



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 099 • 1st SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, October 22, 2001

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 22, 2001

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Pursuant to Standing Order 81 (14), it is my duty to inform the House of the motion to be addressed tomorrow in studying the business of supply.

[*English*]

That, as part of a continental perimeter initiative to secure Canada's borders and protect the security of Canadians and our neighbours, and to protect our trading relationships, this House calls on the government to:

- (a) provide both Immigration officers and Customs officers enhanced training and full peace officer status to allow them to detain and arrest suspected criminals or terrorists at the border;
- (b) move Customs border officers out of the tax collection agency and into a law enforcement agency;
- (c) detain all spontaneous refugee claimants appearing without proper documentation until their identities are confirmed and they have cleared proper health and security checks; and
- (d) create a list of safe third countries, including the United States and member states of the European Union, from which Canada will no longer accept refugee claimants.

The motion standing in the name of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is a votable motion. Copies of the motion are available at the table.

[*Translation*]

It being 11.05 a.m., the House will now proceed to consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

STRYCHNINE SOLUTIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all studies that were done prior to the banning of the 2% and 5% solutions of strychnine to show the effect that the banning of these solutions would have on Canadian farmers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak once again on behalf of Canadian farmers regarding the removal of 2% and 5% strychnine

which was very effective in controlling the tens of millions of dollars of damage caused by gophers to farmers' crops and to livestock every year.

The issue was first brought to my attention almost immediately after I was elected in 1993. At that time, the government was moving toward the removal of this product and many farmers were concerned. Many municipal politicians brought the issue to my attention. I wrote a letter to the minister of agriculture regarding the issue at that time.

My involvement in trying to get the 2% or 5% concentrations of strychnine restored to farmers has been a long term one indeed, spanning about 7 years now. I have had motions and bills and have done what I have been able to do to force the issue. I would like to say that I have perhaps had some success because at least this past summer there was an emergency registration of this effective strength of strychnine in Alberta and certain parts of Saskatchewan.

Obviously the issue has been pushed enough by municipal politicians, reeves of counties, councillors, my colleagues from across the prairies and farmers themselves to let government know they cannot afford these losses. I would suggest that these tens of millions of dollars in losses a year have been the final straw for some farmers and have led them to go out of business. It has just been one thing too many that they have had to fight and one loss too much. As a result, I have no doubt that some farmers have been driven out of business and have lost their farms as a result of this order. It is extremely serious.

I wrote a letter to the minister of agriculture back in 1994 asking why the product, which was so effective in controlling Richardson's ground squirrels, commonly referred to as gophers, had been taken away from farmers. I told the minister it would cost a lot of money and would cause serious damage.

Later on I did get an answer to the letter but the answer was not really substantial. Through the House, I then put a question on the order paper for the production of papers and I did receive information on the removal of the product. What astounded me was how little there was in these papers. It was a stack of papers an inch thick but extremely few complaints were made and yet the government decided to remove the product.

Thinking logically that could not have been the reason the government made the decision to follow through on the removal of the product, I assumed there must have been studies done by the department which led to this decision being made.

The order I put on the order paper reads as follows:

Private Members' Business

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all studies which were done prior to the banning of the 2% and 5% solutions of strychnine to show the effect that the banning of these solutions would have on Canadian farmers.

I assumed that the complaints certainly would not have sparked this so there must have been studies done. What we are debating today are the studies that must have been done.

I did get an answer from the government and I was asked to withdraw this motion. The answer reads as follows:

No studies were done on the effect (economic impact) on Canadian farmers, of the withdrawal of the registration of the concentrated strychnine solutions (2% and 5%) used by farmers to mix their own 0.4% end-use products.

I am sure the parliamentary secretary will stand up today and ask why we are debating this when there have been no studies.

● (1110)

The reason is it is incomprehensible that this decision, which has done so much harm to Canadian farmers, would be made based on extremely few complaints and without study. Why would a government do this? I believe that there has to be more and that I have not got received all the goods.

I encourage the House to support the motion and I encourage the government, in a very open way, to come up with the information that actually led it to make this decision. The explanation is certainly not in the papers I received.

I will start with a letter I wrote in February 2000 to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, following other letters I wrote. My letter said the banning of the concentration of strychnine effective enough to kill gophers resulted in millions of dollars of losses for farmers who were unable to control the gopher population.

I asked to be provided with the following information. First, I asked for a clear comprehensive explanation as to why an effective concentration of strychnine needed to be banned. As part of the explanation, I asked to be provided with copies of documents and studies which were used as scientific evidence that this effective concentration of strychnine needed to be banned.

Second, I asked for studies that were done to show the effect that the banning of an effective concentration of strychnine would have on farmers.

Third, I asked who specifically was responsible for making this decision to ban this strychnine because it was never clear from the information I received.

Fourth, I asked how much money farmers had lost due to crop losses, since the banning of an effective concentration of strychnine left them unable to effectively control gopher populations.

The response to that was less than complete and did not give an answer to the questions. I was left with information I received before under a request for production of papers. Under the request, I got a thick stack of papers from the agriculture department that handled the request until it was shifted to the health department.

I will go through a summary of what was in the stack of documents that led to this decision, unless there is more. That is what I am asking for from the government. I want it to tell me what more there is on its decision to ban that effective tool for farmers.

The following complaints were found in the material. There were complaints logged with Agriculture Canada by the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals. That consisted of five letters with the names removed of course, to Agriculture Canada, and they concerned wolves. There are no wolves in most areas in prairies where strychnine is used, so is a little difficult to see the connection.

There were other letters from Sheila Burgess and Cindy Hunter to Agriculture Canada, again mainly concerning the welfare of wolves.

Some of the letters referred to the same magazine article. In other words, it seemed that these letters were written mostly as a result of this article which said that the strychnine used to control Richardson's ground squirrels or gophers was killing the wolf population as unintended targets. There were also concerns expressed that strychnine should not be banned.

In terms of the information in the stack of papers that I received, that was what I got. The decision to ban strychnine was based on that, unless the government was not forthcoming in the information it sent to me. It is one or the other.

There were also concerns expressed that strychnine should not be banned. It was not a lot, but this was done in about 1995 or 1994. It was quite early in the process. Letters from the reeve of the rural municipality of Hamiota, the vice president of the eastern region of Able Pest Control, that made the product, and my first letter of 1994 were included in the documents. There was also a letter from the administrator of the rural municipality of Shellbrook, Saskatchewan.

● (1115)

There were no complaints made to provincial governments, at least there were no complaints which were included in this material. Maybe there was some reason why the agriculture department did not include complaints from provinces. I would not know what that would be. That is what I received.

It seems the decision to remove this important tool, which has caused farmers tens of millions of dollars in losses every year, was based on that. I believe the tens of millions of dollars would be an extremely low estimate of the damage done to farmers. I have a lot of reasons for believing that.

Some farmers have taken the time, along with some provincial government officials, to prepare an estimate based on examining their particular pastures or their crops. They have looked at the damage done and have put a dollar figure to it. The numbers for these individual farmers were astounding, and I am talking about a lot of loss for particular farmers. These farmers have been left without an effective tool to control gophers.

In fact, a study looked at the effectiveness of premixes of strychnine which were available still through municipalities or through various retail outlets. That chart showed that these premixes were very ineffective.

One study showed that only 11% of the gophers were controlled through use of this premix product. Another showed that even with three consecutive applications of this premix product, it only controlled about 50% of the gophers, leaving 50% to continue to do the damage.

I guess people who have not been involved in this would not understand all of the labour that goes into each application of strychnine to control gophers. It is extremely labour intensive. To do one 60-acre pasture could take a full day of heavy physical work. Many farmers have hundreds and thousands of acres infected now because of the removal of this product.

The damage is enormous. The reason for removing this product is hard to understand. I am asking today for the government to provide information that it has not provided because there must be more. I do not believe that any governmental department would remove a product based on this information. There has to be more.

What I want to see from the government is the production of all the information that led it to make that decision because it is an important issue to farmers who have crop losses due to not having this product. It is an important issue to cattlemen who have animals injured due to gopher holes and the badgers digging in after them. Animals have suffered from broken legs and that type of damage. Horses have had to be put down because they have broken a leg in one of these badger or gopher holes. Also people have sustained injuries because of this.

All of this results from the removal of a product. There just has to be more. I ask the House to support my motion. Most of all, what I am really asking for is to have this product returned to farmers. All the work I have done has been done for that reason. Let us bring this product back so farmers have access.

We had an emergency return of this product last summer. Let us just deal with this, say yes, that we will return this to farmers so they can deal with this serious gopher problem and that we will do it before next summer.

Farmers have told me that they are more than willing to take a half day course, if they have to, on how to use this product safely. However, many do not understand why they would have to because they have used it safely for decades with really very little evidence of any non-target species being harmed.

• (1120)

What I really want is the return of this 2% or 5% solution of strychnine so that farmers can do the job. If the government feels it is necessary to have a training course, farmers are more than willing to take it. So let us get on with it and have the product returned.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Lakeland has questioned why Canada's then regulatory body, Agriculture Canada, did not carry out impact studies prior to its withdrawal of liquid strychnine concentrate from the market in 1992.

The fact is, no significant economic impact on farmers was anticipated as a result of restricting access to liquid strychnine concentrate products.

And no impact study done at that time would have uncovered any evidence that farmers' economic well-being would be adversely affected. Farmers would continue to have the same level of pest control to combat ground squirrels, commonly known as "gophers",

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after the liquid strychnine concentrate was withdrawn as they had when it was available.

This was a reasonable assumption to make, because there were similar, yet safer ready to use products available on the market, ones that offered an equivalent or greater amount of strychnine compared to bait prepared from liquid concentrate products.

It was only several years after the discontinuation of liquid strychnine concentrate that evidence began to emerge that there were problems involving the effectiveness of the ready to use baits.

Therefore, in 1992 it was reasonable for the government to expect that the withdrawal of liquid strychnine concentrate would not pose an economic hardship on farmers, beyond some slightly increased costs to strychnine users who previously had used their own grain for bait formulation. It was also reasonable, and in keeping with its responsibility for safeguarding the health and safety of Canadians, and their environment, for the government to take action on liquid strychnine concentrate.

Strychnine is, after all, a highly toxic product that has been associated with poisonings of non-target species, including pets, wildlife and possibly humans.

The government's expectation that the discontinuation of liquid strychnine was a reasonable and prudent step was based on the Department of Agriculture's two years of consultation, through the Western Forum and the then Canadian Association of Pesticide Control Officials, with agriculture and wildlife control officials in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

During that consultation period, no serious economic effect on the farm economy of the west was foreseen as a result of the disappearance of liquid strychnine concentrate; if there had been, then an economic impact study would undoubtedly have been done.

As was explained to the hon. member for Lakeland and this House during the debate on Motion No. 13 held on September 19, it has been verified through analysis that the concentration of strychnine found in today's ready to use products is very similar or actually greater than that found previously in baits prepared on the farm by mixing the liquid strychnine concentrate with farm available grain.

Since the strychnine present in the ready to use bait has been clearly shown to be of a concentration adequate for the control of gophers, it was suggested that other factors, such as baiting procedures, environmental conditions affecting the bait itself and lack of palatability might be responsible for poor performance of the ready to use strychnine baits.

To investigate these factors, the PMRA in 2000 and 2001 granted research permits to Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, or AAFRD, to assess the efficacy of various baits against gophers. These baits included those made from 2% strychnine concentrate, the standard ready to use bait made with oats, and bait made from more palatable substances such as canary seed.

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Bait freshness and the type of bait seem to be important considerations in achieving good bait uptake and successful gopher control. Plans for a definitive comparison study to settle the question of whether a freshly mixed canary seed bait would be the most effective bait are currently being discussed with the provinces.

When the gopher problems in some parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan became so serious this past summer that the provincial governments requested emergency registrations to allow them to use the liquid strychnine concentrate, the PMRA granted these registrations.

Mindful of the risks associated with liquid strychnine concentrate, the registrations were for one season only, and the availability and use of the concentrate was highly restricted. An access program was put in place that allowed only agricultural fieldmen, in Alberta, or pest control officers, in Saskatchewan, to sell and distribute the liquid strychnine concentrate.

On November 16, the PMRA will meet with Alberta and Saskatchewan pesticide regulatory officials to review the further results of research and to assess the program that allowed restricted access to the strychnine concentrate during this summer's emergency registrations of strychnine.

• (1125)

Officials will discuss whether the access program worked, whether it provided reasonable availability, while mitigating any possible adverse effects of using liquid strychnine concentrate. Another topic to be discussed at this meeting will be the use of currently registered alternative products to strychnine.

I believe that the government has taken a justifiably cautious approach to making the liquid concentrate of strychnine available, given the nature of this poison. Strychnine has a very high acute toxicity. It acts quickly on the central nervous system, often causing violent convulsions which eventually lead to death through respiratory failure. And there is no effective antidote for this poison.

Canada is not alone in having taken action on strychnine. All above ground uses of strychnine have been prohibited in the United States since 1988. It is illegal to use strychnine for pest control in most European countries and its use is prohibited by the Berne convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats.

In closing, I would like to refer to a concern that several members raised in their speeches during the September 19 debate on Motion No. 13. They wondered why a product that utilizes ammonia to control gophers cannot be made available to farmers as quickly as possible as an alternative product to strychnine.

Members may be interested to know that a pre-submission consultation has taken place between the PMRA and the potential applicants in order to help the applicants submit a complete and correct application to register their product. As a next step, the agency is now considering exactly what type and how much information will have to be generated in order to support the registration of a pest control product based on ammonia. Although ammonia is a widely used commodity already registered under the Fertilizers Act, the PMRA must, under the Pest Control Products Act, ensure that a product presents no unacceptable risk to health or

the environment before it can be registered for use as a pest control product in Canada.

I want the hon. member from Lakeland to be assured that the Canadian government has acted in consultation with affected provinces and stakeholders in the matter of restricting the availability of liquid strychnine concentrate for use in the formulation of strychnine baits on farms. With their co-operation it has moved to protect the health and safety of Canadians and their environment, and is equally committed to finding the means to help resolve the problem of gopher infestations in our western farmers' fields.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address request P-3 for the tabling of documents, submitted by the Canadian Alliance member for Lakeland, which reads as follows:

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all studies that were done prior to the banning of the 2% and 5% solutions of strychnine to show the effect that the banning of these solutions would have on Canadian farmers.

Let us first look at the background for this issue. Strychnine is a pesticide that helps, among things, control gophers that attack crops in western Canada. It seems that the product used by farmers is effective provided it contains 2% to 5% of strychnine. However, this product is also criticized because of its harmful effects on water, air and soil. Moreover, it is said to also threaten the health of animals that are not pests and of human beings.

In 1992, the federal government restricted, through regulations, the use of liquid strychnine by Canadian farmers. Now, they can only use a concentrated premixed liquid version of the product that contains a maximum of 0.4% of strychnine.

The Canadian Alliance member for Lakeland is very interested in this issue. He tabled Motion No. 13, which was debated in the House for one hour. That motion asked the government to compensate farmers for damage done to livestock and crops by gophers resulting from the banning of effective concentration of strychnine, thereby removing the ability of farmers to control gophers on their lands.

On March 28, 2001, he tabled Bill C-321, an act to amend the Farm Income Protection Act (crop damage by gophers). I am taking this opportunity to say that the French translation should be revised. While we could write the term "gaufre" with the letters "ph" instead of an "f", it would be best to choose a more appropriate term.

Indeed, the English term "gopher" was translated in French by "gaufre", which is "a crisp pancake cooked between two hinged metal pans with a grid pattern" and which is often eaten with maple syrup but, I might add, without strychnine. We are a long way from the ground squirrels called gophers, which are rodents causing the same damage as our groundhogs in Quebec.

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Finally, our colleague, the hon. member for Lakeland, is asking that certain studies that the federal government has in its possession be made public. These studies, which were done prior to the strychnine ban, could reveal that the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food banned this pesticide knowing the devastating effect that such a measure would have on western farmers' crops, yet took no steps to compensate them.

The Bloc Québécois therefore supports this request for documents. The government that has been running this country since 1993 suffers from acute secrecy syndrome. And the debate over this request is an opportunity for me to highlight the federal Liberal government's chronic lack of transparency.

Every day, democracies are tempted to take the secret way out. These democracies, which are accused of being slow, view secrets as an easy way to speed things up, as a sort of pragmatic art, which cuts short futile discussions. The temptation is understandable. What is less understandable is that so many democrats fall victim to it, because democracy loses its meaning the moment it loses its transparency.

This government, which promised during the 1993 election campaign to be transparent in managing the affairs of the state, probably has the worst dirty habit of hiding things in the entire political history of this country. These are a few examples.

I would like it if the hon. member for Joliette could tell us himself how many times he had to rise in the House to ask the government to make public the FTAA texts. It took us a long time to get them.

● (1130)

When the multilateral agreement on investment, the MAI, was involved, once again no documents were forthcoming. It took a leak via the Internet, originating with the government of France and certain individuals with a strong interest in the matter, before we could finally get our hands on a document, and it was absolutely abominable. Negotiation of this agreement had to be abandoned.

As for the Canada-Costa Rica free trade agreement, which we have just experienced, that most recent agreement, namely Bill C-32, we were again asked to pass it without seeing the texts. We are presented with them, but once again we are confronted with a fait accompli. Once again, we are being asked for a blank cheque. We were not consulted at all on the discussions relating to the agreement.

Going back a little in time, hon. members will recall the sad story of the contaminated blood. After creating a commission of inquiry into contaminated blood, the federal government did its utmost to stop the commission from unearthing the full story and naming names.

Let us also recall the Minister of Finance's budget surplus. Once again, there was a whole set of secrets that had been systematically concealed since the government found the path to a balanced budget.

Let us recall the secrecy surrounding the location of transgenic crops in Canada. Ottawa refuses to reveal the location in one or more provinces where there are experimental GM wheat crops. The Canadian Wheat Board has attempted to obtain a list of these from the Canada Food Inspection Agency, but to no avail.

Let us recall the Access to Information Act, which is nothing more than a toothless watchdog. This act, which is supposed to guarantee access to any document of public interest is as full of holes as Swiss cheese, and totally ineffectual against the Liberal government's propensity toward secrecy. This is why there are complaints from both journalists and MPs, both in opposition and in government. Even the information commissioner is very concerned.

The Liberal member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot decided he had had enough of the way the present government was treating the Access to Information Act. He feels it is far too easy for the government and departmental officials to conceal information of a public nature.

But the bad example comes from the top. In his annual report published in March 2001, Information Commissioner John Reid said that he himself no longer had access to certain documents considered secret. According to the report, the Prime Minister and his closest advisers and ministers keep on ignoring the Access to Information Act. Worse still, the member for Saint-Maurice will not allow the commissioner to see his agendas and has gone all the way to the supreme court to prevent Mr. Reid from doing so.

This sort of attitude at the top encourages the entire bureaucracy throughout the country to make the commissioner's life difficult by putting up fierce resistance to requests, said the same report.

The Prime Minister fell back on this "secret way out" when he refused to testify regarding the demonstration staged in Vancouver for the arrival of the president of Indonesia, thus putting a lid on an essential element of the investigation—whether or not the order to the police to use force came from his office. Doubt breeds mistrust, and all politicians are paying the cost of this lack of transparency.

The Bloc Québécois finds it unacceptable that the government is behaving in this way, when it had promised the public transparency. The member for Lakeland is calling for the release of documents which would, to a certain degree, compromise the previous government, because the decision was taken in 1992. It would not cost much to release the documents, but it would fulfill one of the 1993 election promises regarding transparency.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to speak to the issue of Richardson's ground squirrels, commonly referred to as gophers in the farming communities of Brandon and Souris in southwestern Manitoba

I spoke to this issue shortly after it was put on the floor as Motion No. 13 under private members' business. At that time I suggested and received agreement from most members on this side of the House that all private members' business should be votable. Had Motion No. 13 been made votable it would probably not have precipitated the issue returning to the House in this form.

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I congratulate the member for Lakeland for bringing it forward under Standing Order 97 as a motion for the production of papers. It is an issue that he obviously sees as being very important, not only in his constituency but particularly in Canadian agriculture. It is a way to bring forward the issue again to hold the government accountable and to have a vote on a particular motion for the production of papers.

As the member has indicated the government has demonstrated that there are no studies and papers to be tabled and therefore the member should withdraw his motion.

I find it interesting that a decision of this magnitude could be made when hundreds of scientists involved in these types of decisions with the federal government have not put forward any justification for making this change. I have the order that was put into place on December 22, 1992. There are some backgrounders that indicate why the change was necessary. It went from a 5% strychnine solution down to a 0.4% solution, which has been proven to be terribly ineffective if not useless.

We have the order, but I am sure there had to be in some way, shape or form a justification of why this order was put forward. That is all the member is asking for. He is asking the government under production of papers to give us the studies that were put forward and used as background information to make this final decision.

It is not that difficult as was mentioned by the member from the Bloc. It seems we have grave difficulty in trying to get information out of the government on this side of the House. I do not understand why the government is afraid to give this information out.

This is a very simple matter. It is not that difficult. Let us see the backgrounder and the reasons justifying why that decision was made. Let us vote for the motion for the production of papers and let us see the studies. If in fact the studies support the final decision, the member would be the first to stand in his place and accept that. However, how can we accept that when we do not have any understanding of the decision making process of government scientists?

Access to information is a tool that we use. I use the analogy between access to information and the motion for the production of papers before us. We depend on access to information to generate information from the government. When we get information it is censored to the point where it is useless. A government must be open and transparent to generate the confidence of the people which it governs. I find that the accountability and transparency of the government are becoming eroded day after day.

I have a suggestion for the government. This is not a matter of politics but a matter of understanding why decisions are made. The government should be more forthcoming with information, and this is a prime example. Everybody should stand in their places when the vote is called and make sure this motion for the production of papers is voted on favourably, so the government will come forward with the necessary documents.

● (1140)

I thank the member for bringing the motion forward. The issue is serious and I do not want anybody to think that it is frivolous by any stretch of the imagination.

Coming from western Canada, I do not think anybody can understand the real issue with respect to a gopher population that is out of control. It seems to propagate the Richardson's ground squirrel or gopher population in areas where we have had drought this year. Farmers are looking for an alternative method to control this terrible rodent infestation.

One of those methods is and always has been a 5% strychnine solution. Unfortunately that is not available to farmers right now. Until we come up with something more environmentally friendly and more effective in controlling the pest itself, we have to look at other alternatives. That is why the member has been very vocal in his support of this issue. I thank the member once again for bringing it forward.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I support my colleague from Lakeland in his request for information on the studies of strychnine that led to the ban of the 2% and the 5% varieties of strychnine poison used against the Richardson's ground squirrel or gopher.

I spent the weekend in Ottawa and in my area of the city I noticed a tremendous number of squirrels. The little fellows were gathering nuts and burying them. I did not get that close to them, but I want to compare them to Richardson's ground squirrels or gophers.

Tulips were planted this weekend on Parliament Hill. If each one of those little Richardson's ground squirrels ate a tulip it would be a problem in the city of Ottawa. If we look at one pasture in Saskatchewan or Alberta gopher holes are as close as the tulips that were being planted. Members should imagine the kind of devastation that is created for a farmer, rancher or whoever owns a property where gopher holes are as close to each other as those tulips.

The hon. member talked about badgers. Badgers move in and create huge holes that cause extra problems because wildlife falls in them. There are fawns, antelope, horses and cattle with broken legs. This creates economic problems for the farmer or rancher.

My colleague from Lakeland is only asking for information from the government proving that studies were done before strychnine was removed. All that we have received are seven letters. The government removed a product from the market, which is causing great hardship to Alberta and Saskatchewan farmers.

The Government of Canada and the provinces compensate agriculturalists if they have waterfall damage or if deer and elk cause problems on their farms.

Concerns have been raised regarding the impact on other wildlife and the use of strychnine. A fox, wolf or coyote would have to consume 40 to 50 gophers or poisoned animals at one time to be affected. There are also concerns for birds picking at the gophers. They would have to consume approximately 5 to 15 animals. Any of the birds at home could not consume one gopher let alone 5 to 15 of them to be affected. I have concerns about that.

We want the studies and the information. The hon. member for Lakeland wants to know what kind of studies were carried out by the government.

The Richardson's ground squirrel has become an epidemic on the prairies. The gopher or the Richardson's ground squirrel is very well known. The mascots of the Saskatchewan Roughriders are gophers. Gainer and Leonard are the most popular thing on the field in Saskatchewan right now because our football team is having a hard time, but we love the gophers. Gainer and Leonard can be pests at football games because they tend to sneak up behind people and scare them, and they make a lot of noise when we score a touchdown. However the real pests are a great concern to Saskatchewan farmers.

• (1145)

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health said that there are products on the market to control these pests. There are no products at all on the market to control the Richardson's ground squirrel, therefore we are asking for help. There is no proof that non-targeted animals have died because of the use of strychnine. The information from the hon. member for Lakeland showed that the animals that lost their lives were targeted by criminal activity. If there is scientific, absolute proof, we would like the government to release those findings.

We looked at the economic problems that a gopher can cause. We said that 123 gophers, and this has been studied, can consume up to a tonne of feed, which translates into damages of \$15,000 to \$16,000 per quarter of land. Total losses to farmers are reaching into tens of millions of dollars in Alberta and Saskatchewan. It is a huge problem.

In studies that were done by the Alberta Cattle Commission, and this was another thing that the hon. secretary brought up, in regard to the use of strychnine, the commission used test markets and the values that they were supposed to use. There were eight tests. In one test, it was as low as 11% effective. That is what they were doing in Alberta. For the highest number ranchers had to do three applications of the strychnine mixture and the result was 75%.

Imagine planting those tulip bulbs on a quarter section of land or 160 acres or tens of thousands of acres like a lot of our ranchers have and going into a field with a little bucket of strychnine and oats and dropping it down a gopher hole over and over. I should have counted how many people were planting tulips out in front of the building this weekend. Imagine one farmer or his family out covering let us say 10,000 acres with a bucket of oats. It just does not work. We are not getting effective and real progress from the government in getting help for western Canadian agriculturalists.

We are asking for information, and that is what the hon. member for Lakeland is asking for.

Farmers in Unity, Saskatchewan, have created a gophinator which will look after the gopher problem. It uses anhydrous ammonia, which farmers apply right across Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan every spring. It is a fertilizer.

If I went out with my cultivator in the spring and cultivated my pastures with an anhydrous tank behind my cultivator I could get rid of the gophers, but who wants to cultivate pastures? One just does not do that. It is not natural. If the gophinator could be patented and used properly, that would be done.

Private Members' Business

I am just asking for the people in the House to approve the hon. member for Lakeland's application for information. That is all we are asking for. On behalf of farmers and ranchers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, I ask that the House do that.

• (1150)

Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to give thanks to my hon. colleague for his efforts in raising this issue. It is also a great problem in my riding and we have had quite a number of people address it. Like all problems, though, attention is required if we are to see any solution.

During the last session of parliament I was privileged to lay upon the Table petitions from my constituents and from a number of others in Saskatchewan. There were approximately 300 signatures on the one I had. According to an article in the *National Post*, farmers sent Ottawa a petition of 5,000 signatures in total asking that they be allowed to use concentrated liquid strychnine to battle an annual gopher infestation. The animals have been causing trouble on Saskatchewan farmlands in growing numbers since 1992 when Ottawa restricted the sale of the poison.

There is an interesting quote from the article. "The poisons being purchased are just not effective", says Sinclair Harrison, a Saskatchewan farmer. "It makes the gophers sick but it does not kill them. We don't want to see anything suffer".

Not only is Sinclair Harrison a farmer, he also happens to be the head of SARM, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. We will be saying more about that organization in just a moment.

Each of the prairie provinces is susceptible to millions of dollars of damage. In fact the hon. minister, Mr. Vanclief himself, at one time said that gophers—

• (1155)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt. We cannot refer to a member by name. I would ask the hon. member to please use the member's title or riding.

Mr. Larry Spencer: The hon. agriculture minister made that statement. He is also on record as saying that he has no evidence of this affecting the Canadian economy because of the restrictions on strychnine. This is highly debatable, as we are finding out today, because it has a great impact on our Saskatchewan farmers. That is evident.

Of course strychnine poison is perhaps not the only solution. The gophinator has been mentioned and I was interested to hear that the hon. member across the way mentioned that they had to test to see if there would be harmful effects from injecting anhydrous ammonia into the soil. It is interesting to me that we can inject anhydrous ammonia into the soil to raise our food, but when it comes to using it for pest control we have to make sure it is okay. I do not get the logic. I do not really understand it but I guess that is the way some people think.

Government Orders

There are some other chemicals or drugs that would kill gophers, such as anticoagulants. They may be effective if repeated doses are applied in a certain minimal length of time, that is, within two or three days. Perhaps that would be better, but as my hon. colleague has pointed out who wants to go back to all those holes over and over to make the necessary applications? If we examine the evidence I believe we will discover that strychnine is in fact the only truly effective way to control these pests.

Each province has regulations for the use of strychnine. We seem to be so worried about where it is going and what it may do but these regulations are already in place. In Saskatchewan the sale of strychnine is restricted to pest control operators, farmers or persons authorized in government approved pest control programs. Only those people are able to get it at all. They are held accountable and responsible. It seems to me that there is a lot more accountability and responsibility placed upon the people who would use strychnine for gopher poisoning than there is upon people who use a lot of other things that are a lot more dangerous for the general population of Canada.

The vendor of these products maintains a record of sales and has the name, address and signature of the buyer along with the quantity purchased. Detailed records are kept by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, of which Sinclair Harrison, as I mentioned, is the president. In Saskatchewan alone there are around 250 pest control officers, one pest control officer for nearly each of the 297 rural municipalities, and they are quite well trained in the use of strychnine.

However, one of the problems with the strychnine poisoning method is that to be most effective it must be used at a certain time of the year, pretty well no later than mid-March. As cute as these little gophers are, they do not all come up out of the ground at one time. The first ones up are the males. They stick their heads up, look around and see what is on the horizon for the new spring. They come up one to two weeks ahead of the females. The females begin to awake from hibernation and stick their heads up and poke around. When the level of female gophers is high enough, that is when the chemical needs to be put down. It needs to be put down early in the year, before we have hundreds more little gophers later on. There can be five to ten gophers in a litter. For effective control, it must be done at a certain time.

•(1200)

We are having trouble at the municipal level in getting the supplies on time. There needs to be a distribution system that would get them there on time. This would include strict control methods as to how they are stored, proper training for those who use them and those kinds of things. These things need to be done. There is no reason we cannot be prepared and have that ready.

The government needs to have some sort of assigned mechanism in place and enter into talks with the municipal governments on how these kinds of things can be put in place and controlled. The government needs to talk to cattle organizations and various farm organizations to reflect their concerns and implement appropriate measures to control the increasing costs gophers are afflicting on our farm economy.

There is no direct pipeline held season after season to handle these kinds of things. Nonetheless these are problems that can easily be addressed. They need to be if that is the only way we have of controlling the gopher population.

It seems the government would want to know what the effects of the restriction on strychnine are. We are asking that this information be put out. If we need to find other solutions then the government should know that. This is a drastically increasing problem.

My hon. colleague mentioned gophers popping out and taking down all the tulip bulbs. I was here a few days ago when we had the memorial service for the police officers and firemen who lost their lives. I was wondering what would happen if the front lawn contained the population of gophers required to get all those tulip bulbs. Let us think of all the holes. How many of those firemen and policemen would have been injured, like our cattle are, by falling into the holes as they marched through the parade grounds blowing their bagpipes?

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this issue is of grave concern to western Canada. The government has totally ignored the loss of millions up to billions of dollars. If people in the west lose their crop as a result of deer or elk they are paid for it. If they lose their crop because of water fowl they are paid for it. This year on the prairies more crops were lost to gophers than any other thing yet the government came out with something that did not kill the gophers. As I said in the petitions I read in the House, if anything it made them more virile.

It is time we did something about this other than just getting the papers back. Let us be armed next spring so we can at least have a chance in this infestation to grow a crop.

•(1205)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 12.05 p.m., the hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CLAIM SETTLEMENTS (ALBERTA AND SASKATCHEWAN) IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.) moved that Bill C-37, an act to facilitate the implementation of those provisions of first nations claim settlements in the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan that relate to the creation of reserves or the addition of land to existing reserves, and to make related amendments to the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act and the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Government Orders

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C-37, the claim settlements (Alberta and Saskatchewan) implementation act. I welcome the opportunity to inform hon. members about the intent of Bill C-37 and explain how it fits into the government's broader aboriginal agenda.

Members will recall that the recent Speech from the Throne committed the government to strengthening Canada's relationship with aboriginal people, supporting aboriginal governance and bringing the benefits of prosperity to aboriginal communities. We are also implementing the pledges made in "Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan", Canada's response to the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Bill C-37 is another important step in these ongoing processes, one of many we will take in collaboration with aboriginal people and other stakeholders in the coming months and years.

The proposed legislation addresses a number of goals set out by the government including, most fundamentally, fulfilling our historical obligations to aboriginal peoples to live up to the promises that have been made not only by our government but by others before us going back 200 years or more.

Bill C-37 is about strengthening the capacity of first nations governments to make decisions about their lands and communities. It would give them additional tools to pursue economic development opportunities that would generate jobs and income for first nations people. In this way Bill C-37 would protect and enhance the rights of other parties and lead to partnerships between first nations communities and private sector interests throughout the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Although the proposed legislation is somewhat technical in nature, its objective is simple: to facilitate the transfer of lands to reserve status in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Our goal is to improve existing processes which lead to uncertainty and missed opportunities for all parties and which can be unnecessarily time consuming and cumbersome.

Hon. members will be familiar with the rationale for the legislation from the debate respecting part 2 of the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act which was passed by the previous parliament. Bill C-37 would essentially extend the Manitoba process to the other two prairie provinces.

To put the issue into perspective, hon. members should be aware that the Government of Canada has numerous outstanding commitments to provide additional reserve lands to first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan. These commitments have arisen out of two types of settlement agreements. Treaty land entitlement settlements are intended to address historical injustices involving more than 30 first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan that did not receive all the land they were promised when they signed treaties.

Canada has also made commitments to expand reserve lands as part of 13 specific claim settlements in Alberta and Saskatchewan, most of which deal with alleged wrongs over the administration of first nations lands or assets under the Indian Act.

The government has been working to implement these settlement agreements for the past several years. We are making progress but it

is clear to everyone involved that we need quicker and better ways to add lands to reserves. A million hectares, or 2.5 million acres, are yet to be added to reserves as a result of claim settlements in Alberta and Saskatchewan. More reserve expansion commitments are on the horizon as we continue to negotiate treaty land entitlements and specific claims in both provinces.

There are two principal reasons for the current backlog in reserve expansion commitments. First, in all provinces but Manitoba, thanks to the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act, creating reserve land under claim settlements requires an order from the governor in council. First nations have suggested that the process be streamlined. We agree with this objective.

● (1210)

More significant, however, is the need to accommodate existing third party interests when processing land selections. Canada's additions to reserve policy require that any such interests be either bought out with the agreement of the third party or somehow accommodated in a manner acceptable to Canada, the third party and the first nation. Only then could the land be transferred to Canada and granted reserve status.

Bill C-37 addresses both these issues as the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implication Act has done in Manitoba. First, Bill C-37 would empower the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development rather than the governor in council to grant reserve status to lands selected by Alberta and Saskatchewan first nations under claim settlements. This would replace the current process of obtaining an order in council and would shorten the time needed to approve additions to reserves. This would in turn allow any economic benefits associated with the lands to be more immediately realized by first nations.

Second, and more important, Bill C-37 would streamline the way third party interests such as leases or mineral rights are dealt with in lands selected for additions to reserves under claim settlements.

The changes proposed in Bill C-37 would essentially allow first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan to agree to continue an existing third party interest or negotiate a new one on such lands before the lands became part of a reserve or were purchased.

This is not possible under the Indian Act. Although the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act provides a pre-reserve interest granting power by way of what is called a designation, under that power first nations can only agree to continue existing interests. They cannot accommodate new development proposals that may arise while the land is being processed into reserve status. Moreover, this power can be used only in relation to treaty land entitlements and not to specific claims. It can be used only when the first nation has already purchased the land.

Government Orders

The pre-reserve designation power contained in Bill C-37 does not, I repeat, does not, have these limitations. The improved pre-reserve designation power could be used for all Alberta and Saskatchewan claim settlements and not just treaty land entitlements. It would give first nations access to a broader range of land that has development interests or potential. Because these lands could be selected and acquired more quickly, any third party interest associated with them would contribute more quickly to economic and social progress in the community.

These changes would obviously benefit first nations. However I would ask hon. members to consider the issue from the other side of the fence, so to speak. The new approaches set out in Bill C-37 would provide a higher level of commercial certainty for all concerned parties, not only first nations but private sector developers, land owners and people, companies or institutions that hold interests in land in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Bill C-37 would enhance protection for third parties by bridging the gap between non-reserve and reserve status for lands, thereby avoiding potential interruption of access to or use of the lands. In other words, the proposed legislation would provide businesses and investors in Alberta and Saskatchewan with certainty of tenure for any third party interest they might hold in lands to be added to a reserve.

Bill C-37 would also provide the certainty, stability and predictability first nations and businesses needed to negotiate new commercial arrangements and economic development partnerships. This is clearly a win-win solution to the legal uncertainties and delays inherent in the current process for adding lands to reserves.

• (1215)

These new mechanisms to deal with third party interests and the ministerial authority to grant reserve status are the major thrust of the proposed legislation but I would like to bring a couple of additional points to the attention of the House.

The first point is that individual first nations will be able to elect whether or not to adopt the provisions of Bill C-37 in relation to their claim settlements. For existing settlement agreements, all that will be required is a simple resolution by the first nation council to opt into the new processes.

Settlements negotiated after the legislation comes into effect will need to state explicitly that the first nation wishes to adopt the provisions of Bill C-37.

As well, it is important to note that this opt-in provision will apply only on a settlement by settlement basis. In other words, any first nation that has both a specific claim settlement and a treaty land entitlement settlement must make a separate election for each settlement agreement and is free to make a different election in each case. In this way maximum freedom of choice is afforded to individual first nations.

As I noted earlier, Bill C-37 is modelled on the recently enacted Manitoba Claim Settlement Implementation Act. During the process of developing the current legislation, we saw an opportunity to bring needed minor improvements to the language of the previous bill. Bill C-37 therefore proposes to amend the Manitoba Claim Settlement

Implementation Act to make these language improvements so that the two bills remain consistent with each other.

The proposed amendments are minor in nature, either removing a grammatical ambiguity or bringing precision to the post-reserve administrative regime that would apply to third party interests.

These amendments have the support of the aboriginal association representing Manitoba first nations most effected, namely the treaty land entitlement committee of Manitoba which represents the 20 first nations that are party to the 1997 treaty land entitlement framework agreement for that province.

Similarly, Bill C-37 proposes related amendments to the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act of 1993. One amendment would ensure that any agreement, past or future, to release the province of Saskatchewan from its obligation to provide unoccupied crown land as part of a treaty land entitlement settlement is expressly confirmed by the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act.

As hon. members may know, this obligation dates to the natural resources transfer agreement negotiated between Canada and Saskatchewan in 1930. Saskatchewan was released from this obligation respecting certain first nations in 1992 under the terms of the Saskatchewan treaty land entitlement framework agreement and the Nekaneet treaty land entitlement agreement, and this release was recognized in the 1993 Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act. We are simply extending this legislative confirmation to any similar releases, whether given before or after the coming into force of this act, which are concluded as a result of post-1993 treaty land entitlement settlements in Saskatchewan.

Bill C-37 would also amend the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act as it relates to the pre-reserve designation power I mentioned earlier.

As I have noted, Bill C-37 would provide a similar but improved mechanism for granting a third party interest in land before the land has been set apart as a reserve.

The proposed amendments to the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act would establish clear rules for determining which mechanism will apply depending on the first nations' opt-in decision I alluded to earlier.

I want to make it clear that Bill C-37 would not give effect to any claim settlement in Alberta or Saskatchewan. Nor does Bill C-37 create new institutions of government, new regulations or new financial obligations for Canada.

• (1220)

The goal here is simply to ensure that claims agreements, including those that may be negotiated in the future, can be implemented more quickly and efficiently.

Government Orders

There is nothing contentious about this proposed legislation. In fact it was developed in close consultation with the affected stakeholders.

The underlying principles for the bill were first discussed with first nations in Alberta in 1997 when Canada was negotiating treaty land entitlement agreements with the Alexander First Nation and the Loon River Cree First Nation.

It should be noted that Bill C-37 has since specifically been endorsed by both of these Alberta first nations whose treaty land entitlement settlements included commitments by Canada to recommend such legislation.

Given the level of support for the proposed approach in Alberta, our government seized the opportunity to make the same mechanisms available to first nations in Saskatchewan.

To that end, we initiated discussions with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the government of Saskatchewan in December 1999, and again we received a very positive response.

To broaden the consultation process, a draft of the proposed legislation was distributed in February 2000 to all Alberta and Saskatchewan first nations which currently have claim settlements with reserve expansion commitments to implement.

The governments of both provinces as well as Alberta treaty organizations and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations also received this draft. An updated version was sent out in April of this year to all these same stakeholders.

Some minor improvements have been made to Bill C-37 based on feedback received from these stakeholders. I am pleased to say that the proposed legislation now has the full support of all parties from the provincial governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan to first nations and their treaty organizations in both provinces.

As I noted earlier, the minor amendments to the Manitoba Claims Settlement Implementation Act are also supported by treaty land entitlement first nations in that province.

Between them, the Manitoba Claims Settlement Implementation Act and Bill C-37, will cover fully 97% of existing reserve expansion commitments under claim settlements across Canada.

We are proceeding with the legislation in Alberta and Saskatchewan for the same reason we went forward in Manitoba: we know a better process is needed and there is strong consensus among stakeholders in these two provinces that this approach is reasonable, responsible and effective.

Bill C-37 would benefit first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan and would benefit third parties that hold interest in land selected for additions to reserves under claim settlements in these two provinces. It would also move Canada forward in fulfilling our outstanding commitments to aboriginal people.

It is the right solution for everyone and I trust we can count on the support of hon. members from all sides of the House in voting to send the legislation to committee for review.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the minister announce the

bill. I wish we would have had a little time to take a look at it. It was introduced last week and now it is Monday and it is here.

I think it is incumbent upon the minister to make sure people understand the different terminology in the bill. I come from a rural area where there are at least seven first nations. People understand the term reserve but, other than the first nations people, they do not understand the terms specific claims, additional land and so on.

The minister mentioned that Bill C-37 had the consent or approval of the government and provincial governments. I want to say something about the bill that will need to be mentioned in committee. Does the bill have the understanding and support of local governments? In the past we have run into some real difficulties, as the minister knows.

Let us say that 10 sections are added to a given reserve. The taxes from those 10 sections would no longer be available to the local government which would have that many fewer dollars to put toward road, schools and so on.

The minister should be cognizant of this if he wants clear passage and total acceptability of the bill. We need to do some work with the local governments. I know that in Saskatchewan it is the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the municipal governments at the places from which the land is being extracted. We have a problem there.

We also have another problem. As most members know, Saskatchewan and Alberta were not added to Confederation until 1905. While the minerals in other areas remained with the land or purchaser thereof, in Saskatchewan the minerals remained for the most part with the crown. I believe the hon. member mentioned 1930. One of the difficulties we have, even in my constituency, is that the minerals on lands in the eastern portion belong to the crown. As immigration and settlements moved west after 1905, the minerals went with the land when it was purchased.

Conceivably we would be adding 10 sections of land to a current day reserve. Under the previous owner the minerals belonged to the crown. The property owner did not have the minerals. As the property is moved to a reserve the minerals will go to the crown and there could be some problems with that.

I have some real concerns but not about the expansion. I agree with the minister, I think most people in general want the treaties to go forward, to get them out of the way and, for lack of a better word, to get on with the show. Let us make this happen but in doing so let us make sure we notify all partners and that everybody is aware of what is going on. That is very necessary.

Government Orders

•(1225)

To draw an analogy, my constituency had its first anthrax scare way out in a rural area in a village with maybe 20 people. I do not want to get into the details but they have never been told anything. Nothing has gone out as to what to do, who to call or what to expect. There is a lack of government information and explanation, a lack of printed government policy, a lack of PR with the newspapers, particularly in the area concerned. Those things are imperative.

I hope the minister will take my advice. As he goes into the specific land claims and the addition to the reserves, he would be well advised that people in that area have an understanding. Once there is an understanding there is more apt to be agreement with what is going on. That is necessary.

We will let the bill go to committee. We will support it at this point. However I am quite sure that when the bill gets to committee there will be a lot of questions. We will be asking questions not just on the part of the first nations, but also on the part of local government.

Something has to be clarified. The first nations people want to be called first nations. The result of mammoth research and, I believe, the 1988 booklet was that they want to be called first nations. Throughout the bill the minister refers to first nations, but the word Indian is still being used. They no longer want to be called Indians. Throughout the Indian Act, which we are going to look at, that word is used. Both terms are being used. We should not be doing that. Let us be consistent in using one term.

Finally, let us hope that in committee we will allow enough time to carefully look at not only the first nations people but other people who are affected. We must carefully look at the rural municipalities or other landowners who lose property or have the property consumed and what their rights are and what provisions will be given to local governments so that they may carry on their work. In the past in settling land claims the relationships between the parties have soured in many of the rural municipalities in my constituency and they remain that way today. Let us hope we can avoid that in the future.

•(1230)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise to speak in this debate. Bill C-37, the claim settlements (Alberta and Saskatchewan) implementation act, which the House is currently considering, is, as its name indicates, intended to facilitate the implementation of territorial agreements reached between the federal government and the first nations.

The bill is very technical and does not bear the usual characteristics of the initiatives of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which tend to be rather controversial or at least to cause some flurry. In fact, the minister appears to want to assume his responsibilities fully and demonstrate the leadership needed to ensure the full development of the first nations.

I have a hard time understanding why the Bloc Quebecois would oppose quick passage of this bill, since the minister is finally proposing constructive action in support of the first nations. The

position the Bloc Quebecois has taken on the bill is very much in keeping with the party's line on the first nations' right to self-government.

I, in fact, recognize the minister's, or rather the department's, openness. It seems now to be giving greater consideration to the real needs and deep aspirations of the first nations.

As such, Bill C-37 facilitates the implementation of land claim settlements, which we know are the result of long and difficult negotiations designed to bring about greater self-government and increased accountability for first nations.

It is important to point out that the legislative measure being discussed today is limited exclusively to the results of the negotiations in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Incidentally, similar legislation was adopted one year ago concerning Manitoba.

Bill C-37 will considerably reduce the time required to grant the lands negotiated real reserve status. Aboriginal people in these areas would be able to use the legislation to accelerate the land transfer process. This is a key element of the notion of self-government, as it would allow first nations to benefit sooner from the natural resources on their lands. Their economic space would be strengthened and everything seems to indicate that the legislation would have a positive effect on these communities.

In closing, while supporting this bill and hoping to see it adopted speedily and efficiently, I would like to express my desire to see the recommendations of the Erasmus-Dussault report, made public in 1996 at a cost of \$50 million, adopted as quickly as possible to deal with the problems plaguing the first nations in a comprehensive manner, as opposed to limiting ourselves to a piecemeal approach.

The government must not limit itself to bills such as this one, which deals with a specific part of the problem, but it must develop a comprehensive policy and a clear direction to ensure that the recommendations made by the Erasmus-Dussault royal commission be implemented as quickly as possible.

•(1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the NDP caucus critic for aboriginal affairs, I am pleased to join the debate regarding Bill C-37.

We welcome any measure that will speed up the implementation process of the many outstanding claims and treaty land negotiations that are under way. We recognize that in both the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan there is an enormous backlog and an enormous level of frustration on the part of aboriginal peoples, first nations communities and other interested third parties in the tedious and painfully slow negotiation process that has been under way for decades, if not centuries.

Government Orders

We recognize that Bill C-37 very closely resembles the Manitoba act of a similar nature which was passed only last year. As a member of parliament from Winnipeg I did seek advice from those parties that are affected by the Manitoba settlement claims process. We got a positive report. People are generally satisfied that what was implemented in Manitoba can and should serve as a model for the other two prairie provinces as they address very similar issues. I understand it will.

We note with interest that the minister for aboriginal affairs pointed out that Bill C-37 addresses 97% of all the outstanding treaty land entitlement negotiations and specific claims settlement negotiations which are currently underway. We welcome that. If we can clear up 97% of the unbelievable backlog, then when those administrative and bureaucratic details are put behind us we can look forward to the day when aboriginal communities can take real steps toward true self-government as contemplated in the recommendations of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples.

The aboriginal affairs critic for the official opposition failed to point out any of the specifics in the bill. It is incumbent upon somebody in the House to deal with some of the substance and to comment on the actual details surrounding the bill. I would have hoped that someone in the official opposition would have read the briefing book and would have gone through some of the specific details which people in the rest of the country are very interested in.

For people who may be watching and for aboriginal communities who realize that this is their day to have this issue dealt with in the House of Commons, I would like to go through some of the details of the bill. On behalf of aboriginal communities I will explain to the general public what we are talking about when we introduce a bill that would result in the addition of lands to reserves. I look to the manual that was provided to all members of parliament which explains quite clearly under what circumstances the federal government would seek to add to the land mass of reserves or to create new reserves.

A lot of non-aboriginal people may feel that this process was finished and done with at the turn of the century. Most of these treaties were signed between 1874 and 1906. However, there are circumstances under which for two reasons these lands are expanded by creating new reserve lands or allocating new pieces of land to existing reserves. One is to meet with the entitlement issue. The Indian Act specifies that based on the size of a family or the size of a community a certain amount of land will be allocated to that first nations community.

There are historic shortfalls. Some go right back to the day of the original signing of the treaty and some because the size of the community has grown and the land mass of the reserve no longer meets the needs of the size of the community. These things need to be addressed. It could be to address social concerns or another reason that is cited is to improve the geographic integrity of a reserve.

• (1240)

Some of these reserves were put together and mapped out in a period of time when there was less understanding as to what the ultimate usage would be of the first nations community, whether it was a geographical barrier like a river or a mountain range or a social or a cultural barrier like the development of industry in certain areas

of a reserve. Those were not accommodated between 1874 and 1906, and now there are good arguments why they should be accommodated. That is another rationale under which we would improve the geographic integrity of a reserve by changing its physical and geographical shape.

Sometimes there is a need to compensate the first nations communities for the public takings of reserve land. For instance, if a bi-pole hydro-electric line was slated to go through reserve land, there would be a loss of land usage directly underneath those wires and for a right-of-way on both sides of those wires. This may constitute hundreds of thousands of acres on that reserve property. We believe it would be only fair to compensate that equal amount of land with usable land. This is another reason why we may see a situation and why we believe there are righteous claims made to the federal government to justify the expansion of existing reserves.

Finally, the rationale is to fulfill Canada's legal obligations under a court order or the terms of a claim settlement with the first nations relating to such matters as treaty land entitlements and specific claims.

To answer the question from the member from the official opposition who asked if non-aboriginal people in the community understood why it was necessary to introduce legislation that would contemplate expanding reserves and even creating new reserves, the rationale is cited in the briefing book should he have the time to read it. That would be useful for everybody concerned.

Not only should I point out what is in the bill in terms of what enabling measures it gives the minister, but I should also point out, for the comfort level of other people and of third parties who are affected by these expansions of reserves, what is not affected in the proposed legislation.

Again, to answer many of the questions raised by the critic from the official opposition, perhaps for his behalf and for the sake of people with legitimate concerns and to raise the comfort level of those who may criticize the expansion of aboriginal and first nation communities, such as rural municipalities, private property owners, third parties and non-aboriginal people who are affected by the expansion of a reserve, let me cite some of the things that are not affected by the legislation.

First, the bill would not automatically ratify any claim settlements. It would simply put in place the enabling measures or a process by which those settlements may be settled in a reasonable, fair period of time instead of the undue lengthy, tedious process that we have come to accept as the norm. The purpose of the bill is not to ratify these settlements but to facilitate the process by which the reserve creation commitments of these settlements can be implemented. That should address at least one of the points that was raised by the hon. member.

Another question that legitimately should be asked about the bill, and one thing that we can put to bed right now, is that no expropriation of private land or interests is contemplated by the bill or enabled by it. It does recognize that there are third party claims to land that we may seek to make a part of a reserve. Sometimes there is competing and compounding third party claims to resources or even the actual ownership of land which we seek to use to expand reserves.

Government Orders

Again, the legislation does nothing to actually expropriate any private land ownership. Third parties can take comfort in the fact that we as the opposition party in the House of Commons recognize that this is neither the intention nor the result of this legislation. In fact, we will find within this legislation specific protection of third party interests that did not exist before. Before we had to be subject to the vagaries of the settlement in the courts, now there some accepted and predictable processes under which a claim or a legitimate objection, as a third party, will be dealt with.

● (1245)

We should also point out that nothing in Bill C-37 deals or interferes with the taxation of on-reserve third party interests, which is another legitimate concern that could be and should have been raised by any critic of the bill. Having read the bill and the briefing books, we are satisfied that the bill does not affect first nations' ability to tax on-reserve third party interests. If it did, we would have to vote against the bill.

I point these things out only because they are predictable things that should and probably will be raised by people who present before the committee or the general public who may be concerned that we are taking steps in the House to expand the reserve system and to settle outstanding treaty entitlement and specific claim settlements in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

We are used to hearing opposition to any steps that may move forward the legitimate aspirations of first nations communities to achieve self-government. It is a common theme that we in the NDP caucus have been opposing for a number of years. We hope that people in the House of Commons can set aside their biases and prejudices for or against, as is the case of the official opposition, aboriginal first nations' self-government. We hope they can see that the bill is not threatening in any way. It is an enabling measure which would clean up a bureaucratic backlog of outstanding claims, and having put those issues to bed, would allow us to deal with the more salient and pertinent issue of true aboriginal self-government. We all look forward to the day we can move on with that as well.

Some of the background information that was given to us is helpful as well. We recognize that Bill C-37 is advantageous in another way that was not pointed out by the official opposition. We note that the bill will facilitate the selection by first nations of commercially viable lands rather than simply lands that are encumbered by other interests. In other words, it could be looked upon as an economic development tool. For those who are always saying that aboriginal communities must become more self-sufficient, that they must promote business and that they must get more with it regarding the economic realities of Canada, the bill could enable first nations communities to access lands that have economic development potential. This is a real plus which we have not heard raised here before.

We are not saying that the only way we can expand the reserve is by choosing land that borders or is close to the reserve which is completely unused, unclaimed or undeveloped. It may result in choosing land that has economic activity on it. We would then have to negotiate some kind of compensation for the third party using the land. The land would then be transferred within the first nation.

In closing, in Manitoba we find that the steps to enable the process to move along more quickly has been quite a satisfactory experience. We have no hesitation in recommending a similar model for the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. I believe that 30 first nations will benefit in the province of Alberta and as many as 16 in the province of Saskatchewan, and 97% of the outstanding entitlement and specific claims can be remedied and settled under this enabling process. That in itself is reason enough for us to support it at second reading to go to committee.

● (1250)

Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member opposite. It is fair to say that he made some very excellent points with respect to Bill C-37. I want to congratulate him for that.

I also want to congratulate the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Under his steady hand and leadership, he has been able to bring this bill forward and make the kind of inroads and efforts that are required in this all important area.

This is a very important area that deals exclusively with reserve land proposals that arise under claim settlements, either existing or in the future both in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. As such, it is very important not only in those two provinces, but it sets the right tone across Canada. The minister and the government need to be congratulated because it underscores our commitment to do the right things in this very important area.

As the opposition is saying right now to the minister that he did a good job, I too want to add to that. I think it is excellent and really well worth noting.

What would the member opposite scope out as being the most important aspect of the bill? He referenced his own province and other areas in the west. If we listened closely to what the member said, it was very wise. Could he expound a little further on that and give us more insight? Especially given the fact that he is from Manitoba and knows some of these things, it would be insightful for us to hear a little more from the member for Winnipeg Centre.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, as uncomfortable as I am with that kind of introduction, I do not mind speaking a little longer about a bill in which I see a lot of good qualities.

To take the hon. member's question seriously, the most important single thing that Bill C-37 could do is alleviate the backlog of unsettled claims that exist on the two prairie provinces so that we could use our energy and resources in a more positive way and take serious concrete steps toward the larger issue of aboriginal self-government. In other words, the sooner we rid ourselves of these bureaucratic, almost nuisance claims, where we have lawsuit piled upon lawsuit waiting for resolution. Ten, twenty or thirty years go by, generations go by before first nations communities can avail themselves of the land to which they are entitled by court order. However with third party complications they simply cannot address it.

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That would be the first single biggest advantage that I see. In Manitoba we are managing to cut through some of that bureaucratic backlog that has piled up on people's desks. If we can accomplish that for the 30 first nations in Alberta and the 14 first nations in Saskatchewan, who support the bill and endorse this process, that in itself would be progress, and I support that.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just so that we do not get too carried away in thanking and complimenting the government in the interest of keeping some balance, I certainly agree that the bill before us today addresses a backlog that has been created, which is a very positive sign. I know this is a very common concern that has been voiced by first nations about the amount of bureaucracy, paperwork and process that these issues have had to go through.

However we also need to recognize that there are many other issues that need to be addressed within first nations governance and within the claims process.

The member is very knowledgeable on this issue as our critic for aboriginal affairs. Could he comment on whether he thinks there are any aspects of this bill that could be applied, for example, in British Columbia where I know there have been a lot of issues around the treaty negotiation process and claims process. Does the hon. member think there are other things that could be undertaken, as a result of the bill, to address concerns that have been put forward by first nations?

• (1255)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Vancouver East for the opportunity to expand on that point somewhat. Had I had more time in my original speech, I would have pointed out that we have some reservations about the bill. One aspect of the bill we are critical of is a recurring theme that we see in much of the legislation introduced by the government. It expands and enhances the powers of the minister.

This is such a recurring theme that I cannot think of one piece of legislation in the four years I have been in the House of Commons in which the Liberal Party, the government party, has not sought to expand the discretionary authority or discretionary power of the minister. I remind ministers and others that they will not always be ministers.

Even if I have no personal problem with the current minister of aboriginal affairs having expanded authority because there might be a sense of trust there, God forbid we could look at a day when the official opposition might be the government and the powers of people vehemently opposed to aboriginal self-government might have been expanded. They might use that power in a way that we would not be satisfied with at all. We have to consider that as the powers of the current minister of aboriginal affairs are expanded.

We are dealing with a situation where the official opposition is on record saying things like the famous quote of the aboriginal affairs critic for the Reform Party about living on an Indian reserve being like living on a South Seas island being supported by a rich uncle. That was the attitude we heard put forward by the Reform Party, now the Canadian Alliance.

I want to be accurate because I do not want to misrepresent what the member for Athabasca actually said, but he said that we should not say we did not defeat those people just because we did not beat them in a war, that they are in fact vanquished; otherwise we would not have been able to force them on to these godforsaken little reserves they live on. That is the tone of the comments we get from the Canadian Alliance, from the official opposition, when it comes to aboriginal issues.

I caution the government and the ruling party. As it enhances the powers of the minister perhaps they should be sunsetted just in case there is a change of government some day and that authority or that power could be abused.

I do not know if I am out of time, but the hon. member asked me about the British Columbia experience. We have been dealing with the occupation of lands in the Sun Peaks area in the interior of British Columbia. We have met with the aboriginal leadership in the interior and the Kamloops band in that area.

Many outstanding issues will not be affected or enhanced or even improved in any way, shape or form by this legislation, but we hope the sentiment expressed in the legislation will have a desirable effect on other outstanding issues in other provinces.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, some of the last comments made by the member for Winnipeg Centre seem unfortunate. I certainly have no idea how dredging up things from years and years gone by, probably taken out of context, has anything to do with building and being positive.

As the first ever Reform Party member elected to the House of Commons in 1989 I remind the member for Winnipeg Centre that I taught school on a reserve at Frog Lake. I had several native foster children in my home. I was a lighthouse for the Reform Party. I tell him that there is sweet nothing to be gained by this kind of behaviour and debate in the House of Commons.

Let me tell him exactly what the Canadian Alliance position is in its policy paper. It states:

Our position in land claims negotiations will be to ensure respect for existing private property rights, affordable and conclusive settlement of all claims, and an open and transparent process involving all stakeholders.

Is that not what the NDP just said? Is that not in some measure what the government is trying to do right now? That is what we should be discussing right now.

On behalf of members of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, as someone who has represented them for quite some time, and on behalf of every member of the House of Commons, it is foolish to even go down that path. Shame on them.

Let me get to the bill at hand, Bill C-37, and talk a bit about some of the pros and cons in that legislation. Obviously there is a history in this regard. The minister talked about it earlier this morning. If we had any choice it would have been to have the bill longer because there is so much to study in it. It was just brought in last week. I know that it was to be debated this coming Thursday, but because of Bill C-33 respecting the Nunavut water board and tribunal this bill is coming into the House earlier today.

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So keen was I to make sure that I did get something to say about it, I travelled on the all-nighter last night so I arrived here at about 8.25 this morning. I am glad to be here while we are participating in this debate. I am also glad that we can change our flights around.

If we look at the history in this regard, the minister alluded to the Manitoba land claims agreement and made some changes to that as well. That came in, in 2000. To be able to make changes to that legislation to tighten it up, to make it more efficient and more streamlined, as the minister said, is a good thing. With the ongoing land claim settlements we need to be able to make sure they are swiftly and positively resolved. If this bill is in any way able to do that it is a good thing, not just for first nations but also for third party stakeholders. The minister talked about them.

Life is a balance. We always need to be able to come up with some sort of a balance that we can strike with regard to the stakeholders, whether in oil, gas, minerals or whatever, on reserve land or on future reserve land, as the minister talked about.

Let us look for a few moments at some of the general observations of the bill. Native reserve claim settlements normally require the accommodation of existing third party interest. That is there already.

Before land can be set apart for reserve creation or expansion the existing third party interests on that piece of land must be cleared either by buying out that land and cancelling it, or by accommodating the interest in a manner agreeable to Canada, the particular first nation and the third party. Only after that can the land be transferred to the government for reserve purposes.

Again that process looks like it is a good one, but of course the trick is how lengthy that process can be become. I think my colleague said that it could go on for years and years, sometimes even a generation for sure. Usually the additions to the reserve process takes between one and three years, but all kinds of outstanding land claim settlements can go on for many years.

Hopefully Bill C-37 will speed up that process. It would allow a first nation to consent to the creation of interests on land proposed for reserve status rather than waiting until after the land has been purchased by the federal government and granted reserve status.

We look at the timelines on it, give checkmarks and say that is a good thing.

• (1300)

We have to look at some of the pros and a few of the cons in the particular bill. We need to draw a column. It seems to me we all do that in our lives when we have a decision to make. We look at the pros and the cons. Then we weigh them off against each other because life is obviously just a series of tradeoffs and balances.

Some of the pros are that Bill C-37 would allow the minister to set lands apart for reserve creation expansion rather than doing this by the more time consuming order in council. Not only will this hasten the settlement of outstanding reserve claims, but with the large numbers of reserve creation orders expected in the future this will also avoid taxing the order in council process. I am sure that gets to be fairly lengthy on its own.

We could flip that pro into a con and say that as with so much legislation, as the member for Winnipeg said, the minister seems to get a great deal of power regardless of who is in power. We have to make sure that there are checks and balances on the power of the minister.

I am sure the minister would agree with that. We have both sat in the House for many years. It would be a pity to think that he would become omnipotent or something like that. I am sure he would never want that to happen. We have to make sure we balance out the pro with the con in that regard. Yes, it does give the minister more power, but let us make sure that there are checks and balances.

The predesignation provision allowing a first nation to consent to third party interest on land proposed for reserve status will significantly reduce the time required for Saskatchewan and Alberta to fulfill their reserve expansion commitments. Dear knows this whole process goes on and on. Perhaps the bill can hurry that process along, again making sure that all aspects are taken into consideration and that all stakeholders and third parties, regardless of what their interests are, are not getting the short end of the stick or shafted in any way on either side.

A speedier implementation process would encourage on reserve economic activity benefiting the first nation and provide commercial certainty for the third party that has an interest in proposed reserve land during the transfer process.

What a smart thing it is to have economic development on reserves. Hopefully the idea of complete dependence on government is waning across the nation. For first nations and reserves to be totally dependent on government is not a happy situation for anyone. None of us like to be completely dependent. If this in any way gives economic self-sufficiency or economic development for reserves across the land, it would certainly be seen as a good thing.

The legislation accommodates existing third party interests to give the first nations the opportunity to welcome new interests during the reserve creation process. It is interesting that while the bill is before the House we are talking about the pipeline in the Northwest Territories. That is also important.

All the kinks have not been worked out of it. That is for sure, but as we are watching this process evolve right now there are private oil companies which are taking in the aboriginal community in a one-third profit sharing idea. That whole idea of economic development cannot hurt anyone for sure. It is interesting that those events are going along a parallel track to make sure that third party interests really are considered and yet they are able to share the benefit of using native lands as well.

This will give the first nations a chance to select commercially viable lands for reserve expansion rather than simply those lands which are already cleared of existing interests. Again, that appears to be a benefit.

We have a couple of concerns. I have already mentioned the explicit one, not total but certainly more power for the minister. We need to make sure we keep that in check.

Although we support facilitating a quicker resolution of first nation claim settlements, we have concerns regarding the effects of the legislation on third party stakeholders with interest on proposed reserve lands.

I just mentioned the pipeline through the north coming down into Canada. Alaska also wants to get in on that. However, to make sure we are not all on one side or the other, there needs to be a balance. As I have said many times in my remarks as well as in the past, we need to make sure that there is concern for both sides here, that we do not just take off our glasses and say we want this side or that side to benefit. It needs to be mutually beneficial.

That is the only way in life it works. To me it is the only way this piece of legislation can work. We have to work together and make sure we get the aboriginal community as well as the third party stakeholders to the table.

• (1305)

We are not trying to pull the wool over anyone's eyes or pull a quick one and say to them that they have missed their chance, because we know these things always have ramifications. Sooner or later those concerns will come up, or there will not be any goodwill for third party stakeholders to even work with the government or to believe that a piece of legislation like this will really help them. We want to make sure that the third party stakeholders feel they are being listened to, that they, as well as the first nations, are being given not just the benefit of the doubt but the benefit of the whole situation, because I know that many of them over the years have had concerns that they have been railroaded or whatever.

Again, the minister has a huge responsibility to live up to. I know there are frustrations across the country right now and he faced frustrations this summer. These surely are difficult times for him to be working through. I know he will realize how important it is to strike that balance. We in the official coalition are in the opposition now, but sooner or later, as the member said, someone else will be in government and we want to make sure that there are reasonable and rational processes in place, as well as transitions that would take place for any government of the day.

I know the minister understands that because when he and I first started in the House we were sitting in the opposition corner. The opposition coalition wishes him well with this. I suppose if we can give any advice or caution it would be to make sure that he deals with this sensitively on both sides of the issue. I know it is a tough tightrope to walk but at the same time I do believe it is important. If he does not, obviously down the road he will end up with problems far more serious than those he is facing now.

The opposition coalition gives qualified support. We say to the government that we want to move ahead with these land claims settlements and we trust that this Alberta-Saskatchewan land claims agreement, which is modelled after Manitoba's, will go well, that it will go speedily and that we will see some true benefits both for the first nations and the third party stakeholders.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C-37, claims settlements (Alberta

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and Saskatchewan) implementation act. I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of this proposed legislation.

At first glance this may appear to be a somewhat technical bill, with limited scope and applicability but first impressions can be deceiving. The reality is that the changes proposed in this legislation—as minor as they may appear—will have a big impact on first nations communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Hon. members should know that Bill C-37, when it becomes law, will make a difference in the lives of first nations people and communities. It will make a difference to landowners, developers and people who live and work near existing reserves.

What is so important about this proposed legislation? After all, the existing process for adding lands to reserves works, does it not? It is a little slow and cumbersome but the job gets done.

If that is the approach we wish to take, then yes, the current process does work, but it hardly works well. In fact, it is severely impeding progress in resolving outstanding settlement commitments that have been made to first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan—some of which date back a decade or more.

Let me state for the record that this is not the approach this government intends to take. We are not prepared to accept the status quo because first nations deserve and want better, and Canadian taxpayers as a whole deserve a more efficient process.

The government intends to move quickly in fulfilling Canada's commitments to aboriginal people. This is really what Bill C-37 is all about.

“Gathering Strength”, our response to the report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples, included a number of specific commitments. Notable among these was a pledge to honour Canada's treaties signed with aboriginal people.

This goes to the very heart of Bill C-37 because the key objective of this proposed legislation is to implement better, more expeditious ways to meet our reserve expansion commitments, most of which arise out of treaty land entitlements.

Perhaps some history is in order to help put this issue into perspective. As members will know, between 1874 and 1906, the Government of Canada signed several numbered treaties with first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan. As a general rule, these treaties required Canada to allocate reserve land to a first nation based on its population—generally, the first nation was to receive a certain acreage for each family group.

For one reason or another, many first nations involved in this treaty making process did not receive the full amount of land promised to them. In some cases, the shortfall can be blamed on inaccurate counts of band members; in other instances, not enough land was set apart when a reserve was first surveyed.

Regardless of the cause, there is no question that insufficient amounts of reserve lands were provided to some first nations. Therefore, while some of the treaty land entitlement obligations were fully satisfied long ago, many first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan did not historically receive their full land entitlement.

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These century old injustices must be resolved and our government has been tackling the problem with renewed energy over the past several years.

Treaty land entitlement settlement agreements have been signed with six first nations in Alberta. In Saskatchewan, a treaty land entitlement framework agreement is in place covering most of the affected first nations, and several others have signed individual agreements. In total, 36 first nations in the two provinces are encompassed by these agreements.

Clearly the will exists on all sides to move forward on this issue. Appropriate resources have been earmarked for these settlements by the governments of Canada, Alberta and Saskatchewan. First nations have been identifying lands they would like to add to their reserves. However, despite the best of intentions and the full co-operation of all parties, this is where progress has bogged down.

Almost invariably, the lands being selected by first nations have existing third party interests. Under the terms of claim settlements, these interests must either be cleared or accommodated in a way that is satisfactory to everyone involved before the lands can be added to a reserve.

● (1315)

Unfortunately, with the exception of the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act and, to a lesser extent, the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act, existing federal laws simply are not geared to accommodating third party interests with any degree of certainty or timeliness.

In fact, the current additions to reserve process create a classic catch 22 situation. Third party interests must be addressed before lands can be granted reserve status. But with the exceptions I just noted, first nations can only agree to permit a third party interest on land that is already part of a reserve.

The end result is that processing selected lands into reserve status takes a great deal of time and energy, which is one reason why settlements signed some time ago are not yet fully implemented.

Bill C-37 will address this situation by providing for more efficient and commercially certain ways to accommodate third party interests. Essentially, a first nation will be able to consent to such an interest—either existing or new—before lands have been granted reserve status.

Recent experience has shown that the sooner third-party interests can be resolved, the quicker lands can be added to a reserve, and the quicker first nations can begin to reap the economic benefits associated with those lands.

It is interesting to note that the catalyst for Bill C-37 was a commitment by Canada to recommend such legislation under treaty land entitlement settlements concluded in 1998 with the Alexander First Nation and the Loon River Cree First Nation.

In other words, the proposed legislation is fulfilling commitments to specific first nations, while at the same time addressing longstanding issues of concern for more than 30 other first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Bill C-37 extends beyond the scope of treaty land entitlement agreements. With the approval of first nations and the affected provincial governments, the legislation has been crafted in such a way that it may benefit any other existing or future claim settlements containing reserve expansion commitments in both provinces.

For example, Canada also has reserve expansion commitments arising out of specific claims settlements in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Although these commitments involve significantly less land than treaty land entitlement settlements, they present the same implementation difficulties.

I want to emphasize that the bill is not being forced on any first nation in Alberta or Saskatchewan. It would apply on a per claim basis, and only when the affected first nation agrees to opt in to its provisions. First nations that wish to continue to add lands to their reserves using existing processes will be free to do so.

In closing, let me say once again that Bill C-37 is an implicit part of this government's commitment under "Gathering Strength" to address Canada's historical obligations to aboriginal people and to pave the way for their greater economic self-reliance.

The bill would also strengthen the capacity of first nations governments to make decisions about lands selected for addition to reserves under claim settlements in a way that is effective, timely and accountable to their membership.

Bill C-37 would help Canada move beyond historic grievances with first nations people while ensuring that past agreements were honoured and fulfilled. It is a positive step into the future, a step that is supported by first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan and by the governments of these provinces. It clearly deserves the support of this House as well.

● (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by answering the questions from the opposition parties. I think I can deal with virtually all of them, which I hope will speed the process through committee.

I was of course delighted to hear the member from the coalition talk about the futility of dredging up the past. I eagerly look forward to seeing how the Alliance and the coalition bring that sentiment into question period today.

The NDP and the Bloc were basically in support of the bill and outlined some of its good points. Several questions came up, mostly from the official opposition, and I will address some of those points. The first point was about providing the public with more and better information on some of the concepts. My colleague from the NDP did a very good job of that. For people who may not have been aware of them, he explained some of the provisions in the bill.

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The opposition member mentioned that one definition that is not covered is specific claims. Just so members know, these are items that come up over and above the regular treaty obligations, which may have come up over the years as isolated incidents that do not hold up under the Indian Act and that we have to deal with.

The second point the member for the official opposition mentioned was related to municipal claims. He specifically mentioned SARM, but SARM has been involved along the way with these claims and has been dealing with the government in a good working relationship. SARM is quite familiar with the claims. Although it is not an issue in Alberta, there have been claims by municipalities, school boards and other taxing authorities for alleged loss of tax revenues due to establishment under a claims settlement.

However in Saskatchewan the tax loss issues were dealt with in two ways. For Saskatchewan, the treaty land entitlement framework provides that Canada and Saskatchewan shall contribute equally to a fund which is to be used to compensate rural municipalities. It also compensates school boards for tax losses experienced as a result of reserve expansions under that agreement. For the specific claim settlements which the member for the opposition mentioned, tax loss is largely the responsibility of the government of Saskatchewan by virtue of a bilateral agreement signed in 1999 between Saskatchewan and Canada. This is well in hand. I hope the member will be happy that it has been dealt with.

The last point he raised is related to mineral claims. He is right when he says that in some cases mineral claims will revert to the crown for the benefit of the first nation. That is good because that will help first nations economic development.

That is all I can remember of the member's points. If there were any others perhaps the member could bring them up in question period, because if all the questions have been dealt with hopefully the bill will go quickly through committee.

There was a point brought up by the NDP and the coalition that related to the powers of the minister, in particular the powers to allow the minister to make these decisions as opposed to having an order in council. This was requested by a number of first nations and also will speed up the process of this administrative function so that they can get on with their economic development with these third party interests.

The last point I want to comment on relates to the pipeline. It was mentioned by the coalition. Because the Alaska gas pipeline would go through my riding, I am delighted that this was raised. There would be great benefits for aboriginal people through employment and perhaps in taxes in different parts of the north, but in the Northwest Territories and Yukon there are different legal regimes, different treaty regimes, so it is not that relevant to those areas.

•(1325)

However, if it goes through Alberta through the natural gas pipeline which would bring Alaskan gas from Prudhoe Bay through Alaska and the Yukon, and if it happens to go through a reserve, it could possibly apply and once again would help first nations speed up their economic development with those added assets.

This is important legislation not only for the first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan but for all residents of those provinces

and indeed for all Canadians. I would like to take a few minutes to explore the issues of how changes proposed in Bill C-37 would foster economic development in the affected first nations communities. I want to focus on this because it is a fundamental argument in favour of the proposed legislation.

I think hon. members on all sides of the House would agree it is vitally important that aboriginal communities from coast to coast to coast have opportunities to become more fully engaged in the Canadian economy. A strengthened aboriginal economy would help to address the many difficult issues that face first nations and Inuit communities across the nation. That is not to say that progress has not been made already. I can cite dozens of examples of successful aboriginal companies. In fact, there are more than 18,000 aboriginal owned businesses in Canada, ranging from small home based enterprises to multimillion dollar companies that do business around the world. Many of these are located on first nations reserves where they not only provide essential goods and services but are a vital source of employment and revenue.

The aboriginal community is diverse and vibrant. Aboriginal businesses operate in all sectors of the economy. They include resource industry firms, transportation and construction companies and retail and service outlets. They include manufacturing operations, management consultants, computer companies, arts and crafts enterprises and environmental and cultural tourism businesses.

However, more needs to be done to foster economic development in aboriginal communities, particularly on reserves. Despite the progress that has been made over the past couple of decades, aboriginal people continue to be among the most economically disadvantaged of all Canadians. There is still far too large a gap between the employment rates among first nations people and among other Canadians.

First nations still face special barriers to economic development, including legal obstacles, lower levels of education and lack of business experience and capital. These barriers are affecting social conditions in reserve communities. They are affecting families and children, and the effects are not positive ones.

What does all this have to do with Bill C-37? In my mind, having a sufficient land base upon which to engage in economic activity is the key to achieving prosperity in first nations communities. Since the claim settlements that would be facilitated by this proposed legislation concern reserve expansion, these settlements are an incredibly important vehicle for supporting aboriginal economic development. Treaty land entitlement and specific claim settlements do more than address past wrongs of first nations people. They pave the way for a better economic future by providing a secure land base and, in some cases, a financial package that can be used by the claimant group to fund economic development activities.

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As consideration of the bill progresses, we will hear repeatedly of the legal and technical obstacles in the current additions to reserves process, which are impeding progress in implementing settlement agreements. These obstacles have resulted in an enormous backlog of commitments to add lands to reserves in Alberta and Saskatchewan, a backlog that is certain to grow unless action is taken to address some of the basic underlying problems. This is the objective of Bill C-37.

The proposed legislation would expedite and facilitate the additions to reserves process in two ways: first, by authorizing the minister rather than the governor in council to confer reserve status on lands and, second, by introducing new and better ways to accommodate third party interests in lands that are being converted to reserve status under claim settlements in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

I would like to consider three ways in which these elements of the bill would encourage economic activity in reserve communities. First and foremost, the proposed legislation would demonstrate to investors and others who engage in activities on lands proposed for reserve status that transactions can be concluded with greater predictability for both the first nation and third parties.

•(1330)

Hon. members can appreciate that certainty and stability are prerequisites for economic development. Regardless of whether an activity would be taking place in a reserve community or in downtown Edmonton or Regina, Bill C-37 would provide businesses and investors in Alberta and Saskatchewan with certainty of tenure for any third party interest they might hold in lands to be added to a reserve. It would also provide the certainty businesses need to negotiate new commercial arrangements with first nations communities.

Equally important is that the changes proposed in Bill C-37 would significantly reduce the amount of time needed to process lands into reserve status. Dealing with third party interests under the current process is problematic and time consuming. Sometimes it takes up to two years or more. This would all change if Bill C-37 becomes law. Because lands would be selected and added to reserves more quickly, the lands themselves and the revenues generated from any third party interests preserved on them would contribute to more immediate economic and social progress in the community. In fact, the pre-designation powers included in Bill C-37 would allow first nations to begin to enjoy these economic rewards even before the selected lands have been granted reserve status.

Finally, I support the bill 100% because making the accommodation of third party interests easier would give first nations access to a broader range of land that has development interests or potential. I think the member from one of the opposition parties mentioned that positive point.

In other words, these changes would facilitate the selection by first nations of commercially viable lands rather than lands that are simply unencumbered by existing interests. As first nations acquire better lands we can expect to see increased economic activity in these communities.

Although this proposed legislation may appear to be minor in the overall scheme of government activities, I do not think we should underestimate its impact. The vast majority of land selections under claim settlements in Alberta and Saskatchewan would be affected by one or more third party interests, whether that be a right of way for an access road, resource rights or a leasehold. Bill C-37 would have the potential to come into play for virtually every one of these claims. With the likelihood of even more settlements in the years ahead, the legislation's importance to the additions to reserve process in Alberta and Saskatchewan would only increase over time.

Obviously I am very supportive of the proposed legislation. I believe Bill C-37 would contribute to improved quality of life in first nations communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan. It would contribute to a growing economic base to support first nations self-government and it would help first nations communities further distance themselves from economic dependency on government.

Bill C-37 is yet another step the government is taking to live up to its commitments in "Gathering Strength", including our commitment to support strong communities, people and economies. It is another step toward a better future for aboriginal people in Canada.

With these important benefits in mind, I would encourage hon. members to support the proposed legislation so it can proceed quickly through the House and to the other place.

•(1335)

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with a lot of interest to the speech of the member for Yukon and would like to tell him that in the past I have had a chance to work with the minister of Indian affairs. In 1995 we worked on the privatization of CN, so I see a lot of good things in Bill C-37 right now, having worked with the minister previously.

I would like the member to explain some points to me. In Bill C-37 I see basically a lot of components of the Manitoba land claims act and settlement. I would like him to explain to me what he would like to see when the bill goes to committee. There are some strong points in the bill. Could he highlight what points he would like to see drawn out in committee immediately to go along on this deal making process he was talking about?

Mr. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, as a new member, I would like to know is why this particular member always asks me questions. I remember the first time I made a speech he asked me a question about farming and I am probably the least likely riding in the country to have farms. I thought he was on my side but this is a particularly good question.

I hope I have answered most of the questions that the opposition parties brought up. They made some good points. They supported things and brought up some concerns. I tried to elaborate on those points and I am anticipating that the bill will go through committee very quickly, especially since I happen to be on that committee. We are dealing with a number of other serious issues and complicated bills some of which are coming from my riding in the Yukon.

Government Orders

The most important point for people to understand is that because the land will be transferred to a reserve there could be economic considerations. As all the parties have said, it will be very beneficial for first nations. Hopefully most of this land has some good economic potential. Rather than waiting for the long protracted process of getting approval to do things and getting the certainty for the land, the businesses and the first nations can start right away and keep it economic.

That will help both the business and the first nations. From the first nations' side, this land is in limbo because of all sorts of bureaucratic steps. For the businesses, especially if they already have interests on that land, they can continue to get quick revenue from that land without an interruption and without the uncertainty. They will just have a new landlord and they can continue to take in funds.

I hope it is brought up in that context as sort of an administrative bill but it has some very sweeping benefits that are so needed to develop the economies of first nations.

Mr. John Finlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House on Bill C-37, the claim settlements (Alberta and Saskatchewan) implementation act.

I join the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in urging hon. members to recognize the merits of the legislation and to help us move it quickly through the legislative process. As the hon. member for Yukon mentioned, that means the committee. We are looking forward to getting it as soon as possible.

I, too, feel that it is an essential bill that would help very much in the recognition and respect for which our native people are looking and also in the economic development in which they want to partake.

As the minister made clear this morning, the bill addresses a number of commitments and goals consistent with the government's aboriginal agenda. It would affirm and honour treaties which are a cornerstone of Canada's relationships with aboriginal people. It would help foster economic development in first nations communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan so that the communities can become more self-sufficient and sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of areas in your riding and mine, and in the ridings of many members on both sides of the House, that would benefit from extension of the act to all provinces. That may be something we will see within a short space of time.

It would facilitate the process by which Canada is living up to its commitments to the first nations people. It would accomplish all this primarily by ensuring that better means exist to recognize and accommodate third party interests in lands selected for additions to reserves in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In other words, the powers being accorded first nations under the proposed legislation do not come at the expense of any individual, business, institution or government, and that is often the sticking point in some of our negotiations.

In fact, the opposite is true. Bill C-37 would provide the certainty of tenure that third parties with existing interests need. The minister has stated that this is truly a win-win situation for the current backlog of current reserve expansion commitments in Alberta and Saskatch-

ewan. At the present time there is close to a million hectares, which is 2.5 million acres, of land being considered for this very purpose.

It is a good solution for first nations because the pre-reserve designation and permit granting powers provided for under the legislation would allow them to select and acquire the best lands available, regardless of encumbrances, instead of taking what is left over and the worst lands available.

First nations would be able to enter into better agreements with third parties and more quickly which means that the economic benefits of land ownership will flow to communities sooner rather than later.

However, developers, investors and others who have third party interests in lands selected by first nations to fulfill a treaty land entitlement or specific claims agreement, would also benefit from the commercial certainty provided by Bill C-37.

I want to focus on the issue of accommodating third party interests for two reasons: first, it has been the main stumbling block to moving more quickly in meeting Canada's reserve expansion commitments in Alberta and Saskatchewan; and second, I know the protection of third party interests is an important consideration for hon. members on all sides of the House.

The minister has advised us that Canada currently has a commitment to add a million hectares. More such commitments will be made as additional claims are settled.

Land to fulfill these commitments is typically contributed from unoccupied federal or provincial crown lands. Alternatively the land may be purchased by the first nations on a willing seller, willing buyer basis. Herein lies the problem: the vast majority of land being selected by first nations for additions to reserves has existing third party interest.

● (1340)

These interests may range from rights of way and hydro line easements to mineral permits and leases, timber licences, commercial and residential leaseholds for tourism, recreation, vacations, et cetera.

Regardless of the nature of the interest, it must be accommodating in some way that is satisfactory to all parties: Canada, the first nation and the interest holder. This is one of the key issues that must be addressed under the federal additions to reserves process.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, as we have heard already, with the exception of the recently enacted Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act and the 1993 Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act, existing federal laws were not designed with the requirements of the additions to reserves process in mind. In other words, they are not geared to accommodate third party interest in a way that is either commercially certain or commercially expeditious.

Under the current provisions of the Indian Act, for example, a first nation can only consent to the creation of interest on reserve land if the land is already part of the reserve. This does not include land that is being merely proposed for reserve status. Of course first nations, like any land owner, can grant leases on land they own privately, but if a first nation wanted to transfer such land to Canada to be made into a reserve, any third party interests on the land could not legally be carried forward. They would have to be terminated and then reinstated.

Land must exist as reserve land before leases or any other third party interests can be voted on by the membership of the first nation.

What this means is that a third party must surrender its interest in land, even if only temporarily, before the land can be added to a reserve. In exchange, the first nation at present is only able to offer the promise or undertaking that it will vote to re-grant that interest once the reserve is created. At the snail's pace that some negotiations move, that could be a long wait and someone might lose interest.

Most interest holders are understandably reluctant to do this because it puts their future rights at risk. As a result, the addition to reserve may be effectively stalemated and the affected first nation may have to abandon its preferred choice of land and accept land that has far less development potential.

Manitoba first nations have been released from this cumbersome process under the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act, providing the additions to reserves commitment arises out of a land claim settlement. The situation has also been addressed to some extent in Saskatchewan where the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act of 1993 allows first nations to consent to the granting of interest on lands that do not yet have reserve status.

However experience since 1993 has taught us that this power under the Saskatchewan Treaty Land Entitlement Act has not proven as advantageous as it could have been since it is limited to the granting of existing interest. It can only be used in treaty land entitlement situations, not in specific claim situations, and it can be only used when the first nation has already purchased the land.

Such limitations have been avoided in the wording of both the Manitoba Claim Settlements Implementation Act and the provisions of the present bill.

Bill C-37 would essentially extend the pre-designation powers now available in Manitoba to first nations in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Under this proposed legislation, a first nation will be able to consent to a third party land interest either existing or new during the reserve expansion process and indeed even before purchasing the land itself. In this way first nations will be free to then purchase the land knowing the encumbrances have been settled in advance and where they will not present a hurdle to reserve designation.

To achieve this, Bill C-37 borrows from a variety of existing federal legal mechanisms for granting third party interests but adjusts each in minor ways to facilitate their use when applied to additions to reserves. The effect will be to provide first nations and third parties with commercial certainty in their deal making while land is being processed as reserve land.

This new approach will help avoid situations where the first nation is forced to negotiate the buy-out and closure of an ongoing viable operation simply to clear the land of encumbrances, thereby forgoing any future revenues that might have been derived in terms of royalties or rents, or the holder of that third party interest is asked to risk temporarily surrendering that interest while a parcel of land is being processed into reserve status.

• (1345)

The bill will give developers and investors, both existing and potential, the assurances they need to enter into agreements with first nations. At the end of the day, both parties, the first nations community and the holder of the interest, will benefit from these business arrangements.

Hon. members can appreciate that these proposed changes are designed to make the additions to reserves process as smooth and simple as possible for all parties in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Bill C-37 will put real estate transactions related to reserve expansions on a level playing field with non-reserve transactions in these two provinces. At the same time it will provide clear-cut legal mechanisms for protecting third party interests in land selected for addition to a reserve.

Having said that, it is important to acknowledge that the first nations with claim settlement agreements in Alberta and Saskatchewan will not automatically be bound by this new legislation. First nations will have complete flexibility in deciding whether to opt into these provisions.

I assure hon. members that Bill C-37 will not impose any additional restrictions or requirements on land owners or third party interest holders. No land owner will be forced to sell property to a first nation to fulfill a claims settlement agreement nor will a third party interest holder be forced to enter into agreements with first nations. Both these types of transactions will continue to take place on the basis of a willing buyer and a willing seller. The bill simply allows agreements to be put in place where both parties desire it.

This is clearly a good piece of legislation. It will protect third parties while giving way for new partnerships with aboriginal communities. It deserves the support of hon. members and I urge them to join me in voting to send Bill C-37 to committee for review.

S. O. 31

●(1350)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that it would give first nations flexibility and I appreciate that. Will the local governments that will lose taxation on properties that are being acquired have flexibility in the service they have to provide under the current legislation?

Mr. John Finlay: Mr. Speaker, I understand that is already covered in the legislation in Alberta and Saskatchewan. They would be a third party and have an interest in the land. Therefore, it would have to be agreed to.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the third party is the individual or group of individuals from which the first nations are making the purchase. Having said that, once that land goes into reserve or into specified land claims, does the local government, the village or rural municipality have the flexibility in the services which it must provide under the act at the present time?

Mr. John Finlay: Mr. Speaker, the general answer is yes. Those services must be paid for, agreed to and provided on a willing basis. Otherwise DIAND has to step in and do something, as it has had to do in a number of areas. The member has made a very good point. In Saskatchewan right now I understand that is allowed and there is an agreement in place to compensate the municipality for the loss of that tax revenue.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

●(1355)

[English]

FLU AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that October is National Flu Awareness Month.

Every winter almost one-quarter of Canadians are infected with influenza. Thousands become seriously ill and thousands more die from flu related complications.

Anyone who wants to improve his or her chances of having a flu free winter can benefit from the annual flu shot. The flu shot cannot give a person the flu and side effects are minor.

[Translation]

At high risk are seniors, adults and children with chronic diseases, and their caregivers. Without vaccination, they may face the possibility of serious or even fatal consequences should they get the flu. A yearly vaccination is the only preventive measure that has been proven to reduce mortality rate from influenza.

* * *

●(1400)

[English]

JIM MUNSON

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I hope this does not damage his future prospects but I would like to rise today on behalf of the official opposition to pay tribute to Jim Munson.

Jim Munson joined CTV *News* in 1979. Previously he had worked in radio, including a stint at Broadcast News. While at CTV Mr. Munson served as London and Beijing bureau chief. We especially note his excellent coverage of the anti-communist uprising in Tiananmen Square.

I can say without fear of contradiction that Jim is highly regarded by all members of the House. He is tough but fair, scrupulously accurate, hardworking and intelligent. I have not always agreed with him but I have always respected him. I first met Jim in the early seventies when I first came to the Chamber. He is a true professional.

On behalf of the official opposition, the Canadian Alliance, I thank Jim Munson for his work all these years. We are saddened by his departure. He will be missed. We wish him all the best in the future and say bonsoir à notre ami.

* * *

NATIONAL SLEEP AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House and all Canadians that October 22 to October 28 has been designated National Sleep Awareness Week.

Over three million Canadians suffer from sleep disorders yet many are unaware they are affected. Sleep disorders reduce the quality of life by decreasing alertness and the ability to perform effectively on a daily basis.

Sleep/Wake Disorders Canada responds to the needs of people with various sleeping disorders ranging from the most common, insomnia, to sleep apnea where breathing stops periodically throughout the night possibly inducing heart attack or stroke.

With the goal of improving the quality of life of affected individuals, Sleep/Wake Disorders Canada distributes information, encourages research and establishes local self-help groups. I ask members to join me in wishing Sleep/Wake Disorders Canada a successful public awareness week.

S. O. 31

[Translation]

NATIONAL BLOCK PARENT WEEK

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan (Québec East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is National Block Parent Week. The Block Parent program works to prevent crime in our neighbourhoods.

The distinctive red and white Block Parent window sign in the window of a home helps out hundreds of Canadians every year. Whether children, seniors or others who are lost, frightened, or in distress, everyone benefits from the services of the Block Parent program.

The commitment of some 50,000 volunteers enhances the security and compassion of Canada's communities. It is important to acknowledge their contribution and their importance.

I wish to pay tribute to the Block Parent volunteers. Knowing they are there is most reassuring.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that during the last parliament the Prime Minister persuaded the provinces to make a deal on health care and the children's agenda. This was an important step forward but we must still work on strengthening the federal role in health affairs.

In the end it is only the federal government that can ensure nationwide standards. Only the federal government can make sure that all Canadians, not just some regions, get the health care and child support to which they are entitled.

Our health care system is designed to be universal, portable, comprehensive, publicly funded and publicly administered. Let us make it so.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the policies of the government are killing rural Canada. Prairie grain producers are experiencing an income disaster. What is the government's response? It responds with programs fat with government administration and very lean on results.

The government's policies are killing rural transportation systems. The useless firearms registration law is wasting hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars while treating farmers as criminals. The Liberals with their cruelty to animals agenda have now joined the animal rights fanatics in their harassment of Canadian farmers.

Farmers need relief from the burdens of excessive government regulation, taxation and harassment. When will the government realize that the war is against terrorism and not against Canadian farmers?

● (1405)

UNICEF

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Halloween approaches it is important for all Canadians to give a little more to ghosts and goblins wearing bright orange boxes around their necks this year.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, or UNICEF, has been helping children of the world for over 53 years. In countries around the globe UNICEF provides much needed food, money and other supplies for children and their families in the worst possible need.

In Afghanistan, for example, there are nearly five million victims of the Taliban who without assistance will become a humanitarian disaster when the cold, hard Afghanistan winter sets in.

This Halloween I would ask all Canadians to be particularly generous when neighbourhood children with UNICEF boxes knock on their doors. Ignorance and poverty breed hatred, and hatred is the true enemy in this campaign.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA POST

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year Canada Post will celebrate its 20th anniversary. I think the Canada Post Corporation should use this opportunity to treat its rural letter couriers and suburban service providers fairly and give them the right to collective bargaining in order to obtain decent working and living conditions.

Members will agree with me that 20 years' of service in a world like ours takes loyal employees such as the rural letter couriers and suburban service providers, who have clearly not been entitled to benefits or even minimum wage.

This is why I hope Canada Post will begin its 21st year on the right foot by giving these employees the right to collective bargaining as an expression of its gratitude.

I will shortly be introducing a bill in this regard, and will be asking my colleagues to support it.

* * *

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Parliamentarians for Global Action, of which I am chair of the Canadian chapter, is an international network of parliamentarians from over 100 countries with a mandate to promote a broad human security agenda.

Parliamentarians for Global Action adopted a resolution on the terrorist attacks of September 11 pledging the support of its members for the international effort to combat terrorism including, first, calling on all governments to join the United States in identifying and bringing to justice the perpetrators of this crime against humanity; second, developing a co-ordinated strategy to halt international terrorism, including targeted sanctions, the freezing of financial and other assets and the selective and legal use of force; and, third, urging all people to refrain from attributing guilt by association and retaliating against any ethnic, national or religious groups and their communities and to maintain their commitment to dialogue, understanding and the preservation of an open and tolerant society.

In a word, PGA regards the *raison d'être* of anti-terrorism law and policy as protective of human security, including both national security and civil liberties, and as involving a multilayered and multilateral diplomatic, legal, political and economic effort to underpin it.

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SALE OF POPPIES

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 70th anniversary of Canadians proudly wearing poppies. Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae immortalized the poppy in his famous poem *In Flanders Fields*. The poppy symbolizes the sacrifices that have been made so that we can enjoy our freedoms today.

The Pickering Public Library Board has in my opinion insulted the Royal Canadian Legion by classifying this fraternal service body as a charity. This year, 2001, is the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion and the 70th anniversary of the poppy. Every public establishment in Canada should consider it an honour to participate in the sale of poppies.

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PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1966 the Government of Canada introduced the Outstanding Achievement Award. This award, considered to be the most prestigious award in the public service, is presented annually as part of the Public Service Awards and Recognition Program managed by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

On Tuesday, October 16, five senior public service employees were recognized for their exemplary accomplishments and their sustained commitment to excellence.

Cited for their outstanding achievements are: Peter M. Boehm, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Rachel Corneille Gravel, Veterans Affairs Canada; David A. Dodge, formerly with Health Canada and currently with the Bank of Canada; Warren Edmonson, Labour Program, Human Resources Development Canada; and Dr. John Brian Morrissey, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

I know all members of the House join me in congratulating these very worthy recipients.

●(1410)

S. O. 31

JOHN HAIDAR

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday, October 24, Mr. John Haidar will receive the 2001 Citation for Citizenship, an award recognizing those who help newcomers adapt to Canadian society.

Mr. Haidar came to Canada from his native Lebanon in 1977 and became a Canadian citizen in 1980. In 1987 he became actively involved in assisting immigrants with the application process. He has, on a volunteer basis, worked with the local citizenship and immigration office to develop effective procedures to assist new immigrants. He has also worked closely with the Arab Canadian Intercultural Orientation Centre and the Windsor Islamic Association.

Over the years he has assisted over 700 new immigrants to the Windsor area, not only with the immigration process but also in their efforts to find employment, access health care and education. His efforts have been an exceptional asset to our community.

I extend my congratulations to John Haidar on the occasion of this well deserved award.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NORTH SHORE ECONOMY

Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the North Shore is currently facing an economic downturn, primarily because of the world iron crisis. Businesses have stopped work, and hundreds of jobs have been lost.

In Sept-Îles, the mining company, IOC, has stopped work on the biggest construction site in the world, the refurbishing of the pellet plant. Over 900 construction workers are without work. The reopening that had been planned for 2002 has been delayed, and the 140 jobs involved put on hold.

The federal government must provide immediate funding in order to help businesses in the riding that are doing everything they can at the moment to keep their heads above water.

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[*English*]

MULTICULTURALISM

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind all Canadians of the value of tolerance, respect and cultural diversity. Our country's diversity distinguishes it from most other countries. Our diversity has been a fundamental part of the Canadian landscape since its beginnings.

Since the tragic events of September 11, the problem of racial discrimination has become even more salient. Threats to the physical and emotional safety of individuals cannot be allowed if we are to maintain the tolerance that defines the spirit of our great nation. Now more than ever Canada's future depends on maintaining and strengthening its capacity to bring together people with many differences.

Oral Questions

No one's identity or cultural heritage should be compromised. I ask that all members of the House unite to promote the fundamental belief that all Canadians are equal. Our diversity is an indispensable asset.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, this is the time of year when many Canadians throughout the country who live in areas where there is a lot of seasonal employment find that they have not had enough work this year to qualify for employment insurance.

The minister the other day told the House the government had programs in place. There is nothing in place to help those who have not qualified for employment insurance, unless one lives in the district of the Minister of Industry who apparently is using ACOA money to provide programs that give people benefits.

I have no problem with that. I am glad the people in that area of the province did very well. However if it is fair for them it is fair for every other seasonal employee in the country. The minister should be careful because if he is to help the Minister of Industry he should also help foreign affairs, health, heritage, culture and finance, just to make sure we have a level playing field in the leadership race.

* * *

NATIONAL QUALITY MONTH

Mr. Tony Tirabassi (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, October is National Quality Month. It was established to promote organizational excellence, increased productivity and healthy workplaces in Canadian public and private organizations.

As part of National Quality Month this week has been designated Canada's Healthy Workplace Week. Sponsored by the National Quality Institute, the events of this week will encourage healthy workplace practices. Such practices include not only the physical work environment but also social atmosphere, management practices and an improvement in individual lifestyles of employees.

The health and well-being of employees are vital to productivity and the achievement of excellence. I encourage all Canadians to take a few moments to think about how they can work together toward a healthier work environment.

* * *

• (1415)

JOE SHOCTOR

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Edmonton today is known as the city of champions because it has been blessed by the efforts and convictions of many who have worked tirelessly to support and encourage world class public venues from sports to theatre.

Tonight a tribute will be held in Edmonton for one true champion of the community. Tonight the late Joe Shoctor's name will be honoured, and rightly so. From modest beginnings Joe has left his mark for all time on Edmonton's sport and theatrical scenes. He has been particularly recognized for his civic achievements by being honoured with the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of

Excellence. Edmonton's world famous Citadel Theatre, being located on Shoctor Alley, needs no further mention.

Tonight a tribute will be held for a true Edmonton champion. Tomorrow and forever his name will be etched on Edmonton's honour roll of excellence. Joe Shoctor, a businessman, a visionary and an artist, helped paint the canvas of the vibrant city of Edmonton today. Joe Shoctor is an Edmonton champion.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to hear that the Prime Minister has finally agreed to have talks with President Fox of Mexico and President Bush along the issue of creating a secure perimeter. We are pleased with that development and that change.

Unfortunately, he did not make that announcement here in the House of Commons. He made that, as is somewhat their pattern, outside of the House of Commons. As a matter of fact, he made it behind closed doors in China.

Will the Prime Minister now please grant us the courtesy in the House of Commons to announce that he indeed has a change of policy and will be pursuing a secure perimeter for continental North America?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not announce at the APEC summit any change of policy. He simply said that the government would be carrying on talks with Mexico and the United States on a number of areas to work jointly on the fight against terrorism. It could be that border issues would come up during these discussions, but there has been no decision made on any change of policy. My hon. friend is mistaken.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): He should not keep blaming the media, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

The premiers of Quebec, British Columbia and six other provinces want the federal government to take action on the security perimeter question.

Can the government promise that it will hold a federal-provincial summit on the question of a security perimeter before any meeting takes place with our North American partners?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a wholly federal jurisdiction. The federal government will assume its responsibilities, even if it wishes to seek the opinions of the opposition parties or the provinces.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we hear reports continually about suspected terrorists hiding in Toronto, or in Fort McMurray or simply roaming the countryside.

Will the Prime Minister please commit here in the House today that any discussions with our North American partners on securing the perimeter will definitely include changing the laws and the policies in Canada, so that we can detain and deport, if necessary, those who are deemed dangerous?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know there is legislation before our parliament to tighten up our refugee and immigration system. We know that further announcements have been made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. There is other legislation before the House.

I think we are acting very vigorously and responsibly as are our partners, like the United States. They have to tighten up their laws too based on the facts and evidence we know about in the press.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we learned from immigration documents and the media that three men in Fort McMurray may have been connected with the September 11 attack on the United States. Canadians had to learn from the *Sun* newspapers that Nabil Al-Marabh, who was freed by the government's Immigration and Refugee Board, may be the chief al-Qaeda operative in North America and living in Canada. We also learned from the media that Mohammed Atta may have been working in Toronto.

When will the solicitor general put aside his canned answers and offer Canadians the information they need to know about the threats that exist here?

• (1420)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is big on mays, but it is pretty hard to be definite on mays or perhaps.

My hon. colleague is well aware that the RCMP and CSIS are working with the FBI and all other security agencies around the world to make sure people who could be connected with terrorism are brought in for questioning and, if they need to be arrested, they will be arrested.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the solicitor general cannot hide behind the cover of saying that investigations are ongoing. Canadians are learning more about the current security crisis from the American officials, our own media and British websites than they are from the Liberal government.

When will the minister put aside his scripted answers and begin offering real information to Canadians about the threats here in Canada?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague does not like the answer, but it is pretty difficult for me to say there is not an investigation going on. The fact of the matter is, this is the largest investigation in the history of this world. Our RCMP and security intelligence agencies

are working with other security intelligence agencies around the world to make sure that these people are brought to justice.

* * *

[Translation]

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before adding any sunset clauses to the anti-terrorism bill, the Prime Minister states that there must be a guarantee that “in three years there will no longer be any problem with terrorism”.

Such a guarantee is not necessary because with the sunset clauses even the most controversial clauses could be renewed if necessary.

Will the Minister of Justice admit that the Prime Minister's reasoning does not hold up and that sunset clauses are indeed necessary to protect rights and freedoms as much as possible?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and I have been quite clear that the preferred approach of the government is a review at the end of the three year period.

However, the Prime Minister and I have been equally clear that we are very interested in the advice and recommendations from both the House of Commons and the Senate committees. We will take that advice very seriously when it is provided to us.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if any guarantees are needed, they relate to rights and freedoms because the terrorist threat, as we now know it, could no longer exist in three years.

Under these circumstances does the Minister of Justice realize that sunset clauses offer the most important guarantee, the guarantee of better protection of rights and freedoms, our best weapon against terrorism?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, the government does believe that the three year review period is the appropriate guarantee and review mechanism. However, we have also made it very plain that this legislation needs to be carefully reviewed and studied by both the House of Commons and the Senate committees. We look forward to the advice and recommendations that both those committees will provide us.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the United States, which suffered an unprecedented attack on September 11, and France, which has been the target of numerous terrorist attacks in the past, did not hesitate to include sunset clauses in their special legislation.

Why would Canada, which prides itself on being a model when it comes to protecting human rights, refuse to include sunset clauses to protect these rights over time, as other countries are doing?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, some democracies have sunset clauses, some do not. Our recommendation to the Parliament of Canada is a three year review clause.

I come back to the point that the Prime Minister and I have reiterated in the House that we are interested in hearing what the House of Commons committee and the Senate committee have to say. We will listen very carefully and study very closely the advice and recommendations of both committees.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the tragic events of September 11, the government has been telling us that we must not give in to terror and that we must change nothing in our way of life.

Does the government realize that it has fallen into this trap itself by dangerously encroaching on civil liberties and by changing our way of life without giving any clear guarantees that this special legislation will only apply for a limited time period?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I categorically deny that the government, in its anti-terrorism legislation, is trampling civil liberties or fundamental freedoms. We believe everything in our anti-terrorism legislation is within the spirit of the charter of rights and freedoms and within those values of any free democratic society.

To go back to the earlier point, we have indicated our preferred option for a review mechanism. I understand that this is an issue on which reasonable people of good faith can disagree. Therefore, we look forward to hearing the advice and recommendations of the two committees reviewing this legislation.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the world looks on with horror as the number of Afghans threatened with starvation continues to grow. UN officials estimate that this could be as many as 5.5 million people. Food aid workers on the ground estimate it to be as high as 7.5 million.

At the very least will the Canadian government consider calling for a halt in the bombing to allow emergency food aid to reach the millions who will otherwise literally starve to death?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the plight of the Afghan people. We have long been concerned. They have gone through years and decades of conflict. Every effort is being made to provide humanitarian aid.

The government, through CIDA and through my department, which is providing aircraft for humanitarian aid, is doing so. However, at the same time, we need to continue the counterterrorism plan to flush out the terrorists and to suppress terrorism so that the people in this country, in the United States and in the free world can

feel safe and secure from the kind of terrorist activity we saw on September 11.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, winter is closing in on starving Afghans. UN food stock is down to a two week supply. Millions are threatened with starvation and only a halt in the bombing will allow the necessary food relief to get into Afghanistan. Oxfam is calling for the halt, so are others; Christian Aid, Islamic Relief, Action Aid and UN officials on the ground.

Will Canada respond to this monumental human tragedy by supporting the call for a halt in the bombing?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of National Defence pointed out, it is not only possible but necessary to at one in the same time fight against terrorism and provide support for Afghan refugees.

This is our approach, this is what we support and this is what the free world supports.

* * *

HEALTH CANADA

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, respecting the drug Cipro, the Minister of Health has admitted that he gave his officials "the direction to stockpile the drug".

When he gave that order, did the minister know his officials were contemplating a purchase that would break the Canadian law protecting patents? Did he seek advice from the law officers of the crown before directing his officials to break Canadian law?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the absolute priority for me is the health security of Canadians. I want to make it clear that the emergency response officials at Health Canada acted in good faith in taking the steps they did to stockpile medications needed for health security reasons. There are different versions as to what happened. That will eventually be sorted out.

I would like to make it clear that I have directed all the interested parties to meet to resolve these issues to assure everyone that everything was done lawfully, and that is exactly what is going to be done.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, is the minister trying to tell us that the administration of his department is in such a state of chaos that he is allowing officials to violate the Patent Act without notifying him, consulting him, or without him even knowing about it? Who is running the shop in that department?

Has the minister established a contingency fund to deal with legal proceedings that may be launched by Bayer or Apotex?

Oral Questions

•(1430)

[English]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only reaffirm that our priority on this side of the House is to make sure that the health security of Canadians is protected. We will do that. That means, including other things, the accumulation of medications that may be necessary. I can assure the House that we are making every effort.

I have told officials to meet with the companies to resolve outstanding disputes and ensure that everything is done to protect health security within the law.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in spite of the minister's soothing words, his credibility has suffered a serious setback. He first explained the illegal contract for anthrax medicine by saying that he could not get what he needed from the legal patent holder. He said that he had even asked them twice and they could not supply it.

It turns out that was not true at all. Now his story is he knew nothing about the illegal contract. Now let the minister explain this clear and glaring contradiction.

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are differing versions at the moment of what happened. We know what happened and in the fullness of time so will the House.

In the meantime, I have directed officials to meet with the companies in question to try to resolve all outstanding disputes, and I am confident that that can be done.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Well, Mr. Speaker, how can the government pretend to enforce law and order when one of its own ministers gives out a story that turns out not to be true and enters into an illegal contract, breaking the patent law of the country? Is this what the Government of Canada condones in one of its ministers?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member will see that everything that I said will be borne out. I can only assure her and the House that we are confident that the discussions which I have directed officials to undertake will be successful.

* * *

*[Translation]***ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION**

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the deputy information commissioner stated in an interview that the anti-terrorism legislation could result in what he described as a "massive contravention of the Access to Information Act". This statement is in line with that of the privacy commissioner, who expressed similar concerns last week.

When two commissioners express reservations as serious as these, is this not enough for the minister to realize and accept the fact that her bill warrants serious review and must include sunset clauses to limit the life of it?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously I respect the

views of the privacy commissioner and the access commissioner. They will have the opportunity to appear before both the House committee and the Senate committee this week. I look forward to reading their testimony to see what advice and recommendations they may have for us.

However I come back to the point on which the hon. member concluded. We made it plain that we believe a review process is more than adequate to ensure the protection of Canadian rights and freedoms. We look forward to hearing what the committees have to say in relation to this matter.

[Translation]

Ms. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we all know very well there are requirements for confidentiality in the fight against terrorism. Does the minister not understand, however, that what we disagree with is her deciding alone on control of information?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, my ability to issue a certificate is only in exceptional circumstances in relation to a limited type or category of information surrounding international relations or information in relation to national security.

However, as I said in relation to certain other matters, I know the concerns of the access and privacy commissioners. I know the concerns expressed by the Bloc. I look forward to what the committees have to recommend.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has a headache on his hands and it will likely take more than a few aspirins to clear it up.

Today he is working feverishly behind the scenes to fix the mess but to do that he may end up paying out big dollars either to break a contract or for breaking patent rights. That is money that belongs to Canadians for their health and safety. It is enough also to give each of us a headache.

Why are taxpayers on the hook for his mistake?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should not jump to conclusions. We are stockpiling medications for health security reasons. We will continue to do that.

We will make sure that our health security needs are met. We will do that lawfully. There are disputes at the moment among companies. I have directed officials to resolve those. I am confident they will be resolved. The bottom line is that our health responsibilities will be met.

Oral Questions

• (1435)

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the company that was given the illegal contract said that it began production and that it will sue if the minister backs out. Will Canadians now end up paying twice for the same stockpile of medicine?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned to see that Canadians get value for their money. I am confident they will. I am confident the present disputes can be resolved. Most important of all, I am confident that we will meet our responsibilities to Canadians to ensure the security of their health needs.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has stirred up controversy by announcing that it bought drugs from Apotex so as to be ready for any possible anthrax contamination.

But Bayer already markets a drug for this purpose which is protected by the Patent Act. The announcement was made without anyone having checked with Bayer as to its capacity to deliver large stocks rapidly.

How does the Minister of Industry explain that the Minister of Health deliberately violated the Patent Act?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the security of Canadians' health, including the need to stockpile the drugs necessary to protect that health, is naturally my top priority.

Health Canada officials acted responsibly. There are certain problems between the companies. I have asked officials to resolve these problems and I am confident that an agreement will soon be reached.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the health argument does not cut it because, on the one hand, the federal government is getting ready to buy unapproved copies of a drug and, on the other, Bayer is manufacturing a drug approved by Health Canada and can respond immediately to the federal government's needs.

Only one question remains. What was the real reason behind this political decision?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and the House of Commons that we intend to resolve this matter responsibly. More importantly, however, we also intend to fully protect the health security of Canadians.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration made a big media splash about the maple leaf ID card for landed immigrants so that they could come and go in and out of Canada without a passport.

In typical Liberal half measure style, the proposed card is not state of the art and is in fact a low tech, easily duplicated piece of plastic that may cause more trouble than it attempts to solve.

Why did the minister not insist that the card be tamper proof?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that the new maple leaf card is state of the art, that it does have capabilities to ensure that it is fraud resistant and tamper resistant and further that it has biometric capacity as well as compatibility with U.S. technology.

However I want to discuss with the privacy commissioner before we move on any of those features.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the so-called smart card is really a dumb card. Credit card fraud and the production of fake charge cards have been around for years. The minister's card is no innovation at all; no embedded fingerprint or iris scan in the card.

Why is the minister going to give Canada a dumb card in maybe about two years rather than a smart card right now?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the new maple leaf card, which will be distributed in late spring of next year, just a few months from now, will be state of the art. It contains dozens of security features that frankly I do not want to discuss publicly because by discussing them publicly it will make it more difficult to secure the card.

The member opposite, perhaps at committee, might want to ask for a discussion of the new maple leaf card but I am not sure that members would want to have all the information about all the security features.

* * *

• (1440)

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

Last week the government announced additional funding for the Communications Security Establishment. Could the minister today elaborate on this announcement?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the \$37 million will help to buy new equipment for the Communications Security Establishment. It is an important organization within the government. It comes under the jurisdiction of defence but it works with our allies, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

We need to be on the leading edge of technology to make sure that we get the kind of intelligence, the kind of information that we need to be able to counter terrorism. This will give us the tools to do that.

BILL C-36

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice who has said repeatedly that she wants to listen to the advice and recommendations of the committee but she knows that the committee will not be giving advice or making recommendations. The committee will either be amending the legislation, Bill C-36, or not.

Is the minister prepared to say in the House that she will accept amendments coming from the committee that have to do with sunsetting certain controversial clauses of the bill? That is what the House and the committee needs to know.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the committee has a number of options available to it, one of which is to propose amendments to the House in relation to the legislation. The other option is that it can provide advice and recommendations to the government and the government can propose amendments to the legislation.

I have tried to be very open with the House committee and again this morning with the Senate committee. I look forward to hearing the views and advice of both committees. If the hon. member has amendments to propose and if we think they improve the legislation we will certainly consider them very seriously.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we may have amendments to propose but I think government backbenchers on the committee need to know that the government is truly open to amending the legislation. The Prime Minister's remarks did not exactly help in that respect.

Is the Prime Minister still open to the legislation being amended, having certain clauses sunsetted if that is the will of the committee? The House needs to know that otherwise the committee process will be a sham.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister and I have both been clear that we believe the three year review mechanism is the appropriate one. However I believe we have both been equally clear that we are open to advice and recommendations from either the House or the Senate committees. If the House committee chooses to make recommendations in relation to amendments, we as the government will consider those and we will consider them with an open mind.

I hope our goal is the same, which is to have the most effective and yet the fairest anti-terrorism legislation possible.

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HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health just said twice that there are different versions of what happened with regard to the Cipro issue. What are those versions and which one does he believe?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the true version and I want the member to know that only one version is true.

Oral Questions

I also want the member to know that we are doing everything we can to resolve the disputes that are in place at the moment. I also want to assure the House that despite the back and forth, our bottom line is health security. We are keeping our eyes on our responsibility and we will meet our responsibility.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, this is no laughing matter. It is a serious issue. The minister will just have to swallow the pill on this one. It has gone on and on.

With all the differing versions we want the truth. Who is making the pill right now in case we need it and who will pay for it?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will have sufficient pills to protect Canadians. We will stockpile the pills that we think are necessary and we will do that in a responsible fashion.

I do not want the House to think for a moment that we are going to lose sight of our most important responsibility. I announced last week that we will be stockpiling medications and that is exactly what we will do so that Canadians have what they need when they need it.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we know that more than 70% of refugee claimants who are not accepted by the government never leave our country. The British government has recently pledged to remove more than 24,000 illegal immigrants.

When will the minister of immigration announce her intention to remove people who are in this country illegally?

• (1445)

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the member opposite to table any evidence that he has to support the premise of his question. He is absolutely wrong.

Canada's number one priority is the removal of anyone who poses any kind of criminal threat to Canada's security. Our second priority is the removal of failed refugee claimants. Our third priority is the removal of others without status.

I challenge the member to table the evidence that is in the preamble to his question.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister ought to read the performance reviews that come from her own department. That is where those figures in fact came from.

Just last week a man who has been facing deportation since 1997 escaped from government custody. Since 1996 Askan Forsat, who remains at large, compiled a lengthy and violent criminal record while he was a guest in Canada at taxpayer expense.

Why will the minister not make public safety her top priority?

Oral Questions

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public safety is the number one priority of my department. I point out to the member opposite that in the last five years we have removed 45,000 people. Last year alone 8,636 individuals were removed, 1,700 of whom were criminally inadmissible, and the rest were either failed refugee claimants or those without status.

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[Translation]

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the UN secretary general personally issued an urgent appeal to member states on September 27.

The UN and its agencies need over \$900 million Canadian to help approximately seven million Afghans who are relying on international assistance for their survival. As of Friday, the UN still had only received 11% of that amount.

If the government truly wants to exercise the leadership that it can, should it not focus its efforts on humanitarian assistance and truly support the work of the UN in that regard?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question.

First, when the United Nations said that they would need so many hundreds of millions of dollars to help Afghan refugees, that was assuming a worst case scenario, that was if all Afghans were to leave their country.

Under the existing circumstances, Canada has so far given \$16 million in humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees. Canada has always been there for Afghans. We have given \$150 million over the past ten—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mercier.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that out of 22 countries that provide humanitarian assistance, based on relative wealth, Canada ranked 18th in the year 2000.

Quebecers and Canadians are disturbed by the bombings, because they see the impact on civilian populations.

When will Canada make a meaningful contribution?

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada and Canadians are concerned by this issue.

Over the past 10 years, Canada has contributed \$150 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees and their country.

As for what is now being done for Afghans and refugees, not only did Canada give \$16 million, but that money has already been allocated, which is not necessarily the case with other countries that promised money, but that have yet to come up with it. As for Canada, it has delivered—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary West.

[English]

G-8 SUMMIT

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in a short nine months Kananaskis, Alberta will be host to the G-8 summit. To date the Alberta government has received no formal commitment of financial support from the federal government. Quite obviously, given recent world events, heightened and costly security measures are needed now more than ever.

When will the government quit ignoring Alberta's demands and put funding commitments for the Kananaskis G-8 summit in writing?

• (1450)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Calgary police service and the RCMP have established a joint operation to assure the security of the G-8 summit. Discussions on reimbursement to Alberta and Calgary are under way.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister obviously does not know what the Calgary police service is doing.

The G-8 summit in Italy cost \$225 million. The Quebec summit of the Americas cost \$100 million. Amazingly, Quebec is still trying to recover money from the government's broken funding promises.

I would like to know what guarantees the government is prepared to make so the people of Calgary, Canmore and Alberta will not be left holding the bag like Quebecers were.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that the Government of Canada will stand up to its commitments. I can also assure my hon. colleague that discussions are under way with the Alberta government and the city of Calgary on reimbursement. A joint service has been established between the police service in Calgary and the RCMP to make sure we have the proper service and security in place.

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TRADE

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year the Minister for International Trade along with his counterpart from Singapore announced that they were going to look into the possibility of free trade between Canada and Singapore. Could the parliamentary secretary tell the House what happened to those discussions and where we are at this point in time on this issue?

Mr. Pat O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at APEC this past weekend in Shanghai, Singapore's Prime Minister Goh and the Prime Minister of Canada announced the intention of our two countries to begin negotiations on a bilateral trade agreement. Such an agreement would be the latest in a series of ongoing bilateral agreements that Canada has successfully negotiated. It would give us market access via Singapore to a very important region of the world. We look forward to an early conclusion to these negotiations.

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the justice minister said that the government would be open to any suggestions that might improve the new anti-terrorism bill. In particular, she left the door open to a sunset clause which could limit some of the more controversial aspects of the bill. Yesterday however, the Prime Minister said that he rejects the idea of a sunset clause. This not only contradicts his own justice minister, but it has also shanghaied the work of the justice committee.

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to allow the committee system to do its work on the most important bill that will be placed before this parliament?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister made plain was that we as a government believe that the appropriate review mechanism is a three year review of the entire legislative package. However both the Prime Minister and I have made it absolutely plain in the House that we are very interested in the work that both the House and the Senate committees are doing. We look forward to any advice, recommendations, or as the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona has suggested, perhaps amendments that would improve this legislation.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that we should trust him to conduct a legislative review of Bill C-36 in three years.

I wonder if we could just examine the record on this. Criminal code amendments regarding mental disorders should have been reviewed five years ago by the government. They have not been. Criminal code amendments pertaining to sexual offence proceedings are overdue by a year. Employment Equity Act amendments should have been reviewed by a similar committee. They are also overdue by one year. The Referendum Act should have been reviewed six years ago and the government has still not reviewed it.

Given that the government continues to honour these things only in the breach, why should we trust it now?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): As I have said, Mr. Speaker, we do believe the review mechanism is the appropriate one. That review can be carried out by a House of Commons committee, a Senate committee or a joint committee.

I would presume that parliamentarians would take their obligations seriously and take up that opportunity to review the legislation after three years.

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[Translation]

WATER CONTAMINATION

Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, nearly three years ago now, the Minister of Transport promised to deal with the problem created by his department's pollution of the water table in the beaches sector of Sept-Îles.

The minister promised to assume his responsibilities and take a lead role in the matter.

Oral Questions

Now that the municipal council of Sept-Îles has unanimously voted to demand the payment of \$2.5 million from the minister to remedy the situation, what is keeping the minister from assuming his responsibilities and paying this amount that is owing?

• (1455)

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, we have offered alternatives to the affected residents. That is the position of the federal government.

We continue to work with the population of the region on finding a long term solution.

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[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the Minister of Natural Resources led a trade mission of energy companies to Mexico last week. Why did the minister choose Mexico, why now and what was accomplished?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was my honour to lead a very positive Canadian energy business mission to Mexico last week. It was very well received by the Mexican government and by the private sector in Mexico. It was very well participated in by 25 Canadian energy businesses that travelled with me.

Canadian energy business activity already exceeds \$1 billion in Mexico. There is great potential for more. To position ourselves well in that market we need to be present in person, persistent and patient to establish the lasting foundations upon which future business opportunities will be built. I believe we did that last week.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, there may be a role for Canadian peacekeepers in Afghanistan as part of any United Nations mission to rebuild that country. Canada will not be able to keep that commitment if our forces currently deployed complete their full missions.

Could the Minister of National Defence inform the House today what current commitments we will have to drop to put soldiers into Afghanistan as peacekeepers?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that question is far too premature because there is no determination of a peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan.

I clearly indicated that Canada wants to help Afghanistan get back on its feet. Whether it does that through humanitarian aid, through CIDA, through helping it establish a civil society or possibly through peacekeeping, all of those matters are up for consideration.

However, no decision has been made about any peacekeeping. In fact, the special envoy to the secretary general of the United Nations does not think a UN mission will be necessary. It is far too premature to be dealing with that.

*Routine Proceedings***HUMAN RIGHTS**

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, very shortly the Supreme Court of Canada will hear the Gosselin case, probably the most significant test of the charter of rights involving the rights of four people to adequate food, security and housing.

It is hard to believe that the federal government is not intervening to defend the vision of a just society that supports economic and social rights to which Canada has signed internationally.

Will the Minister of Justice review this case and intervene positively, including support for the provinces, so that no Canadian has to live the way Louise Gosselin was forced to live? Will the minister respond to that?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is accurate. At this time we have no intention of intervening in this case.

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[*Translation*]

HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, there was a promise that two bridges would be constructed, along with a 14 kilometre section of Highway 30. This promise has since become a mere commitment to do the work, and then a call for expressions of interest.

Could the Minister of Transport tell us what stage the request for information process has reached, and what the deadline is for completing the 14 kilometre section of Highway 30 and the two bridges? It is becoming a matter of urgency for the Montreal and Montérégie regions.

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the extension of Highway 30 is a federal government priority. We are working in conjunction with the provincial government to determine all the costs and analyze all the facts before constructing this link that is so needed by Canadians, particularly the residents of Montreal.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, eight provincial premiers are leading the charge on border security and trade flow. The Deputy Prime Minister has arrogantly declared that this is solely a federal issue.

Why will the government not bring the provinces quickly to a Canadian border summit before meeting with Mexico and the U.S.?

• (1500)

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I am just speaking in terms of constitutional reality but we are interested in hearing the views of provinces. They will be consulted.

By the way, the provinces have their own direct role in this. Are they attending to the security of the documents they issue like drivers' licences? Are they ensuring the security of provincially

regulated infrastructure? Let them assure us that they are doing their job. I know we are doing our job.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Mihaly Varga, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Hungary.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question I asked during question period, the minister of immigration asked me to table the documents that backed up my statement that more than 70% of people who were not approved for refugee status never leave the country.

Those figures are in fact in the minister's own performance documents. I would just like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a copy of the performance report as soon as I can get one.

The Speaker: If I could make a suggestion, perhaps it would be prudent for the hon. member to get the copy first and then seek consent of the House to table the document. These things normally are not given in advance in my experience. If he would wait, I think it might be prudent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34 I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to two very special meetings held in Washington in June and July of this year.

The purpose of these meetings was to impress upon our parliamentary friends in the United States the harm they were doing with respect to our forestry industry, particularly softwood lumber, which is one of our most important industries.

It was also to impress upon our friends in the United States that this is just one natural resource which goes along with our other natural resources such as mining, electrical power, oil and natural gas, and that we cannot look at one natural resource in isolation of another.

I would like to say that on such short notice the committee staff with whom I work, Carol Chafe, June Dewetering and John Christopher, were absolutely superb. As Canadian parliamentarians we can be very proud of the people we have assisting us in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

●(1505)

FUGITIVES FROM JUSTICE IN OTHER COUNTRIES ACT

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-403, an act respecting fugitives in Canada from justice in other countries.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important and time sensitive private member's bill. Its enactment would require annual reports to be submitted by the Minister of Justice to parliament on the extent, volume and progress of extradition requests received by Canada each year.

These reports would be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for consideration and a report. The committee would then recommend that a point of extradition law be referred to the Supreme Court of Canada for an opinion.

There is provision in the bill for the Minister of Justice to respond to the committee's recommendation for debate in the House of Commons. This is very much in keeping with the need for transparency and greater examination of these issues in Canada.

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

* * *

PETITIONS**CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition from citizens of the Peterborough area who are very concerned about cruelty to pets. The petitioners point to several very highly publicized recent examples of animal abuse and neglect, some of them sadly in our part of Ontario.

Frontline workers such veterinarians, humane societies and others are becoming frustrated with what they face regularly from the results of animal cruelty. They point out that legislation has been introduced in the form of Bill C-15 which would allow much more significant consequences to apply to those abusing or neglecting animals.

They call upon parliament to expedite Bill C-15 to get it into law and all members of the House to exercise good conscience in so doing.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition in support of bioartificial kidney researchers initiated by Ken Sharp from my riding. The bioartificial kidney is an experimental implant device which would help those who at the moment depend on dialysis or kidney transplantation.

The petitioners out that 18,000 Canadians suffer from end stage kidney disease. They call upon parliament to work and support the bioartificial kidney which will eventually eliminate the need for both dialysis or transplantation for those suffering from kidney disease.

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

●(1510)

[English]

FOREIGN MISSIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-35, an act to amend the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand again to speak to Bill C-35. As was mentioned the debate on this bill began last Thursday. When I approached the table today I was told that I had 14 minutes left unless I was speaking French and then I would have 15 minutes. I will attempt to do this in English and I should be done in 14 minutes.

The bill does a number of things. One of the main thrusts of the bill is the implementation of part of the Hughes report. This summer we went through the Hughes report that dealt with the APEC inquiry. It made many recommendations.

One of the recommendations dealt with the RCMP. It recommended the requested statutory codification of the nature and extent of police independence from government with respect to two different areas: first, the existing common law practices regarding law enforcement and, second, the provision and responsibility for delivery of security services at public order events. Bill C-35 intends to implement the last part of the Hughes report but not the former part.

RCMP Commissioner Zaccardelli dismissed the key recommendations saying that there was no need in his opinion for statutory recognition of police independence.

Canadians must have confidence that the RCMP can do its job. That includes investigating the government in suspected cases of wrongdoing without fear of interference or reprisal. APEC is not an isolated incident. There are other examples, such as the airbus affair, that suggest the government may have improperly interfered with or instructed the RCMP.

A number of books chronicle the politicization of the RCMP, such as Paul Palango's *Above the Law*, and Stevie Cameron's *On the Take*.

Government Orders

In January 1997 the federal government reached a \$2 million out of court settlement with former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in what we call the airbus affair. It has been almost five years and Canadians have never learned the truth as to who was ultimately responsible for this libel suit. No one was ever held accountable for the Liberal government's suspect political intervention into a criminal investigation of national and international importance.

For those who may not remember, I will refresh their memory. In 1995 a letter of request was sent to Swiss authorities signed by justice department lawyer Kimberly Prost on behalf of the justice minister. Contained within this letter was a false accusation. It stated:

This investigation is of serious concern to the Government of Canada as it involves criminal activity on the part of the former Prime Minister.

On November 4, 1995, Roger Tasse, Mulroney's lawyer, contacted the justice minister via telephone to apprise him that they were in receipt of the letter written to the Swiss authorities. According to news reports Tasse pleaded with the minister to water down the language and send a new document to Switzerland. The minister refused. Furthermore in a letter dated November 8, 1995, to the justice minister Mulroney's lawyer stated:

In light of the most important, unjustified and highly damaging statements contained in the request made to the Swiss authorities, we urge you to personally review the matter and to direct your department to withdraw the request already made and to present, if that is the wish of the RCMP, a new request that is more respectful of basic rules of fairness and decency.

The justice minister again refused to withdraw the letter. That resulted in a \$50 million lawsuit by Brian Mulroney. Even the former RCMP commissioner was concerned that the lawsuit would jeopardize the criminal investigation. He stated:

I have been very concerned about the potential impact on the criminal investigation of a long and very public civil process.

● (1515)

The minister again refused to withdraw the letter. A civil suit proceeded and at the very last moment the justice minister made an out of court settlement with an apology. This cost Canadian taxpayers \$3.4 million. However the letter containing the false accusation was not withdrawn. The court decision indicated that the request letter was invalid as it had followed an improper process. Rather than withdraw the letter the former justice minister appealed the decision.

I know this case may be old news but to date Canadians have never been given answers. This matter has not been resolved. Nor has anyone been held responsible except for RCMP Staff Sergeant Fraser Fiegenwald. We have been left with the impression that Staff Sergeant Fiegenwald who allegedly leaked this information to author Stevie Cameron was responsible for the entire airbus scandal including the \$3.4 million that this fiasco cost Canadians.

The facts as far as I understand them do not support this perception. However the government did nothing to dispel it, especially after Fiegenwald was conveniently allowed to retire from the force just before a code of conduct proceeding.

A cloud hangs over the RCMP as a result of airbus and all the many unanswered questions. It is negatively affecting its reputation. A cloud also hangs over the Prime Minister, the former justice minister and the former solicitor general as their involvement in this

matter still remains suspect. Although it is not too late to lift this cloud by allowing the truth to be known, I am sure the government will never allow an investigation into this affair.

In 1997 a motion was brought before the standing committee on justice and legal affairs. The motion originated with my party and had the support of the Bloc, the NDP and the Tory members of that committee. It called for an examination of the facts pertaining to airbus. Not surprisingly the motion was shot down by Liberal members of that committee, particularly the member for Scarborough—Rouge River who believed that if the committee—

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps the member should speak in French as in French he might be relevant to the topic of discussion because at this point he is not. Perhaps the member could—

The Speaker: I know the hon. member will draw some connection between the things he is saying now and the bill that is currently the subject of debate before the House. We are all looking forward to that.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I am sure if the member would sit and listen rather than referring to all the other people around him he would understand that the bill deals with the RCMP and the cloud that hangs over it. It deals with the two recommendations that have been brought forward by the Hughes report.

It is very condemning of the Liberal government when we talk about airbus and it brings up the rancour of many on that committee because it is still an issue that has not been dealt with. We are talking about the politicization of the RCMP and its involvement—

The Speaker: With great respect to the hon. member, the bill deals with foreign missions and international organizations. It does not appear to have a great connection with the RCMP. Perhaps he could elucidate the House on this point a little further. We would appreciate his comments in dragging the bill into the debate.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your intervention. If you take a look at the summary of the bill, it clearly states:

The enactment further provides that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has the primary responsibility to ensure the security for the proper functioning of intergovernmental conferences.

This refers to APEC. I am sure that if this member would listen he would hear very clearly. He has to read the bill to see the correlation.

I would ask, because of the impropriety shown by the member, that at least a few minutes of my time be put back. I can spend that time instructing the minister or the member because he is not a minister on the RCMP and how it is related to the bill. He is in the back row where he will probably sit forever. The member for Scarborough—Rouge River believed that if the committee—

● (1520)

Mr. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on another point of order. If a member raises a question of relevance, is it appropriate for the member to whom the question is directed to respond with personal allegations and asinine comments as we have just heard?

Government Orders

The Speaker: We are getting into debate here. I think the hon. member will have his opportunity in due course.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I would gladly answer his question in the question and comment period. If he wants to take a look at the bill, he can take a look at proposed section 10.1 and he will very clearly find the reference we are drawing attention to.

Getting back to the committee meeting we were referring to, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River believed that if the committee conducted such an inquiry with the police investigation still in process the RCMP's case might be jeopardized, but the members did agree that at some point down the road an inquiry should be done.

Guess what, we are still waiting and, believe it or not, time has not diminished the memories or the magnitude of this scandalous affair. In fact, now the question is not just the scandalous affair. It is the question of a possible cover-up.

As I am accustomed to doing in the House, I would like to quote from an article that appeared in the Edmonton *Sun* of November 25, 1997. I do so because it is important to demonstrate that the opinions of this side of the House are shared by others. The article states:

There should be a thorough and public fumigating of the events surrounding the \$1.8 billion purchase of European Airbus passenger jets by Air Canada during Mulrony's tenure.

But not solely for the reasons stated by Mulrony in his interview.

The purpose of the inquiry in the former PM's eyes is to get to the bottom of who knew what in Ottawa—with the trail of incriminating evidence hopefully leading right to the prime minister's office.

There certainly is an air of incredibility surrounding the incident which would have Canadians believe that a lowly RCMP sergeant was flying solo when he requested the damning letter to Swiss banking authorities—the letter wherein Mulrony and other top former PC officials were implicated...We can't blame Mulrony for attempting to clear his name while at the same time holding the feet of his political tormentors to the fire...Sadly, there appears to be an unwritten rule in federal politics that governments don't go digging into the excesses of the previous regime. If only to prevent receiving the same treatment when they get booted from office.

Ottawa's cosy code appears to have been broken in the Airbus affair. And so it should have been—which is the second reason why a comprehensive probe is a good idea. The allegations in the affair, if proven, would amount to one of the biggest political scandals in Canadian history.

That's why it's absolutely necessary to assure Canadians that they aren't true.

This clearly will not happen if left to the footdragging of the Ottawa Liberals—who now have as much to answer for regarding their own behaviour as they do in seeing the RCMP investigation carried out with commitment and vigor. A thorough, comprehensive and independent inquiry into all aspects of the Airbus affair is an excellent idea. Canadians need to know the truth.

That said, given what passes for government in Ottawa these days, there are only two chances of such an inquiry happening. And slim just left town.

In other words, what the article is saying is that the chances of that happening with this federal Liberal government are next to nothing.

It is absolutely imperative that every member of government, up to and including the Prime Minister, is subject to the laws of the land. The public must be confident that the federal government is not above the law. I thereby call upon the Liberal government to immediately bring in legislation clearly defining the role and independence of the RCMP in law enforcement.

I also call upon the government to properly and effectively respond to the Hughes report and all of its recommendations, not bury the truth as is customary for the government. Repeatedly the

government has, when convenient or necessary, held back or shut down inquiries. We do not need to go back to all the different inquiries that it has brought these types of things into and then forgotten about. We know about the blood scandal and the Krever report. We know about the defence minister shutting down the Somalia inquiry. We know about all the other inquiries that have come forward and that the government has put a lid on.

In regard to the bill we again call on the government to make changes and to put some of them in the RCMP Act, not just in the bill.

• (1525)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to talk to Bill C-35, an act to amend the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act. My distinguished colleague, the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, has covered much of the law enforcement aspects of the bill and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has addressed the international trade issues on behalf of the opposition coalition. I will, relatively briefly, bring up a few issues that are of concern to me.

First, some people refer to this as a housekeeping bill. I have a hard time accepting it as a housekeeping bill. This would affect a lot of different aspects of the way we do things, who does what, who is allowed to do what, the actions of the RCMP and so on. Although it would really correct or update our domestic laws to meet our international commitments, it does define a new or a more explicit role for the RCMP and in that way I find that it is a little more than just housekeeping.

Although I understand the philosophy and the purpose of the bill, I think it would create a double standard. It is a slippery slope that the government is getting on, it seems to me, where it would be establishing two sets of rules. It is saying that Canadians would be subject to the law of the land but foreigners often would not. It would expand that level of immunity and quite dramatically extend who would qualify for the immunity.

Under the bill, new organizations and new groups that are not clearly defined would qualify for immunity from certain aspects of our laws. In the other bill we have before us, the terrorism bill, Bill C-36, I notice a line which states that foreigners might not necessarily have to follow the rules of the firearms control act. I find this a little strange because Canadians obviously have to abide by these laws. It seems like the government is going from one bill to another and establishing a dangerous precedent, so we would have one set of rules for Canadians and another set for many foreigners. This would go far beyond what we have done before in allowing different groups and organizations to be recognized for these benefits.

Government Orders

Another concern is that the government had an opportunity here to address the issue of foreign diplomats who commit crimes or offences while under the influence. We are all very much aware of the awful tragedy that happened in Ottawa when a Russian diplomat ran over two pedestrians, killing one and severely injuring the other. Nothing has happened about that. There has been no accountability. This person had a long record of alcohol offences. Nothing was done to prevent the accident and nothing has been done to hold this person accountable. He was whisked away to Russia very quickly. When our government demanded an investigation and accountability, the Russians said if we wanted that we would have to pay them to send their investigators from Russia to Canada to investigate it. I did not see a lot of commitment on behalf of that foreign government to address this concern that outraged many Canadians.

It will be a long time before we have another opportunity to address these issues. The bill could have done that but it definitely does not. It does not address any of those issues that raised a lot of concerns. It just seems so unfair. People were outraged about the accident. Again, the bill, which reorganizes the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act, could have dealt with that but did not.

Certainly Canada has to encourage organizations to come to Canada to have their meetings, like the G-8, APEC and so on, and perhaps some of the immunity aspects have to be extended to them. Previously these immunities have been extended only to organizations and nations with which we have treaties, not just organizations that are non-structured or mobile and move around. This makes me wonder what other organizations would qualify for this immunity from taxes and our laws and who could actually commit crimes and not be held accountable. It is just a little scary.

I agree that we have to be in a position to attract these organizations. We are a well respected country and an appealing country for these types of meetings, being relatively safe and secure. We have to be able to provide the amenities and competitive immunities.

● (1530)

However, it seems to me that the bill goes a little too far and is not defined enough on who could qualify for these issues. For instance, it is not clear about interparliamentary meetings and things like that. Under the bill would all these members be immune from criminal prosecution or taxation et cetera?

Another aspect of the bill would change the process for allowing someone with a criminal record to come to Canada. Currently the minister has to provide a minister's permit to allow a person who has a criminal record to come to Canada. The outstanding example of this is Nelson Mandela. Not one of us in the House, I think, would ever question Nelson Mandela's right and privilege to come to Canada, speak with us and meet with us in parliament, but he has a criminal record and he required a minister's permit to allow him to come here. That would no longer be necessary because the permit would be issued under the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act and would no longer require the minister's permit.

Another part of the bill that was dealt with by the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough was the RCMP aspect. It is a very important aspect because it very clearly defines who would be

responsible when international guests are here. Many people in Canada were outraged about the violence and protests during recent meetings in Vancouver and Quebec. There always was confusion about the chain of command, about who ordered the police to do what and when, whether it was political, RCMP, local or provincial police or what. The bill would correct that.

It would remove that question and would allow a lot of us to have a little more peace of mind when we are inviting meetings to Canada. I hope it would help us and help them if there would be just one police department involved with the protests. We hope they would better understand the rights of protestors to protest and demonstrate. They do have a right to protest and demonstrate, but with the confusion over who was in control of the meetings and who was responsible for policing and law enforcement, I think things happened at the meetings that should never have happened. I believe having one group in charge would be a positive move. The huge report on APEC pointed out the need for clear parameters in order for the RCMP to be able to police these meetings without having to answer to political bosses, provincial police forces and so on.

It would be a very positive step and I hope the RCMP will take advantage of the opportunity to better understand how people can be allowed to protest and demonstrate legitimately without encouraging violence or demonstrations that turn into anything other than demonstrations.

The legislation appears to cover three general types of international organizations. There are international organizations originating by treaty, for instance, NATO and the International Civil Aviation Organization in Montreal. They are currently covered under the immunity, which would be extended to a second category, the new international organizations with headquarters in Canada, like the IOC, the environmental secretariat and different NAFTA bodies, which are growing steadily.

The third one is stand alone organizations that move from country to country, like APEC and the G-8. I am not satisfied nor am I comfortable with how that is defined and what groups could be included. Could groups involved with the chambers of commerce and things like that come under that umbrella of immunity? We are anxious to get the bill to committee to analyze it and see if there are extended immunity rights that were never meant to be part of the bill.

There is no question that our country should be in a position to play host to these organizations. I think Canada is an attractive destination for them. Recently we moved the meeting of finance ministers to Canada because it could not be held in India. That is just an indication of what we have to offer.

To wind up, I am concerned about the double standards between Canadians and non-Canadians. The bill would extend immunity and taxation exemptions to a number of groups. It seems to ring a bell to me with extending the immunity or exemption from the firearms control act to non-Canadians whereas Canadians have to follow those rules. We need more clarification.

Government Orders

•(1535)

On the upside, the bill ensures that Canadian diplomats receive the same privileges and immunities that their representatives in Canada receive when our diplomats are in foreign countries. It has an enforcement clause and that is a good aspect in it.

We support both the purpose and philosophy but we hope there will be amendments that deal with some of the concerns which I and my colleagues have raised throughout this debate.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order in response to the question that the minister of immigration answered earlier. She asked me to table a document that backed up a statement I made. I have that document and I ask for unanimous consent to table it so the minister can look at the numbers and know that what I said was accurate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague in the coalition from Cumberland—Colchester. He is not a man who often sings his own praises, but I will briefly mention that he is very hard-working and is in fact working on bringing together a conference of individuals from the Middle East, Palestine and Israel, to talk about a resolution to the ongoing conflict taking place there. I congratulate him for his hard work on that particular issue.

I will ask him one question about Bill C-37, that being the part that was brought up earlier by the member for Crowfoot about the RCMP and its role in providing security in these kinds of situations. Could my colleague comment on whether he thinks that is addressed adequately within this bill or is there more that could be done in that particular area?

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, first, I will make it clear that I do not sing at all. I appreciate the comment, but it is an all party effort, with members of all parties attempting to bring the Israeli and Palestinian members of parliament to Canada to meet with Canadians. It has already been a rewarding experience because for eight months Israelis, Palestinians and Canadians have worked together. We have not accomplished the goal yet, but we have already made progress.

As far as the question of law enforcement, I am confident that the clarification of the RCMP as the law enforcement agency responsible for enforcement in this situation will ensure a much better reaction and law enforcement situation. Plus, if we have a group of RCMP specialists in this type of field who specialize in the management of these international events, they can understand and perhaps use their experience to improve the process so that protesters can protest and demonstrators can demonstrate without violence, without damage and without the awful circumstances involved in recent events.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too will attest to the hon. member for Colchester—Cumberland's hard-working approach to all that he does in the House of Commons. In that regard, he reflects of

course the hard-working people of his province and my native province.

As well, I thank him for the comments he has made outlining the strengths of the bill to amend the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act. However, having delivered the good news to the hon. member, I was somewhat taken back when he indicated that he did not believe a thorough investigation has followed the tragic events regarding Mr. Knyazev's departure from the country and what led to it. I assure the House that we have been doing everything possible to assure that Mr. Knyazev is investigated and brought to justice.

In that regard, we have worked closely through the mutual legal assistance program with the Russian authorities. They have now completed their investigation and, in accordance with Russian law, investigators must now review their report with the victim and her family. This is consistent with their approach.

We have from the outset worked very hard to make sure that everything was appropriate, that this was a very thorough investigation, and although it has been extended, there is no concern whatsoever that any deadlines will be missed in that regard. I do feel it necessary and incumbent on the hon. member to check his empirical data in future.

•(1540)

Mr. Bill Casey: My empirical data is very simple, Mr. Speaker. There have been no charges laid and the Russians have not cooperated in the way they should have. The big one for me was, they said that they would only send Russian investigators to Canada if Canada paid. That does not show much of a commitment on behalf of the Russians to see that justice is done. Justice in this case will only be done if we pay for it even though the charges are against Russians not against Canadians. The Russians should pay for this.

However, I am not arguing that the government did not do what it could within the parameters that were available. The parameters should change, and they could have been changed under this bill, to give more access to justice to ensure that justice is done in the event that a crime like this occurs.

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I have one last comment. No justice is rendered if charges are brought prematurely.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, no justice is rendered if no charges are brought.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the member had to say about these meetings which had to do with the Middle East. It strikes me as extremely topical. Could he give us a little more information on them.

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, this was a series of meetings proposed to bring Israeli members of the Knesset and Palestinian members of the legislative assembly to meet with Canadian parliamentarians. It was actually scheduled to take place last Monday but because of a change in schedules and the volatility of the situation, we had to delay it for a short time.

Government Orders

I am convinced that both sides are still committed to do this. As late as this morning, I talked to Israeli and Palestinian authorities and they are both still committed to come. It will be very beneficial for all of us if they can.

Again, the magic is that already the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Canadians have worked together. We have proven we can work together and make accomplishments, even if it is just a small accomplishment. I am very optimistic that if we get another chance to enhance this, we will even do better.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate my friend, the member for Cumberland—Colchester, on his efforts in bringing together the Israelis and the Palestinians. As he probably knows, he has taken on a Herculean task. Nevertheless, every effort helps and at some point will be able to break the camel's back or one more straw will destroy the enmity between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

It is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-35. I want to continue down the same path that my friend from Crowfoot started down. Not long ago he gave an excellent speech in this place about some of the concerns that we have about the separation between the people who enforce the law, the RCMP, and the government.

When there is a real embarrassment facing the government, if it had the opportunity, the temptation would be to use the RCMP or any police force to try and cover up that embarrassment. I will not suggest that this government is prepared to do that, but there have been concerns in the past and we all know that. I am speaking of the APEC affair or the airbus affair of which my friend spoke. There was enough evidence in the APEC affair to warrant our concern about that possibility. In the airbus affair, we saw evidence that the government did what it could to pursue a former prime minister to the point where it cost Canadian taxpayers \$3.4 million.

In Canada we have taken our freedoms for granted. For a long time we have lived in relative peace. We have never really been in a situation, not since Confederation, where our personal liberties have been seriously threatened. There have been times when there have been bumps along the road and at various points Canada has entered into great conflicts. Canadians have always valued their freedom, but unless they are threatened, after a period of time people tend to take their freedom for granted.

One of the greatest innovations of modern times is the idea of limited government. It is important to remember that for a long time in history the normal course of events was for the monarchy, or the government or the church to have all the power while individuals had none. Over the last 800 or 900 years we have seen that change. We have seen more and more rights accumulate to individuals. We should value those rights.

As somebody once said that government is not reasoned. It is not eloquence. It is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearsome master. I believe that is right. That is founded on what we know from history. Governments at various times have intervened in the ability of individuals to pursue their lives as they wished.

Any time a piece of legislation comes along that suggests that more power should accumulate to the government, in this case via the RCMP, we should be concerned. We should watch and make sure

that we are not giving away freedoms frivolously or without going through them to ensure that there is not some other way that we can deal with this. I submit that there is a different way that we can deal with this.

One of the things that legislators in general would be happy to see would be a government that recognized there was concern about its connection to the RCMP and security forces and that it would take some steps to ensure that there was, on the one hand, oversight, but on the other hand, eliminate some of the possible ways that, in this case, the Prime Minister's Office could interfere via security forces to try to cover up some kind of an embarrassment. There are ways to do that.

One way would be to involve this place, through our committees, to ensure that there would be some kind of an oversight capacity. Some people have suggested that we could set up our own committee to specifically deal with those types of things.

● (1545)

Perhaps it would be a subcommittee of the justice committee. It is a good idea to have some committee empowered to ensure that our security forces are not politically interfered with in some way. That is a critical point because at this point we almost leave it solely to the discretion of the ministers in charge as to whether or not they can get involved in some way. We really count on their good will.

I am not suggesting that every day it be challenged in some way, but there are times when governments could be tempted to intervene and in so doing start to limit the freedoms of individuals. At a time of crisis we need to be aware particularly of that possibility.

One possible option would be to set up a subcommittee or committee to have oversight to ensure that if some of these issues arise we have a way to look at them and deal with them.

I heard it said in this place by the justice minister today that there were concerns at this time about whether or not the government would interfere in the rights of individuals, or something like that. There have been many times when the government has interfered with the rights of individuals in Canada. I could point to Bill C-68 and suggest that the government absolutely and completely interfered with the rights of individuals when it brought in that legislation. It completely interferes with our right to private property.

Preceding Bill C-68, and I believe as a part of it, the government through order in council confiscated people's legally obtained firearms without compensation. That is completely contrary to the idea of property rights and the basic freedoms we have established over a long period of time.

Many people believe our basic freedoms were only defined in 1981 with the charter of rights. That is completely wrong. We had hundreds of years of common law tradition before then which really laid down the ground rules for our basic freedoms. Mr. Diefenbaker brought in a bill of rights which put those rights down on paper. I argue that the government violated those rights when it brought in Bill C-68 and started to confiscate firearms.

Government Orders

I argue that when it comes to endangered species legislation the government is on the cusp of interfering with our most basic property rights, again because it is not prepared to offer full compensation for land that is taken out of production in the hope it can somehow protect an endangered species. We have no problem with endangered species legislation, but we believe the government should ensure that the basic rights of people are protected.

There is no more fundamental right than property rights. Some people may question that, but I argue that every right is a property right. My friend from Hamilton nods his head, but every right is a property right. In fact there is only one right and it is the property right: the right to the security of ourselves, the right to control our actions, the right to acquire things. There is but one right and that is a property right in oneself.

When abolitionists were trying to get rid of slavery they used to call it man stealing because people were stealing someone else's person. I argue there is but one right and every other right flows from it: the right to property. The first right we have is the security of our own person. The right to freedom of speech flows from that. The right to freedom of association and the right to keep what we have produced with our hands and our minds all flow from the same source: the right to private property in ourselves.

When we set down laws at a time when we are concerned about having security of our person breached by forces outside our borders, we have to be careful that we do not at the same time breach them by empowering our government to do too much. That is my primary concern with Bill C-35 and actually with Bill C-36 as well, while we are talking about bills presently before the government.

There are other examples of how government has breached our rights even since I have been a member of parliament.

• (1550)

One thing that was most frustrating to me as an MP, as someone who comes from the west, was when the government lost a court case over the Canadian Wheat Board and moved very quickly to plug a loophole through order in council which effectively ensured that the government could stop farmers from the great crime of selling the wheat they had produced on their own land, selling it in that case to someone in the United States.

Even in Canada farmers are not allowed to sell their own wheat. It all has to pass through the Canadian Wheat Board, which is completely contrary to the—

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been here for quite some time and I thought we were looking at Bill C-35. Just in the summary of the bill it says it has to do with foreign missions and international organizations that allow Canada to comply with its existing commitments under international treaties and respond to recent developments in international law. Where is the relevance of the last 10 minutes?

• (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I ask the hon. member for Medicine Hat to tie everything he said in the past 10 minutes to the subject at hand.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, if the member cannot see the relevance of talking about basic fundamental rights whenever we

talk about any legislation, I am afraid I cannot say anything to him that would get the picture across.

Every piece of legislation that comes through this place has to be screened at some point, and I hope justice department lawyers do it, to determine whether or not it is in some violation of our fundamental rights. I can say nothing more than that to clarify it for the hon. member.

The summary of the bill talks about empowering the RCMP, giving the RCMP new powers which some people are concerned may kick the door open for political interference by the RCMP in matters that might embarrass the government. That is really the point I am trying to make. I am simply saying that there are precedents for governments violating our rights. One of the rights that have been violated, I would argue again, is a property right.

Andy McMechan, a Manitoba farmer, was put in chains and cast into prison for the great crime of selling his own wheat, a violation of his most basic right to property. It was absolutely ridiculous.

That is my response to my friend across the way who was wondering whether or not the legislation has any connection at all to the idea of basic rights. I argue that of course it does.

I go beyond that and touch on something else which my friend from Crowfoot touched on. He is here right now. He gave a great speech when he talked about some of these different things. I simply point out that when it comes to protest, I believe completely that people should have the freedom to protest.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. The hon. member for Medicine Hat has the floor.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, the freedom to protest takes many forms. The freedom to protest is limited like every other freedom. Every freedom has a reasonable limit. When protesters in Quebec City started to tear down fences and break windows, they should have been arrested and charged. They should have been convicted and sentenced, if in fact they were guilty of those crimes. I want to make that very clear. No freedom is unlimited. There are reasonable limits to all of them.

Instead of introducing new limits on freedom, what should happen is that security forces of various kinds should be given enough resources to enforce the laws that presently exist.

We do not need more and more laws that restrict our freedoms. We need adequate resources to enforce the ones we have. We made that argument in the past about Bill C-68 and other pieces of legislation. No law by itself will stop people from doing things if they have criminal intent. What will stop criminals is more police on the beat, more security and more intelligence gathering. All those things can stop criminals but just passing laws does nothing in and of itself.

Government Orders

When we are confronted with something like the APEC protest or the Quebec City protest, the issue is getting more police out there to ensure that people can protest peacefully and have their say about things, but the moment they step over the line, trespass on property or vandalize, that is when the police should step in and do their job.

One of the best examples of how well that can work is in New York City pre-September 11. Members will remember that when Rudolph Giuliani was elected as the mayor of New York City quite a while ago it was in a state of turmoil because there was a tremendous amount of crime. Mr. Giuliani said that if he were elected he would hire more police and put more cops on the beat. He did that.

They started charging people for crimes already on the books. Graffiti artists were arrested and charged. They cracked down on crime. They cracked down on those who were harassing people on the street. They cracked down on petty vandalism.

As a result, not only did they deal with petty crime but the violent crime rate dropped like a stone. That is the point. Making new laws will not fix everything, but if police are on the beat to enforce the laws it makes a huge difference. We know that empirically. Common sense tells us that.

For a long time in my own community we were battling to get a proper number of RCMP officers. The federal government had cut back funding to the RCMP. We had a situation where a lot of new people had come to town and the crime rate went up. Since we brought more police into the community my understanding is that things have stabilized. I do not know that crime is going down, but it certainly is not rising the way it was previously.

We are grateful the government is finally starting to put a bit more money into justice after listening to the Canadian Alliance. I guess it started to realize that perhaps it is not such a bad investment after all to put money into these things.

My point is simple. We should not assume that by creating new laws, and perhaps even violating some of the fundamental freedoms in which we believe so strongly, somehow some of the problems with crime will end. It will not happen. We need reinforcement. I conclude by saying that the government's first role has to be the security of the liberty of people.

•(1600)

In fact a lot of people would argue that the security of people's liberties should be the government's overwhelming and overriding role. What does that mean? It does not just mean securing their personal safety, as critical as that is, it also means securing all their fundamental rights, including the right not to have their lives interfered with by their own government.

While we are in this period where we are all concerned about threats from outside the country, we should also be alive to the danger of interference within the country from our own government.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes on this side of the House I am regarded as a somewhat conservative Liberal in the sense that I am very much a proponent of financial prudence, of financial transparency. I deplore the effect special interest groups have on government policy and that kind of thing.

Having listened to the member for Medicine Hat speak just now, I realize that despite these, shall we say, conservative tendencies, I belong on this side and not that side because the member for Medicine Hat brought in the concept of property rights and individual rights versus collective rights. If something defines me on this side, and I think defines the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Conservatives as well, it is the idea that collective rights have to take priority over individual rights.

The member for Medicine Hat is actually echoing a philosophy that exists in the United States, indeed, it is actually written in the constitution of both the state and the federal constitution in the United States. It is the idea that an individual has vested rights in property against every other influence.

We on this side of the House, and I think some opposition members, would think that the collective good actually transcends the individual's right to his or her own personal advantage.

He mentioned the species at risk legislation in which property rights may be in collision with the need to preserve species.

•(1605)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where my friend was going. Let me simply say that there have been many times, and I did not touch on all the examples, where individual rights have been breached for the good of the collective. Let me point to one that may resonate more with the member.

During the second world war we rounded up Japanese Canadians, took their property away and sent them to internment camps for the good of the collective. My point is that everybody should have a personal right to the security of their person no matter what, as long as they do not violate the equal rights of every other person to have that same security and freedom.

I want to argue that when we see things like what happened during the second world war when those people were rounded up, that was a violation of individual rights because of collective rights.

I want to make the point that when it comes to endangered species, there would be no collision between private property rights and the endangered species legislation if the government would simply compensate people for taking away their property. That is all we are asking.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments of my valued friend and colleague. I will refrain from making any reference to this mantra of free speech or any reference at all to the ability to speak our minds because I think my friend, more than anyone in the House perhaps, has come to appreciate this a great deal.

Government Orders

He spoke about the possible interference within government agencies, particularly the RCMP. We see that time and time again, even on a bill as important as the new anti-terrorism bill, Bill C-36, where at the outset of the bill going to committee, both here in the House and in that other place, the Prime Minister made comments from outside the country as to the outcome of the deliberations with respect in this instance to the sunset clause.

My friend also alluded to government becoming too large and interfering, particularly in property rights. I am reminded of an expression I heard that any government that is large enough to give us everything we want is certainly large enough to take everything we have. I think that expression ran through his speech as well.

Would the member expand further on this concept of parliamentary ability to do its work? The government and the Prime Minister, in particular, through his office and through his reach, which we have seen at APEC where Jean Carle was doing his bidding and through the Shawinigan affair where the BDC was called upon to make certain interventions, all of that is very indicative of a government that does not respect parliamentary democracy. I would encourage my friend to comment further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): For the few minutes that are remaining, let us come back to foreign missions and international organizations, please.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the section in the bill that deals with the role of the RCMP and the whole debate we just heard, reflects the cynicism that members in this place have about the ability of the House of Commons to deal with issues that are important to the public. Many of the decisions being made are made by the Prime Minister, by the PMO, outside this place, and Liberal members are just as frustrated as members on this side.

I completely support my friend in what he said. The Prime Minister's comments speak volumes about his respect for the House of Commons. I think that basically sums it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I would remind members again that we are discussing foreign missions and international organizations.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think your reminder is timely.

In response to my point of order before, the member is quite right, everything we do in the House is related to everything else that we do in the House and it is not difficult to make those relationships. For example, he has been discussing property rights and endangered species. I am pleased to see that there is an element of compensation in the current Endangered Species Act but, as Mr. Speaker just pointed out, this act has to do with foreign missions and international organizations.

What does the member think about the change in the legislation in the definition of international organizations? Does he not think this is an appropriate thing to do at this time?

• (1610)

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what that has to do with property rights.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Robertson is a gentleman in Ottawa who spent quite a

few decades as the privy council president. This past winter he said that our system of government had evolved into a form of elected dictatorship and that cabinet had become nothing more than a focus group. I am concerned that there be a separation between the powers of the police and the state, especially given the comments made by a very respected person in this town and one whose opinion I respect.

I just wonder whether we should not really be focused on separating the power between the dictatorship and the police force and make sure they work in an arm's length relationship.

I would ask my colleague from Medicine Hat if he has any such concerns.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the inability of parliament to insert itself truly into this debate. We are having a debate today and the minister is not here. None of the ministers are here. We are sitting here—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member is a veteran of the House. He knows perfectly well that he cannot refer to the absence of any minister nor any member.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the ability of parliament to become relevant in these sorts of debates. With rare exceptions, the decisions are made well before the legislation gets to this place. Again, Liberal members are just as frustrated about this as we are.

I have talked privately with many Liberal members. When we go to committee to sit down and talk about making changes to bills, I often see a parliamentary secretary hovering like a hawk, waiting for any sign that there might be some deviation from the government line on a piece of legislation, and if there is, members are brought to heel very quickly. That is unfortunate. We have competent people on all sides of the House who should be allowed to do their job, which is to represent their constituents and to use their talents and skills wisely.

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will, upon conclusion of my remarks, attempt to address some of the concerns that have been raised.

[*Translation*]

But I will not discuss the price of eggs in China.

[*English*]

I think basically that is the kind of thing that has been brought into the House today. I am disappointed when I hear speakers complain as they do about their perception of parliament not being relevant and then go on to list anything but what we are discussing today, which is Bill C-35, an act to amend the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act.

I would assure the House that as a Liberal member I am quite able to discuss and put forward my frustrations, such as they may be, and have never had need for the opposition parties to convey my frustrations. I have always been able to do that.

Government Orders

To move to the topic at hand, which is Bill C-35, an act to amend the Foreign Missions and International Organizations Act, I am pleased to perhaps bring a focus to the discussion today that not only are we amending an act but we are doing it at a time and within the ambience of the very tragic events in the United States, which reminded us that threats to public safety are of a global concern, that no system is infallible and that no country is immune.

Our commitment is to protect persons who attend international meetings in Canada. That is our focus and it is very clear. It is incumbent upon us, when we host any kind of meetings of organizations, to have the legislative power and authority to ensure the safety of everyone involved. As was mentioned, Canada is obligated to do so under various international conventions. The amendments that we brought forward clarify our ability to fulfill that obligation.

In June 2002, Canada will be hosting the G-8 summit in Kananaskis, Alberta. This will be the first meeting of world leaders since the horrendous acts of September 11. In preparing for this event, we will need to take all necessary steps to protect our international visitors and to ensure the meeting can take place safely.

These amendments provide clear statutory authority to support security measures and to ensure public safety and the safety of foreign delegations at international meetings hosted in Canada such as the G-8 summit.

The amendments also help us to respond with greater certainty to continuing and growing threats and to public safety in a world that has so remarkably and fundamentally changed since September 11.

Does the statutory authority to provide security mean that the police will have broader powers? Absolutely not.

I want to just digress from the notes that I had planned. I think there is a failure on the part of some members to understand that the federal government, in this situation, is attempting to umbrella two systems. One is the common law which we develop according to precedent. The law is growing and very much, as Thomas Aquinas said, a living thing.

At the same time, the province of Quebec has the code civile, the Napoleonic code. Instead of developing in a similar way as the common law, the Napoleonic code has all of what one wants contained in a statute written down and codified. It is incumbent on the federal government then to create legislation that recognizes and allows both systems to function within our ambit.

What I think is causing some concern here with regard to police powers is that all the authority has been very much in place within the ambit of common law. What these amendments attempt to do is clarify and codify in a manner that allows for no confusion. What is happening is that the confusion is occurring on the other side of the House.

The police have always had the authority to take whatever necessary and reasonable security measures were required to protect internationally protected persons and to preserve the peace in order for the important business of these international events to proceed. These amendments would simply clarify in statute police powers that are already in place.

This is also in line with legislation adopted by other countries, such as Australia and New Zealand which have gone ahead and clarified police powers in similar circumstances, just as we are going to contend with within these amendments. This is the prudent thing to do given the changing nature of international meetings and evolving challenges to global security.

In traditional diplomatic situations in the past, frequently the dialogue and negotiations occurred on a bilateral basis. Therefore, the immunities and all of what was set up within the Vienna convention were aimed to apply to what was the traditional method of conducting diplomacy, which was in a bilateral setting.

However, today, as we have evolved more and more, a great deal of our negotiations and our protocols are an end result of multilateral negotiations and rather than just occasional multilateral negotiations, they occur within the ambit of permanent international organizations that continue on a weekly-monthly basis, many of which have headquarters in Montreal and in other parts of Canada.

Specifically, the amendments would clarify three things:

First, the RCMP's role for assuming primary responsibility to ensure security for the proper functioning of an international conference attended by internationally protected persons.

Second, the RCMP's authority to take security measures, such as controlling, limiting or prohibiting access to an area in a manner that is reasonable under the circumstances.

Third, they clarify the fact that these statutory police powers do not affect the powers that the RCMP and other provincial and municipal police forces otherwise have under common law.

I would like to highlight to the House the tremendous co-operation that now takes place between the RCMP and its provincial and municipal counterparts to ensure the safe and secure running of these events.

The security for the summit of the Americas in Quebec City, for example, was the largest operation of its kind in recent Canadian history. It involved a partnership of over 3,600 RCMP members, 2,700 members of the Sûreté du Québec and 500 members of the Quebec City and Ste-Foy municipal police forces.

I wish to assure the House and Canadians that the RCMP will continue to work with its many international, federal, provincial and municipal partners to provide the most appropriate and effective security arrangements for all federally hosted international meetings much as it did in Quebec City.

The threat that faces us in the aftermath of September 11 will not be easily removed. Our actions will be ruled by resolve. If laws need to be improved they will be. If security has to be increased it will be. However our actions will continue to be driven by the need to safeguard the values that we cherish, the values of hope, freedom and tolerance to the world.

Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, everyone has the fundamental freedoms of, among others, assembly, expression and association.

These amendments balance the government's need to ensure public safety and the need to protect an individual's right to demonstrate, as has been mentioned, openly, publicly but in a safe setting. They are in no way intended to hinder peaceful protest. Any security measures taken by the police will still need to satisfy charter requirements: that they are necessary, reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

The amendments will help us to respond with greater certainty to a changed world. They will ensure public safety and the safety of our visitors at international meetings hosted by Canada. They will build on the success of partnership that police forces across jurisdictions have demonstrated at past international events. They will also protect the cherished values and freedoms that define what is meant by being a Canadian.

I certainly hope that some of the confusion that has been exhibited in speeches here and at the first reading have been addressed by my remarks. If not, I would be pleased to answer any questions that my colleagues may wish to ask.

• (1620)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is aware of the fact that in times like these the government must respond. We must look at existing legislation but we need to be careful not to overreact in the area of the charter of rights and freedoms and the values we all hold dear.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary two questions, one to do with security and one to do with international organizations.

First, there is an amendment with respect to security and the powers of our security organizations. Does this mean that until now police have been unauthorized to protect people who attend high level international meetings in Canada?

Second, why at this time do we need to extend diplomatic immunities to international organizations not established by treaty?

• (1625)

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Peterborough for his questions. With regard to the security question I would assure the member that police can provide such protection under common law, as was mentioned earlier. However the amendment hopes to clarify that power. To assuage some of the concerns across the way, clarification frequently leads to a delineation that is meant to make clear that police have a certain authority beyond which they cannot go. They cannot extend it to levels that would concern people. Clarification frequently means exactly that. That is all we are hoping to attain by moving out of the realm of common law and into a codification of that power.

The second question, a very good one, was with regard to international organizations that have not been established by treaty. This allows us to grant immunities and privileges by order. It is not an automatic trigger. It requires an order to be passed to organizations and conferences.

For instance, the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the G-8 are organizations that meet frequently in different places and have not been established by treaty. It almost goes without saying, but I guess we now need to say it in an amendment, that people who attend the OSCE, G-8 or similar bodies

must have the same immunities and privileges as those who attend organizations set up within the ambit of a treaty. Staying with the G-8, I suppose it is timely to have this clarified and in place.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. 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 Cumberland—Colchester, National Defence; the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, Airline Safety; and the hon. member for Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Transportation.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The recorded division stands deferred until the end of government orders tomorrow afternoon.

[*English*]

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think you would find consent of the House that we see the clock as 6.30 p.m. and that we proceed to the adjournment debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is there unanimous consent to see the clock as 6.30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

Adjournment Debate

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question I originally raised on May 30 which was five months ago. At the time the distinguished parliamentary secretary said he would be more than happy to take my question under advisement and get back to me at an early time. It is now five months later and at my initiative we are back to discuss the issue.

It is appropriate that we discuss the issue now considering the things that are happening and the fact that the Prime Minister has suggested he will send peacekeepers to Afghanistan to deal with the aftermath of the military action when it ends. The question was raised today in the House as to where the additional soldiers would come from, where the money would come from and which peacekeeping efforts would be reduced to deal with this.

However it is more important that the government send a message that it will play a part in establishing a transitional government in Afghanistan and that it fight hard to ensure the United Nations plays a key role in Afghanistan after the military action ends. If the United States or any other country sets up a puppet government in Afghanistan it will be a disaster the rest of the world will pay for a long time. It must be a United Nations initiative.

Does the government agree? Will it do everything it can to ensure Canada plays a key role in establishing a transitional government through the United Nations that recognizes and represents all facets of the population in Afghanistan? Can the parliamentary secretary tell members whether the government is prepared to play a role through the United Nations?

●(1630)

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question the member asked has absolutely nothing to do with the question he asked on May 30. For your information, Mr. Speaker, during question period he asked about the cancellation and reissuing by DND of the tender for the redeployment of vehicles and equipment from Eritrea. That is the question he asked. I do not know what that has to do with Afghanistan.

At this point in time Canada has not been asked by the United Nations and the United Nations has not made up its mind as to whether it is going to be involved in peacekeeping, and if peacekeeping is going to be involved in Afghanistan.

Perhaps the member should come back in six months and ask the same question again. He may actually get an answer. However, I will comment.

I appreciate the continuing interest of the member for Cumberland—Colchester in the military and the way it operates and the economy of scale that the military operates in. This ensures that the government has an opportunity to reply to some of the concerns raised by Canadians as to whether the military is combat capable, whether it is able to take part in the long term planning that is ahead of us and whether the enhancement of global deployability is still of great concern.

I appreciate the member's question. His question came from the incident with the GTS *Katie* in which a shipping firm was not being paid by the agent that had been contracted. It protested and Canadian equipment, containerized equipment mostly, was held up in high seas and not allowed to enter port. That created a situation. The Government of Canada, through the Minister of National Defence, had decided that the use of commercial carriers to move equipment and personnel, which has been a common practice among Canada's allies for many years for non-combatative services, eases the pressure on military personnel who would otherwise have to provide these services. On the subject of sealift in particular some valuable lessons were learned from the GTS *Katie* incident. A number of steps have been taken to strengthen the DND sealift contracting operations and options to meet the transportation requirements of the Canadian forces.

After consulting with the Department of Justice, legal counsel, the shipping industry and a number of NATO allies, DND decided to try an industry best practice approach of chartering its maritime transportation requirements directly with shipowners. This eliminates contracting intermediaries and allows for the solicitation of bids directly from shipowners through a broker.

The redeployment of Canadian forces equipment from Eritrea this past summer offered an excellent opportunity to charter by this means. It is a very successful operation and one now that we can be very proud of. It provides the economy of scale, the efficiency that all of our allies use and it has proved to be very successful.

●(1635)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge to the parliamentary secretary that I did go into a new area which was not part of the original question. The original question was asked five months ago. I appreciate that the parliamentary secretary tried to answer that question but he said that we have not been asked to participate. That goes along with what the Prime Minister said in the House, that we have not been told what to do.

What I am asking is that the government take a proactive stand. Do not ask and do not wait for someone to tell us what to do. Canada is in a perfect position to take advantage of the respect we receive all around the world and say that we want the United Nations to play a key role in a transition government in Afghanistan and that Canada wants to play a role in developing that plan for Afghanistan.

We do not have to wait for anyone else. We do not have to wait to be asked. We do not have to wait to be told. Let us take some action. Let us do something. Let us try some leadership.

Mr. John O'Reilly: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I appreciate that the member for Cumberland—Colchester gave me an opportunity to talk about something else besides something he was interested in five months ago which actually has no bearing now and certainly has changed the way the Canadian forces operate.

We are not waiting for anyone to ask us. Perhaps the member should have been in Halifax to watch the ships being deployed. We are responding to the world economies. I was recently in Ethiopia. We have 1,650 troops in Bosnia. I am sure the member is well aware of that. We are doing our part on the world scene to make sure that the world is a safer place to live in. Canada will take part in all of its NATO exercises and will live up to the 1994 white paper. We will also make sure that our commitment to NORAD is fulfilled. We do our part on the world stage. Our troops are something the world is very proud of and Canada can be proud of.

AIRLINE SAFETY

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 18 I asked the Minister of Transport quite bluntly if the government would assume full control of pre-board flight screening inside the Canadian borders.

Right now customs agents receive an entire year of training before they are put on the job by themselves. Pre-board flight screeners, these officers who check the luggage and hand baggage before people board the aircraft, receive 20 hours of training. Even after the terrible events of September 11, that has still not changed.

The airlines, especially Air Canada, have been asking the government to assume full cost, full control and full training for pre-boarding screening officers throughout the country. In fact, many members of parliament, when they leave the Ottawa airport, see a big sign at the pre-check screening board which says "Airport security is an airline responsibility". That is simply nonsense. It has to stop.

The Government of Canada must assume full cost and full control of airport pre-screening at airports in Canada, that includes small and major airports.

I will give the government credit. After September 11, and long before that, as a former airline employee, I asked the government many times to ensure that identification checks were done on people prior to the boarding of a flight. That I must say is now being done.

There is another dangerous aspect of airport screening that is not being done. Nothing is being done to stop terrorists, who have no concern for their own lives, from putting something in their suitcase, checking it in and having it go onboard the aircraft in the underbelly. They then can sit up top and an hour later in the flight a disaster can strike. That can still happen today.

I do not mean to frighten airline passengers or people willing to take flights in the future, but there is no x-ray of baggage or cargo going onboard airplanes. We have it internationally but not domestically.

Countries in Europe are doing it now and I encourage the government to move with as much speed as possible to x-ray all baggage and cargo that go on aircraft to ensure safety and to give back the confidence that the travelling public deserves.

We encourage the government on two points. First, assume full control of security at all airports in the country, including the cost, the training and employment of these people. The ones who are there now do a good job, but they simply do not get the income nor the training to do their job post-September 11.

Adjournment Debate

Second, and I cannot reiterate this enough, it is imperative that the government assume control of the x-ray of all baggage and cargo which goes on board an aircraft. If it does that, it will indeed give the travelling public the confidence it needs.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to respond to the question raised by the hon. member on September 18, 2001, on airline safety.

I would like to begin by providing assurances that the safety and security of travellers have always been and will continue to be the prime concern of Transport Canada.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, and in the days that followed, the situation was constantly being closely monitored and measures were reviewed to provide for the resumption of air travel.

These measures and the other components of the aviation safety system, including the requirements that pertain to screening officers, are continuously being re-examined.

The government has already responded to the airline industry's concerns by announcing on October 2 its intention to compensate the airlines affected. This compensation is to cover losses resulting from the closure of air space in the days that followed the September 11 tragedy.

The government is establishing high standards for screening activities. It requires screening officers be trained to certain standards and that they act immediately to correct anything that hinders screening operations.

Screening officers assigned to preboarding must follow a rigorous program of training, which includes both theoretical and practical training, before they are certified. The law requires them to take refresher courses every two years.

On October 11, the Minister of Transport, in a series of important announcements on security measures, indicated that he would be investing \$55.7 million in the purchase of sophisticated explosives detection equipment and high tech electronic equipment. This technological equipment will be used to screen cabin and checked baggage.

This announcement followed the minister's statement on September 25 that Transport Canada would be purchasing explosive detection equipment for priority airports in Canada. The Canadian security program incorporates all of the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization and is one of the best in the world.

For obvious security reasons, information on the implementation of the new equipment will not be released.

Adjournment Debate

I would like to provide assurances that Transport Canada takes its responsibility for ensuring the safety and security of travellers very seriously. Should any component of the system need to be changed, Transport Canada will react quickly to ensure the necessary changes are made.

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his answers.

However I do not have a definitive answer to whether the baggage and cargo are going to be x-rayed prior to delivery on board an aircraft. That is the question all Canadians are asking me to ask the government. Also he did not answer whether the federal government will assume full control, full cost, full employment of all pre-board screening officers in the entire country.

Those are the two questions. A simple yes or no would suffice.

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that the officers performing security checks at airports will have the necessary training and will meet very strict criteria.

I can also add that the department and the government will ensure that any baggage will be checked as belonging to a passenger on both domestic and international flights.

[English]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday I pointed out that the Minister of Transport had announced the spending of \$79 million on new security procedures in transport, a vast majority of which was going toward highly sophisticated state of the art detection screening equipment. I asked the minister what airports that equipment would be going to. His response was that it would go to the major airports where the highest volume of traffic occurred.

In a supplemental question I asked the minister what good he thought it would do to put the equipment into high density airports when at dozens of small airports across the country there was not even basic x-ray equipment for carry on baggage. People going through those airports are subject to a hand search. I am not disparaging the people who operate those security checkpoints. They are not given the tools. It is very easy for them to miss a hidden compartment or something else that basic x-ray equipment would pick up.

When people board aircraft and fly into a major airport, such as Vancouver or Calgary in my case, they are deposited on the secure side, around the back of the sophisticated equipment which the minister is spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on to no avail.

I asked the minister how he thought it would help to put in the fancy equipment and then have people fly out of small airports and simply be routed around. His response as reported in *Hansard* was:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that when that is the case those people in transit are required to go through security at the larger airports.

That is not true. Virtually every week I fly out of small airports that do not have x-ray equipment. I know for an absolute fact that I

am deposited on the secure side. At no time ever, not once, have I been re-routed through enhanced security at the larger airports.

I would like it clarified why the minister gave such an answer. Was he endeavouring to intentionally mislead members of the House, or was he simply incompetent in answering a transport question?

● (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the safety and security of our transportation system is Transport Canada's number one priority. The Minister of Transport was very clear and dealt with these subjects amply during oral question period and in his speeches during debate.

As I mentioned, while it is not a part of the government's general direction, without a doubt, we are prepared to study all possible measures to improve airline safety. We have tried to reduce threats to airline safety, both on the ground and in the air.

Security in Canadian airports and customs operations continue to be strengthened and we are accelerating the procurement of security and explosive detection equipment. We are limiting activities in restricted areas of airports, increasing the police presence in major airports, heightening passenger screening, and improving measures regarding baggage.

The Security and Emergency Preparedness Directorate of Transport Canada is responsible for the development and implementation of programs that contribute to the security of the national transportation system.

To this end, the department is co-operating with all of the relevant federal departments and organizations in Canada and with its partners in the United States, including the FAA, to prevent incidents that threaten the safety of our national transportation system.

We constantly assess our approach and our measures to provide a high degree of safety to travellers in this field that has been so tragically shaken. The minister and the government have made a number of announcements since September 11 on the subject of improvements to our excellent safety program. He was equally clear in stating that we must not discuss specific safety measures in public.

The Minister of Transport and the Government of Canada have announced a broad range of new measures to improve safety of operations in Canada's airports. These initiatives will provide more than \$69 million for new equipment and related activities in Canadian airports.

[English]

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I did not get an answer during question period which is the reason I asked to come before the House tonight during adjournment proceedings. I did not get an answer again. It is very unfortunate the minister could not have sent someone who had some transport knowledge. Obviously he does not. We would very much like to get an answer. My question was not answered. It was not even addressed.

Adjournment Debate

The government's priorities have to be questioned these days. We are in a time of national and international stress. People are concerned. What has the Liberal government done? We adjourned early on Friday and we adjourned two hours early today.

Where is the government's priorities and plan? It does not have any. It cannot answer basic security questions in transport. The government does not have a plan and it cannot even give a straight honest answer.

• (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I have to remind the hon. member that he comes very close to being unparliamentary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Mr. Speaker, recently the minister announced funding of \$79 million to improve airport security.

Once again, I can assure the member that we are asking our employees to ensure that every piece of baggage belongs to a passenger, whether on domestic or international flights.

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

(The House adjourned at 4.51 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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