer soon.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I imagine the minister has some responsibility in the administration of budgets, and I would like her to confirm that this money was in fact paid out according to the objectives of the Heritage Canada program and not according to the referendum objectives of the Liberal Party of Canada.

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to two internal reports by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the first signed by Bill Coleman on March 31, 1997, and the second signed by Ann Scotton on August 22, 1997, the grant applications submitted in 1995 by Option Canada met only two of the 22 conditions necessary in the circumstances.

On November 5, the minister told us that everything had been done according to the rules. How, then, does she explain that Option Canada's application was approved, when it met only two of the 22 grant criteria?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, given that the letters mentioned by the member opposite were personally forwarded by me to the opposition, she should know that, when the analysis was done, our department's audit bureau made all the necessary changes in the current system.

Right now, the criteria are consistent with Treasury Board requirements. She should know, because it says so in her own documents.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, not only did the grant application not meet the criteria, but we have learned that $2 million of this grant went out to Option Canada 12 days before the application was submitted.

● (1425)

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all the documents, including the date payments were made, were supplied to the opposition in January and they contain all this information. I have already explained to the member and her colleagues that, once we saw that the criteria had not been met, we did the necessary follow-up.

There is nothing else in the file, given that we were the ones who supplied them with the information they are now supposedly bringing to light here in the House.

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[*English*]

## HOME CARE

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are sick and tired of waiting for home care. Yet the health minister told home care delegates in Halifax that Canadians may have to wait up to two more years. That is not good enough, not for the sick, not for family caregivers and not for health care providers.

Will the health minister accelerate the introduction of comprehensive home care by establishing in partnership with the provinces a 90 day emergency task force to get on with home care once and for all?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has said that it will work with provincial partners toward the creation of a national approach to home and community care to fill the gaps that are now evident in the health care system, to meet unmet needs and to ensure Canadians wherever they may live in the country can rely on a standard of care at any point in their lives which is equivalent to the principles we hold dear.

Four hundred Canadians from across the country met in Halifax this week. The meeting just ended yesterday. From that meeting it became clear that in the months ahead we must work to prepare this plan so that we get it right.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the minister acknowledged that inadequate home care was causing health care crises across the country each and every day. He avoided mention of the $3.5 billion that his government hacked out of health care and the pain and suffering it is causing Canadians.

Will the minister sit down with the provinces and health care partners to work co-operatively? Will he accept the conference recommendation to begin significant funding and set standards for home care no later than 1999, no later than next year's budget?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the process of collaboration, of forming partnerships with provincial governments and others, has already begun. We have already begun to identify specific concrete steps that can be taken to move on the principles I have described.

The answer is not as the NDP would have us do, simply to throw dollars at the issue. The answer surely is to come to understand where the effort is needed most and to work with partners to prepare the proper response. That is exactly what the government is committed to do.

## HEPATITIS C

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are suffering from hepatitis C which they contracted through no fault of their own.

Yesterday victims who contracted the disease before 1986 and after 1990 filed a class action lawsuit. This issue is about people who have been suffering since the early 1980s and have waited long enough.

When will the Minister of Health start to show some compassion and treat all these victims equally? A lengthy and costly court case is not in any party's interest.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has been saying since before the delivery of the Krever report that a lengthy litigation is not in the interest of anyone. We have been anxious to find a way to resolve these tragic errors of the past in a humane and fair way. We remain committed to just that process.

I should tell the hon. member that in my judgment it is in the best interest of the victims and the federal and provincial governments to take a co-ordinated approach in this regard. I have been working toward that result. I hope that within a very short while I will be able to announce with my provincial partners a resolution that will meet the—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint John.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, Justice Krever stated in his report ''compensating some needy sufferers and not others cannot in my opinion be justified''. This is exactly what the victims are saying. These are people who are suffering through no fault of their own and people are dying.

● (1430)

The government appointed Justice Krever and now it does not want to listen to him? Where is the leadership on the other side? Will the minister treat all victims equally, in the same manner, the way Justice Krever suggests?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have told the member and the House, the government intends to act. It is our hope that we can act in concert with the provinces in the interest of the victims.

However, one can search the record and one's memory and not find a trace of any action taken on behalf of these victims by the hon. member's party when it was in power over the period of 1993. It has been left to us to act and we will accept our responsibility.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, picture this. A civilian employee, a maintenance worker of the defence department, gave testimony before the defence committee in Cold Lake in January.

Shortly after she received a letter from the office of the judge advocate general warning her that it would be in her best interest not to speak out against the department.

Will the minister advise the House whether this lady has been singled out for intimidation, or is this routine procedure in his department?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know of the specific case the hon. member is referring to but I will say one thing. It is our policy to treat people fairly and humanely and to make sure that in any of these cases we get to the bottom of the truth and treat people in a fair fashion.

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Ms. Simone Olafson who works at the base in Cold Lake received this letter from Major Barber, deputy judge advocate, after her appearance before the defence committee.

She is chastised for saying negative things about his department. The letter from the JAG's office concludes with the warning ''govern yourself accordingly''.

Ms. Olafson has been betrayed. When will the minister apologize to these people for encouraging them to appear before the committee and then betraying them?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to look at the facts of this situation, but from the way this member and other hon. members in the opposition have approached these subjects in the past, they certainly do not get their facts right. We need to get to the bottom of this, look at it properly, and not rely upon their kind of information.

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[*Translation*]

## OPTION CANADA

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the use of funds at Option Canada, the minister has just said that she provided all the necessary details.

I have to say that she and her department have always turned down our requests for information, and only through access to information legislation, two and a half years after the fact, did we get the answers we now have.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage say that the management of the funds was carefully monitored, when three internal memos from her own department and two internal reports say the very opposite?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my reports here in this House were timely.

I would again point out that I personally provided all the documents the member opposite refers to. We have nothing to hide. We have monitored the matter and changed procedures to ensure that the situation will never recur.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone knows about using the Access to Information Act when information is being withheld. That is what we had to do.

How could the Minister of Canadian Heritage appear before the Standing Committee on Heritage on November 5 last year and say that all expenditures were in compliance with the rules of Treasury Board, when she had two memos on October 8 and 9 from her department saying the opposite and especially when that very day, in her department, a report was submitted to her indicating that funds were being managed very badly? How does she explain that?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my testimony before the committee, I clearly said, and the assistant deputy minister, Mr. Moyer, followed it up, that the procedures in place when the contributions were made were consistent with the requirements of Treasury Board, and nothing has changed in this matter.

* * *

● (1435)

[*English*]

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of Indian affairs has conceded that the unauthorized leaking of Bruce Starlight's letter was wrong. The privacy commissioner says her department in fact broke the law.

On Monday, after more than two full months, the minister finally apologized to Mr. Starlight but that will not pay his legal bills.

The Liberals had no trouble coughing up more than $2 million to the former prime minister when they leaked one of his confidential letters.

Will the minister commit here and now to pay Mr. Starlight's legal fees?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member has been, but indeed one of the first things I did upon receiving the report of the investigator was to call Mr. Starlight and indicate that we would pay for his legal fees.

**Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we asked the minister repeatedly in the House to make that commitment and she has only made it right now.

In the matter of Bruce Starlight—

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Skeena.

**Mr. Mike Scott:** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we have asked the minister consistently for over a month and this is the first time we had a commitment to pay those legal fees.

In the matter of this leaked letter the privacy commissioner and the minister of Indian affairs found that correspondence in her office was handled in a lax manner. Both investigations concluded ''physical security afforded to sensitive correspondence was poor and did not comply with government policy''.

Could the minister tell us who in her office is responsible for security of sensitive correspondence?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained in the House and as I have explained publicly, the recommendations made to me by the investigator indicated quite clearly that there were lax approaches.

We are taking action against the seven recommendations that he made. Indeed individuals have been named in the department to deal with confidential information, to classify it appropriately and to manage it effectively in my department.

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[*Translation*]

## FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In recent years, francophone groups outside Quebec have suffered some very severe cuts. In Saskatchewan, for example, 43% of their funding was cut. Preparations are under way for renewal of these agreements with the francophone communities outside Quebec.

Can the minister justify not having found any extra funds for the francophone communities, when the latest census data show just what a drastic situation these communities are in?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes, we are in the process of negotiating, with the provinces, the renewal of the Canada-communities agreement.

What I find most interesting is that the leader of the Bloc Quebecois is getting booed during his travels around Saskatche-

wan. They have rejected him outright because he does not acknowledge that there can be francophone Canadians. He wants a francophone Quebec and an anglophone Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister has misread the papers again today.

The department she represents has expended huge amounts of energy to turn up another $10 million in funding, in order to finance the Council for Canadian Unity and Options Canada.

Could the minister expend the same amount of energy to turn up additional funding to save the francophones outside Quebec? Or does she only have energy for flags?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the present time we are, through a number of different programs, funding education and support for francophone communities outside Quebec to the tune of $1.2 billion.

I find it absolutely incredible, ridiculous even, that the same Bloc MPs who want to separate Quebec from Canada, who want to have a French Quebec and an English Saskatchewan, should pretend to be demanding rights for minority francophones in Saskatchewan. This is nothing but crocodile tears, all for show.

* * *

● (1440)

[*English*]

## KOSOVO

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the problems in Kosovo have been escalating daily. The minister's answer to that is that we should impose some sanctions. We know that sanctions will not work in the short term.

People are dying over there and the minister comes up with this idea of sanctions, just a token gesture. Does this minister not have any other ideas that will stop the killings in Kosovo?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am always glad to share information with the hon. member. As he knows, not only did Canada impose a series of sanctions but the same decision was taken by the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany to establish the same kind of sanctions, to establish a mediator and to meet again in 10 days to determine whether further action should be taken. Already we have had some responses.

President Milosevic has offered to meet with groups of Albanians in Kosovo. We are taking very tough and very direct action.

I do not think the hon. member would like to precipitate a major conflict in that area without making sure that we—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Red Deer.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been there since 1991. We are not part of the contact group and yet we have been a major part of this issue.

Why will the minister not at least, when negotiating with the Americans, particularly yesterday with Madam Albright, emphasize the fact that we should be part of that contact group and part of the decision making? Sanctions are just not going to be enough.

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we made those exact points.

* * *

[*Translation*]

## HEPATITIS C VICTIMS

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government, the Ontario government and the Red Cross are being sued for nearly $4 billion.

The announcement of the lawsuit coincides with the rumour about the federal government not planning to compensate those infected with hepatitis C before 1986 and after 1990.

Does the minister recognize that it would be unfair and discriminatory to compensate only hepatitis C victims contaminated between 1986 and 1990, when the people infected with the AIDS virus, directly or indirectly—

**The Speaker:** The Hon. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, concerning the whole issue of compensation for hepatitis C victims, we are currently working with our provincial partners to find a fair and equitable solution.

Hopefully, we will be able to make an announcement in the coming weeks, in co-operation with the provinces, about compensation for the victims.

* * *

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

[*English*]

It has been reported that reducing greenhouse gases in Canada will cost $100 billion over the next 15 years. With this kind of huge expenditure, can Canada afford to meet its obligations under the Kyoto agreement?

**Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the same media reports quoting that figure, the reports went on to indicate that the costs of not responding to our Kyoto obligations would be even higher.

With our work on the voluntary registry, our work on energy efficiency, our work on renewables and alternatives, our work on co-generation, on new technology, development and diffusion, our development of international flexibility tools like emissions trading, indeed we can meet our obligations and we can build the economy at the same time.

* * *

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Jason Gamache was a convicted young sex offender, but the public did not know this. An unsuspecting mother hired him to babysit her six year old daughter. He raped and murdered that little girl.

I ask the justice minister if she would commit today to amend the Young Offenders Act so that the publication of the names of young offenders who threaten the lives and the safety of members of society can be published.

● (1445 )

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I am indeed working on a response, and a fulsome response, to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The hon. member was a member of that committee and I have made it clear to him and others on a number of occasions that this response will be forthcoming in a few weeks.

I look forward to the positive contribution of the hon. member and others as we renew the youth justice system in this country.

**Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we have already made our response to the cries from across this land to do something about that issue in our private member's bill which was tabled in the House last September.

I want to know why the justice minister has been dragging her feet for so long on a whole host of issues that not only the parliamentary report submitted to this House has urged her to move on but others as well. Why has she dragged her feet so long on this issue?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would hope that most people in this honourable House know that the renewal of the youth justice system in this country is a complex, multifaceted issue. Therefore, unlike some in this House, I actually want to consult with those who are key stakeholders in the youth justice system.

I want to reassure the hon. member that our response to the standing committee report will be forthcoming in a matter of weeks.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the defence minister is pushing alternative service delivery at military bases across this country, saying it will save money. He has failed to produce one single audit to substantiate this claim.

At 5 Wing base in Labrador the British company SERCO contracted to run the base will receive bonuses of $1 million annually.

While several hundred civilian employees are condemned to unemployment and wage reductions, the minister sits idly by as ex-military brass line their pockets with SERCO.

When will the minister halt this unfair attack on the people of Goose Bay, Labrador?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the research behind the statement before the question is wrong. What we are attempting to do is in fact save the base, save jobs and provide a service to our allies who use the base for low level flying in an efficient and effective way in the hopes they will use the base in the future.

We have to cut costs to do that. However, in doing that we are treating people fairly and humanely. We are giving them options under the EDI and ERI departure incentives as well as options for other possible jobs.

As well, the company which is taking over the contract has a plan to offer most of them a job.

* * *

## CANADA PORTS

**Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada Ports Corporation is offering former ports police in Halifax hush money. Cash for silence in Halifax.

The solicitor general indicated on *Newsworld* yesterday that he met with the RCMP about these and other matters.

Can the solicitor general assure this House that former ports police in Halifax who signed the gag orders will face no criminal or civil liability or repercussions if they voluntarily speak with the RCMP and co-operate with investigations into Canada Ports Corporation?

**Hon. Andy Scott (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no contract, no relationship, can interfere with an RCMP criminal investigation.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the health minister. In 1991 the government did act unilaterally to compensate the HIV victims. He is wrong on that.

What we are asking is for him to exercise the same moral responsibility and political leadership that has to be there to meet this pressing need.

Will he exercise that moral responsibility and political leadership and compensate these innocent victims?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we want to look at the history, the fact is no effort was made to come to grips with the hepatitis C victims. It is that about which I was being asked by the hon. member for Saint John.

I hope we can put the hon. member's political thrust aside and deal with the interest of the victims because that is where our interest lies.

Over the past several months I have been working with my provincial counterparts to find a way to compensate the victims of the hepatitis C tragedy which is humane and fair and keeps the issue out of the courts. If we can do that I shall be very happy. That is my objective.

• (1450 )

**Mr. Greg Thompson (Charlotte, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the way we are headed, these innocent victims are going to be in court for 10 years because of lack of leadership by the health minister. Most of them will be dead before their families receive any compensation at all.

Is the health minister going to continue to cave in to the finance minister or is he going to exercise leadership at the cabinet table? Last week he acknowledged that Canadians are going to have to come to his rescue and lobby the government. What does he want, 65,000 victims marching on Parliament Hill to get action or will he do it on his own?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is so distracted by his own tiresome rhetoric that he is not listening to the answer.

The answer is that this government, with one voice, is trying to find a way in collaboration with provincial governments to compensate victims. That will remain our priority. I am very hopeful that in the near future we will be able to announce progress.

* * *

[*Translation*]

## RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Today marks an important milestone in the history of Canada. On March 11, 1848, the first cabinet of the responsible government of the time was sworn in in the Province of Canada, now Ontario and Quebec. It was the achievement of a coalition involving Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin.

What is the government doing to mark this most important milestone in the history of Canada, which may serve as a rallying point for all Canadians?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

It was indeed a very important point. The capital of the united province, or Province of Canada, was Montreal in 1848. Today, after question period, I invite all members who believe in responsible democracy to come and join with us. There was Mr. Lafontaine, who had a seat in Ontario, and Mr. Baldwin, who had a seat in Quebec. In Canada we can live together whatever language we speak.

* * *

[*English*]

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, since the induction of the Young Offenders Act in 1984 to today the crimes committed by young offenders, particularly violent ones, have escalated to unbelievable proportions. I cannot understand for a moment why some things are so dense that this cannot get through, that it is not working.

My question is for the justice minister. The minister is going to be introducing some white paper regarding the Young Offenders Act. Apparently her first priority of animal abusers is over with and now we are going to get serious. My question to the minister is simple. What is taking so long?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify for the hon. member that we have no intention of introducing a white paper in relation to the renewal of the youth justice system.

As I have already pointed out in response to another hon. member's question, the youth justice system and its renewal is a complex and important issue. I am going to take the time required to consult the people most concerned.

* * *

[*Translation*]

## DRUG LICENSING

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

There are 50,000 people living with HIV or AIDS in Canada. However, six drugs, whose efficiency in the treatment of HIV and AIDS has been proven, have yet to be approved by the Health Protection Branch, and this after more than 14 months.

What does the Minister of Health have to say to people with HIV or AIDS who need these drugs but have to do without because of the inefficiency of the drug licensing process in Canada?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health has the responsibility to ensure that drugs submitted for assessment are safe before we approve them.

Last week in Vancouver I met several persons concerned by this issue. I made the commitment to review once again the process in place within the department to ensure that we are effectively fulfilling our responsibilities.

* * *

[*English*]

## EMPLOYMENT

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada.

Since the southern part of Albert County and the Salisbury—Petitcodiac area are rural areas, and are outside the Moncton Census Agglomeration, since the minister has all the statistics indicating that these areas have a very high unemployment rate, and since the federal government excluded the parish of Dorchester in 1994, in between the five year review, will the minister immediately exclude the southern part of Albert County and the Salisbury—Petitcodiac area from the urban employment insurance zone for New Brunswick?

● (1455 )

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has had the opportunity to meet with some of my officials. I know she presented her case at that time. I understand that my officials have asked her to present more information to support her case.

I will be happy to look into it more carefully when she has provided the information we need.

* * *

## HEALTH

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Health to listen to the words of an innocent hepatitis C victim, a constituent of mine, Connie Lake.

Connie told me: ''I just wish they would put an end to the games they are playing with the compensation. I am so disappointed in this Liberal government''.

On what date can Connie Lake expect compensation or will she be forced to sign on to a class action suit as her last resort?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my judgment the interests of that victim and the interests of all Canadians affected by the hepatitis C tragedy are best served by an approach toward compensation involving both levels of government. That has been our objective.

We could have acted by ourselves but we chose not to. We are looking for an agreement with provincial governments and I think we are now close to that agreement. I hope in the weeks ahead to be in a position to announce co-ordinated action between both levels of government to deal with the interests of that victim and others.

* * *

## AGRICULTURE

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Agriculture and Agri-Food.

As a member who represents a large rural riding I am very concerned about farm safety. Between 1991 and 1995 there were 502 work related fatalities on the farm. Of those, 10% were children.

Can he tell this House what this government is doing to promote safety on our Canadian farms?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Gilbert Normand (Secretary of State (Agriculture and Agri-Food)(Fisheries and Oceans), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my 27 years of medical practice, I have had the opportunity to see the tragic consequences of farm accidents.

That is why my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, and I want to acknowledge National Farm Safety Week this year. More than 500 Canadians, 10% of whom were children, died in farm accidents between 1991 and 1995, and farm equipment was involved in 70% of these accidents.

[*English*]

I want to say to Canadian farmers, take care of your life, take care of your health and take care of your family.

* * *

## THE SENATE

**Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister as recently as this week has said he is in favour of a

reformed Senate. He has also said he is in favour of an elected Senate.

This year Albertans will be electing representatives to fill the Senate vacancies. Will the Prime Minister commit to this House and to Canadians today that he will appoint those duly elected Albertans to the Senate when a vacancy arises?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when we had the occasion to vote for an elected Senate I remember very well that his party opposed an elected Senate and rejected the Charlottetown accord.

When there is a reform of the Senate it will apply to all elements, election, equality and effectiveness. Otherwise there will be 6 senators from Alberta and 30 from the maritimes forever. The maritimes, having 30 senators, will never give them up. They will keep them and I would not blame them.

* * *

[*Translation*]

### REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for regional development.

Two hundred employees of the seafood plant of eastern Quebec have worked long and hard finalizing plans to buy the plant. Only the federal government is dragging its feet.

● (1500)

Is the future of 200 families in Matane important to this minister and to this government? If so, let them give the go-ahead as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Secretary of State (Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, this government plays a role in regional economic development. It does so through Canada Economic Development, with the emphasis on assistance to small and medium-size businesses. It helps regions take advantage of the era of globalization.

The question raised by the opposition member has to do with the acquisition of businesses or essentially transactions in which the government cannot intervene, particularly through Canada Economic Development.

Obviously, we are concerned about the situation, but the fact remains that Canada Economic Development cannot intervene. We will, however, be following developments closely.



## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

### 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 12 petitions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask for unanimous consent of the House to table a copy of the letter I referred to in question period.

The minister questioned the facts surrounding the case. I want him to have a look at it so he can deal with it.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Speaker:** There is not consent.

* * *

● (1505 )

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-368, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Department of Health Act (security of the child).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and is an honour to introduce this enactment which removes the justification in the Criminal Code available to school teachers, parents and persons standing in the place of parents, of using force as a means of correction toward a pupil or child under their care.

It also clarifies the mandate of the Department of Health by specifying that the power to promote and preserve the physical, mental and social well-being of the people of Canada, includes the power to educate Canadians about the health and social risks associated with the corporal punishment of children, the alternative to its use, and the health and social benefit of respecting the right to security of children.

It further clarifies the mandate of the Department of Health respecting the co-ordination of efforts with provincial authorities to establish guidelines relating to the protection of children and law enforcement services for children.

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

## HOLIDAYS ACT

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-369, an act to amend the Holidays Act (Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day) and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House two private members bills, both seconded by the member for Brossard—La Prairie.

The first one is an act to amend the Holidays Act to declare November 20 a national holiday recognizing the birthday of a true nation builder, Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

[*Translation*]

The purpose is to declare this day as a national holiday, as a tribute to one of modern Canada's builders.

[*English*]

Laurier was our first French speaking prime minister. It is important for Canadians to recognize the contributions that Laurier made to the country.

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

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## HOLIDAYS ACT

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill 370, an act to amend the Holidays Act (Sir John A. Macdonald Day) and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the second one is an act to amend the Holidays Act to declare January 11 a national holiday recognizing the birthday of Sir John A. MacDonald, our first prime minister.

It is important for Canadians to recognize their political leaders and I so present the bill to the House today.

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

* * *

● (1510)

## RECALL ACT

**Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-371, an act to establish the right of electors to recall members of Parliament.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in the interests of democratic reform I am pleased to introduce a bill which when passed will allow for the recall of a member of Parliament for good reason.

The signature threshold requirement and the general mechanics of the bill are modelled after recall legislation which has been in place in some of the United States for more than 75 years and has been modified to fit our parliamentary system.

Almost three years of research and preparation went into this bill because of the serious nature of the subject.

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

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## CONSTITUTION ACT, 1997 (REPRESENTATION)

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-372, an act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I introduced toward the end of the last parliament a private member's bill, Bill C-385. The election took place before the bill was called.

Today I keep the commitment I made publicly to my constituents to reintroduce the bill in the 36th Parliament if re-elected. The bill is seconded by my colleague, the hon. member for Victoria—Haliburton.

The purpose of the bill is to cap the size of the House of Commons at the current 301 members. Obviously redistribution would still occur but within that cap. The bill would replace subsection 51(1), rule 2 of the Constitution Act, 1867, which would see the size of the House increase indefinitely.

One only has to do the math to realize that if we had a population the size of the U.S.A., under our current rules some day we would have 3,000 members of Parliament. Clearly that is not an acceptable number of MPs.

The bill seeks to cap the size of the House and to respect that most basic and fundamental rule of representation by population.

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

* * *

## PETITIONS

### GULF WAR

**Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I wish to present a petition signed by 819 constituents from my riding of West Nova.

The Government of Canada officially refers to the 1991 gulf war as special duty area Persian Gulf whereas many government officials including veterans affairs through press releases and internal memos use the term gulf war when making reference to this conflict.

The petitioners request that the Government of Canada officially recognize this conflict as the gulf war, thus resolving confusion leading to the proper recognition of the valiant efforts of its approximate 4,000 military members who served in this conflict.

● (1515 )

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House of Commons today to present a petition from 35 residents of Williams Lake in the constituency of Cariboo—Chilcotin.

The petitioners request that Parliament impose a moratorium on ratification of the MAI until full public hearings on the proposed treaty are held across the country so that all Canadians can have an opportunity to express their opinions on it.

PENSIONS

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of a number of people from the Toronto area.

The petitioners pray that Parliament will enact legislation to wind down the CPP while protecting the pensions of current seniors so that Canadians can contribute to mandatory RRSPs of their own choosing.

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC NUDITY

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of submitting three petitions, two of which are from several constituents of mine who oppose public nudity.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is to oppose nuclear weapons in Canada and anywhere in the world.

[*English*]

CRTC

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to rise to present the following petition which comes from concerned citizens in my riding of Lethbridge and contains 364 signatures.

These citizens and many more have expressed their concern and questioned the CRTC granting rights to a pornographic television channel while refusing religious television broadcasters.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to review the mandate of the CRTC and direct the CRTC to administer a new policy which will encourage the licensing of religious broadcasters.

PUBLIC NUDITY

**Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition deals with public nudity.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Mr. John O'Reilly (Victoria—Haliburton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the second petition the petitioners pray and 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.

PENSIONS

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition on behalf of a few hundred of my constituents from Kamloops, British Columbia, who are concerned about the government's plans to radically change the retirement income system of Canada, the seniors' benefit package.

They have heard all kinds of rumours and they are asking the Government of Canada to ensure that sufficient hearings are held across the country to ensure that all Canadians have an opportunity to indicate their response to the recommendations.

TAXATION

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have another petition which deals with our unfair tax system.

The petitioners point out that our tax system is biased, unfair and unjust, that it is biased in favour of large corporations over small businesses and that it is biased in favour of upper income earners as opposed to average working Canadians.

They are asking the Government of Canada to undertake fair tax reform in such a fashion that every tax exemption is considered under a cost benefit to Canada and that those which clearly do not benefit Canada and Canadians should be eliminated.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including many from my riding of Kitchener Centre.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that as we near the 21st century it is ever more important that Canada take advantage of the inspiring recommendations made in the final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, released in the fall of 1996, to further the process of reconciliation between Canada and its aboriginal inhabitants.

The petitioners therefore ask Parliament to continue its political dialogue in a negotiation process with First Nations to address the royal commission's report and recommendations in a spirit of goodwill, with justice and fairness as its guide.

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise, pursuant to

Standing Order 36, to table a petition from the right-minded constituents of Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

The petitioners urge the federal government and, in particular, the Minister of Justice to bring about necessary changes to the Young Offenders Act that would include lowering the age of identifying perpetrators and seeing that perpetrators who are deserving of transfer to adult court are transferred.

● (1520 )

This petition contains hundreds of names and I table it on behalf of those people in Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS COMPENSATION FUND

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including those from my own riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk on a daily basis as they discharge their duties and that if they lose their lives while on duty the employment benefits often do not provide sufficient compensation to their families. The petitioners note that public mourns the loss of police officers and firefighters who are killed in the line of duty and wish to support in a tangible way the surviving families in their time of need.

The petitioners therefore pray and call upon Parliament to establish a public safety officers compensation fund for the benefit of families of public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by 496 people from Saskatchewan who want the Young Offenders Act to be repealed and replaced with measures that hold young criminals accountable for their actions.

CRTC

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition which is signed by 275 people who express a very deep concern about the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission showing a very decided bias against Christian broadcasters by licensing the pornographic Playboy channel while on the same day, July 22, 1997, refusing to license four religious television broadcasters, including the International Catholic Broadcast and three multi-denominational applicants.

They view as hostile to them the CRTC's systematic refusal to license Christian broadcasters while at the same time consistently licensing sexually explicit and violent programming.

These petitioners state their constitutional right to freedom of religion, conscience and expression. They appeal to Parliament to review the mandate of the CRTC and direct the CRTC to administer a new policy which will encourage the licensing of religious broadcasters.

GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure this afternoon to present petitions regarding the ongoing gasoline price saga.

The petitioners are calling upon the Parliament of Canada to adopt legislation which would require gasoline companies to give 30 days' written notice to the Minister of Natural Resources of an impending significant increase in the price of gasoline, that is, an increase of over 1% of the current pump price per litre, and that such notice should also contain the reason or reasons for the increase and when it will take effect.

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[*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 would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## 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.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was looking over the agenda of the House for the next little while. Could you give some indication of when we will start to deal with some really serious issues of importance to Canadians?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Nunziata):** That is not an appropriate point of order.

# GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

## CANADA-YUKON OIL AND GAS ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-8, an act respecting an accord between the Governments of Canada and the Yukon Territory relating to the administration and control of and legislative jurisdiction in respect of oil and gas, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Nunziata):** When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Jane Stewart** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

● (1525)

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C-8, the Canada-Yukon Oil and Gas Accord Implementation Act.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in support of this legislation which promotes the historic changes that are occurring in Yukon.

Hon. members have heard how Bill C-8 will provide for the transfer of the administration and control of onshore oil and gas from Canada to the Yukon government. It will also give the territorial government the authority to legislate all aspects of oil and gas.

Passage of this proposed act is a necessary and logical step in the Yukon's political evolution.

For too long Ottawa has been making decisions for Whitehorse and for Yukoners. The time has come to turn control over to those who live in Yukon so that they may deal with the issues on a daily basis. That is why the devolution of all remaining provincial-type powers and programs of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in Yukon to the Yukon government continues to be a priority for this government.

Canada and Yukon have worked together for more than a decade to respond to northerners' desire for more control over their lives. The process of placing responsibility where it belongs, at the local level, is well under way. We are providing the platform for northerners to find solutions to northern concerns.

[*Translation*]

For several years now, Yukon has drawn certain advantages from the transfer of responsibilities. At the present time, it delivers provincial-type programs in such areas as education, health and economic development.

The federal government, however, still administers Crown lands, forestry, water, environmental issues, mines and minerals, and of course oil and gas.

This current undertaking to transfer oil and gas jurisdiction shows the government's constant determination to give provincial-type jurisdictions to the territories. The administration and control of oil and gas resources constitute significant and obvious provincial-type functions.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of transferring this role to the people of the Yukon. Natural resources lie at the very heart of the Yukon economy. Natural resource development is essential to the territory's prosperity in the 21st century, as well as to its residents' survival.

The present government is agreeable to Yukon administration and control of oil and gas resources. Transfer of this program represents an important step in the political and economic evolution of Yukon.

Subsequently, of course, there will have to be a transfer to the Yukon government of other provincial-type powers and programs on its territory. To that end, in January 1997 the federal government announced a proposal for making such transfers.

I will give a brief explanation of what the transfer of responsibilities for oil and gas means to the Yukon and its economy.

[*English*]

For too long Yukon has had to watch its oil and gas resources go untapped because of uncertainty over land and resource ownership. That is changing. Our ongoing negotiations with Yukon First Nations and efforts to finalize the remaining land claims in the near future will soon set the stage for a renewal of oil and gas activities.

The move to transfer onshore oil and gas resources to Yukon will strengthen northern independence and provide stable, predictable revenue to the territorial government and Yukon First Nations who have signed land claims agreements.

Once Canada transfers responsibility, it will no longer be directly involved in managing oil and gas resources in Yukon. Canada will, however, maintain jurisdiction over offshore areas.

With the transfer the federal government will pay Yukon the moneys it has collected in onshore petroleum revenues.

● (1530 )

Once the transfer is complete, Yukon will collect the annual revenues from the Kotaneelee project which are valued at approximately $1.5 million per year. These revenues will be shared with the six Yukon First Nations that have land claims agreements in effect.

The Yukon will enact new territorial legislation that will allow it to address exploration, development, conservation and environmental and safety issues. This new territorial legislation will provide for a management and regulatory regime that is generally modelled after existing regimes in Canada.

Bill C-8 would allow the governor in council to transfer the legislative powers to Yukon once the territorial legislation is in place.

[*Translation*]

The bill before us today and the transfer process have the wholehearted support of the Yukon government. Setting the pace of the transfer, the territorial government said the time had now come for it to take control of its own oil and gas resources.

The Yukon First Nations also support the bill. Once passed, it will provide them stable and predictable revenues, as well as signed land claims agreements, which will help them move toward self-sufficiency and financial independence.

I would like to congratulate representatives of the Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government who have been working together to develop a system to jointly manage oil and gas resources in the Yukon.

This is a historical alliance which bodes well for the development of the Yukon and further transfers of powers to the territory. This close co-operation has become even closer as a result of consultations held by the federal government and the Yukon over the past few years, which led to the transfer of responsibilities for oil and gas resources as proposed in the bill before us.

The bill has also the support of the industry. Bill C-8 will help create a stable and predictable environment, which in turn will attract new ventures and open up new opportunities to the area.

Passage of the bill will send a clear signal to Yukoners that Canada is committed to fostering economic development in their territory.

In conclusion, I would like to mention that all those involved in the work of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development support this bill and approved its decision to send it back to the House without amendments.

In view of the widespread support for this major initiative, I urge my distinguished colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased at long last to rise and speak to Bill C-8, the Canada-Yukon oil and gas accord implementation act.

This bill has been around for a long time. It was allowed to die at the end of the last Parliament only to return in this Parliament to be bounced on and off the Order Paper again and again. I can only assume that the hesitancy of the government to deal with this bill has something to do with the dismal progress being made in finalizing the Yukon land claims that are before the government and that in fact were passed in the last Parliament.

Generally, I and my party support this bill and the principles involved simply because all the stakeholders involved in this process generally support the bill. The principles of the bill are to be applauded. However we certainly do have some concerns with this bill, as we do with so many other bills that the government introduces and deals with in this House. The bill goes part way toward achieving its objectives but unfortunately not all the way.

This bill reflects the government's recognition of the important role of northern oil and gas exploration in the political evolution of the Yukon Territory. Canada's territories are the site of one-quarter of Canada's remaining discovered petroleum and half of Canada's estimated potential oil and gas resources. Control over oil and gas exploration and development is the key to the economic well-being of the territories.

● (1535 )

This bill is important to the economic future of the Yukon and is in fact in accordance with many of Reform's positions on issues.

First of all the bill calls for the devolution of province-like powers to the Yukon Territory. By transferring administrative and legislative control over oil and gas to the Yukon Territory, the federal government is demonstrating some degree of commitment to the Yukon Territory's political evolution. We support any effort that increases provincial or territorial control and decreases federal control over natural resources, including oil and gas.

Second, this bill concurs with Reform's belief in the equality of all provinces. While Reform supports increased power for the Yukon government, the powers held by the territory should not exceed those held by the provinces.

This bill does not transfer any powers greater than those held by the provinces under sections 92, 92(a) and 95 of the Constitution Act, 1867. As has been reiterated, this equality among provinces is absolutely essential to the equal treatment of all Canadians.

While Reform is supportive of this legislation, certain aspects of the legislation raise important questions. It appears that through the devolution of province-like powers, the federal government intends to move the Yukon Territory toward provincial status. If this is true, it is important that the federal government start treating the territory as a province. This means that like other provinces the Yukon government should have some negotiating power in the settlement of aboriginal land claims.

Instead of giving the Yukon government the opportunity to participate in the negotiating process however, the government is retaining the authority to override any territorial government objections to the way in which land claims are settled. The federal government is doing this by retaining the right to take back control of Yukon lands for the settlement and implementation of land claims.

In recognition of the unique situation in the north, I would agree it is important that this legislation respect aboriginal land claims and settlement rights. It is also important that the legislation not diminish aboriginal treaty rights nor conflict with existing wildlife, environmental and land management legislation under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

The issue here is not so much the protection of aboriginal rights as it is an issue of heavy-handed control by the federal government. If the government were to settle a land claim in any one of the 10 provinces, one can be certain that a provincial government would be very active in the negotiating process. Why then would the government withhold that same negotiating power from the Yukon government?

While the federal government protects the interests of First Nations peoples in the Yukon, the territorial government should have the opportunity to protect the interests of all residents of the Yukon Territory, native and non-native alike.

This provision also hinders future oil and gas exploration development. Oil and gas companies may be slow to invest in exploration and development projects that at a later date may be affected by the settlement and implementation of land claims.

It had previously been anticipated that negotiations for all of the Yukon First Nations would have concluded by February 1997. This anticipated date was then extended to July 1997. As of today, only half of the Yukon First Nations have reached agreements while the remaining seven agreements are still being negotiated.

In order to instil confidence in potential investors, the government must develop and adhere to a strict time line for land claim resolution. I would therefore urge the government to resolve these land claims as expeditiously as possible with the full participation of the Yukon government so that potential investors can confidently proceed with oil and gas development in the Yukon Territory.

There are also concerns regarding the government's retention of the right to take measures in the event of a sudden oil supply shortfall. This would be in compliance with Canada's international obligations as outlined in the International Energy Agency oil sharing agreement.

The same international obligations were responsible for the introduction and implementation of the national energy program. Westerners need not be reminded of the disastrous impact the national energy program had on Alberta's economy during the last so-called energy crisis.

Because of the very nature of the north, the Yukon economy is extremely dependent on oil and gas revenues. It will therefore suffer even greater hardship should the federal government deem it necessary to implement controls like those espoused during the last energy crisis. There must be some commitment by the government to consider the impact of its actions on the Yukon economy and on the social and economic well-being of the Yukon peoples in the event of an oil supply shortfall or energy crisis.

● (1540 )

The legislation affecting the Yukon in this respect should set the precedent for other provinces, resulting in amendments to the existing legislation that would protect all provinces from economic disasters like that brought upon Alberta by the national energy program. If the political evolution of the Yukon territory is to proceed, the federal government must commit to consultations with the Yukon government to find a co-operative solution to any energy shortfall.

The most positive aspect of this legislation is the economic power it confers upon the Yukon Territory. Not only will the Yukon government have jurisdiction over exploration, development, conservation and management of oil and gas, but over resource revenues.

This legislation allows the territory to raise revenues by any mode or system of taxation in respect of oil and gas in the territory. It also gives the territorial government control over the export of oil and gas from that territory. This bill will reduce the Yukon Territory's economic dependence on the federal government, allowing it to develop its own economy like the Canadian provinces.

However, there are concerns regarding the sharing of resource revenues with the federal government. The federal government still intends to collect a portion of the annual oil and gas revenues beyond an initial amount of $3 million to offset transfer payments to the territory which differs from the process of equalization in the provinces.

Also, I might add that this same provision does not apply in the First Nations land claims settlements in the Yukon. The First

Nations collect all of the oil and gas resource revenue from oil and gas development within their territory.

The government's share of the Yukon Territory's revenues after the initial $3 million could go as high as 80% of those revenues. I doubt that this level of revenue sharing would ever be tolerated by the existing provinces.

Despite its shortcomings, this legislation represents an important first step in the political evolution of the north and has received support from all the concerned parties. This legislation is part of a greater process that involves the devolution of control not only over oil and gas but over education, health care and economic development in the Yukon Territory.

This legislation has the potential to lead the Yukon government down the road of political evolution, but only if the federal government is committed to treating the Yukon as a developing province and not some second class political entity.

For these reasons we support this legislation but with some reservations about the method of implementation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today at third reading of the bill to implement the agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Yukon on oil and gas.

If the House will permit me, I want to digress a little to begin with. The other day, I listened to a Reform member tell us that the Bloc Quebecois was concerned only about Quebec and that anything outside of it was of no interest at all to them. I promised myself that I would respond to that allegation the next time I spoke. Not only is the Bloc speaking today on the bill, but I wish to point out that I have in fact visited the Yukon on a number of occasions.

It is important the Bloc assume some responsibility toward native nations outside Quebec as well. As the trustee of the native peoples, the federal government can make decisions in British Columbia that affect Quebec. I think we are acting responsibly by giving serious consideration to the type of legislation before us and by focussing on the priorities of the native peoples first and foremost.

We have before us today a bill providing for decision making to be transferred from the central government to a territorial one, however within the Yukon Territory, there are 14 native nations. I think it important to look carefully at the native issue in bills such as this one.

● (1545)

Today, at third reading, we are looking at a bill to implement provisions of the Canada-Yukon accord signed on May 28, 1993. At that time, the government undertook to introduce a bill, which it first did in the last Parliament and which we are now going to enact in this one.

We are, of course, talking about control of oil and gas resources. The Yukon will be able to administer and control exploitation of oil and gas resources on its territory. These are new legislative powers that are being given to the Yukon. They are similar to those that have been given to other provinces in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

It will therefore be up to the Government of Quebec—my colleagues mentioned jurisdictions earlier—and to the Yukon government to regulate and manage oil and gas activities. When we talk about the exploitation of resources, we are talking about ordinary, concrete concepts, no surprises. We are talking about gas and oil exploration, naturally, about about their marketing, production, and preservation as well, because we know that this is the kind of enterprise where vigilance is required with respect to the environment and the preservation of natural resources.

These are the kinds of jurisdiction that have now devolved to the Yukon government: the environment, exports, security and, of course, the establishment and collection of revenue. Whereas the federal government was the one to do so, now it is up to the Yukon government to set the tax base and collect revenue.

The Yukon government must enact legislation based on the legislation existing elsewhere in the country. And, naturally, like the federal, the Yukon must not enact legislation that exceeds other provinces' jurisdictions. In other words, we do not want it to have special status that goes beyond the jurisdictions and concessions made to other provinces with respect to the decentralization of oil and gas resources.

I also think it important to tell people, as I do each time, where the Yukon is on the map. Our viewers and those listening know that it is in the western part of the country. In fact, it is 5,000 kilometres from here. But I think it is also important to put it in the context of the native issue, which is very important in Western Canada.

To the north of the Yukon is Alaska, which is an American state, as everyone knows. However, animals that are important to native hunting and fishing, the wildlife and the fish, do not necessarily respect borders. There are typical examples of that, with the Porcupine caribou herd, among others, whose calving grounds are in Alaska but whose migrations take it to the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

Therefore, it is important to know there is to the north an American state that does not belong to Canada. However, the wildlife roaming the continent does not necessarily respect borders. It must be remembered that natives attach great importance to this. This is why there are often agreements between countries on

jurisdiction over wildlife, the environment and the caribou herd migration.

To the east are the Northwest Territories. In fact, there is a bill that might be before us this afternoon and that will affect the Gwich'in, the Dene, the Metis, the Dogrib nations, and those from the Deh Cho regions. These are all Northwest Territories regions located in the Mackenzie Valley. It is rather interesting that we are talking this afternoon about the far west and that we will be dealing in a few minutes with their neighbours, for quite another reason, but let us say it is important to indicate where the Yukon is.

To the south lies British Columbia, with an extremely rich native culture, where almost 220 native communities live, with all the resulting problems and benefits.

I have been to British Columbia several times. It is nice to see how the native culture has influenced the white culture and how the different cultures interact.

● (1550)

There were also disadvantages. Federally and provincially, there are enormous problems with land claims. Everyone is aware of the debate on the Nisga'a issue and the recent Delgamuukw decision.

Many decisions have been made by courts in that part of the country, and it seemed important to me to put them in perspective. Incidentally, representatives of the aboriginal peoples of the Yukon are probably listening in this afternoon and I take this opportunity to salute them.

I remember they were here when we passed the bill on self-government and claims settlement. These people fought long and hard and finally won after having negotiated for 21 years.

I remember very clearly that they were up there in the public gallery and they were very pleased. I think that the security service had made an exception and allowed the representatives of the aboriginal nations to stand up and applaud with us all this great victory regarding their land claims and self-government.

I would like to salute them and, for fear of missing one, I will name them all: there are 14 nations. The first nations of Little Salmon-Carmacks, Selkirk, Tr'on dek Hwech'in, the Ross River Dena Council, the Liards, the first nation of Carcross-Tagish, the aboriginal people of White River, the first nations of Kluane, Kwanlin Dun, Champagne and Aïshihik, the aboriginal people of Nacho Nyak Dun, the Tlingits from the Teslin area and the Gwitch'in Vuntut first nation.

I will not be surprised, when I go back to my office later, to get a call from *Hansard* editors asking me about the meaning and, particularly, the spelling of the names I just mentioned. I felt important to name these nations, and I will get back to them later on—perhaps much to the despair of those responsible for publishing the *Hansard*—when I will give you an idea of the progress made in the negotiations to achieve self-government for each of these nations.

It is very important in the current debate to know where these nations are in terms of their claims to achieve self-government status. They are looking at how oil and gas will be developed on their lands. They are directly concerned, because they will soon have agreements on their lands and their self-government.

The Yukon is a region of the country that has a rich history. Everyone knows about the Klondike gold rush. I went there several times, including Dawson City, and it is really sad to see how the landscape was almost totally destroyed by mining operations. This shows how important it is for aboriginal people to at least have a say in legislation such as the bill before us.

That part of the country was also severely affected by the development of natural resources other than gold, lumber for instance. The landscape was destroyed and there was no sharing of wealth. This is why now, as we approach a new millennium, aboriginal people are getting together and truly want to play an active role in the decision-making process.

At the time, their landscape was totally changed, along with the lives of these people. Their hunting and fishing traditions were greatly affected. We only left them piles of rocks, we did not share any wealth with them. Explorers and companies came. They developed the landscape, but they also exploited the people, the first inhabitants of this place, the aboriginals. Then they left, leaving the landscape in a deplorable state, while taking all the resources with them.

I met the people of these 14 aboriginal nations in Dawson City. I also met them in Whitehorse. These are not rich people. Like all Canadian and Quebec aboriginal communities, they have social and economic problems. This is why they are paying particular attention to the legislation before us today. Those who spoke before me said it: land claims and the sharing of natural resources are means to achieve full self-government, full financial autonomy, which is also very important for these people.

● (1555)

Let me remind the House of the social contract we had at the time. People were told: ''We will take your resources, we will sign treaties and set up reserves on which we will exercise complete control and take our fiduciary responsibilities towards you. We will take care of you''. This is what happened with the results we all know about.

People often question this social contract. We often hear ill-informed people say that natives have everything they need, that the government sets aside $5 billion for them in its annual budget. These people say that natives get an average of around $15,000 to $16,000 per capita and wonder what they are complaining about.

We have to realize that this is what the social contract agreed upon at the time is all about. We told them: ''We will take over the land, develop the resources and we will see to your health, education and economic development''.

Nowadays, it is important to keep on reminding people of that. What we handed the natives in the past and what we keep giving them are not gifts. It is part of the social contract we negotiated at the time. After seeing what natives have gone through, especially after reading the royal commission report, I am not sure they ended up on the winning side with this social contract.

As I said earlier, through self-government, land claims settlement and a better sharing of the resources, natives will not only regain their pride but also an economy which is crucial to their sense of pride and which is lacking today, since they are confined in a state of dependency vis-à-vis the government.

I want to give you an overview of the progress in negotiations. I highlighted the negotiations carried out so far. Several communities have signed a deal. Some of them did it in 1994, others have been successful since then, but other native communities have yet to sign a self-government agreement or to settle their land claims. I think it is important to give the House an update.

The Little Salmon-Carmacks and Selkirk first nations both signed self-government agreements on July 21. That is not long ago. These people may have been on the sidelines in 1994, but they have now signed their own self government agreement.

This agreement came into force on October 1, 1997. Thus, two more First Nations have managed to settle their self government and land claims problems.

The Tr'on dek Hwech'in First Nation of Dawson City concluded its negotiations on self government on May 24, 1997. The agreement is to be ratified early in 1998; it has not yet been done, but apparently, it should be done soon.

Negotiations on a final settlement on land claims and self government with the White River Nation were concluded just last week. This nation is the latest to be involved in self government and land claims negotiations. It is the last community that got such an agreement.

Negotiations with the Dena council of Ross River are at a preliminary stage. Its territory straddles B.C. and the Yukon. Problems in negotiations have existed for a long time. The council recently tabled a 120% selection of lands. I imagine it is asking that much, but would be content with a little less. Apparently, the federal government expects that this selection will include numerous areas with a high mineral potential. This is in a mineral rich part of southern Yukon. That may be the reason why negotiations are taking a little longer.

Negotiations with the Liard First Nation are currently under way; they deal with the selection of rural lands with a high oil, gas and forestry potential.

This is a case where negotiations on self government and land claims are moving ahead swiftly. But the First Nations are also closely following devolution of federal powers to the Yukon. This is a typical example of the special monitoring by a first nation that is closely related to decisions that will flow from the bill before us.

● (1600)

As for the Carcross-Tagish First Nation, meetings took place last fall. Negotiations are focusing on rural lands as well. Agreements have been signed on a number of claims. The First Nation should soon submit claims regarding specific sites. It was anticipated that negotiations with respect to self-government would be concluded right about now. The final agreement should be signed by March 1998. So we are getting near a final agreement in this case as well.

The Kluane First Nation has submitted land claims. The final agreement, including land claims, is 62% complete, and the agreement with respect to self-government is 85% settled. So, once again, agreements are forthcoming. As I said, work is 62% complete on land claims and 85% complete on self-government. Therefore, we can assume that a final agreement will be reached in the coming months.

Negotiations with the Ta'an Kwach'an Council have, to all intents and purposes, been concluded. They cannot be finalized, however, until the problem of the band's separation from the Kwanlin Dun First Nation is resolved. This reserve has decided that it should be divided into two communities. Therefore, before going any further and concluding agreements with regard to self-government and land claims, we must resolve the problem of how this reserve will be divided.

As for the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, there have been no negotiations since June 1996, because last June the First Nation submitted a proposal that falls outside the frame of reference established under the final umbrella agreement. When the federal government started to negotiate, it set up a legislative and negotiation framework. This particular community wants out. There are some adjustment problems so this could take a little longer.

The aboriginal communities which have not yet signed agreements are the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation, the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Gwitch'in Vuntut First Nation. We still have not reached final agreements with these groups. I felt it was important to give a progress report.

As my colleague pointed out, the Bloc Quebecois supports this bill because we are the only sovereignist party in this Chamber and we stand behind any decentralization initiative.

We are rather opposed to centralization. When the government launches a campaign to encroach on a provincial jurisdiction, like education through the millennium fund, or when the Minister of Health tries to infiltrate home care, our party is against it.

Why are we not opposed to this bill? Precisely because it is about decentralization and we believe in decentralization. We believe in devolution to the provinces and territories, to smaller communities, for several reasons.

The main one, in my opinion, is that devolution of these jurisdictions brings government closer to the people, who are then in a better position to exercise control and to adjust their demands to the real needs in the field. If decisions are made in Ottawa for Yukon, for the Gaspé region in Quebec, or for the Matapedia Valley—and I see here my colleague who is supporting me this afternoon—it is more difficult and we are quite opposed to that. We like to see the devolution of powers to the regions and the provinces.

If the government insists on encroaching on some areas of jurisdiction, it should at least respect the provinces by transferring tax points or funds to those not wishing to participate. We believe that this money would be better used if jurisdiction was transferred together with the corresponding tax points or compensation, should a province or region not wish to participate in the program.

The political scene in the Yukon has also changed. The last time I was there, there was no NDP government in power as is now the case.

● (1605)

The NDP is not the same political party as the Bloc Quebecois, and I know its members are not necessarily sovereignists. However, if I look at the political spectrum between the left and the right, I think there is a good balance in the House. Like the NDP, we lean toward the left; our fundamental values include assistance to communities, immigrants and aboriginals.

That is why we consider these issues with special care and sensitivity, unlike the present right wing in this House, where the Reform Party and the Progressive Conservative Party are often much more conservative on such matters and pay much more attention to economic interests than to the interests of aboriginal people.

So the election of a new NDP government in the Yukon is important for aboriginal people, because they will be able to make sure—and they have already received assurances from the Yukon NDP government to that effect—that the government will not take advantage of the fact that self-government and land claims agreements have yet to be reached in some territories, for example by issuing development licenses.

I felt it was an important issue to raise, and it is reassuring not only for us but also for the native communities, since they mentioned it to us, and if they took the trouble to mention it, it must be true, because they might have experienced a little more difficulty with the previous Yukon government.

We expressed some reservations at the second reading stage about the granting of development licences in lands claimed by the First Nations. We were not comfortable with the idea that Yukon might be allowed to legislate on the whole issue of oil and gas development, including, as I mentioned earlier, conservation, development, export and revenues.

We were reluctant because we feared the government might take advantage of the nations that had not yet reached a settlement by issuing development licenses even before negotiations on land claims were concluded.

This issue has been partly settled. Department officials appeared before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development before second reading, at the report stage. We finally reached an agreement on some issues, and department officials made certain amendments to the bill which satisfied not only the Bloc but also the First Nations. Clause 6 in particular restricts the granting of oil and gas interests on certain types of lands, including those under negotiation. So the bill contains a provision that deals with our concerns.

As for clause 8, it allows the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Indian Affairs, to take back the administration and control of any oil and gas in public lands so that negotiation or implementation of land claims agreements can continue with the native people.

That is one clause. As a fiduciary, the federal government can tell the Yukon government that, under section 8, it is issuing development licences on lands claimed by the First Nations without their agreement. So, as fiduciaries, we included a provision in the bill to take back this jurisdiction.

We in committee fulfilled our mandate. We asked for adjustments and these adjustments were made. Public officials came and explained the impact of the clauses to our satisfaction. And, when consulted, aboriginal people said they too were satisfied.

In conclusion, as my colleagues mentioned, who supports this bill? The territorial government, naturally, most community groups and organizations in Yukon, as well as the Council for Yukon First Nations, since the 14 nations I mentioned earlier are grouped under a council that supports the bill, as long as the aboriginal and land claims remain valid. I spoke at length about this.

Since the First Nations consider that clauses 6 and 8 satisfy their concerns, we support decentralization, the importance of which I explained earlier. It must be done in a thoughtful and orderly

manner in the interest of the whole population, including of course native people, who form the majority in these territories.

● (1610)

Everyone should benefit from the small bill before the House today. Consultations seem to show that will be the case.

I also took the liberty to add another difficulty not only for *Hansard*, but also for our interpreters. I would like to reassure them. I will say a few words in Gwitch'in. I will give you the translation. Otherwise, I believe the interpreter now on duty would probably have a hard time translating exactly what I will be saying in Gwitch'in.

For now, I will not speak of the meaning. I will speak in Gwitch'in, and after I will tell you what it means. Rest assured, I will say nothing nasty. Everybody will be happy.

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Gwitch'in and provided the following translation:*]

[*Translation*]

I would like to salute the 14 First Nations of Yukon, and I hope they will be the first to benefit from Bill C-8.

[*Translation*]

The translation was done by Mary Janc Kunnizzi, a specialist of the Gwitch'in language at the Native Language Centre of the Yukon.

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

[*English*]

**Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am particularly pleased to rise and support Bill C-8, especially this year as it is quite symbolic. It is the 100th anniversary of the creation of Yukon, which was in 1898. Yukon was originally designated as a postal region. After the gold rush we were worthy enough to become a territory.

This legislation does what it ought to do. After a hundred years it is the beginning of putting power back in the hands of the people who live there. It puts power where it belongs, with the people of Yukon.

This act will implement an accord between the Government of Canada and the Yukon Territory relating the administration, control and legislative jurisdiction in respect of oil and gas. It is an important act for the people of Yukon as it will transfer to Yukon additional legislative powers necessary to undertake, through Yukon legislation, all aspects of the management and administration of onshore oil and gas resources.

This legislation will give the Yukon government province like authority to regulate and manage Yukon gas and oil resources in the public's interest. For those who live in provinces that have provincial powers, the term might not have the same affect on you. But coming from Yukon where we are always winding our way through a maze of asking permission to do this or that, this is really significant. It is a huge difference in how we will function as a people and as a legislature.

The devolution of province like powers will not affect any settlement of an aboriginal land claim because the federal government will retain the capacity of regaining the authority transferred to the Yukon government if it is necessary to settle an aboriginal land claim. This is also important because of the 14 first nations, all of them are not settled. Although it is very close, it is not done yet.

Bill C-8 is necessary legislation to transfer authority for oil and gas resources to the Yukon government. It is a significant event because it confirms Canada's commitment, as set out in the northern oil and gas accord signed in May 1993. It must be viewed as a commitment from Canada to the political evolution of Yukon and to the concept of devolution to Yukon and it should be linked to an orderly transition of the transfers of other remaining resources like forestry and mining. We await eagerly to see how this works out so that we can bring down the power over forestry and mining to us.

The composition of the government in power in Yukon is six people in the cabinet, two ministers are First Nations and our Speaker is a First Nation. The composition of our territory is reflected in the government. As well, first nations people have a very strong representation on the council for Yukon first nations. All of the 14 do not belong but most of them do. They are a very integral part of everyday life. Never are our first nations an afterthought. They are represented in all our levels of government.

● (1615 )

We expect that the federal government will complete the devolution of all remaining provincial-like powers and programs to the Yukon government. That will make the people of Yukon far more responsible for their own well-being.

Devolution is a transfer process through which the federal government will transfer all the northern affairs programs of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs to the Yukon government. In effect this will end a century of colonialism in Yukon.

As I said, in 1898 a separate territory was created. It had a commissioner who was all powerful. In 1948 the territory suspended its right to income tax collection in exchange for the annual transfer of federal funds. In 1979 the federal government effectively signed over decision making powers to elected territorial representatives. Again, this was a huge change because the commissioner was always appointed.

In 1993 the umbrella final agreement for first nations self-government was signed. On May 28, 1993 the federal government and the Government of the Yukon Territory entered into the Canada-Yukon oil and gas accord. That is what is in front of us to be ratified.

Devolution is an issue of fundamental importance for Yukon people. It will signal the end of a quasi-colonial attitude toward the north and the beginning of a process to gain greater economic self-reliance. It will reinforce participatory democracy because it will give northerners a meaningful democratic say in the development of their own region. It is an essential part of aboriginal self-determination.

With the continuing settlement of Yukon land claims and self-government agreements, Yukoners on the basis of a relationship based on partnerships can look to the future as citizens of Canada and not possessions of the crown.

Devolution is good governance for Yukon, but it will create new employment and economic opportunities, which are desperately needed in the north, and will increase respect for the environment.

Federal and territorial legislation dealing with the transfer of province-like powers to Yukon and the development of a Yukon oil and gas act and regulations is demonstration of a successfully working relationship with first nations and the beginning of a new era of relationships between the people of Yukon and the central government of our confederation.

Devolution opens new opportunities of economic development for Yukoners. After the completion of transfers, Yukon through its own legislation will manage and regulate oil and gas activities including exploration, development, production and conservation, environmental and safety regulations, and the determination and collection of resource revenues.

The Yukon Act is being amended to transfer to northerners new responsibilities and new legislative powers in relation to the exploration of oil and gas; the development, conservative and management of oil and gas, including the rate of primary production; oil and gas pipelines; the raising of money in respect of oil and gas in the territories; and the export of oil and gas.

The amendments will include provisions to allow the federal government to continue to exercise its other responsibilities, including taking back administration and control of oil and gas on any lands in order to settle or implement aboriginal land claims.

It is fully consistent with legislation implementing aboriginal treaty rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, including legislation establishing wildlife land management and and environmental regimes.

In addition, the Yukon government has actively involved the Yukon first nations in the process, including the development of the Yukon oil and gas legislation and management process.

The working relationship and close co-operation of the three parties, the federal government, the Yukon government and the Yukon first nations government, have been very successful. The three parties are now committed to completing the remaining land claims and self-government agreements hopefully by the fall of 1998.

Devolution is about partnerships and the assumption of new responsibilities and obligations. The Yukon government and the first nations government established a working partnership on devolution and signed a number of accords. In addition, they have made arrangements concerning their working relationship during the implementation of specific devolution or transfers, particularly an arrangement concerning the transfer of oil and gas responsibilities.

● (1620 )

It will give the Yukon government, a local government with locally elected representatives and locally accountable officials, effective control over land and resource management. The territorial government will be in a better position to integrate decisions over resources and will be able to serve more effectively the people of Yukon.

With this transfer of federal resources to the territorial government, financial capital and human resources must at that level guarantee the provision of adequate services and levels of funding. There must be assurances that the resources transferred are enough to provide for the delivery of the mandated responsibilities of the transferred programs.

We expect that the federal government will not withdraw any funding from the programs considered for transfer to the territorial government. It is not in effect a hollow shell handed over to us with all of the responsibility but not the power we need to deal with it.

This negotiated agreement is an historical agreement for the Yukon territory, the Yukon government, first nations of the Yukon and everyone who lives in Yukon. It fully protects the interests of first nations and we are confident it is in compliance with land claims and self-government agreements.

This agreement bodes well for the future of Yukon. In the continuing spirit of co-operation among the federal, territorial and first nations governments, I urge the House to proceed quickly with the bill. It is long awaited and will be much celebrated in this year of our hundredth anniversary.

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the previous speaker, particularly because she is the member for Yukon.

I listened carefully to her speech and did not hear any reference to a number of issues I raised in my speech. Would the member indicate her response on behalf of Yukoners to the cap on resource revenue? The Yukon is being capped at $3 million. Anything

above that, up to 80%, will be going back to the federal government.

Another provision I also raised was that the federal government retains the power to unilaterally take back control of oil and gas under certain circumstances.

I wonder if the member would respond to those two issues.

**Ms. Louise Hardy:** Madam Speaker, on it being capped at $3 million, I would rather that had not happened and there were no cap. However that was the way it was negotiated, I think in part because a territory is in a very difficult negotiating position and has to make the best of going from a difficult position to a better position. This agreement was arrived at by the parties involved. I would prefer that there was no cap but there is and we will live with it.

On having the power taken away, again that is part of being a territory. I do not think anyone living in a province would accept that power can be given and power can be taken away. That is how life has been in the territories. As I understand it, under the circumstances of making sure land claims are settled that is important.

All first nations groups should know that they can negotiate without pressure their agreements. After that point I would prefer if the federal government had nothing to do with giving or taking away power. Eventually Yukon will be recognized as a province and will not have to face this kind of withholding.

**Mr. David Chatters:** Madam Speaker, I am surprised at the member's response when she says that eventually the Yukon territory will become a province. I support that idea wholeheartedly.

However, under the terms and conditions of the bill and the direction it is headed, Yukon will forevermore be some kind of second class province. It will not have the jurisdiction or the power of other provinces. I am amazed the member representing Yukon who sits in opposition to the government does not seem to raise that issue or does not seem to be concerned about it.

● (1625)

I would have expected, both being a member for Yukon and being in opposition, that she would have demanded of the government that the bill allow Yukon to become a province with the same kind of status as Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and all other provinces.

**Ms. Louise Hardy:** Madam Speaker, when Yukon becomes a province all of this would be renegotiated. It is for the people of Yukon to decide when they want to take on provincehood.

It cannot be forced on anybody. Perhaps at this point we are not ready or prepared to do that, but we are to build toward that position.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak on Bill C-8, the Canada-Yukon Oil and Gas Accord Implementation Act.

The bill represents the first bill I have had the opportunity to work on both at the parliamentary level and the committee level in the Indian affairs and northern development portfolio. I feel it represents a step in the right direction. It is not perfect but it is a step in the right direction.

The bill transfers authority to the Yukon territorial government regarding exploration, development, conservation and management of onshore oil and gas resources, oil and gas pipelines, the raising of money in respect of oil and gas in the territory and the export of oil and gas.

At the same time the bill allows the federal government to regain control and administration of oil and gas on Yukon lands in order to settle or implement land claims for aboriginal groups.

The bill was formerly known as Bill C-50 but died on the order paper with the call for the election in April 1997. It incorporates some changes to the original Bill C-50 in order to address concerns raised by aboriginal groups, specifically the effect of the bill on their land claims agreements and self-government. I will speak in more detail on this matter later.

Bill C-8 is the implementation process for the Canada-Yukon oil and gas accord. The accord was the product of a process begun in 1987 under the minister at that time, William Hunter McKnight. It was a beginning of a process to devolve responsibility from the federal government to the government of Yukon with the intention of conferring powers analogous to those held by provinces.

Currently all oil and gas management authority in Yukon is controlled by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in its energy policy area for the territories. With Bill C-8 control over oil and gas passes to the Yukon government with the application for onshore resources and an area adjacent to the northern coast, including Shoalwater Bay and Philips Bay.

The area referred to as the north slope was of special concern to the aboriginal peoples, and in particular the Inuvialuit Regional Council. The council representing the signatories to the Inuvialuit final agreement in the Northwest Territories expresses reservations about the extent of protection for this area in the bill.

Shoalwater Bay is an area of significant importance to the Inuvialuit for the harvesting of beluga whales. As such it wanted reassurance from the federal government that this area should be protected from development so the traditional hunt would not be jeopardized.

The Inuvialuit was assured by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that the area would be protected with part of the area being a national park. This is explicitly removed from the development in Bill C-8.

At the same time the federal government informed the Inuvialuit that Shoalwater Bay would not be developed but did not include this area specifically in the legislation. Instead it is protected by implicit understanding outside the bill. It will be imperative for the federal government to honour this commitment to the Inuvialuit.

Of the 14 aboriginal groups in the Yukon area eight have yet to settle land claim agreements with the federal government but are presently involved in negotiations. This was another area of concern for first nations, specifically how the bill would affect land claim negotiations.

These concerns were expressed during consultation with Yukon first nations, especially the eight bands who are signatories to the Inuvialuit final agreement but have not yet settled land claims.

● (1630 )

To alleviate uncertainty clause 8 was added to the legislation allowing for the administration and control of oil and gas to revert to the governor in council for the settlement of land claims. With this addition, the rights of aboriginal groups are preserved while ensuring that future land claims will be resolved and implemented properly. Nothing in the legislation is to abrogate or derogate existing aboriginal and treaty rights. This is to protect aboriginal rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

While the transfer of authority is to the Yukon government, the federal government will disperse an amount equivalent to revenues from all onshore resources since April 1, 1993. With the oil and gas revenues in Yukon currently valued at $2 million, this represents a significant amount of money that would be accruing to the territorial government. Following the transfer, onshore resources will be collected by the Yukon government with offshore resource revenues divided according to a formula for revenue sharing.

Under the royalty sharing formula Yukon first nations will receive 50% of the first $2 million collected by Yukon. For any amounts greater than $2 million the reparation falls to 10%. The average per capita amount received by the first nations cannot exceed the average Canadian per capita income.

This is a bill the Progressive Conservatives started and we continue to support it. The one weakness or complaint that should be raised in this House is the inadequate job the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development did in involving public participation in this process.

When I visited Whitehorse after this bill had received first reading in the House and after we had already had a video conference with Yukon region representatives, I met with many groups who would have appeared before the committee but were not given an opportunity by the present government.

With that said I will still support this bill because in the end it helps Yukon. It recognizes aboriginal rights and moves the Yukon government closer to self-sufficiency and hopefully one day to provincial status.

[*Translation*]

**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 Acadie—Bathurst, Sable Island Natural Gas; the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche, Employment Insurance; the hon. member for Halifax West, Self-Government; the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, Infrastructure; the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Bankruptcies.

[*English*]

**Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak to this bill which is an important piece of legislation particularly to the development of the Yukon Territory and its people. It is also a pleasure to have a piece of legislation before the House that we can support and not have to amend greatly.

I will explain why the Reform Party is supporting this bill and the few flaws we see with it. Although we support the general direction of this bill, it remains far from what really needs to be done in the territories.

As we know, northern Canada and Yukon are areas of our land where there is high unemployment and poverty which is a big problem not only there but to Canada as a whole. For these regions control over oil and gas exploration is the key to economic well-being. Therefore Bill C-8 is important for the economic future of the Yukon Territory.

Bill C-8 gives the Yukon Territory administrative and legislative control over oil and gas in the Yukon Territory. In other words, this is a devolution of powers from the federal government to the Yukon government, and that is a good thing.

The Reform Party believes those powers are best exercised in the hands of the government nearest to the people instead of in the hands of some bureaucrats in Ottawa who are far removed from the consequences of the decisions they make.

● (1635)

We can generally say that the Reform Party believes that any move toward devolution of powers from the federal government to the provinces or territories is a positive development.

We are opposed to big, heavy bureaucratic central government and would eventually like to see the territories as full participants in Confederation with province like status.

The Reform Party also believes that the territories should have the same powers as the provinces and that all provinces should have equal powers with no special status for any.

We all know this is clearly not the case at this time, but we are committed to this important and fundamental principle of equality.

Therefore on the grounds of devolution of power which brings the government closer to the people and moving toward giving Yukon the right to achieve full province status, we are supporting this bill.

We also support Bill C-8 because it has the support of the people of Yukon. Consultation on the bill was done and Yukoners stated they wanted control of their oil and gas.

Because of those consultations and the universal support for devolution of powers expressed we are in support. The people of the Yukon Territory have made an important step forward in the development into a province with this bill. The Reform Party supports them in this effort.

While we are supportive of this legislation, there are a few provisions in the bill that we remain concerned with. First of all, in this bill the government has the right to take back administrative and legislative powers that it gives to Yukon in the event of a national emergency or in the case of an aboriginal land claim settlement.

This House hardly needs to be reminded of what occurred in the west the last time there was a so-called national emergency with respect to natural gas and petroleum. We had the national energy program and the petroleum gas and revenue tax.

These types of things should not happen again in this country where one part of the country is expected to subsidize the rest of the nation over some situation like that. That seems somewhat counterproductive. Needless to say, it seems really counterproductive to have that in there.

There are still many first nations in Yukon that have not settled their land claim agreements yet, even though the government has been promising rapid conclusion of these land claims for years.

An investor planning to set up shop in Yukon knows that from one day to the next they could suffer a loss because this federal government might have to settle a land claim or take back resources, or that type of thing. How anxious would they be to make an investment there? I doubt whether they would be willing to put very much money in, certainly not the millions of dollars it takes to begin oil and gas exploration. They want guarantees of stability when they make investments.

I would like to take this opportunity to urge the government to resolve land claims as quickly as possible and to obtain the full and meaningful participation by the Yukon government. Do not exclude it. Get this done with so that there will be stability in Yukon.

In recognition of the unique situation in the north, I agree that it is important that this legislation respect aboriginal land claims and settlement rights. It is also important that the legislation does not diminish aboriginal treaty rights or conflict with existing wildlife, environmental and land management legislation under the Constitution Act, 1982.

The issue, however, is not so much the protection of aboriginal rights as it is an issue of heavy handed control by the federal government. If the government were to settle a land claim in any of the 10 provinces, the provincial government would certainly take an active role in the negotiating process.

If the government is committed to giving Yukon province like powers, as it seems to be attempting in this bill, it should also give the territory the same negotiating powers in the settlement of aboriginal land claims as the provinces have.

Why would the government withhold the same negotiating power from the Yukon government? It is a question to be considered by the government and by all members of this House.

While the federal government protects the interests of aboriginal people in Yukon, the territorial government would have the opportunity to protect the interests of all residents in the Yukon Territory, regardless of whether they were native or non-native.

On that note I would like to reiterate the Reform Party's commitment to equality. In order for Canada to function as a nation, the territories should have similar powers to the provinces and the provinces should have access to powers available to all others.

This Liberal government should be decreasing federal powers not only over Yukon oil and gas but also in other areas to work toward empowering territories.

● (1640)

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

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

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## MACKENZIE VALLEY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-6, an act to provide for an integrated system of land and water management in the Mackenzie Valley, to establish certain boards for that purpose and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

**Hon. Raymond Chan (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Raymond Chan (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise to address the House on third and final reading on Bill C-6, the Mackenzie Valley resource management act.

I want to say again how pleased I am to be sponsoring this proposed legislation.

Bill C-6 will have important ramifications for the people and the environment of the Mackenzie Valley and I am delighted to have played a role in bringing it before the House.

I am also delighted that we have finally come to this point in the legislative process.

Although Bill C-6 was tabled in the House only a month ago, this legislation has been five years in the making. It previously died on the order paper as Bill C-80 when the election was called.

It has been the subject of one of the most extensive consultation processes I have ever witnessed in government, with 35 drafts of the bill developed and distributed for comments and review.

An information package on the proposed resource management regime was widely distributed across the Mackenzie Valley.

Federal officials have held literally dozens of meetings with aboriginal leaders, the territorial government, the resource industries and the public.

As a result of this exhaustive process we have before us today a better bill. This is a lengthy, complex and technical piece of legislation but it is also a solid bill that will withstand the test of time.

● (1645 )

I would like to take a few minutes to acknowledge the many groups and individuals who have contributed to Bill C-6 which, as hon. members know, will establish an integrated resource co-management regime and environmental assessment process for the Mackenzie Valley.

[*Translation*]

I want to begin with the leaders of the Gwich'in, and the Sahtu Denes and Metis of Northern Mackenzie Valley. Bill C-6 is the logical step following the land claim settlements signed by these native groups in 1992 and 1994.

Despite a three year delay in the adoption of this legislation, the leaders of these communities showed remarkable patience. They understood the need to proceed with wide consultations, to accommodate various interests and to make sure the legislation is fair.

The Northwest Territories administration also deserves special recognition for its role in establishing a resource management system which allows for a decision-making process involving both regional and valley-wide levels. The territorial administration helped make sure that the new system reflects today's realities and needs while respecting the close relationships the native peoples have with the lands and the waters of the Mackenzie Valley as a whole.

Resource industries also made a big contribution to the proposed bill. They recognize that it is necessary to evolve with time in the Mackenzie Valley, and to adapt to new ways of doing business and managing the environment. Bill C-6 will provide them with the certainty and coherence they need to realize their investments in the valley, investments that will create jobs, increase government revenues and make Northerners economically more independent.

I also wish to commend the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs and her predecessor for having developed a bill which will provide a just balance between the numerous different interests in the Mackenzie Valley. Thanks to their perseverance, Bill C-6 will reach its main goal, which is to protect the fragile environment of the Mackenzie Valley, while at the same time allowing the government to fulfil its constitutional obligation towards the Gwich'in, the Metis and the Sahtu Dene.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not commend my colleagues of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern

Development for the important work they carried out. As my distinguished colleagues know, the committee undertook a comprehensive study of Bill C-6 before Christmas recess. Several witnesses offered convincing testimony and the committee was able to benefit from different point of views and discussions between its members.

Again, we have before us a better bill than the initial version. Thanks to the amendments proposed by the government and the standing committee, and to the support of the territorial government, the mining industry and some native groups, Bill C-6 has been improved and made more precise.

These amendments have improved the clauses of the bill dealing with consultations, bringing greater openness and transparency.

These amendments will increase the participation of natives, including the first nations which have not already signed territorial land agreements, in the joint resource management regime.

The amendments will facilitate the transition process to the new regime by providing an additional protection to the present users of lands and water.

The amendments have also allowed us to include in the bill some guarantees that its implementation will cause no prejudice to future negotiations on land claims and self government.

[*English*]

I would like to quickly recap the key elements of Bill C-6 so that hon. members can appreciate the importance of this legislation to the people and the environment of the Mackenzie Valley.

Hon. members will recall that Bill C-6 will establish six boards of public government to administer the new resource management and environmental assessment regime. Two of these boards, the Mackenzie Valley land and water board and the environmental impact review board, will have jurisdiction throughout the valley. The other four will be regional institutions responsible for land use planning and land and water issues in the two settlement areas.

● (1650 )

Bill C-6 also provides for the establishment of additional regional boards by order in council as land claims agreements are finalized with other aboriginal groups in the Mackenzie Valley.

The need for a co-ordinated and integrated approach is an underlying principle of Bill C-6. The Mackenzie Valley must be viewed as a single ecosystem, not just a collection of political or demographic regions. Activities that take place upstream can and do affect communities downstream. Decision making processes must take into account what is right for the entire ecosystem and all its communities and residents.

Even First Nations that stand in opposition to Bill C-6 have not disputed the need for a single valley wide system. There is essentially unanimous agreement that we cannot have several different resource management systems in place in the valley. It simply will not work.

The question is not whether to proceed with an integrated approach, but when. Some First Nations that have not yet signed land claims agreements would like us to wait. The government's view is that further delays are not only unwarranted but could put Mackenzie Valley's environment at undue risk. Clearly the time to act is now.

A single integrated system is also the best way to proceed in terms of cost and efficiency. Bill C-6 will ensure regulatory consistency between the settlement areas and adjacent lands. Virtually all lands in the Mackenzie Valley will be subject to the same environmental review requirements in keeping with this government's commitment to streamline environmental processes, avoid duplication of effort and reduce costs to industry and others.

[*Translation*]

One of the main features of the new system is that native peoples are assured they will have a role to play. The first nations get to designate half the members of the new resource management boards, with the federal and provincial governments designating the other half.

Therefore, the various native groups living in the Mackenzie Valley area have the assurance that their traditional activities and lifestyles will be able to coexist with other forms of economic development. At the same time, non-native valley residents will have the opportunity to voice their concerns through the management boards and the hearing and public consultation process provided for in Bill C-6.

I am also glad to point out that the legislation follows up on a recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, promoting the implementation of a co-management system in the Mackenzie Valley. Such an approach would be impossible without high levels of respect, recognition and mutual responsibility, all principles on which is based *Gathering Strength*, a native action plan the government announced recently.

From a different perspective, Bill C-6 is another step towards the transfer of federal responsibilities and programs to the territorial government. The Northwest Territories Water Board, which is currently administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, will be integrated into the new Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board.

As for the new Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board, it will take over from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in co-ordinating and conducting environmental assessments. Once Bill C-6 is passed, the department will no longer be involved in issuing land use permits.

In other words, Bill C-6 will put in the hands of northerners the decision making process for issues directly affecting the Mackenzie Valley lands and waters. The new system shows a high degree of sensitivity and accountability to northerners and reflects both good planning and sound public management.

In spite of the major changes that will result from Bill C-6, the proposed legislation will not cause any disruption in the valley. It is based on existing regulations, with which industry is familiar.

● (1655)

It neither extinguishes nor overrides any right that aboriginal people of the Mackenzie Valley have. It will not take precedence over constitutionally protected land claims settlements or the Indian Act.

Under the new system, aboriginal people will have a much greater say in the decision making process than they do now.

In addition, it provides for land and water use applications to be processed quickly and fairly. It will also ensure that clearly defined procedures are used for the purposes of environmental assessment and protection throughout the Mackenzie Valley.

[*English*]

In closing, I would ask hon. members to consider the words of Richard Nerysoo, president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council. When he gave evidence before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Mr. Nerysoo said ''Bill C-6 sets up a state of the art framework for land and water management in the north that is second to none in the Canadian north and for that matter in the world''. A state of the art framework that is second to none in the world. These are not the words of a government spokesperson. They are the words of a respected aboriginal leader whose people will live with Bill C-6 on a day to day basis. They are words of pride, hope and confidence.

I urge hon. members on all sides of the House to recognize that Bill C-6 is a necessary, practical and responsible approach to resource management in the Mackenzie Valley. It has widespread support in the valley because it is a balanced and workable regime and because it will achieve its stated goal. It deserves the same level of support from this House.

**Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to once again speak on Bill C-6 which is of course the Mackenzie Valley land and water management act.

I would like to give a little illustration about how things are sometimes seen. A farmer observed two trains coming down one track and they ran head on into one another. It was a mighty train wreck. The investigator came out and asked him what he did about it. The farmer said that he could not do a thing about it but that he had thought about it. The investigator asked him what he had thought about. The farmer said he thought that it was a heck of a way to run a railroad.

It seems to me we have had this bill here before from the Tories and from the Liberals. It died on the Order Paper both times because it just did not seem to get the support it needed.

To state that the bill is called for everywhere and by everyone is to overstate the case. In committee we heard a lot of objections to this bill particularly from aboriginal groups who have not yet settled their land claims. The concern of the people I spoke with in the Yellowknife area was not one of water management but one of land claims negotiations. Therefore it really is not all that it seems to be.

We are opposed to the bill and have been since the beginning, even going back to its Mulroney Tory roots when it took the form of Bill C-16. We were concerned then about a growing and unaccountable bureaucracy which it creates and the set of regulations that would have arisen under it. We also planned to oppose it as Bill C-80 in the last Parliament. It was basically the same bill but it died on the Order Paper before the election.

Today more than any other reason, and there are a lot of reasons, there is one thing we disagree with. More than the big bureaucracy, which is making business developers in the north wary of investing there; more than the duplication of services that this bill would create; more than the possibility for interjurisdictional confusion; more than the opposition by the aboriginals who are still in the process of negotiating their land claims; more than the increase in the cost of compliance; more than the referral loop which many businesses are concerned they are going to get into, where it will be sent from the left side to the right side of the building, to across the street, to Ottawa, to everywhere else for referral, there is one thing we fundamentally disagree with.

What really gives us grounds to oppose the bill is that the simple amendments that were moved in committee to bring democracy into the bill were defeated by the government. We were not really asking for a great deal. We wanted to see a little democracy and accountability in the bill rather than the same old patronage system of which the old line parties are so fond.

● (1700)

The amendments we proposed were to provide for an election system to be put in place based on current election models to determine who would sit on the boards. In our view this was preferable to the board members being determined by the minister of Indian affairs based on criteria that are unknown and unspecified in the bill. It is interesting that many believe the unspoken criteria are linked to one's contribution, whether financial or other, to the government party.

Bill C-6 creates three new board levels: a five-member land use planning board in the Gwich'in and Sahtu settlement areas; a Mackenzie Valley land and water board, subject to the creation of additional panels which will have up to 17 members, including a five-member permanent regional panel in each of the settlement areas; and an eleven-member environmental impact review board for the entire Mackenzie Valley. Could it be any more simple and could it be any more bureaucratic?

The problem with these boards is that although the bill clearly establishes them, it fails to spell out criteria to be used in determining who actually sits on the boards. The whole process is closed to the people of the Mackenzie Valley which creates a big problem. When we tried to solve this problem with the democratic amendments put forward to the committee by the Reform Party they were defeated. This is unbelievable. This is a democracy. How can anybody stand up in this House and speak against any form of democracy?

Consider that time and time again we have seen problems that come out of such a system. I am not talking about democracy. I am talking about its antithesis, one person making appointments. We do not need to look very far from this Chamber to find a great example of how flawed this patronage system is. Everyone here knows what I am referring to. A supreme example of patronage in this country is the Senate.

Last June the people of Canada went to the polls after they heard what the candidates for Parliament had to say. They went to the polls and elected members to this House, which constitutes half of the Government of Canada, just half. Millions of Canadians exercise their democratic right to elect just half of Parliament. In contrast, there is one man, the Prime Minister, who appoints the entire other half. We just saw that happen.

Who gets there and what has been the result? With respect to those senators who do serve with good motives and intentions, how well have Canadians been represented by our non-elected friends such as Andrew Thompson? These people vote the party line because they are appointed by one man, the head of the governing party. How dedicated to the people do you have to be when you are not accountable to the electorate but are only accountable to the person who appointed you? It must be quite something. I do not think any of us here could imagine such a thing, since we are not accountable to one person, we are accountable to our constituents.

Why do we allow it to go on? Why do we implement new ways of promoting this old and ineffective way of doing things as we are doing with Bill C-6? That is what I would like to know. I am sure that is what Canadians would like to know and I am sure that is what many people in the Northwest Territories still want to know. The way I see it, the boards being created under Bill C-6 are nothing but mini senates, except that these boards are appointed by the minister of Indian affairs instead of the Prime Minister.

The other negative effect that comes out of this system is that it may create racial tensions in the Mackenzie Valley. Will the members the minister appoints to the board fit into specific categories of people? It seems they would either have to be natives or government officials.

What about the other residents of the Mackenzie Valley? Will they not have a say? We think this is wrong and that it could have been solved through free elections for these boards.

We are not opposed to the goals of this legislation. On the contrary, we think the intentions of Bill C-6 are good. We do need to protect the environment. It is just that this is such an awkward way to try to achieve it. Bill C-6 was originally supposed to simplify a land claim settlement agreement. It was not a land and water management act. That is why there is such a concern.

In light of what I have said here today and in light of the understanding of myself and the Reform Party of democratic accountability, I am opposed to this legislation.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the aboriginal question is a very popular one among the Bloc Quebecois, and I must thank my two colleagues here who always make it their duty to support me in caucus when an aboriginal project, or one with an aboriginal dimension, comes up. My colleagues from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and Lévis are always first in line to support aboriginal issues and I congratulate them for it.

I am pleased, therefore, to speak today on Bill C-6. It is not often that bills concerning aboriginal people come before the House, but today we have had two in succession and dealing with adjoining regions. As I have already pointed out, the previous bill, Bill C-8, concerned the Yukon, while this one has to do with the Northwest Territories, the region right next to it. I will be pleased to offer a brief geographical overview of the part of the territory at issue today, the Mackenzie Valley.

The bill before us is aimed at creating boards. We know there were agreements prior to this bill. There was an agreement with the Gwich'in, signed April 22, 1992, and another with the Sahtu Dene and Metis, signed September 6, 1993.

I also recall that one of the first bills in the last Parliament concerned the Sahtu Dene and Metis. That bill concerned comprehensive land claims. I recall that at that time I was a bit muddled about the Sahtu, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, the Gwich'in and so on. Now, with four years of experience under my belt, I

think I could dare claim a little more knowledge, even though I know that a person could spend years getting to know everything about it, even if he or she had studied the aboriginal question thoroughly.

Today we have a bill that arises out of those agreements. I will permit myself a little aside, as I did a bit earlier, concerning our Reform Party friends, because I have made a promise to myself that I would take every opportunity to point this out. The other day, I heard one of them claiming that the Bloc Quebecois is concerned only with Quebec, that the Bloc Quebecois has no interest whatsoever in what goes on east or west of Quebec.

Members should remember what I said earlier, when speaking on Bill C-8, about the aboriginal issue. We feel very concerned about this issue, and Bloc Quebecois members—as seen today, spoke about the Yukon less than an hour ago and are now discussing the Northwest Territories. The aboriginal issue is important to Quebeckers, and we are aware that it could have consequences.

The federal acts passed in this House and then by the Senate can have an impact on aboriginal people in Quebec, and we are looking after their interests. This is why we always take part in discussions dealing with aboriginal people, even if they are not from Quebec. I say to Reformers that we do not only defend Quebec's interests, particularly when it comes to aboriginal issues.

Let me say a few words about how the boards will operate. There are three boards: the land use planning board, the Mackenzie Valley land and water board and the environmental impact review board. As members know, the bill before us is the result of two agreements for the entire District of Mackenzie. These agreements provided that implementing legislation would be passed here, precisely to implement the accords, and this is what we are doing today.

I will briefly describe the board memberships, but first I want to tell the House that these boards will essentially function like government organizations. They will have their own staff and budgets, in accordance with government approval and funding procedures. Therefore, discussions will take place with the government to determine the funding of these boards.

However, as my colleague mentioned earlier, some provisions will no longer come under federal jurisdiction. This means that, under Bill C-6, some budgets which, until now, were controlled by certain departments under certain acts of Parliament, are being transferred to these boards.

As was the case earlier with the bill on the Yukon, we agree with this decentralization measure. Indeed, we can only agree with the transfer of money or tax points to regions of the country.

● (1710)

I think that my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot totally agrees. Any decentralization exercise must involve federal tax points. Decentralization must not be done only on paper. It must involve funding, because money is really important. I thought it was worth mentioning.

The first agency I want to talk about is the land use planning boards. There will be two of them, one in each region, namely the one where there is an agreement with the Gwich'in and the one where there is an agreement with the Sahtu Dene and Metis. Both regions are part of the District of Mackenzie. These two boards will consist of five members, including two members designated by the first nations, one by the federal government and one by the provincial or territorial government, and these four members will appoint a chairperson.

If we look at the bills currently before us and those that will come before us, there is always a certain parity between the first nations and the government. We can see a decentralization that gives more power to the first nations. That is reflected in the membership of the various boards. This is reflected here, and it will also be reflected in other bills that we will consider later on regarding Nunavut or other regions.

This parity is important, and I think it is time to start sharing, not only powers and jurisdictions, but the related tax points and funds. That is an expression of trust in the first nations. There will be certain problems in the bill. I will of explain it later, but, as a preamble, I thought I should describe the composition of the boards and their mandate.

There are therefore two boards, as I said earlier, one for the Gwich'in and one for the Sahtu Dene and the Metis. They will be able to develop, consider and propose changes to the plan for the use of all lands in the District of Mackenzie. So when a land use plan is approved by a first nation and by the government, it will be used as a reference to develop of the region.

There is a problem I can describe right away. The problem is that a number of nations and several regions of the Mackenzie have yet to sign an agreement, as we saw earlier on the claims and the establishment of a system to manage lands and water. With the two agreements discussed earlier, we are finally applying it to the entire Mackenzie region. That is where the problem lies. The first nations that have not yet signed an agreement will have their approach to managing the land and water within their territory dictated by the bill. This is a rather odd approach, which we oppose.

I will describe later the way we tried in committee to correct the situation. Unfortunately, the government majority did not support us. And this is why the Bloc will oppose the bill. I just wanted to describe the dynamics of the problem.

I will now deal with the issue of boards. Earlier, I mentioned the Land Use Planning Board. I will now talk about the Land and Water Board. It will consist of 17 members. Five members will come from each of the Gwitch'in and Sahtu Dene and Metis settlement areas. In addition, seven members will be appointed by the government and by the first nations of the three areas located outside these settlement areas.

Here is the problem. Seven persons not covered by a settlement agreement are to be appointed in order to include the whole area, all the way to the Beaufort Sea, under a single management system, even though some First Nations in the Mackenzie Valley have not signed a land claim agreement yet. This is a problem, and several aboriginals said so to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. The Land and Water Board has the authority to grant land and water use licences, thus fostering development in the Mackenzie Valley.

● (1715)

It will issue licences involving some aboriginal peoples or some areas in the Mackenzie Valley not yet covered by an agreement. As I said, it is rather strange. In fact, this is the main reason why the Bloc Quebecois will not support this bill.

There is another board, the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. When this issue was discussed in committee it was agreed, for practical reasons, to reduce its membership from 11 to 7; but its composition is similar to that of the other boards I mentioned earlier. One will represent the Gwich'in, who have already signed an agreement, another will represent the Sahtu Dene and Metis, who signed an agreement, two will represent the appropriate department within the Government of the Northwest Territories, and two will represent those who do not have an agreement yet.

Once again, this board is not, I would say, taking hostages, but going over the heads of people who have not yet signed an agreement and it is applying to the five Mackenzie regions a decision that affects two regions, and this is somewhat deplorable.

With the scope of the valley environmental impact review board, all development activities on the lands and waters of the valley, including proposals affecting Indian reserves or lands governed by a settlement with a first nation, will be subject to the environmental impact review and assessment process.

I mentioned earlier the huge environmental problems experienced by the Yukon Territory. The same is true for the Northwest Territories. I have been to Yellowknife often and there has been shameless exploitation of the environment in these areas. Once again, the wealth created from these lands has not benefited the natives. Often, the only legacy snatives got was a devastated landscape, a landscape that has been exploited and left to natives in a dismal condition.

This has harmed natives not only economically, but also culturally. I remind the House that their culture is based on hunting, fishing, trapping and fruit gathering. These are all things that were disrupted. Therefore, it is important to have a board that will properly examine any projects submitted, to ensure that the environment will be preserved and to avoid repeating past errors.

Unfortunately, there are some regions not covered by agreements on which this will now be imposed. I repeat that this is one of the reasons the Bloc will vote against the bill.

The boards will replace land and water settlements by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. People often say to us: ''Why is the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs responsible for oil, gas and natural resources in the far north? That should not be its mandate''.

I remind the House that the name of the department is the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, meaning that anything north of 60 falls squarely within its jurisdiction, including several aboriginal nations. So it makes some sense that it comes under the department's jurisdiction.

The legislation provides for a method of overseeing the cumulative effect of land and water use on the environment. Earlier, I mentioned devastated landscapes. When companies need river water or use land, it will be important to look not just at the short-term impact, but also at the cumulative repercussions.

Sometimes, on the face of it, this might sound reasonable. The activity goes on for one or two years. But, in the long run, it can have a dramatic impact on the environment and these boards will allow oversight.

Periodic, independent environmental assessments will be done and made public. Increasingly, the departments involved will have to pull out, in accordance with the bill before us.

There is also another board, the Northwest Territories Water Board. This board was created under the present legislation. It will gradually be phased out in favour of the boards I have just described.

● (1720)

Also, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will gradually lose some of its impact, and let the boards take on a greater role.

After the short geographic description of the Yukon I have just given, I think it would be important for me to do the same for the District of Mackenzie.

The Mackenzie River originates in the Great Slave Lake and flows into the Beaufort Sea. It is a major system in the Northwest Territories. Everybody talks about the Mackenzie Valley. Every-

body knows the great contribution this river makes to the district, and that is why it deserves a great deal of attention.

What are the geographical borders of this area? To the west, we have the Yukon, where the native peoples have a very rich culture, as I said earlier. The Northwest Territories are no different. They also have a very rich native culture. Natives were undoubtedly the first inhabitants of that area. Exploration, the gold rush, natural resource development all came after the Gwich'in, the Metis and the Denes were already there.

These peoples have been living there since time immemorial. It is important not to ignore them in our discussions.

To the west, we have the Yukon, with its rich native culture. The immediate neighbours are the Gwich'in and all those peoples I have just mentioned.

To the north is Inuvialuit, a Canadian territory where a self-government agreement has been concluded with the Inuit. There are four regions: Inuvialuit is located completely on the west coast and is right next to the territory we are talking about today; there is also Nunavut, a region located a little more to the east where the Inuit from the northern part of central Canada will have complete jurisdiction starting in 1999.

Discussions are under way in Quebec as well because there is an Inuit part of Quebec called Nunavik. Discussions are going well in Nunavik with the Quebec government which, as we all know, is very open minded with regard to aboriginal nations. As a matter of fact, statistics provide tangible proof of what I just said, whether it be for language retention, social and economic advantages, and so on. Quebec is in a much better position than the rest of Canada in this regard. I can personally vouch for that, having made frequent visits to aboriginal communities both in Quebec and in Canada.

Quebeckers are very proud of their record with regard to aboriginal nations. I must tell you that I will seize every opportunity to say so. I am a Quebecker, I am proud of being a Quebecker, I am a sovereignist and we are happy with the way we treat aboriginal nations in Quebec.

I will now get back to my description of the Mackenzie. To the east is Nunavut, which I talked about earlier. It is one of the four regions that will become self-governing on April 1, 1999. Its population is 90% Inuit.

To the south is the 60th parallel, south of which are the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

As is the case with all major waterways, we find various settlements along the Mackenzie. On the shores of the Mackenzie River are the towns of Fort Norman, Fort Franklin, Norman Wells, which is extremely rich in oil, Fort Wrigley, and Fort Simpson.

All these towns are former trading posts. Back then, oil was not what it has become today. During the 18th century, oil was not the reason people went up there, because nobody knew what oil was. In order to move from place to another, sheer physical effort was more important than oil. People used snowshoes and canoes.

The fur trade was the reason people went up there. All these towns developed because of the fur trade. Later on, their development was spurred by gas and oil exploration, and also, lately, by diamond exploration.

This is a history rich region. The Hudson's Bay Company had a trading post at Fort Franklin between 1945 and 1950. That is not so long ago.

• (1725 )

During the sixties, the Dene settled permanently in Fort Franklin, which they called Deline.

Fort Norman was also called Slavey Tulit's by the natives. There are many native connotations. Slavey Tulit's means mouth of two rivers. We have 50 native languages in Canada, and aboriginal names often refer to natural features, as in this case. At the mouth of two rivers, there was probably an abundance of fish and game. Explorers and traders set up a trading post there in 1810. There is a lot of history there.

As I have already said, several other bills concern Norman Wells oil. In 1919 Imperial Oil made a very big oil strike in this oil-rich area. During the second world war, Norman Wells gained a great deal of importance because the allied war machine required this essential fuel.

So, unfortunately, the war machine's demand for fuel was profitable for those involved with this black gold. Norman Wells thus became a major centre at that time, but unfortunately declined in 1947 with the post-war slump in demand.

The demand for oil has continued to grow since then. The city, with its economy centred on oil, is gaining in importance.

Norman Wells is located on the Canol pipeline. This pipeline was built during World War II so that the community could ship its top quality light crude to the Alaska highway and to centres a little further south for the war industry.

I hardly need point out that Northern Wells is also at the northern end of an oil pipeline from the Northwest Territories to Zama, Alberta.

This is a region which is rich in natural resources: oil, gas, diamonds, gold. It is an extremely rich region, and one which has made many oil companies rich as well. I also remind people every time of the social contract between the natives and the white people. The white people said at the time they would take over the territories, develop them and confine the natives to reserves.

It is not the natives who came out as winners in this economic war. It is Canadians who accumulated some fortunes and who left the natives faced with devastated landscapes and deplorable social and economic conditions. In the end, they did not benefit from this wealth.

One of the sources of conflict between the white people and the natives is how they perceive the land. When we, the white people, go into business, when we want to build a house, when we want to acquire some real estate, we go to our lawyer, we do a lot a measuring and we try to stake out our land as accurately as possible. We do some surveying. In our opinion, the land belongs to us. It must be staked out, and it belongs to us.

The native philosophy is quite different. For the natives, the land belongs to everyone. This was the philosophy that they had and that guided them when the white people came. For them, it was quite normal to share the territory. But, as we will see, the issue and the approach were quite different for the white people. Unfortunately, as I said earlier, this was not done quite to the benefit of the natives.

We also have very little information about their culture. Anthropologists have not examined these issues very much. However, we got some data from merchants and explorers, who divided the natives into three groups. The eastern group, which includes some bands such as the Yellow Knives, the Dog Ribs—

● (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Order, please. 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.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

### BROADCASTING ACT

**Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-288, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act (broadcasting policy), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to be the first person to speak in support of this piece of private member's legislation, Bill C-288, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act. In my allotted time I would like to speak to three basic points or principles.

I should point out this is not a new piece of legislation either to this House or to the Senate. In fact, this is the same piece of legislation which in the last Parliament was called Bill C-216 and which passed this House as amended by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and passed the Senate as amended there and is now back before us as Bill C-288 in the same words. But there is one slight shift. This has not been deemed votable by the committee charged with making such determinations.

To those members of other parties and to new members I have to point out that this bill has been studied by a House committee, it has been studied by a Senate committee and it passed the House, passed the Senate and came back here as amended.

This bill received more press coverage in the last Parliament than any other private member's bill by far. It received editorial endorsements and it taught the Senate of Canada that it cannot sit idly by and ignore private members' legislation passed by this House.

Some members may recall the call a senator campaign which was launched last winter and should know that the Senate of Canada was forced to hire extra telephone operators to deal with the thousands of calls made into that place telling the senators to get on with their business and to pass this bill.

Clearly if thousands of Canadians would pick up the phone to call the toll free line at the Senate, one must conclude that this bill had and continues to have wide scale public support. It is equally important to note that the bill has also been endorsed by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the Consumers Association of Canada, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and was endorsed by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on April 9, 1997 in this House.

Finally, because there were concerns expressed in the other place about the effect of this bill on French language services, when it cleared the other place it was noted in debates there that even the French language specialty service approved of this bill.

Furthermore, the Toronto *Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the Montreal *Gazette*, the *Financial Post* and other papers carried editorials calling for the passage of this bill. The *Financial Post* in an editorial said that despite the cable industry's promise not to employ negative option billing again, it was time to drive a stake through the heart of it so that marketers within the cable industry did not find a new variation.

This evening is perhaps the last chance the House will have to deal with this issue.

The second point I want to make deals with the substance of this bill. What this legislation does for the first time is give Canadian consumers a modicum of control over what they will pay for services offered by cable, telephone and satellite companies on to television screens. It is not a radical idea. It is a pretty simple concept that Canadian consumers should agree to the provision of services and that in agreeing they should know what they are receiving and what the cost will be.

Of course this is the normal practice in most marketplaces save and except, and I say this sadly, in matters of Canadian telecommunication. In this realm we have said that Canadians should not have

the right to select what they receive and how much they will pay for it.

This is a pathetic commentary on how specialty television services are provided in this country and goes a long way to say how we as legislators have allowed the exploitation of the Canadian public by large corporate interests all in the name of culture.

● (1735)

Yet this bill affects only specialty channels. It in no way impairs or impedes the ability of the government to declare certain channels to be mandatory and therefore to be carried on basic cable.

This bill simply deals with specialty channels, those specific interest channels that to some are entertaining and to others are of no interest. These channels are simply diversionary entertainment. They are of no consequence to anyone, cultural or otherwise.

The present chair of the CRTC, Madam Bertrand, stated before a Senate committee last spring that this bill really was not necessary because of competition in the marketplace, and additionally that cable companies would not employ deceptive marketing techniques again.

We all remember the declarations of the Canadian Cable Television Association which assured us of its new found, straight up marketing techniques in dealing with Canadian consumers.

Yet is it not interesting that these born again straight shooters of last spring and January 1998 again used manipulative marketing practices to try to trap subscribers to taking additional channels?

We saw a month and a half ago that the public statements of Mr. Richard Stursberg, the spokesperson for that organization, were made with a number of qualifiers which he failed to mention originally, that is that negative option marketing continues to exist across this country. This was noted by the Toronto *Star* in an editorial on January 30, 1998: ''It is time for consumers to raise their voices again''.

The only way consumers can raise their voices is through us in this place who can legislate to give them the protection they want and deserve.

I have asked members present to think about it, to think back to the consumer revolts of 1995 on this subject, to think back to the sanctimonious statements by the industry that it had learned a lesson and would not use manipulative marketing practice, to think about it, to look to the practices of recent weeks.

It is clear that only one conclusion can be drawn, that no lesson was learned by the industry. Once again the consumer is forced to pay. Again the Canadian consumer is the loser while we in this place refuse to do anything. What a pathetic commentary on our ability to help those we allegedly serve here.

The third point deals with the role of the CRTC in all this. As I noted earlier, the CRTC appeared before the House committee on Canadian heritage when this bill was before this House and five months later before the committee in the other place when it was there.

When it was here before the committee Mr. Keith Spicer, the then chair of that commission, stated to members present they ought to go ahead and pass this bill.

Five months later his successor, the present chairman, Madam Bertrand, said it is not necessary. Eight months later the cable industry is back to its old tricks.

There is one party that is extremely culpable in all of this besides the cable industry, the CRTC. It has turned its back on Canadian consumers and has co-operated every step of the way with the industry to the gross detriment of our constituents, Canadian consumers.

How it could, in a period of five months, flip-flop from endorsing and calling for the passage of legislation to a point where it could conclude that it was not necessary is beyond me.

It is evident the CRTC has no policy on this. It is fine for it to tell people to go back to basic cable, but it fails to realize that 90 per cent of Canadian consumers have something greater than basic cable. Telling people to go back to basic cable is really destroying the specialty channels that it says it is there to encourage in growth. What does the CRTC do in this instance? What does it do for Canadians? The answer is still nothing.

In a letter I forwarded to the chair of that commission on January 22, 1998, I asked what action in the name of consumers will the CRTC take to review unacceptable steps taken by Rogers Cable. I should point out that subsequently virtually all cable companies in this country took the same step.

In a reply I received from the chair one month and five days later I was told: ''A competitive broadcasting marketplace offering Canadians a greater array of program and cost options is beginning to appear''.

This is the justification apparently for Madam Bertrand and her commissioners to allow their industry to run over consumers. She went on to further note that she is sending a copy of my letter to Rogers and asking that it respond to me directly about my concerns within three weeks and to send a copy of its response to her.

● (1740)

This is clearly ridiculous. The CRTC has become a post office box for people with complaints, Canadian consumers, the people it allegedly serves. We have set up this body to protect Canadians.

I must say I am very comforted by Madam Bertrand's assurance that the commission is now following this issue and that I along with many other Canadians have brought this to her attention. I have to wonder somewhat facetiously if one must bring this issue to the attention of Madam Bertrand with a ball peen hammer to get some action.

While the CRTC hides behind this wall that all is well and the marketplace will take care of any problems, she writes letters talking about how the CRTC works to establish fair and affordable basic monthly rates and programming options for cable subscribers. Clearly she is out of her realm. Clearly she is out of touch. Even the television reporter for the Toronto *Star*, the person who works full time covering the television and communications beat for the largest newspaper in Canada, on January 23 of this year, less than two months ago, wrote that he hated the monopoly and hated having no choice.

If a person who works and is imbued in this industry is unaware of the competition then where does the chair of the CRTC get off in believing there is competition in the marketplace? It is no wonder or surprise to us here that we continually hear from constituents who have no use for that body known as the CRTC, that the time has arrived for us to seriously look at its continued existence, that the time is now to take action and put an end to this silly charade where Canadians, our constituents, are always ending up being the people who pay. They are the victims in this case.

The time is now. It is the last chance for members in this place to do something for Canadian consumers in the face of an indifferent regulatory body which has no interest in them.

I would therefore seek the unanimous consent of this House for the following motion. I move:

> That Bill C-288, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act, be deemed to have been chosen a votable item.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** Is there unanimous consent in the House to put this bill to a vote?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, this bill, seconded by me, is a learning experience in Parliament and parliamentary procedure. This bill is one that passed this House of Commons, went to the Senate and after a rocky ride arrived back in the House of Commons. Indeed it was the Bloc Quebecois at the time that also took parliamentary procedure to make sure that the prior bill did not ever get through the House of Commons.

It is really regrettable because I have in my hand a news release from the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in Ottawa dated Wednesday, March 11, today. I would like to read the news release:

> MPs urged to support negative option bill.
>
> The Public Interest Advocacy Centre today urged MPs to support Bill C-288, which will outlaw negative option marketing by the cable industry. This bill is, word for word, identical to Bill C-216 which was introduced in the last Parliament, but killed after being passed by the Senate.
>
> ''Contrary to promises by the industry, consumers are not only still faced with negative option billing, but, in addition, negative reaction marketing'', said Michael Janigan, Executive Director of PIAC. ''Now they're using a variation of this same old trick for the introduction of new services'', he continued. The practice of negative option marketing occurs when a subscriber automatically receives a service for which they are billed, unless the cable company is notified to the contrary. Negative reaction marketing has developed with the introduction of new specialty channels. Consumers who subscribe to existing packages (beyond basic cable) face a massive rate hike unless they agree to take the new specialty package.

● (1745)

The news release goes on.

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre is interested in this as an advocate for the ordinary consumer. The position I am taking as the Reform Party heritage critic and the reason I seconded this bill is that I too have the interest of the Canadian consumer at heart. It is not just the Bloc Quebecois members who for reasons best known to themselves, and perhaps they will describe to us later, have refused to give unanimous consent that this bill be votable. It is the heritage minister in particular and the CRTC that have come out against this and have been working against it underground in the background behind the scenes. The Canadian public should really understand this.

I said that this was a learning experience and it truly was. In the last Parliament when the sponsoring member brought this bill forward, it went through the House with only 25 members voting against it at second reading. The heritage minister at that point said that she was in favour of this bill and its passage. Someone over at the CRTC took the time to read the bill and came to the false conclusion that this would limit specialty channels in the French language. It is a totally false conclusion. It has been proven to be a false conclusion in the Senate hearings that took place.

All sorts of things took place between the first and second reading stages. The bill went to committee. It was examined in committee. It was refined in committee. When it came back to the House for third reading, some very interesting things took place. By then the heritage minister became aware of the fact that her officials at the CRTC had arrived at this false conclusion and therefore was bending arms behind the scenes with the Liberal backbenchers.

We know the Prime Minister has said that Liberal backbenchers may vote how they wish on a private member's bill. Therefore the heritage minister was faced with a problem. She started some arm twisting. We have actual documentation still on file of her

recommendations to the members aggressively recommending that they vote against it.

On Monday, the day of the vote, the minister chose to absent herself from the House of Commons when the vote would be taking place. My office followed the procedure. The minister actually chose to go to a public event that was taking place at the convention centre in Toronto. She thereby had an excuse not to come to the House. She previously said that she was going to vote in favour of the bill but all of a sudden—

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I believe my hon. colleague may not refer to a division in the House or to the absence or presence of someone here. I do not think that is proper.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I would ask the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia to try to stay within the framework of the debate before us.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, the bottom line to the exercise is that this bill has gone through a very convoluted process.

In spite of the aggressive arm twisting of the heritage minister, the heritage ministry and the officials at the CRTC, not only with the members in the House of Commons but also with the members of the Senate, it did arrive back. It was through action by the Bloc Quebecois that the bill ended up being rejected.

● (1750)

This is my thesis. At exactly the same time this was taking place, there was the copyright bill which the heritage minister wanted to get through. She ended up with the full co-operation of the Bloc Quebecois in certain procedures that took place in committee. It is my thesis that the payback the Bloc Quebecois gave to the minister for achieving certain objectives for Quebec artists in the copyright bill was that it would thwart this very necessary piece of legislation.

Why is it a necessary piece of legislation? It is necessary because there is a monopoly under the existing broadcast rules and communications rules. There is a monopoly for cable. It is opening up, but it is opening up very slowly. Right at this moment if there was full competition with the cable companies by telephone and telecommunications companies, if there was not the significant price differential in getting a dish, or not being able to put a dish in certain areas of certain cities or on apartment buildings, cable companies would not get away with either negative option billing or negative marketing, the new variation they are presently into.

The Reform Party is noted for saying let us be free of government rules and regulations, particularly unnecessary rules and regulations. Therefore one might ask why the Reform Party heritage critic would have seconded this bill coming to the House of Commons.

We do not live in a perfect world. I have already described that the cable companies do not have true competition. Until such time as they have true competition, to protect the Canadian consumer we must have this kind of legislation.

I therefore find it exceptionally regrettable that the Bloc Quebecois would have voiced its rejection of this becoming a votable item in the House tonight. I note that this rejection had it not come from the Bloc without a doubt would have come from the Liberal side of the House. I just do not understand what is going on here. Why do we have a government—

**Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

It has already been drawn to the Chair's attention that the hon. member has commented on the voting of a particular member and the member's presence or absence in the House which is entirely contrary to the rules of Parliament. He is now choosing to speculate on how a member might, would or could have voted or several members might, would or could have voted with absolutely no basis on which to make such a statement. I would ask that you call him to order, please, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I would remind the hon. member to keep his remarks within the framework being debated right now.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Madam Speaker, as Shakespeare said, she doth protest too much.

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Again, the issue was not whether the member was addressing the matter before the House. The issue was the member was commenting on the voting or potential voting of a member of this House. That is contrary to the rules. Would you please remind him that it is contrary to the rules of procedure in this House.

● (1755)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** All reflections on decisions of the House and of its members must be made judiciously. I remind all members to please act accordingly.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-288 introduced by my Liberal colleague for Sarnia—Lambton and entitled an act to amend the Broadcasting Act (broadcasting policy).

The bill is motivated by the member's legitimate concerns about the controversial business practice of negative option billing followed by certain cable companies, primarily in English Canada.

My colleague introduced Bill C-216 in the last Parliament, and the Bloc opposed it because it went well beyond the member's intentions and could have had a negative impact on the broadcasting system, in part by threatening the availability of francophone specialty channels in Quebec and in francophone and Acadian communities outside Quebec.

Furthermore, we cannot support a bill that represents an intrusion into areas of billing and consumer protection, both of which are under provincial jurisdiction.

The bill before us would establish federal regulations on the billing for cable services, when business relations between a consumer and a vendor are a provincial matter. I would invite my federalist colleague to look at section 92(3) of the Constitution in this regard. I also point out that, in 1995, the heritage minister recognized this areas as an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec.

In fact, in Quebec we have an organization looking after this: the consumer protection bureau. Jurisprudence confirms that the Quebec consumer protection legislation applies to all businesses, even those under federal jurisdiction, such as broadcasting corporations, as far as the consumer, commercial practices and advertising are concerned.

The Quebec consumer protection legislation outlaws negative option billing. Paragraph 230(*a*) of this act provides that no merchant can demand any money for goods or services provided to a consumer, when the consumer has not agreed to receive such goods or services.

The 1995 consumer revolt in English Canada was sparked when Rogers Communications took advantage of the introduction of six new specialty channels, English speaking channels, on cable television to take out of its basic service package channels that subscribers liked, asking them to pay extra to get them back.

In Quebec, the situation was different. Vidéotron simply added new specialty channels to its basic service at no extra cost. COGECO and CF Cable, on the other hand, reached with the consumer protection bureau an agreement providing for the maintenance of certain practices, as long as flexible arrangements were in place to avoid penalizing consumers who may not have understood that it was up to them to cancel or opt out.

In addition, one of the reasons the Quebec consumers association opposed this bill was the fact that the CRTC and the consumer protection bureau already had appropriate powers to correct abuse.

● (1800)

The Association gave four reasons it was opposed to this bill. First, it would prevent the broadcasting of new services and would reduce francophones' access to a wider range of programming in their own language. Second, it would reduce the number of francophone listeners with access to these services because the cost would allow only the more affluent to subscribe. Third, in the absence of affordable French language services, francophone consumers would have to fall back on English language specialty services. Fourth, in the absence of reasonably priced viable services in Quebec, it would be impossible to extend these services to francophone and Acadian communities in the country.

The Association des consommateurs du Québec summed up the other major reason for which we are opposing this bill very well: it would very likely hamper the development of new French language services in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.

The Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada spoke out strongly against the bill, because it would prevent francophones living in a minority situation from having access to specialty services in their own language.

Bill C-288 of the 36th Parliament is identical to Bill C-216 of the 35th Parliament. If this bill were passed, cable companies would have to obtain the agreement of each subscriber before adding a specialized service to the basic service and then raising the price. The odds are that, where francophones were in the minority, the anglophone majority would not agree to a rate hike in return for a French language service, thus preventing broadcasting of this service.

In addition, this bill would make it possible to choose which specialty services would be optional. It would not be surprising if anglophones did not wish to pay for French language specialty services and did not order them. These services would therefore no longer make money for cable companies and would rapidly disappear.

The objections and fears of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne with respect to this bill were entirely justified, and we share its view that it is up to lawmakers to ensure that the statutes of Canada make it possible to preserve a space in which francophone and Acadian communities can identify themselves and flourish. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has a history of appearing not to be very sensitive to the francophone fact.

In conclusion, I wish to say that, from the point of view of consumers, the ideal situation would be to be able to select the specific channels they wished and to pay for those alone. Unfortunately, current technology does not yet allow cable companies to provide that option. Pay per view television allows consumers to

pay for one program at a time by decoding the signal, but this system is still costly.

Moreover, in a small market such as Quebec, few specialized French language channels would have enough listeners to survive in a pay per view system. The current system allows people to have specialty services in their own language, and these services reflect what goes on in their community, as well as their preferences and interests.

I can only conclude that the member who introduced this bill, and those who support it, show once again that they care little about the cultural reality of Quebec and of French speaking communities outside our province. By trying to regulate at the national level an area of provincial jurisdiction—this in an attempt to solve a problem that is not very serious in Quebec—they are showing that there are two different realities: the Canadian reality and the Quebec reality.

This bill would probably be useful to the rest of Canada, but it would be harmful to Quebec and to francophones outside Quebec. This bill is yet another example of how our two realities, our two ways of living, the Canadian way and the Quebec way, would thrive a lot more if we had two different countries united in a new partnership.

Members will understand that the Bloc Quebecois absolutely cannot support such a bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Bill C-288, moved by my hon. friend, the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

I want to begin by congratulating him for all the work he has done on this issue on behalf of the millions of Canadian consumers of cable television.

• (1805)

He is of course quite right to point out the source of the desire to essentially outlaw negative billing, which came from the reaction of what I think might be properly called a consumer revolt against cable companies in January 1995 as they responded to negative billing by their cable companies.

The vast majority of us, certainly those of us living in urban areas and even in smaller communities, receive our television service through cable companies. Of course because of the monopoly situation those cable companies are in we are faced with difficult questions when presented with a practice such as negative billing. It is only to be expected that consumers would respond in this way.

Were it the case that this practice and this general approach to customers by cable companies was over, perhaps we would not need to pursue the matter so vigorously. However, there are consumers not only in Quebec but in other provinces who are being faced with this particular practice and the problem continues.

I think, on the whole, Canadian consumers have lined up in favour of the legislation. They are in favour of protecting consumers and putting consumers first.

As well, a number of organizations which are generally supportive of consumers' interests are in favour of the legislation, such as the Consumers Association of Canada, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

I would also point out that the vast majority of members of this House are supportive of this measure. Indeed, when the House was last faced with responding to this question, when the member for Sarnia—Lambton moved this piece of legislation in the last Parliament, I think that the vote was 84 to 68 in favour of the legislation. Had there not been an election called last year this legislation would have been passed into law and Canadian consumers would indeed be protected.

We heard the Bloc Quebecois speak today against the interests of Canadian consumers. Rather than leave the matter to consumers in Quebec and outside Quebec to make decisions as to what services might be provided, the Bloc is opposing this legislation which would be in the interests of the vast majority of Canadian consumers of cable television.

We have had what at best could be described as a luke warm response from the Liberal government. We certainly saw the Minister for Canadian Heritage dragged screaming and kicking in support of this legislation and, as has been indicated, not standing up for Canadian consumers on this point.

We have the CRTC, as the member for Sarnia—Lambton indicated, which is also not performing its role on behalf of Canadian consumers. As well, there are a number of cable companies which would like to continue this practice in the face of all the opposition which has been voiced.

It is rather odd, in that context, with the overwhelming support of Canadians for this bill which would essentially outlaw negative billing, that the Sub-committee on Private Members' Business of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs would not recognize that overwhelming support and deem this bill votable.

There are a number of forces lodged against the interests of consumers with regard to banning negative billing.

It is a nefarious practice because, as I mentioned, Canadians have no choice, if they are to receive cable services, but to respond to the terms of payment offered by their cable companies. I think it

is only right, in the context of that monopoly situation, that this House respond appropriately to resolve the question in the interests of Canadian consumers.

● (1810)

Whatever difficulties there may be—and I would not want to underestimate them—with the delivery of services in French, we should not respond to this legislation in a way which is contrary to the interests of millions and millions of other Canadians. We must therefore respond to those concerns in a different way and seek other approaches to the problem without undermining the interests of all other Canadian consumers.

I would end on one final point with regard to whether or not this House is going to have the opportunity to vote on this piece of legislation again at some stage. As I mentioned, had there not been an election called last year this would now be in effect and Canadian consumers would be protected. I think that is fairly clear.

If we continue to deny members of this House the opportunity to have this bill voted on, then it challenges the government's commitment to addressing this particular concern. If indeed the members from the Bloc continue to refuse unanimous consent for this bill to be votable, then the matter falls fairly squarely on the Minister of Canadian Heritage and we can then watch as she decides what she will do; whether she will respond on behalf of Canadian consumers or whether she will respond on behalf of the number of cable companies that are supportive of this practice which is contrary to the interests of Canadians.

On that note, I would ask that this House grant unanimous consent for this bill to be deemed votable.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the House give its consent that the bill be made votable as suggested by the hon. member?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is not unanimous consent.

**Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of Bill C-288. Much has been said on this very important subject by my other colleagues so I will be brief in my remarks.

The member for Sarnia—Lambton brought forward a similar bill, known then as Bill C-216, in the last Parliament. I want to take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for having brought back this private member's bill. It is unfortunate, however, that his efforts and those of many in this House and in the other place will not reach fruition again.

[*Translation*]

This bill provides for the necessary changes to the Broadcasting Act in order to prevent negative option billing for new specialty services. This bill is the only way the House can respond to the consumers who are asking for a decision on this issue. Unfortunately, this bill is not a votable item.

During second reading of Bill C-216 in the last Parliament, my colleagues from the other place defended the French language pay tv and specialty services.

My party shared its concerns with the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, the Canadian Cable Television Association and the Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick among others, and then brought forward amendments to the bill.

The proposed change still aims to protect the consumers, which is the main purpose of the bill. It also answers the main concerns about the delivery of French language services, mainly the availability and cost of specialty services in French. The proposed amendment to the bill is a compromise which would facilitate the delivery of services to the French communities.

[*English*]

We have consulted with the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and both were in favour of this amendment.

This bill, as amended by the Senate in the last Parliament, would have gone a long way in preventing the CRTC from gouging its consumers. When Bill C-216 died on the Order Paper last April, when the Liberals called an election after only three and half years in office, it looked like the CRTC was about to back off, but it has not.

If we take my own experience in Ottawa, Rogers Cable has been pushing the ME-TV package for months. It offered a free subscription for a couple of months and consumers were told that billing would start for this package after Christmas if they chose to keep the service.

What Rogers was not saying last fall was that if we chose not to take the package at $6.95 a month we had to pay $2 more a month. That does not sound like a very good deal for the consumer. On the one hand you have to pay $6.95 for 15 channels although you may only want one. On the other hand if you do not want any, you get charged $2.00 more per month.

● (1815)

I reiterate my support for this bill. I look forward to working with my colleagues to protect the rights of consumers.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to join in the debate on Bill C-288, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act.

With regard to this bill, we must think first and foremost about Canadian consumers. The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton deserves our praises for bringing their concerns to our attention.

When broadcasting started only radio existed. Even then, the Parliament of Canada saw fit to pass legislation in this area to meet the needs of consumers.

Indeed, for over 60 years, as the network has been expanding, successive parliaments have used their powers to ensure that Canadians have access to quality programming produced by Canadians, as well as to the best programs from abroad.

This is a fundamental characteristic of Canadian broadcasting, which has remained the same in spite of the many technical changes we have witnessed regarding radio, and television where programs were initially in black and white, then in colour; first programs were received using a conventional antenna, then came cable TV and other forms of transmission including direct-to-home satellite broadcasting.

There have been changes not only in transmission techniques, but also in programming formulas and choice of packages offered. Traditional television stations and networks are now competing with a broad range of specialized offerings, as well as the pay TV channels and pay-for-view TV.

These changes and improvements have not been without their problems, as this bill shows.

We have, however, always found a way to solve the problems caused by changes in broadcasting, and to attune the Canadian broadcast network to the needs and interests of Canadians.

This will continue to be our main focus and we owe thanks to the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for having brought to our attention the problems associated with the launching of specialized television services in Canada.

For the past 30 years, Parliament has entrusted the CRTC, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, with the mandate under the Broadcasting Act of regulating and monitoring the Canadian broadcast network so as to implement the policy objectives set out in that act.

Generally speaking, this has worked well and I am convinced the CRTC will continue to take Canadian public opinion into consideration, and to strike a fair balance in its search for the means to realize the policy objectives set for it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton has the floor. His speech will put an end to the debate on this item.

[*English*]

**Mr. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is either the first or second day of the institution of this new rule. If private members are not aware, the sponsor of the bill or motion gets to speak for the last five minutes.

I want to thank my colleagues from the Reform Party, the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party for their support in this matter.

● (1820)

I also want to say how surprised I am by the culture critic for the Bloc. The member has laid out a number of the same old stories but has failed to recognize the new paradigm which occurred.

This bill was endorsed by the specialty services association in the province of Quebec at the Senate when it was amended there. It is now amended and is here, yet the member refuses to recognize that. This bill was endorsed by the association of francophones and Acadians outside Quebec when it left the other place and is now here in the same form. She denies that that occurred.

The hon. critic for the Bloc has said that Quebec law prohibits negative option billing. If that is the case, then perhaps the hon. critic can tell us why in the province of Quebec Videotron is doing it and has been doing it since September 1997.

I was called to do several interviews on this topic. Perhaps the Bloc can enlighten us and tell us why consumers were complaining in Quebec and why when they complained to the provincial consumer office they were told that nothing could be done because it was federal legislation. Is this the new realization? Is this the new life of the Bloc?

I would also like to point out that it was said in a speech by another member from this side of the House that the CRTC has been doing a good job for the last 30 years. I have to disagree with that person. I have to suggest that the speech came directly from the Department of Canadian Heritage and was not a speech of that member.

The fact is that Canadians are not protected, whether they be in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia or Prince Edward Island. Canadians are tired of this arbitrary treatment. Notwithstanding what Bloc members might think, they are simply standing in the way of all Canadians, including their constituents and my constituents, in this matter for very dogmatic reasons which are best known to them and quite frankly not understood by anyone else. This includes the consumers associations in that province.

That being said, as I stated earlier, the time has arrived for members in this place to do something for the people they represent. We represent the people who pay the bills. We do not

represent the large corporate interests in cable production which exist across this country.

That being noted, I would like to move another motion in conclusion. I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That the order for second reading be withdrawn and that the subject matter of this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like to make it clear in moving that motion that I am not referring the bill to the committee. I am not asking that the bill be declared a votable item. I am simply asking that the subject matter of this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Mr. Speaker, I ask that you seek unanimous consent on that point.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to propose this motion to the House?

**An hon. member:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no consent.

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

Is it agreed that we call it 6.30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

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

● (1825)

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary will be a little familiar with this question because I have asked it several times and I never get the right answer.

I urge the parliamentary secretary to listen to the question, think, and answer for himself, not a canned written answer by the department. This is not a highway issue. It is not a provincial issue. It is an issue of government responsibility on behalf of the federal government.

In September 1995 the federal government signed an agreement to put $16.2 million into a highway on one condition. That condition was that the province put $16.2 million into that highway as well. That is $16.2 of taxpayers' hard earned money. They each agreed to put $16.2 million into it.

However, as soon as the federal money was in, the province removed its $16.2 million. All of the government money is entirely the federal contribution of $16.2 million. Even though the province agreed to split this 50:50 it does not have one red cent in this section of highway.

We contend that it is the federal minister's responsibility for the $16.2 million. He was entrusted by the taxpayers of Canada to look after that $16.2 million and he cannot look the other way any longer. He must and he should and I hope he will act.

It is worse than that. It is worse than the fact that the province of New Brunswick took its $16.2 million out. The New Brunswick minister of transport recently said it was always the province's intention to recover the provincial share. Here Sheldon Lee was signing a contract saying the province was going to put 50% into this highway but on the side he says it was always the province's intention to not honour its word and take its 50% back.

It is even worse than that. Even though the province of New Brunswick is signing a contract saying it will put in $16.2 million if the federal government puts in $16.2 million, the minister of finance for the province of New Brunswick, Mr. Edmond Blanchard, said ''We have always intended that the provincial money we invested in these sections of road would be recovered''. Here they were, signing a contract saying the province was going to put 50% in when it had absolutely no intention of doing so.

The minister said yesterday and at other times in this House that he will never let it happen again anywhere. He even acknowledged yesterday that there is an issue that has to be dealt with in future agreements. However, he is obligated to fix this agreement and not future ones, that they will look after themselves but this agreement must be fixed.

The $16.2 million of federal taxpayers' money must be accounted for. The contract is not completed yet. It does not expire until the end of March. The highway is not finished. The minister must tell the province of New Brunswick to put the money back, just like the province agreed to do in September 1995. It is not complicated. The province agreed to put $16.2 million into this highway. It has not put in one red cent.

Will the parliamentary secretary now tell the minister to tell the province of New Brunswick to put the money back and carry on with enforcing the contract in the same way it always should have?

The other question is why are the people of New Brunswick being subjected to this foolishness when no other Canadians will be subjected to it in the future according to the minister? The minister said he would not allow this to happen anymore, anywhere else. Why is New Brunswick being forced to take this treatment?

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.):** I would like to thank members of the Conservative Party for the applause but maybe they should wait for the answer.

I want to give the hon. member who is asking the question my interpretation of the facts as I see them in an answer that he surely will respect.

New Brunswick has chosen to operate a new Fredericton to Moncton highway as a public-private partnership using tolls. The province announced on January 23, 1998 that Maritime Road Development Corporation was to construct and operate a 195 kilometre four lane controlled access highway from Longs Creek, west of Fredericton to Magnetic Hill, west of Moncton.

The total capital cost of this project was $887 million. The cost includes new construction at $584 million plus the payment to the provinces for work completed or under way on various sections of $123 million, which does not include the $32 million federal contribution, plus land costs and construction interest costs. The overall agreement is for 50 years.

● (1830)

The highway will be open by November 30, 2001, but New Brunswick plans to start collecting tolls on the existing four lane Trans-Canada Highway between Moncton and River Glade starting July 1998.

The current provincial highway financing agreements are silent on tolls as they were never contemplated at the time the programs were established. The federal government has no legal basis to prevent provinces from imposing tolls on provincial highways, including those highways that have received federal contributions.

The federal government entered into these highway agreements because it wished to accelerate the construction of safer and more efficient highways. In this case New Brunswick has advised that the federal contributions are being deducted against the cost base that would be used to establish the tolls and the annual provincial payment for the remaining capital cost.

I hope the hon. member is absorbing all these important facts because he has hit a dead end on this road—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to advise the parliamentary secretary that his time has expired.

[*Translation*]

## SABLE ISLAND NATURAL GAS

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak, in the four minutes I have, on the important issue I raised in this House in December, and that is the natural gas pipeline running from Sable Island to the United States by way of Moncton.

It is important to speak on this, because, as a representative of northern New Brunswick, I know we have already asked to have the pipeline pass through our region.

We would have used it as infrastructure to attract business and create jobs in the region. At the moment, business people back home have had studies made demonstrating the importance of it. I think the government should be interested in what we have to say, which is that the pipeline should pass through northern New Brunswick and right on through, even as far as Bernier, Quebec. That is what you would call a national line, like the national railway, which goes from the west to the east.

This is one way to develop our region and create jobs there. More than just viability should be considered. I think it important to invest in creating jobs in northern New Brunswick. This is the sort of investment we need. Back home, some 19.6% of people are on employment insurance, when what we need is investment to create jobs. People want to work. That is what they want, and we must take the necessary measures to give them jobs.

We already have the port of Belledune, which created jobs in our region. If we had the natural gas pipeline, it would create further opportunities for us. We must see it this way. I am not opposed to the natural gas pipeline going through southern New Brunswick only, I am even happy about that, but any industry coming to New Brunswick will go where the pipeline is. Once again, the northern part of the province will not have the opportunity to grow.

If we want northern New Brunswick to grow, we must give it the necessary tools. And that is one way to invest. We must not only see this in terms of viability, but as a way of investing in the northern part of New Brunswick. The same goes for other areas, like western New Brunswick. We cannot just turn our backs on them, without taking some kind of initiative to stimulate employment in the region. This is important. It is especially important, since fisheries in our part of the country has been all but shut down. The cod fishery has been shut down, and the crab quotas and everything else have disappeared. That is why it is so important to invest in the infrastructure of this region.

That is why I wholeheartedly recommend that the federal government think about setting up this line in northern New Brunswick. The Liberals may make jokes but they too are in favour, for they are watching New Brunswick—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Resources.

● (1835)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerry Byrne (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware and pointed out, last December the Minister of Natural Resources responded to questions about whether the Sable gas projects would be studied by the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. I think that was the tone and tenor of the question.

As the Minister of Natural Resources pointed out at that time, the Sable gas projects had already been studied for 10 months by an independent federal-provincial review panel.

The joint review panel was created in September 1996 to perform a single window review of the offshore and onshore Sable gas projects to satisfy the requirements of the National Energy Board.

Prior to its formal hearings the joint panel held 20 informal sessions in communities throughout the maritimes to provide information on the projects and to seek public input on the scope of the review to be conducted.

Following this the panel held 56 days of formal public hearings in Moncton, Antigonish, Fredericton and Halifax from April to July 1997. Some 125 interveners participated in the discussions.

I wonder if the member opposite participated in the discussions at that time. I do not think so. I think that actually there was a certain absence of the member at that session. I appreciate his raising the comments in the House this evening. However, probably the time to act as a good member of Parliament was at those sessions in his own riding.

It behoves us to point out the fact that the upscale benefits, particularly in terms of northern New Brunswick, are a decision the company will be taking. Of course laterals are being prepared for Cape Breton and other parts of Nova Scotia. I think that is very worth while. Perhaps the member could spend a little more time in his riding when he actually presents—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Halifax West.

## SELF-GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in November I raised a question as to whether the federal government would show leadership concerning aboriginal self-government. The response by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was in part that the government introduced a policy recognizing the inherent right to self-government and is working in partnership with the first nations.

On the surface this response may appear appropriate, but true recognition of aboriginal self-government and a true working partnership of aboriginal peoples must be more than just words. There must be sincere commitment evidenced by concrete positive action.

The federal government must not remain silent on important issues such as land claims and the sharing of natural resources. These two issues are fundamental to the concept of self-government.

Governments should be taking the lead in resolving these issues through negotiation rather than leaving them to costly and confrontational court action. A true partnership is built not upon confrontation but upon consultation and mutual respect.

How much consultation was there prior to the government's statement of reconciliation on January 7, 1998, at which time four out of five aboriginal leaders expressed disappointment with the process leading to that statement and with the statement itself?

Where was the spirit of partnership and mutual respect when Canada's head of state, the Prime Minister, failed to appear at what was intended to be a very significant response to the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples?

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples argued that the right of self-determination was vested in all aboriginal peoples of Canada and that this right entitled aboriginal peoples to negotiate the terms of their relationship with Canada and to establish government structures that they considered appropriate for their needs.

The commission further proposed section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, recognizing and affirming aboriginal inherent right to self-government. That right became constitutionally entrenched, thereby providing a basis for aboriginal governments to function as one of three distinct orders of government in Canada.

The commission spoke in favour of negotiations as a means of developing self-government arrangements and clarifying the distribution of powers between governments.

Recent court decisions such as the court decision in New Brunswick concerning the right of aboriginal peoples to harvest trees on crown lands points to the need for negotiations around self-government, the distribution of powers and sharing of natural resources.

The importance of negotiations is also emphasized in one of the most significant cases of the Supreme Court of Canada, the Delgamuukw case. This case involved land claims, aboriginal rights, aboriginal title and self-government.

While reaching many important conclusions around the issue of aboriginal rights, aboriginal title and the importance of oral history in determining such issues, the court ordered a new trial regarding the specific land claims under dispute.

● (1840)

It is important to note that although ordering a new trial the court was not encouraging the parties to settle their dispute through the court but rather through negotiations in the spirit of the self-government principle recognized in the Constitution Act.

The court stated that the best approach in these types of cases is a process of negotiation and reconciliation that properly considers the complex and competing interests at stake.

The court concluded that the crown is under a moral if not a legal duty to enter into and conduct these negotiations in good faith. Ultimately, through such negotiation with give and take on all sides, we will achieve ''the reconciliation of the pre-existence of aboriginal societies with the sovereignty of the crown''. The chief justice concluded ''let us face it, we are all here to stay''.

In the spirit of that statement I call upon the federal government to negotiate in good faith with aboriginal peoples to resolve issues around land claims, the sharing of natural resources and self-government.

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, permit me to respond to the hon. member for Halifax West on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

In 1995 the federal government demonstrated considerable leadership with the announcement of its policy on aboriginal self-government.

The government is acting on the premise that the inherent right of self-government is an existing aboriginal right within our constitution. Our approach sets aside the legal and constitutional debates that have stymied process toward aboriginal self-government. Instead we are working to negotiate practical arrangements that give aboriginal communities the tools they need to exercise greater control over their lives and to make tangible improvements in their communities.

Aboriginal self-government will be exercised within the existing Canadian constitutional framework. This emphasizes that the goal of self-government is to enhance the participation of aboriginal people within Canadian society, not place them outside it.

For example, the federal government is committed to the principle that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms will apply to aboriginal governments just as it does to all other governments in Canada. It must also be emphasized that the responsibility of governments to be politically and financially accountable to their members applies to aboriginal governments no less than to others.

The issues surrounding self-government are multifaceted and complex. This was confirmed in the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The Government of Canada agreed and responded with ''Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan''. One of the objectives of this plan is to strengthen aboriginal governance.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has agreed to convene as soon as possible a federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs and national aboriginal leaders that will focus partners on concrete results.

Progress is being made. Self-government initiatives are under way in almost every province and territory in Canada, whether in the context of treaty discussions in British Columbia, through education negotiations in Ontario and Nova Scotia, in province-wide initiatives in Saskatchewan or other venues. As we attempt to complete this great unfinished business in our history, understanding and generosity will be required of all sides.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the first part of the question I asked on November 24 called on the government to substantially lower EI premiums.

Since even the EI fund's actuary says that the fund could be sustained with $2 premiums, I still do not understand why the government is stubbornly continuing to block job creation with overly high premiums.

The government is congratulating itself on having lowered EI premiums by a paltry 10 cents in December. They are perhaps going to say they have lowered them from $3.30 to $2.70, but this is 1998. So we will be listening to what my hon. colleague has to say.

Payroll taxes, however, CPP and EI premiums, were $5.50 when the Liberals took office. They now stand at $5.90, or 40 cents more. And that is just the beginning, because with the CPP amendments, Canadians will be paying $11 billion more over the next five years.

● (1845)

It is hard to believe that the government could be so arrogant as to claim that employers and workers who will have to pay these additional premiums are happy with the situation.

The second part of my question dealt with the auditor general's mandate regarding the CPP investment board. His access to the board's books is limited to the information needed to audit the fund's general accounts.

He is not allowed to conduct value-for-money audits or check if the board abides by the law, and report his findings to Parliament. This is of great concern.

A few months ago, the auditor general informed Parliament of abuses within the Canada Labour Relations Board.

He will not be able to do the same regarding the CPP investment board, which manages the money of thousands of Canadians. The

stakes are much higher. And yet, as elected representatives, we will not have a say.

[*English*]

**Mr. Robert D. Nault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to say to the House and to the nation I am almost shocked that a Conservative member would stand in this place and criticize the government about EI and EI premiums.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall because you were elected in 1988, the same as I was, that during that period between 1988 and 1993 the government under Brian Mulroney, the party that the member now serves with, raised those premiums higher than any level in our history. In the middle of a recession no less it raised those premiums from $2.60 to $3.30, an insurmountable amount for any employer and employee to deal with. That is why I say to you and the people out there I cannot believe this member would even bring this subject matter up.

Let me make it very clear to the member that we are undertaking to reduce the premiums for employment insurance as rapidly as we can. In fact, we have reduced premiums in the employment insurance system four years running, the largest reduction in the history of the EI premium and EI system as a whole. There has never been any government that has reduced premiums every year for four years.

I will give another statistic. The reduction in the last budget for 1998 is the second largest since 1972. If the member does not understand that this government is fiscally prudent and if he does not understand what it means to have a surplus in the EI account for a rainy day, then he has a long way to go.

Before we are done we will continue to reduce premiums at a rate we believe is sustainable. We will make sure there is a surplus—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary, but the time has expired.

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

(The House adjourned at 6.48 p.m.)

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