



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, June 5, 2002**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 5, 2002

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[English]

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

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

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### FISHERIES

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, sustainable development should be more than a slogan or a convenient buzzword. It means managing natural resources as we manage personal savings. We draw from the interest but we try to keep intact the capital.

Unfortunately, according to scientists from the University of British Columbia we along with the Europeans and the Americans have heavily drawn from the capital of the north Atlantic fish stock. Scientists have found the biomass of cod has declined by two-thirds since 1950 because of large cod catches in the 1970s and 1980s. Another report released last month shows current catch limits for Newfoundland's cod fishery are not sustainable.

All around the globe the fishery is in decline. For the sake of future generations we must reverse this dangerous trend and limit the catch to the interest of the resource while leaving intact the capital.

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### RURAL CANADIANS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the decision of December 1, 2001 by the Liberal government to allow Bell Canada to charge an additional cost to rural phone subscribers for a service which is provided free to people who live in cities is discriminatory and unfair, particularly to Canadians on fixed incomes. Bell Canada is telling irate callers that if they do not like the new charge they should call their federal member of parliament.

Pensioners who are being forced to leave the city because of high rents are now finding the federal government waiting to gouge them when they arrive in small town rural Canada.

Why is there two-tier citizenship for rural Canadians? Why is the federal government discriminating against Canadians who live in rural Canada?

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### HEALTH

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a recent article in *Maclean's* magazine reads:

Thirty-three years ago, upstart McMaster University in Hamilton sparked a revolution in the training of doctors that eventually spread to all the big medical schools in North America. Now it wants to start another. Its plan is bold, courageous and designed to combat some of the ills of today's health-care system.

McMaster University in my riding of Hamilton West is once again leading the entire country in medical innovation. Its efforts to move doctors in training into remote areas will bring cutting edge research to those areas and will help retain qualified medical staff in parts of Canada that are traditionally underserved. I commend McMaster University and its health care researchers and staff for showing the foresight and courage to take the risks necessary to reap big benefits for the health care system in the country.

I firmly believe that the solutions needed to sustain public health care in the country lie with our teaching and research personnel. The recent research infrastructure payments to our universities were a strong start but we need to continue to show our commitment to these sources of innovation.

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### SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

**Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year Saint Mary's University celebrates its 200th year anniversary.

Saint Mary's University has been an integral part of the life of Halifax and of Nova Scotia for 200 years. We are most grateful for the work of our founder Father Edmund Burke and the efforts of the administrators and students who have gone before, and we heartily champion those who have taken up their torches. For this landmark occasion Canada Post Corporation issued a handsome stamp to commemorate this milestone.

*S. O. 31*

In my family with my son's graduation this fall there are three generations of Saint Mary's graduates, and I feel privileged to honour the university's 200th year anniversary here in the House of Commons.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[Translation]

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce a financial contribution of \$65,346 from the Government of Canada, through the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, to the LNS Community Seafood Coop, located in Harrington Harbour, on the Lower North Shore.

This co-op, which is doing a pilot transformation of an underused species, namely spider crab, will thus be able to diversify its market by offering a new product that is primarily intended for the Japanese market. Indeed, in some processed foods, spider crab can be an economical substitute for snow crab.

This project will extend the working season of 24 fishers and 30 plant workers.

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[English]

#### CHINA

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, 13 years ago a man single-handedly stopped a line of tanks ordered to put down a rally for democracy in Tiananmen Square. This showed that a man of courage could thwart the will of a despotic government.

Unfortunately our Prime Minister was unwilling to take that same stand. The last time the PM was in China he stated "You know we are 30 million. They are 1.2 billion". If only the Prime Minister had a fraction of the courage of that one man.

The world outside China has not forgotten the events which transpired there 13 years ago. Countless people have disappeared, been brainwashed and been silenced by a government intent on repressing any form of dissent or free speech.

A government that turns upon its own people and cuts them down in the street does not deserve to be rewarded with favourable trade status. Nor does it deserve to host the Olympics.

We must not forget the crimes that have been committed.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### 2003 CANADA WINTER GAMES

**Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to stress the excellent work that is being done in my region, in preparation for the 2003 Canada Winter Games, which will be held next year, from February 22 to March 8.

The reason I am mentioning it today is because I want to invite all hon. members, their families and friends to reserve early, so that they can be there to watch the performances of our sport's elite.

Over 3,000 young athletes from all over the country will gather to give their best performances. Let us be there to cheer them on.

[English]

Let us do our best to be there for them.

[Translation]

Let us plan now to go and encourage our athletes. This is an invitation to come and visit us next February, in New Brunswick, and more specifically in the Bathurst-Campbellton region, during the 2003 Canada Winter Games.

[English]

Let us write it down on our agendas.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### WEEK OF THE DISABLED

**Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since June 1, Quebec has been promoting the right of thousands of people, who courageously face one or more functional limitations on a daily basis, to be treated like first class citizens.

This is the seventh annual week to recognize the disabled in Quebec. The spokesperson this year is singer Martin Deschamps. With his first solo album, *Comme je suis*, which has sold more than 50,000 copies, he generously agreed to share his difference with us.

If all Quebecers take up the challenge of recognizing difference, we will discover that it enriches and enhances the community.

Until June 7, this difference will be displayed with pride; shows, exhibits, and sports activities await you. Take up the invitation. You will be astonished at the extent to which together, everyone wins.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CARIS

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to tell the House how proud I am to be a representative of Atlantic Canada and of Fredericton in particular.

Fredericton is bursting with vibrant, innovative companies that are making a name for themselves locally, nationally and internationally, companies like CARIS. This company has developed a state of the art software for geographic information mapping and charting which is used for everything from land management to ship navigation and safety and is employed by municipal, provincial and law enforcement officials around the world.

The company is headquartered in Fredericton and employs more than 130 engineers, scientists, technologists, skilled technicians and tradespeople who conduct research and development and provide support for its innovative products and systems.

CARIS is only one example of the kind of innovative, entrepreneurial thinking that is generating jobs and creating growth in Atlantic Canada, just one example of the wealth of dynamic businesses and strategic initiatives and partnerships in Atlantic Canada of which all Canadians should be proud.

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#### WORLD PARTNERSHIP WALK

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, on May 26, tens of thousands of Canadians participated in the 18th annual World Partnership Walk to fight global poverty.

An initiative of the Aga Khan Foundation Canada, the walk took place simultaneously in Calgary, Edmonton, Kitchener, London, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg, raising \$2.6 million to support social development projects in Asia and Africa without regard to race, religion, political affiliation or gender.

One hundred percent of the money raised in the walk goes to support efforts by Aga Khan Foundation Canada to address the root causes of poverty by finding, using and sharing solutions that help to end human suffering and improve quality of life at the local level.

I was pleased to join 3,000 of my fellow Edmontonians in raising over \$250,000. I want to thank Narmin Hassam and her team of Edmonton volunteers who organized a very successful event.

I encourage all Canadians across the country to participate in next year's event. We can make a difference.

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●(1415)

#### MEMBER FOR HALIFAX

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to recognize the valuable contributions that the hon. member for Halifax has made in this place as well as in our shared home of Nova Scotia.

While we may not always have agreed on all things there is no doubt in my mind that her intentions and her determination to benefit our country have always been clear.

As one of two voices of her party in the Nova Scotia House of Assembly for many years the member earned a reputation as a social conscience, making life difficult for successive governments, Buchanan governments and even a Regan government at one time.

Her foray into federal politics marked a dramatic change in the makeup of Atlantic Canada's contribution to this place. For the first time members of her party, several of them, were elected to represent maritimers and much to my chagrin some of them are still here although I enjoy their company.

I want to thank the member and wish her all the best in the future, whatever it may bring.

*S. O. 31*

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the eve of Clean Air Day, Canadians have nothing to cheer about.

The federal government has still not ratified the Kyoto protocol and joined with the international community to combat global warming and climate change by reducing harmful emissions. Last year we saw more smog warnings and bad air days around the country than at any time in our history, and the number of Canadians suffering and dying as a result of air pollution is on the rise.

We should be celebrating progress on cleaning up our environment and improving the air quality for all Canadians. Unfortunately the government continues an appalling record of inaction. In fact, over the past decade our air quality has gotten increasingly worse.

I call on the government today to ratify Kyoto and take aggressive measures to clean up our air quality so that next year at this time we will have something to celebrate.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, World Environment Day can be marked in many ways, including walks, bicycle parades, concerts, essay and drawing contests in schools, tree plantings, recycling and clean-up campaigns, and many more activities as well.

In many countries, this event is an occasion to promote political interest and action. Everywhere, heads of state and elected representatives will take this opportunity to make a commitment to defending our environment. Let us hope that in Canada, these commitments will be transformed into tangible action to preserve our natural heritage. In this regard, we can only encourage the government to ratify the Kyoto protocol, and follow the recent lead of the European Union and Japan.

The Bloc Québécois invites the public to take advantage of this World Environment Day to examine the state of our environment. Let us take the time to reflect on what each one of us must do, and let us join forces immediately to safeguard all life on the planet.

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#### ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

**Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the annual report of the St. Lawrence River Vision 2000 Action Plan was released on May 13.

This report also summarizes the initiatives undertaken by the various action plan parties, as well as the progress achieved for the protection, the conservation and the enhancement of the St. Lawrence River.

Progress has been made in most of the areas designated as priorities by St. Lawrence Vision 2000.

*Tributes*

For example, a fish-pass was built at the Saint-Ours dam, allowing five species at risk to have access to habitats located between the Saint-Ours and Chambly dams on the Richelieu River. New recovery plans were prepared for three animal species.

In the area of community involvement, some 30 new concrete action programs have been funded through the Community Interactions Program.

This annual report is evidence of the continuing efforts by the governments of Canada and Quebec to clean up the St. Lawrence River.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

[*English*]

**DAIRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1999 Canada adopted the Codex agreement and international standards for the use of dairy terms. If a product is intended to substitute milk or milk products, dairy terms such as butter and cream must not be used. While soy beverages exist, soy milk does not.

Canadian dairy farmers invest over \$75 million each and every year to promote their products. Yet many companies mislead consumers by co-opting these terms in their labelling where there is no dairy content in the first place. Foods like buttery flavour popcorn and strawberry and cream cereals, despite their labels, do not actually contain any dairy products and mislead consumers.

Having put on a good show at the international level, the government is now creaming Canadian dairy farmers by refusing to apply these standards at home. When will the government actually enforce these dairy term standards?

**The Speaker:** Before we proceed with oral questions, I understand there are some statements.

\* \* \*

**MEMBER FOR HALIFAX**

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute in the House today to the member for Halifax. She has decided to step down as the leader of the New Democratic Party. We hope she will remain a member of parliament but I would like to congratulate her for a job well done.

She has been a pioneer in Canada in many ways. She started with her party under extremely difficult circumstances provincially and built a party from nothing. She led the official opposition at one time and could have perhaps become the premier but decided she would like to try to become prime minister instead. It was our gain.

She has been a great personality in the House. She has a lot of friends. She has great convictions and is a great example.

[*Translation*]

What has always impressed me is her desire to show all Canadians, French-speaking ones in particular, the importance of celebrating both official languages of this country.

She comes from Halifax and has never missed an opportunity to convincingly illustrate our country's bilingual nature.

[*English*]

I think all of us in the House consider the member for Halifax as a friend. For some of us on this side of the House, it is sometimes easier to have friends on the other side. It is less of a problem.

The member for Halifax has served her constituents, her party and her country extremely well. I thank her for a job well done.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know the leader of the New Democratic Party really well. Obviously, in the few very short weeks I have been here I have not had much of a chance to get to know her, although our paths have crossed over the years.

I am certainly aware of her long contributions to public life, not just here in the House of Commons but also in the legislature of Nova Scotia. I am aware of this, of course, as a reader of *Hansards* both federally and provincially for over 40 years.

These kinds of decisions in public life are never easy but I think the leader of the New Democratic Party has made a tremendous contribution to her party and to this place. Despite the many differences that we have in this organization, we certainly appreciate what the leader of the New Democratic Party has contributed.

I want to add my personal wishes. I look forward to her continued presence here in the next while and also wish her the best in whatever future endeavours she may undertake.

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we salute a woman of conviction, the leader of the New Democratic Party, who was also the leader of her party in Nova Scotia. Her popularity there certainly helped the NDP to make significant inroads in the Atlantic region during the 1997 federal election.

Trained as a social worker, justice, equity and the right to quality government services have always been at the core of this leader's concerns, as well as international justice.

While we may not share her vision of Quebec-Canada relations, the member for Halifax has always been very respectful of Quebecers, and for this we thank her.

We wish her good luck in her future endeavours, we only wish there were more people like her in politics.

*Tributes*

[English]

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, there must be something about Halifax. While I was noting the applause and seeing people standing I recalled a former member of parliament for Halifax being in a similar position. When he resigned as leader of his party he went on to say, and there is some risk in my saying this, “there is nothing more popular than a former leader of a political party”.

I simply want to thank the hon. member for Halifax for her courage, her standards and her dedication to principle. I think it is a characteristic of all us that we are here to serve but the hon. member for Halifax had other options. She had the option of a much easier life but she chose not to do that. She chose public service. She has been an ornament to this parliament and to the profession of public service, as she has made us all stand taller as practitioners of the profession of politics.

[Translation]

I heard, and I wish to echo the comments made by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, who mentioned that the member for Halifax has always respected the other political parties and positions that she herself did not share. Once again, this is the sign of great strength of character.

[English]

I am very pleased that the hon. member has decided to stay as a member of the House of Commons. We have need of her here in this parliament. We have need of her strong and steady voice in defence of social justice, in defence of compassion and in defence of the most fundamental of Canadian qualities, respect for the equality of individuals.

On behalf of myself personally and my party, I want to thank her for her service and wish her the very best in times to come.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a couple of moments to put on record the sentiments of my colleagues in response to the news we received today.

[Translation]

I am lacking words to express the feelings of all of my colleagues who so love our leader, the hon. member for Halifax.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate how emotional this moment is for me and for my colleagues after hearing the news of the decision of our leader to step aside. She has done so today magnanimously and selflessly, as has been her way in everything she has done politically. As the member for Halifax said herself today, “The work of a great leader, among other things, is knowing when to pass the torch”.

There is great wisdom in those words, a wisdom that I am sure many in the Prime Minister's party feel should be emulated.

Let me just say three things on behalf of my colleagues. First, it is because of our leader, the member for Halifax, that our party is in a position of strength today. Thanks to her good work, we broke through the doldrums after the 1993 election and reclaimed official

party status in 1997. Thanks to the member for Halifax, we made an incredible breakthrough in Atlantic Canada, winning eight seats and breaking through that barrier.

We may be down a few but we are on a roll. We will be back up. I want to let all members in the House know that we are coming back.

Also because of our leader, the member for Halifax, we made a breakthrough with respect to women in the country. As the first woman leader of an established, recognized federal and provincial party, we owe a debt of gratitude to her. Thanks to her good work we have almost achieved gender parity in our caucus. Let that also be an example for the Prime Minister.

The member for Halifax personifies all that is good in political life. She shows for all of us the example of a selfless, tireless individual who works steadfastly on behalf of Canadians. Her passion for the country and her compassion for its people are her hallmark and a legacy she leaves all of us.

As the member for Dartmouth has said in the past, the words that can only describe our leader today is that she is the iron angel of Canadian politics.

On behalf of all of my colleagues, I thank the hon. member for being the standard-bearer for social justice and for being the iron angel of Canadian politics.

● (1430)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I utter a single word I would like to know from you whether every word that comes out of my mouth is taken off question period? I know the eulogy for this supposedly departing socialist was heartfelt but I hope it was not a plot to take away from her getting down to business for question period.

I appreciate the kind words. I think the most important thing I want to say is that this socialist is not departing. I have every intention of remaining here as leader from now until my party selects a new leader. As I have indicated, it will be my privilege to continue serving the constituents of Halifax for as long as they will have me. I look forward to many years to come in the House.

On an occasion where the Prime Minister has spoken so graciously and generously I would like to be able to congratulate him as well but when he says to me that sometimes in one's party one really wants to be friends with people on the other side, I feel like I should express my condolences to him.

I thank all members for their kind words. The newest leader in the House is not a newcomer here but when he says that I have always stood tall in the House it must be because he cannot see that I am stuck standing between two of my colleagues who tower about a foot over me on a day to day basis.

● (1435)

[Translation]

This morning a reporter asked me “Did you have any regrets during your years of service in parliament?”

*Oral Questions*

I answered sincerely that I regretted not having started learning French when I was younger. I think that it is very important for everyone to try to improve and perfect both official languages in order to express our feelings and our aspirations in both official languages.

[English]

Finally, I want to say to the leader of the Conservative Party that I think the previous leader of his party, who once had the privilege of representing Halifax as well, was quite right when he said that it was only when socialists departed this place that there was such enthusiasm.

I am sorry to break the spell. I have no intentions of going anywhere except getting right down to business in question period, and I hope that is exactly what we are going to do because I have some tough questions I want to put to the Prime Minister.

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

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, last night the public works minister said that the government would continue to give tax dollars to Groupaction.

Despite the RCMP investigation, the auditor general's investigation and the government paying the firm twice for photocopying the same report, now the government has given Groupaction almost a quarter of a million dollars in new work.

Other than its donations to the Liberal Party, how can the minister possibly justify this new money to Groupaction?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the contracts that were in question have been specifically examined by the auditor general and there has been a reference to the RCMP.

I would note that in the auditor general's report she said "our conclusions cannot and do not pertain to any practices that Groupaction followed". She was referring to the public service not to Groupaction.

In any event, I am confident that all ministers will be examining the business matters within their portfolios and determining that any contracting procedures are in fact appropriate.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister said that the quality of Groupaction's previous work was substandard and deficient. Those were his words. It is hard to believe that Groupaction could not have had some role in that. However the government rewards Groupaction with four more contracts worth over \$200,000 when it already knew that the auditor general was investigating the previous shoddy work.

Will the government now freeze all government work on advertising, polling and research to Groupaction pending the outcome of the RCMP investigation?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has made it clear that its investigation will take it wherever it takes it and that it will pursue prosecution if that is appropriate based upon its investigation.

In the meantime the Prime Minister has asked the President of the Treasury Board to make a government-wide inquiry with respect to polling, advertising and sponsorships to ensure that the management framework and the governance system is appropriate. We will ensure that the system is transparent and proper.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the government should just say no, but when a customer pays \$112,000 it is kind of hard to do that.

[Translation]

This government is breaking the rules to help its friends. It ignores the warnings of the auditor general and the RCMP investigation.

Will the government put a moratorium on all contracts to Groupaction until the auditor general tables her report?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the problems found with respect to three Groupaction contracts caused the auditor general to take certain actions. She has reported those matters to the police. She is conducting a government-wide examination. Those are the proper actions to be taken in the circumstances. Wherever any indication of wrongdoing is found, the appropriate references to the police are made.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious that the government did not stop the Groupaction sleaze at all. Let us talk now about the Groupe Everest sleaze. We revealed yesterday that Media IDA Vision got 75% of government advertising services. Now we find another Claude Boulay invention, Media Vision, got another \$13 million.

Could the minister explain why these Liberal friends get all this business?

• (1440)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since those issues were raised yesterday, I am checking very carefully on the arithmetic that was alleged. I want to get a complete picture of the entire advertising situation. For example, it was alleged yesterday that a certain amount accounted for all government advertising. That figure was in fact not correct.

*Oral Questions*

I want to get all the arithmetic on the table and examine it to ensure that it does fit within the guidelines of both my department and the treasury board. If it does not, then the corrections will be made.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian taxpayers call that stalling, quite frankly.

Let us go a little further with this. Here we have a company that got 75% of advertising services. That is against the rules. Now we find the same group, the same affiliate, the same Claude Boulay invention got another \$13 million. Our question is this. Is this not another reason for a public inquiry into Liberal friends getting Liberal contracts?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have indicated very clearly that I intend to examine this arithmetic that has been alleged. There are a whole range of inquiries underway by my department, with the collaboration of the treasury board, by the auditor general where that is appropriate and by the police where that is appropriate.

I am determined that all facts will be revealed. This will be transparent and accountable, and we will ensure that taxpayers get value for their money.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2001-2002, the Games of la Francophonie received \$2.8 million in federal sponsorships. This is \$300,000 more than asked for, and this had the effect of bringing up to \$419,000 the commissions collected by Gosselin Relations Publiques and Media IDA Vision.

Since the case of the Games of la Francophonie is not the subject of a police investigation, I imagine that, this time, the minister will be able to provide an answer.

Could the minister of public works tell us why the amounts paid to the Games of la Francophonie exceeded the initial request? Why did they get more than what they asked for? This seems a bit strange.

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman will know that the Francophonie Games is a major international event. It involves some considerable complexity. The planning for it took place not just within one fiscal year but over a series of years, as one would expect with an event of this magnitude.

There were contract changes over time. The validity and the propriety of those contract changes will of course be subject to the work of the auditor general.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I imagine that the organizers of these events understood all the complexity of this process. They were surprised to get more.

Guy Matte, the co-chair of the organizing committee of the Games of la Francophonie, told us that it was the federal government that imposed Gosselin Relations publiques, a Groupaction subsidiary which, for the year 2001-02 alone, received \$335,000 in commissions.

What the minister of public works does not understand is very simple: does the presence of a firm imposed by the government not explain the ease with which the Games of la Francophonie and, consequently, Gosselin Relations publiques, received much more than was initially requested?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the material before me at the moment that would support any allegations of irregularities. However let me repeat what I said to hon. gentleman on a couple of occasions. Like him, I share a number of questions with respect to the efficacy of the agency system. That is clearly one of the things that I intend to re-examine. If we can find a better, more direct, efficient way of delivering this program, we will make those changes.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works will not make it to the end of the session by telling us that he is looking at the issue. At some point, he will have to provide answers.

The case of the Games of la Francophonie is very interesting, particularly what happened with regard to the printing component. They asked for \$575,000 from the government and they got \$948,000. After commissions and other costs related to go-betweens, they were left with \$825,000.

How does the government explain that the total grant represented 165% of the initial request, while the direct subsidy was 140%?

• (1445)

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, with an event of this magnitude, there are contract changes that do occur over time. This whole event, because it falls within the category of sponsorship, will in fact be part of the work of the auditor general to determine that all guidelines were followed and the proper contracting procedures were applied. That is what the auditor general does.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, one must have quite a bit of power in the government to exceed by 65% the request made by those who are asking for funds.

I want to know who, in the government, can authorize such overpayments. Who has this power in cabinet?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when contract amendments occur, they are of course dealt with by the appropriate authorities within the department to ensure that the matter is completely transparent and that all the facts and evidence are on the table. This is one of the transactions that will of course be a part of the work that the auditor general herself will be undertaking. She will get on with that work very shortly.

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**CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is going on when the Canadian Wheat Board has to pay \$4,000 to get access to the Prime Minister and Liberal MPs? The government has created a virtual culture of cronyism so corrosive that the Canadian Wheat Board believes that it has to cough up, “an entry fee for the purpose of doing business”.

Does the Prime Minister intend to take any responsibility for breeding this culture of cronyism and what will he do to clean it up?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I point out that the Canadian Wheat Board is not a crown corporation. Second, the guidelines that would apply in this case to an entity that is not a crown corporation are being re-examined by myself, as I undertook yesterday. Third, I point out that within the Canadian Wheat Board's authority not only did it participate in the events referred to, but also events that were sponsored by the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla and the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

\* \* \*

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister was about the culture of cronyism that the government has created. There is a virtual toll booth at the Liberal government's gates these days. After nine years in office, the government has still failed to bring in clear ethical guidelines and an ethics commissioner who would report to the House.

I appreciated the kind words of the Prime Minister this afternoon, but something that would mean a lot more to Canadians would be for him to pledge today to support my private member's bill, Bill C-299, which would establish a clear code of conduct for parliamentarians. Will the Prime Minister make that commitment today to Canadians?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a gift for what the member announced today, I would like to inform her that we intend to do that. It was part of the speech I made two weeks ago. The leader of the government has written to all parties about setting up a committee, so there will be guidelines for members of parliament and senators. Unfortunately the Alliance does not want to participate in such a committee.

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works said yesterday that “It will be up to [auditor general] to determine the scope” of the audit of abuse of advertising and sponsorship contracts. Yet the auditor general is prohibited from examining the so-called arm's length foundations in the way she would examine government departments. Under present rules she cannot inquire whether the advertising scandal extends to the millennium fund or the other foundations which control \$7 billion of public money.

In the interest of knowing the whole truth, would the Prime Minister agree to extend the powers of the auditor general so she can conduct a full audit that includes all departments, all crown corporations, all agencies and all arm's length foundations?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it should be pointed out that every one of the arm's length foundations that are referred to by the right hon. gentleman are in fact subject to independent audits by private sector auditing firms. If they are asked to co-operate with the auditor general, they will do so.

• (1450)

*[Translation]*

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has just admitted that the auditor general does not have the power to conduct her own investigation.

Since the auditor general does not have the necessary power to investigate all agencies where significant abuses might be surreptitiously going on, what is the government's excuse for its continued refusal to establish an independent public commission of inquiry which could examine all sponsorship and advertising programs?

*[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me again lay out the process. The difficulties here were discovered by an internal audit conducted by Public Works and Government Services Canada. The auditor general said that the work was excellent and of critical value. It resulted in a whole series of changes within the sponsorship program.

The auditor general reviewed three particular Groupaction files. She took the appropriate action in referring certain files to the RCMP. She is now conducting a government-wide examination with respect to advertising and sponsorships. The President of the Treasury Board is reviewing the government's framework. All appropriate actions have been launched.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, one of Claude Boulay's companies of convenience, Media IDA Vision, controlled 75% of all government advertising contracts last year. At the same time, Media Vision, another of Mr. Boulay's shell companies garnered 75% of Communication Canada contracts. The treasury board clearly states that any one contractor cannot control more than 25%.

Why does the government continually ignore the rules on market dominance for its liberally connected friends?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the House earlier, having heard the specific statistics cited in the House yesterday, upon which these allegations are based, I have started to review the arithmetic. It would appear that the calculation is much different than that which is alleged here. However my examination of that is not yet complete. I will report to the House as soon as it is complete.

I would point out in relation to the sponsorship program, that there is a very clear 25% limit that applies, not only to any single firm but to all its affiliates and subsidiaries.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, those are the new rules that came in a week ago Monday when the minister took over. These are under the old rules. Let us go back there and check that out.

The treasury board rules are crystal clear. If any contractor commands more than 25% of the business, and this is its rule, remedial action will be taken to eliminate market dominance. It is concerned about this, but the Liberals are not. The Liberals did nothing while Claude Boulay piled up 75% of Liberal advertising and sponsorship moneys.

Did Mr. Boulay's Liberal donations have anything to do with the government's refusal to enforce its own rules?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that was included in the report of the auditor general was an expression of her concern that all treasury board rules and guidelines had not been respected. That is something that deeply troubles me as I am sure it troubles the President of the Treasury Board. Together we will determine exactly what transpired with respect to these allegations. If there were errors, or mistakes or wrongdoing, they will be corrected.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2001, CD-ROM/Dessin animé made an application for \$125,000. But the total amounts paid out for that one application came to \$544,087, four times the initial amount requested.

How can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services justify something like this?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status**

**Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all sincerity, I did miss the beginning of the question. I did not hear exactly the file to which the member was referring.

With your permission, would you allow him to restate the question? I am not able to identify the file.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** Would the hon. member for Chambly be kind enough to clarify his first point?

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the list of grants awarded shows that CD-ROM/Dessin animé made an application for \$125,000, which it received.

But the total amount paid out for this single application came to \$544,087, four times the amount requested.

How does he justify this?

• (1455)

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that kind of technical question should appear on the order paper, but just let me offer this assurance. In every case where there may be circumstances that raise questions or suspicions in the minds of officials as they go about the review they have undertaken, they are duty bound by the terms of the Financial Administration Act to report any irregularities to the appropriate authorities.

I want to assure the hon. gentleman that in all cases that is being done.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would be only too pleased to enter it on the order paper, but I have to table this huge pile of scandals.

CD-ROM/Dessin animé applied for \$125,000, but the professional fees alone come to \$319,495.

How does the Minister of Public Works and Government Services explain that the cost of professional fees is more than double the initial grant application?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be careful here to make sure that he and I are referring to the same file, the same matter.

Let me just say this: My officials are reviewing all of the files between 1997 and the year 2000. In the course of that review, if and when they find anything that raises legal questions, the appropriate references to police authorities are done.

*Oral Questions***TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Industry emphatically stated in the House that “not a single penny” of the \$87 million loan had been given to Cascade Data Services Inc. That completely contradicts the public accounts.

The public accounts clearly state that this company received \$300,000 from Technology Partnerships Canada in the year 2000. Either the public accounts are wrong or the minister is wrong.

I ask the minister today, was he mistaken yesterday when he said that?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker. We have asked officials. The amount in the public accounts is a contingency amount set aside in the event that amounts were needed to be advanced. No moneys were advanced because conditions have not yet been satisfied.

Let us remember what we are talking about here. We are talking about a risk sharing investment in a brand new technology that has the possibility of creating jobs and achieving the very objectives we all believe so strongly in, which are an innovative economy and a growing country.

No money has yet been advanced and will not be until the conditions are satisfied.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, then the government has to clean up the public accounts: the public accounts 2000-01 total amount spent in that year, totalling over \$100,000, Cascade Data Services Inc., \$300,000.

The minister has to come clean on this loan. Why is a loan given to a company with no website, no public telephone number and no address known to people in that region? Why is the government doing this?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with great respect to the member, that is just not the way it works. The money was put in the contingency account in the public accounts in case it was needed. It was not needed. It was not disbursed.

I am happy to arrange a briefing for the member with the officials, who can take him through it from one end to the other.

We have committed to an \$87 million investment in a great new idea in a growing area of the economy, but no money has yet been advanced and will not be until the conditions are satisfied. We are there to make sure the taxpayers are protected.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are some pretty amazing things included in the sponsorship program, to say the least.

For example, for the year 2000, promoters of CD-ROM/Dessin animé asked for \$450,000 and received \$550,000 after paying the middlemen, in other words \$100,000 more than they had asked for.

How can the Minister of Public Works explain this extraordinary luck by which many like CD-ROM/Dessin animé received far more than they asked for, after some very generous political contributions were paid along the way?

• (1500)

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Again, Mr. Speaker, the question does not precisely identify a particular file or transaction, but I want to assure the hon. gentlemen and I hope he will listen to these words carefully. All of these files are under review by my officials. Where there is any evidence of wrongdoing that raises legal questions, those files are referred to the appropriate police authorities immediately.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of public works' own records indicate that \$752,000 was paid out to cover this application for \$450,000.

How can the minister explain that, not only was \$100,000 more paid out than was originally asked for, but also the government paid out in a commission of \$82,500 along the way, as well as a production subcontract of \$120,000, which was also not part of the original application? Is this not called giving the customer more than he asked for?

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, if the hon. gentleman would specifically identify the file he is referring to, I would give him a specific answer to a specific question.

Second, let me assure him that where these matters have raised legal questions, they have been referred to the police.

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**IMMIGRATION**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals are consumed with building leadership empires and casting about for traitors in their midst, Canadians have to be wondering who is actually taking care of the nation's business.

Today we learn of yet another case where Canadian visa documents mysteriously disappeared from our supposedly highly secure diplomatic mail service.

Would the part time minister of anti-terrorism tell Canadians what, if anything, has come to light about the likely criminal misuse of these entry documents by organized networks?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer my part time critic that blank Canadian visas were sent to one of our embassies—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I am sure the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration appreciates all the help with the answer, but the Speaker does not because he has to be able to hear the answer.

The hon. minister has the floor and I would appreciate it if hon. members send their assistance to the minister by written note rather than orally.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, of course I think it is a very important matter.

First I would like to mention that the documents were misplaced at the embassy. Then we checked up and the documents were later found, not tampered with, in the secure area of the embassy to which only Canadians have access. The procedures have been changed since then, but we found the visas.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister very cleverly skates over the question of what was happening to these documents while they went missing. The fact of the matter is that this was last summer. They could well have been used for counterfeiting purposes by organized networks to get into Canada prior to September 11.

Is the minister really buying the story that somehow these important documents that have to be personally signed for at every mission just got tucked into a convenient corner and there was no problem with the fact that they could not be found or located for six weeks?

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, security is one of our priorities. Of course sometimes we can have some problems. What I will mention, and I think it is important for the sake of the Canadian people, because there is another scapegoating here, is that when the documents were misplaced at the embassy we informed CIC headquarters that they were missing. At that time the visa numbers were cancelled. Later we found out that the documents were not tampered with and were in the secure area of the embassy to which only Canadians have access.

There was a mistake, we found it and we will make sure that it will not happen again.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, three weeks ago the Department of Fisheries and Oceans ordered fisherman off the MacLeod shelf near North Cape, P.E.I., in an area where local fishermen have been making their livelihood for over 100 years. There is proof that this is a fact.

These fisherman have now already lost three weeks out of their nine week season. When will the minister resolve this issue and allow the fishermen to enjoy their historic rights to fish off the MacLeod shelf?

• (1505)

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. It is true that DFO officials apprehended fishers of district 22 fishing in district 24, issued warnings and asked them to retreat to their side of the line where they are licensed to fish.

Through the diligent work of the member for Egmont, who has provided information that they have been fishing there in the past and may have historic rights, my officials are reviewing the matter at this time. I thank him for his hard work.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear to everybody concerned that the first nations governance initiative has been an absolute disaster so far. Not only have relations between government and first nations been set back 50 years, Canadians may still see a long, hot summer of protests and demonstrations right across the country.

If the minister believes that the merits of his proposed bill are so strong, will he agree now to delay the introduction of the bill and spend the summer working with aboriginal leadership to develop legislation that really does meet the needs of aboriginal people?

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, we have spent the last year consulting with first nations citizens right across the country with the objective of getting their advice on a piece of legislation that will improve their lives.

The member of course is suggesting, without seeing the bill, that somehow he has a problem with it. I would suggest strongly to him as to any good members of parliament that they should keep their decisions as to how they feel about a bill until they see it.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is not much help to anyone involved.

I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Thousands of first nations men and women voluntarily enlisted to serve their country in the second world war and the Korean conflict, but after the wars first nations veterans found that the benefits provided to the average Canadian soldier were not available to them. First nations veterans have been waiting for 50 years for justice on this issue.

Will the Minister of Veterans Affairs act immediately to remedy this historic injustice? Will he act now to give first nations veterans the equal recognition and compensation they so richly deserve?

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact this issue has been one of my priorities since I took office for this portfolio in the middle of January. It is a very complex issue. At the same time, I would like to say to the House that indeed I am very optimistic that we will be able to find a favourable resolution to this very complex issue soon.

*Oral Questions***LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, while in opposition the Prime Minister boasted that his government would return ethics to parliament. He made a point on numerous occasions of promising Canadians that he would restore faith in the political system. History will show that what he said and what he did are polar opposites.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will his much overdue and anticipated guidelines for leadership apply to the Prime Minister himself? Will they apply to the new backbencher from LaSalle—Émard, the fired finance minister? Will they apply to all the candidates that are vying to replace him?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not from the Alliance Party so I will not run to replace myself. On that score, I am not preoccupied with organizing a leadership campaign after I retire so I do not have this big problem.

There might be another problem, that if we have a review in February and if my—

**Some hon. members:** If, if.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien:** We will have a review in February, I am sorry, and at that occasion if money is being raised for that all the donors will be known by the people before the review.

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**GREENWICH DEVELOPMENT INC.**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, he has lost the plot.

The auditor general said this of openness in Greenwich Development Inc.:

These actions circumvented the intent of the terms and conditions of the business development program. Because of the complex structure of these arrangements it is impossible for parliament to know the full capital and operating costs of the Greenwich component of the park.

Exempting this and other quasi crown corporations from parliamentary scrutiny helps hide \$7 billion.

I ask the ACOA minister again, will he table all the relevant files pertaining to the Greenwich deal? What is he hiding?

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Minister of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is attempting to defeat a very sound project in Prince Edward Island. In fact he is trying to defeat a very sound economic opportunity. His words sound so similar to those of the members of the Canadian Alliance I think he may show up at the next Canadian Alliance convention.

Notwithstanding all of that, the auditor general has reviewed the files of GDI and has given constructive criticism of which ACOA, my agency, is responding to and has done very well in so doing.

\* \* \*

• (1510)

**FOUNDATIONS**

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the former minister of finance had a policy of funding off

book foundations which alarmed the auditor general. He had stashed over \$7 billion into these foundations. Yesterday the auditor general once again warned that the government is disregarding the principles of accountability to parliament by using this practice.

Can the new Minister of Finance tell us what his position is on foundation funding?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my view is that where appropriate it is a useful tool. My example of that would be the Canada Foundation for Innovation which has been managed very well in the interests of building scientific research infrastructure across the country. The amounts are determined by an independent arm's length board of directors that does the technical analysis in the context of the strategic infrastructure fund. By contrast we decided that should not go to a foundation but rather be done as a government program with responsibility in the appropriate minister's hands.

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general says that this type of accounting compromises the integrity of the government's reported financial results. That is a very serious charge. On Monday the finance minister was quick to prescribe better accounting and transparency principles for the private sector. He should take his own advice and do the same in his own area of responsibility in finance.

Does the finance minister agree with the auditor general or is he simply following in the footsteps of the former finance minister?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have made clear in a number of contexts, I am very pleased to follow in the footsteps of the former finance minister. I think the results we have seen demonstrated for the Canadian economy over many years indicate the wisdom of the decisions that were taken by him with the support of the Prime Minister.

I have also made it clear, as we have done repeatedly in the House, that decisions made by the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, frequently answered for by members of the foundation before committees of this parliament, have been wise ones as well. I support those decisions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the case of the Jeux de la Francophonie, it is Gosselin Relations publiques that is involved. In the case of CD-ROM/Dessin animé, it is Groupaction that is involved. In these cases of unexplained overpayments of grants, two communication firms very close to the government are involved.

Does the scope of the sponsorship issue and the accumulation of disturbing facts not justify a public inquiry into this whole issue?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they certainly lead us to the steps that have been taken, such as the departmental reviews, the treasury board review, the references to police authorities where required and the government wide examination by the auditor general, who does incidentally have the legal authority of a public inquiry. Accordingly the proper steps have been taken.

I want to assure the hon. member once again that I am re-examining entirely this question of whether outside contracts to agencies is the best way to deliver a sponsorship program or whether it can be better delivered in house by direct government administration.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what is striking in all these files is the size of the commissions collected in the process, commissions that increase in proportion to the size of the grants given.

Should the government not agree to hold a public inquiry into what definitely looks like a very well organized and, more importantly, a very profitable scheme?

*[English]*

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the commissions do in fact accord with industry wide standards. However that does not change my view that I think we can find a far better way to deliver this program. I intend to pursue that through government administration, not outside contractors.

\* \* \*

**FOUNDATIONS**

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, after two days of questioning in the House, the former minister of public works referred the problems of his department to the auditor general and we thought that was a good idea. Then she referred them to the police.

Yesterday the auditor general said that it is urgently needed to have changes in the foundations on how they report and how she can investigate them. Why will the government not allow the auditor general to look at these foundations and report to all members of parliament every year?

• (1515)

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are taking a very close look at all the recommendations of the auditor general regarding foundations.

Again, all foundations are audited by a private auditor. Moreover, funding agreements are signed between foundations and the government.

*[English]*

Through these funding agreements there is a possibility that the minister could ask also for a compliance audit and ask the auditor general to go in to see what is going on in the foundation.

I think we are improving the situation and we are doing that in collaboration with the auditor general.

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, private auditors are fine but there was private auditing of public works that did not find the problems there.

The auditor general said “This compromises the integrity of government”. She also said that it is urgently needed.

Will the government change its policy as the auditor general and all opposition parties are requesting and allow these foundations, \$7 billion worth, to report to parliament every year through an auditor general's report?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all the public works department does not have private auditors. It has an internal audit function. That is why two years ago it found some problems and some corrective actions were taken at public works.

We have improved the system for the foundations. We have changed the funding agreements with the foundations. There is a possibility also for the minister to ask for a compliance audit by the auditor general. We will look at all other improvements that we can make in that matter.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

The last federal budget announced the creation of the \$2 billion Strategic Infrastructure Foundation. Can the minister please advise what the process will be for accepting applications for funding and what types of projects will be given the greatest consideration?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the bill creating this fund was passed by parliament just before the end of March. It specifies four areas of strategic infrastructure: highway or rail infrastructure; local transportation infrastructure; tourism or urban development; and water and sewage treatment infrastructure.

I will be presenting my colleagues in cabinet very shortly with parameters for the program which I hope then to be in a position to announce shortly.

This is intended very much to be a program that will enable us to play a part with other levels of government and other participants in key major items of strategic infrastructure across the country.

*Routine Proceedings***INCOME TAX**

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister made chilling comments yesterday when he said losing \$3.3 billion happens occasionally.

The government has the auditor general's report. How long will Canadians be left wondering whether the government will cut their hospitals and schools in order to recoup the money that it lost track of?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member will correct the record because I never said that at all. I did say that governments occasionally make overpayments and that happens at the provincial level as well as at the federal level. Generally speaking they endeavour to collect the money.

In this case of course it is an unfortunate situation. The amounts accumulated over the years. The accounts had been audited by the auditor general. We are considering what appropriate action we should take in order to deal with this situation.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the government balanced its books on the backs of the provinces. Now it is telling Canadians "Oops, we did not gouge you as harshly as we intended and it is time to pay it back".

Seeing that the Deputy Prime Minister admitted yesterday that the government is prone to misplacing billions of dollars and seeing that the government is running a huge surplus on the backs of taxpayers, will he commit today to leave this money with the provinces?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Minister of Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might remember that the deficit was \$42 billion when we arrived in office. I guess that was being done on the back of somebody.

In any event, there was an overpayment to the provinces. Presumably we would have balanced the budget sooner if the overpayments had not been made.

\* \* \*

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**CANADA LABOUR CODE**

**Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the review of part I of the Canada Labour Code in 1998, the Liberals refused to include anti-scab legislation, despite the fact that they voted for it in 1989 when in opposition.

Because of this loophole in the federal legislation, workers at Cargill in Baie-Comeau have been locked out for more than two years now.

Does the government plan on supporting the bill that I will be introducing today, which is based on Quebec's anti-scab legislation, in order to stop, once and for all, companies like Cargill from getting away with using scab replacement labour?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the hon. member held a press conference on this matter. I am also told that she will be introducing a private members' bill on this issue.

Of course, it is this government's policy to allow a free vote on private member's bills. Nothing has changed in this regard, there is nothing new; we have said and done this for a long time now.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 81(14), it is my duty to inform the House that the motion to be considered tomorrow during the consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

[*English*]

That, after overpaying at least \$3.3 billion to several provinces as a result of its own accounting errors, this House calls upon the government to forgive any past revenue overpayments to the provinces since retroactively clawing back these revenues would severely affect the provinces' ability to pay for health care, education and social services.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Peace River, is votable.

[*Translation*]

Copies of the motion are available at the table.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[*Translation*]

**SPECIES AT RISK ACT**

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to lay upon the table, in both official languages of Canada, a document entitled "Proposed Revised Report Stage Motions at Report Stage of Bill C-5".

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**BILATERAL TREATIES**

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the bilateral treaties that came into force in Canada in 2001.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

*Routine Proceedings***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food entitled "Labelling of Genetically Modified Food and its Impacts on Farmers". Our committee has studied this issue quite extensively and hopefully the report will be of great assistance not only to our own minister, but also to other departments.

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

[Translation]

## PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 62th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the selection of votable items, pursuant to Standing Order 92.

As you know, our committee is working very hard. So I have the honour to present the 63rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the selection of votable items, pursuant to Standing Order 92.

I also have the honour to present the 64th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the list of members and associate members for a couple of committees.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 64th report later this day.

\* \* \*

•(1525)

**CANADA LABOUR CODE**

**Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-472, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code.

She said: Mr. Speaker, as I promised on May 1, I am introducing this afternoon a bill to prohibit employers under the Canada Labour Code from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out.

The bill also provides for a fine not exceeding \$1,000 for each day or portion of day of continuing offence.

I hope that this bill will be subject to a majority vote by the members of this House.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the 17th report of the Standing

Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, presented to the House on Wednesday, May 1, be concurred in.

Far from the prying eyes of the media sits Zimbabwe. Earlier this year, after President Robert Mugabe stole the election which took place in Zimbabwe, the world has turned its attention to other areas. However the situation in Zimbabwe is spiraling out of control and more people are facing starvation, torture and murder.

We may have thought when Robert Mugabe stole the presidential election in March of this year that all would be well in that country. That could not be further from the truth. What is happening there today would curl the hair on anyone's neck.

The international community is ignoring a humanitarian tragedy of enormous proportions. President Robert Mugabe is engaging in the systematic rape, murder and torture of innocent civilians as he takes out his anger and his displeasure on those who supported the opposition MDC party. While this is happening the people of Zimbabwe are crying out for help. What do they see? They see nothing. They see people turning their backs on them.

The magnitude of the problem is massive. The population of Zimbabwe is 12 million. Half the population is facing starvation at this present time. Members should imagine what would be happening if six million people in Europe were facing starvation.

Let me tell members what I saw when I was in Zimbabwe last September with the former secretary of state for Africa and Latin America, who I might add did a superb job when we were there. We went there as part of a small group of nations to find out what was happening.

What the government of Zimbabwe tried to do was to ensure that the individuals who were there from the international community would not find out the truth of what was going on. It doctored the witnesses we were supposed to meet to ensure that only those parroting the government line would be heard. What the then secretary of state did was very brave. He changed that process and ensured that we had a fair representation of people from society in Zimbabwe. What we heard was absolutely chilling.

Mr. Mugabe said to the international community that he was following the rule of law, that he had an independent judiciary, that he would stop the land reform process and that he would adhere to a set of criteria that was put together by Nigeria's President Obasanjo. Instead, we heard that the opposite was occurring. Journalists were being imprisoned. Opposition members were being beaten, tortured and murdered. Individuals could not get together to even discuss things. There was a systematic doctoring in preparation for an election that could not be fair.

*Routine Proceedings*

I went out into the bush and met with a wide variety of farmers from about 30 different farms. Under an acacia tree, away from anyone else, I met with about 14 or 15 black farm workers. They told me that President Robert Mugabe would hire and send young, violent thugs from Harare to go to the farms and ask the black workers, not the white workers, whether they supported the government or not? If there was any indication that there would be no support for the governing party, they would be beaten and murdered, their wives tortured and raped, and their homes fire-bombed. Indeed I saw this and took photographs. There were marks written on their homes for government workers who wanted to claim those homes for themselves.

One farm worker looked into my eyes and said, "Dr. Martin, you see the land right now. If we do not plant in the next two weeks, we will face starvation and we will die. If you don't help us, we will surely die." He begged us, as part of the international community, to help them save their lives. He also said that what President Mugabe was doing had nothing to do with the truth. He was violently abusing and cowering the rural black population to force them to vote for the ruling party.

• (1530)

He spoke about being forced to go with his family and other black farm workers to government Zanu-PF meetings where they had to chant government slogans. If there were any indication that they were not 100% behind the government they would be taken out back and beaten. Some were murdered. We saw that repeatedly.

Some may feel that this has stopped but it continues. When we got back we presented the evidence. The Commonwealth discredited itself by coming out with a piece of pabulum that did nothing to stop Mr. Mugabe. As a result he saw that as a green light to continue his violent ways. Indeed, that is what occurred.

I am deeply disturbed by these events. The response of the international community, including the Commonwealth, the United Nations and our country, was discredited. We did not take a forceful, meaningful approach to this problem. In the face of objective views and analysis by many non-governmental organizations where hundreds of thousands of people's lives hung in the balance, we chose to do almost nothing.

Black leaders out there should be ashamed because the black leaders in Africa sat on their hands and chose to side with a despotic leader who has over the last 20 years demonstrated a flagrant abuse of basic human rights. They chose to stand with him instead of with innocent civilians.

The behaviour of Mr. Mugabe is nothing new. In the early 1980s he and his ruling party brought in his Korean trained Fifth Brigade. It is his personal army made up of North Korean trained soldiers under the command of a person named Perence Shiri. General Shiri, under the direction of Robert Mugabe, took this brigade into Matabeleland North where it murdered 16,000 people. Those are the facts.

Knowing that, the black leaders, President Mbeki, President Dos Santos of Angola as well as the leaders of other black African countries, fell over themselves to support Robert Mugabe knowing full well that the actions that he was engaging in were not only going

to hurt the black population in Zimbabwe but indeed were going to hurt their own countries. The reasons for this are many.

Mr. Robert Mugabe has presented the issue in Zimbabwe as one of land reform, of taking land from the whites who own most of the arable land in the country and giving it to the blacks. Does this stand up to objective scrutiny? The answer is an emphatic no.

The government in Zimbabwe had ample opportunity since the early 1980s to bring in land reforms so that land could be taken from some of the whites and given to the rural blacks. It happened that money that was there from England was pocketed by Mr. Mugabe and his cronies.

If we take a look at land redistribution the only people who got land were friends of the ruling party. Suddenly two years ago Mr. Mugabe brought in land reform as an important issue. The government had an option by law to buy any land that came up for sale, and much land came up for sale. I looked at the gazettes myself. It did not choose to take that route. Instead, it would walk in, peg the land, take it and dispense it to whomever. It dispensed it to friends, family, ministers, police officials and a cadre of cronies who received the land. There was no land for the poor impoverished black population in Zimbabwe. That is what has been taking place.

The issue of land reform was a smoke screen. While it was important for the economic uplifting of the rural black population in Zimbabwe, the election that took place had absolutely nothing to do with land reform and everything to do with one man's desire to retain power at any cost.

Mr. Mugabe's desire to retain power not only stems from the issue of land reform and paying off his cronies, it also deals with the dark issue of blood diamonds. We know there has been a conflict in the Congo for the last two years where two million people have been murdered, innocent men, women and children.

• (1535)

The fact that we have been spending so much time on the tragic situation in the Middle East is understandable, but the fact that we have done so at the expense of two million people who have been brutally murdered is a shame on all of us.

Mr. Mugabe wants to retain control because he is actively involved in the blood diamond market. He sent his army into eastern Congo, not to develop peace but to secure diamond mines there. Through, in part, a man by the name of Ari Ben-Menashe, an ex-Israeli Mossad agent who now lives in Montreal and who has acted as an intermediary for him, he takes blood diamonds out of eastern Congo. The diamonds are shared with his military people who are in there now. Those diamonds are then trafficked to the illegal and corrupt diamond markets in Tel Aviv and Antwerp and then sold for money. Those moneys can go into the purchase of illegal weapons from eastern Europe. Sometimes those diamonds are traded for weapons in eastern Europe.

We can be certain that Robert Mugabe and his cronies are actively involved in the blood diamond trade, the same diamonds that many young women wear on their hands when they have the happy moment of getting engaged.

*Routine Proceedings*

The situation in that part of the world is very murky. I am also ashamed of the appalling behaviour of the United Nations. We may be fascinated and shocked to know that Zimbabwe was asked to sit on the UN Human Rights Commission. What does that do to the credibility of the United Nations when it appoints a country such as Zimbabwe? Just in the first few months of this year, Zimbabwe had 959 documented cases of torture, 145 cases of detention, more than 100 cases of systematic executions and dozens of disappearances and kidnappings. Those are only the ones we have heard about. I am also getting very disturbing reports of innocent people who have been decapitated with shovels and buried in the ground by the thugs of Robert Mugabe.

There is also an active process by the ruling party to teach young thugs from Zimbabwe the art of torture. These people are then being sent out to torture innocent civilians and wreak havoc.

The impact of all this has been to make Zimbabwe a pariah and to destroy a country, which I visited in the early 1990s, that has immense agricultural wealth, physical beauty and resources in terms of its wild animals. It has destroyed Zimbabwe's economy, making it a country with massive unemployment in the order of 75%; a country where six million people are starving to death; and a country, which had an enormous resource of animals of which more than 600,000 them, many some of the rarest in the world, such as the black rhino, have been destroyed.

When I was in Zimbabwe and met with the black farm workers, one interesting thing they said was that they go out and teach their children about their cultural heritage, the game, the spoor and the ecology that surrounds them, but that they could not do that anymore because President Mugabe's thugs were out there shooting, massacring and poaching thousands and thousands of the animals that are their heritage. The black rhino, various forms of buck, and rare cats, including the lion and cheetah, are destroyed in this way.

Mr. Mugabe has been involved in the economic destruction, the rape and murder of his people, and the pillaging of his economy all so he can stay in power. Yet the international community's response is nothing, silence.

The fact is that we have a choice to make. Do we want to stand on the sidelines and give a green light to despotism, murder and the egregious violation of basic human rights or are we going to stand up for the basic rights and protection of innocent civilians? I want to ask that question and put it squarely on the shoulders of black leaders.

• (1540)

Last year in May the African community put together a plan called the New Partnership for Africa's Development, an ambitious plan that calls for, among other things, adherence to the rule of law, the protection of innocent civilians, adherence to a fair and independent judiciary, adherence to good economic policies and an investment in health and education.

Mr. Mugabe and his cronies have violated every tenet of NPAD; every single principle of the document. Why has the leadership of the black African community been silent in its response to this?

This month eight leaders of the most powerful countries in the world will be meeting in Kananaskis, Alberta. There we will have a choice of either standing up and defending the people in Zimbabwe

and the people in the surrounding areas or sitting on our hands and coming out with a document full of diplomatic platitudes and short on substance.

Will we implement a plan of action to not only address Zimbabwe but also address the tragedy in the Congo in which 2 million people died, or the tragedy in Sierra Leone where child soldiers were forced at gunpoint to chop the hands and legs off babies, children, women and adults? Will we just stand by and watch 500,000 being displaced from their homes in West Africa into Guinea because one man, Foday Sankoh, who is part of the RUF, wants to control diamond mines?

Will we stand by and allow famine to claim the lives of up to 10 million people in Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa and the surrounding areas? The numbers are hard to grasp because they are so large but those people are no different from any of us. They feel, they hurt, they have families, they have children, they love, they die, they work but they have been abandoned. They have been abandoned because as yet the international community has not taken it upon itself to stand up for the very basic norms of human rights.

Yes, we have done that to some extent in the former Yugoslavia. Yes, we are trying to do that in the tragic situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. However, while we have done that, we have neglected conflicts of orders of magnitude much larger than what is taking place in other parts of the world.

Why have we done that? At the end of this month the government has to decide whether it will live up to the standing committee's report, a report that I am actually speaking about today, which asks the four simple things.

First, the report asks for the suspension of Zimbabwe, which took place at the Commonwealth, for one year. I ask that we extend that suspension indefinitely until Mr. Mugabe adheres to the rule of law and does the right thing for his people.

Second, the report asks that we ban all foreign travel by Mr. Mugabe and his cronies. Thirty identified people in his cabinet and his cronies have been allowed to travel. They have to travel given that they have been appointed as part of the human rights commission in the United Nations. We must prevent those people from travelling and from going to Europe to buy the lavish gifts that they do off the backs of the people of Zimbabwe.

Third, the report asks that we establish an arms embargo on Zimbabwe. The people are getting arms. When I was down there I saw widespread evidence of children carrying Chinese made automatic weapons. They do not make automatic weapons in Zimbabwe. They probably got the weapons through the trafficking of those illegal diamonds that they pillaged out of the eastern Congo.

Lastly, the report asks that we freeze the personal assets of Mr. Mugabe and those same cronies. There is no use whatsoever in penalizing the people of Zimbabwe. They have suffered enough. The sanctions must be targeted against Mr. Mugabe and those same cronies. If we hurt him personally then we force him to take notice. If we hurt his ego and make him a pariah within his own party and within his country, then we have a chance of changing the situation. Otherwise he is basically impervious to anything else.

*Government Orders*

We have to get tougher on the situation. If we do not the situation will continue to spiral out of control.

The problems of that country are actually shared by many other nations on that continent. The continent has been ravaged by ruthless kleptocrats who have been interested in pillaging the resources of their countries for their own gain and not their people's gain.

For too long we have bought into a notion that colonialism was the root cause of all evil on the continent. I would submit that the argument does not hold any water any more. I would also submit that the responsibility for action on the most egregious violations of human rights falls squarely on the shoulders of despotic African leaders who have hidden behind the excuse of colonialism only to pillage and rape their own countries.

•(1545)

Do we want to stand up and accept that argument or do we want to stand up and do the right thing? The challenge will be ours in Kananaskis. I know Canada can lead. I know that the people who will be sent there will know what to do. I know the Prime Minister's Sherpa is a very knowledgeable man on this issue. He has guided the Prime Minister and given him many good suggestions.

I beg the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to listen to the suggestions that have come from this House on many occasions, to do the right thing, to defend innocent people and to save lives.

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for raising this very important topic which is of concern to many of us.

I wish to now move:

That the House proceed to orders of the day.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The House has heard the terms of the 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.

**An hon. member:** On division.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I declare the motion carried. (Motion agreed to)

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS****PEST CONTROL PRODUCTS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

•(1550)

[*English*]

## SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** There are seven motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-53.

[*Translation*]

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 5 and 6 since they require a royal recommendation.

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 2 to 4 because they could have been presented at committee.

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at report stage.

Motions Nos. 1 and 7 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 and 7 to the House.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Casey:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Will we be presenting petitions today or did we skip that?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Yes, indeed. As soon as the motion passed to move to orders of the day we skipped petitions and questions on the order paper. The member will now have to wait until tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

## MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (for the Minister of Health)** moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-53, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing lines 36 and 37 on page 4 with the following:

“meets the requirements of subsection 43(4) or (5).”

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-53, in Clause 80.1, be amended by

(a) replacing line 28 on page 61 with the following:

“such committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament”

(b) replacing line 37 on page 61 with the following:

“time as the House of Commons, the Senate or both Houses of Parliament, as the case may be, may authorize”.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Motion No. 1 is an amendment pertaining to the definition of confidential business information and should read in part as follows: "...meets the requirements of subsection 43(4) or (5)" instead of "43(4) and (5)".

These two subsections identify different types of confidential business information, so the definition would not be exact. Information can meet the requirements of one subsection or the other, but not both at the same time.

The purpose of Motion No. 7 is to provide for equal participation by the Senate and the House of Commons, when the legislation is reviewed after seven years. The amendment is in accordance with the principles defining the Senate's role as established in the Constitution of Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to address Motion No. 1. My hon. colleague mentioned that it adds the information that would be allowed for confidential business information. This is also specified in the bill. In the original framing of the wording in the bill, we understand that companies which have developed many different products, are rather nervous about the information already available. Also a reading room will be made available for people to read through the information but no information can be written down. Therefore this amendment makes them a little more nervous.

It is important to understand that the bill is not only about pesticides and what pesticides can or cannot come into the country or go out of it, it is also about health and safety. There are two sides to the argument. The extreme side says that no pesticides should be allowed into Canada. The other side says it is difficult for us to be competitive with our neighbours to the south and other international countries because of our slowness in and restrictions on allowing pesticides into the country.

Many of the new pesticides which are being restricted are much safer and better than the ones we presently use. This kind of negative incentive to the companies that would bring products into Canada would be put in jeopardy many of our farmers and our agricultural community. They are not looking for a competitive edge. They are looking for a level playing field with many of our trading partners. Therefore it is very important for us not to entrench this confidential business information any more than that we already have. That would be a difficult one for us to support.

We discussed Motion No. 7 in committee in a pretty significant way. It is a very important amendment because it goes to the root reason of why we are here. That is to represent the people who put us in office, to express their will and to conduct business of the nation in a way that is respectful and representative of the people for whom we speak.

The amendment says that on a seven year review, the legislation could go directly to the Senate and a Senate committee for review. The Senate is unelected, unrepresentative and friendly to a prime minister of the government in power. Therefore it is not a sober second thought. It goes against the fundamentals of democracy when

a review of a piece of legislation as important as this does not come back to the committee of the Commons that dealt with it originally.

We talked about this at some length at the committee. It was very important because as the debate went around, all parties in the committee agreed with the change to the bill. They agreed that when the bill came up for review that it should not go to a Senate committee but rather to a committee of the House of Commons. It is very important that we not jeopardize the democracy for which we fought so hard. It is very important that committee work be dealt with in a respectful way. That subamendment was considered with forethought and with definite ideas that it was important to the legislation.

We might think that this might have been originally an oversight in the bill. However Bill C-56, which deals with the ethics of the nation, uses exactly the same language. That bill is subject to a three year review. It too could go directly to the Senate for review, an unelected, unrepresentative group of individuals who are friendly and appointed by the prime minister, instead of parliament and the health committee.

• (1555)

This amendment must absolutely not be accepted. We must be allowed to continue in the manner in which the health committee recommended. I strongly oppose Motion No. 7.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-53 concerning pesticides.

At second reading stage, I spoke in support of the bill, but also suggested a number of improvements that should be included, including a re-evaluation, by 2006, of all pesticides registered before 1995. Unfortunately, Bill C-53, as it now stands, does not contain such a provision.

The Bloc Québécois also proposed an amendment to prohibit for three years the registration or any new registration of pesticides used for cosmetic purposes.

Unfortunately, the government rejected it. I also raised concern about the lack of support for biological agriculture research. I always thought we should do everything in our power to end our dependency on pesticides and have a more biological and environmentally harmless agriculture.

All these suggestions came from the environment committee report entitled "Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for the Protection of Health and the Environment", to which I had contributed. Unfortunately, Bill C-53 includes none of these proposals, which is quite deplorable. Nevertheless, this bill is a step in the right direction, considering that the most recent legislation, the Pest Control Products Act, dated back to 1969.

At least the bill contains positive elements, and I would like to mention a few.

The bill provides for better health and environmental protection through special protection for the newborn and children.

*Government Orders*

It takes into consideration the overall exposure to pesticides, including exposure through food and water and exposure to pesticides used in the home and school.

The bill also takes into consideration the cumulative effects of pesticides which have the same mode of action.

It encourages the reduction of risks posed by pesticides. For example, only pesticides contributing significantly to pest control are registered, and the dose and frequency of use have to be the lowest possible.

The bill also favours registration of low risk products through comparative risk assessment.

The bill would make the registration process more transparent by making it public and allowing access to detailed assessment reports on registered pesticides.

Thus, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, or PMRA, will be allowed to share scientific data with provincial, territorial, and international regulatory agencies. It will make for a better international joint review process by giving Canadian producers equal access to new and more secure pesticides that will help them be more competitive on the market.

The bill would provide more stringent controls on pesticides after their registration by requiring from the producers a statement of the negative impact of pesticides on human health.

It would require a re-evaluation of older pesticides 15 years after their registration. The minister would have the power to ban pesticides if the required data was not provided.

The bill would also provide increased powers of inspection and higher maximum penalties of up to \$1 million for the most serious offences, when pesticides are not marketed or used in accordance with the law.

The bill would allow public input in the regulation of pesticides through consultations held before important decisions are made concerning registration.

The public could also contribute to the regulation of pesticides through special reviews and re-evaluations. Under the 2002 PCPA, everybody can ask the minister for a special review of a pesticide.

Moreover, the public could have an input through the reconsideration of a registration decision.

• (1605)

Under the 2002 PCPA, anyone may file a notice of objection to an important registration decision. In addition, the review will be open to the public, which will have numerous opportunities to participate and will have access to most of the information received by the review panel.

A public registry will include information on registrations, re-evaluations and special reviews, including the PMRA's detailed evaluations of the risks and values of pesticides.

With respect to test data, the public may inspect the results of scientific tests submitted to justify registration applications.

I applaud all these measures, but we could go further still. We are at report stage and we still have an opportunity to put forward amendments to improve the bill.

Our goal today is to have Bill C-53 reflect the recommendations in the report of the standing committee on the environment, which I cited earlier, or the measures which Quebec is getting ready to take. I would like to mention a few of these.

Last March, Quebec created a focus group on the use of pesticides in urban areas, which has released a report proposing various measures. One of these measures is to increase research and development budgets for alternatives to pesticides in order to encourage all initiatives in this regard and to help make them accessible to the public.

The group also called on the government to implement a communication plan including—and I am still speaking about Quebec—a periodically repeated national campaign to inform the public about the risks of using pesticides and about managing the environment; and to develop information tools, brochures, and a website aimed at citizens who wish to buy pesticides or services requiring the use of pesticides, or who wish to use alternative methods.

The government of Quebec has already approved several of these measures. Right now, the national broadcasting service is televising warnings about the use of pesticides in an urban setting. A number of municipalities in Quebec are getting ready to introduce motions prohibiting the use of pesticides to improve the appearance of lawns within their jurisdiction.

These are tangible measures which this government should have taken in Bill C-53, but it did not go far enough. It stopped short. One might think it had made commitments to pesticide manufacturers.

Why does the government not join Quebec? Why does it not provide funding to Quebec to lead an even more effective campaign so we can stop the use of pesticides in urban areas?

These are positive measures that can be taken, and I find it unfortunate that the federal government does not go that far in Bill C-53. There are alternatives to pesticides, but the government has to promote them. From what we have heard from the Minister of Health, she seems to think that the mere passing of this bill will be enough. People will keep spraying their lawns with carcinogenic chemicals just for the sake of having a nice lawn, without being informed by the federal government of the potential, but nonetheless real, danger of using pesticides.

We must go further, and the amendments before us today would take us there. If the government, particularly the Minister of Health, believes in the precautionary principle, if it wants to protect the health of children and pregnant women, it will have to adopt these amendments as soon as possible.

I think that right now, at report stage, the Minister of Health should make a necessary addition by including a date in this bill. It should be specified that the cosmetic use of pesticides in urban areas will be banned within three years.

*Government Orders*

I hope that the minister will be proposing other amendments before this debate is over.

● (1610)

[English]

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate at report stage of Bill C-53, an act dealing with pest control products.

At the outset let me say that I come to the debate with a great deal of disappointment and anger at the process. Once again the democratic process for this Chamber has been ignored and the hard work of elected members has been ignored.

We have before us today two amendments sponsored by the Minister of Health from the Government of Canada. To do what? To negate, to nullify, the effects of two amendments proposed to the government in good faith at the committee stage in order to improve the act. We are not just talking about two amendments that have now been wiped out by the arbitrary, unilateral actions of the government. We are talking about an entire process that has been held to ransom by a government that refuses to take any criticism or any constructive suggestions.

I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that in fact our committee, the health committee of parliament, worked long and hard to make Bill C-53 a better piece of legislation. We went into the process with good faith. We said at the outset that the bill represented a significant improvement from the old legislation, which dates back to 1969. We said that it was a good start and was clearly beginning to address the concerns of Canadians over the last number of years but that it fell short in a significant number of areas.

We committed ourselves to work hard at the committee to improve the bill, and so we did. The opposition members of parliament together sponsored over 150 amendments to the bill. The NDP alone initiated 56 substantive amendments dealing with serious flaws in the legislation.

Did we get anywhere? Was any of it considered seriously? No. A few token gestures were made, a couple of tiny amendments were made in response to our concerns, but by and large there was a complete wall of disapproval for anything the opposition proposed. Yet here was an opportunity for the government to actually listen to the voices of Canadians and listen to the concerns shared by political parties right across the scene. Once again the arrogance, the absolute arbitrary nature, of the government has ruled the day and here we are today with no amendments from the committee, except for two from the government to negate and nullify the work of our committee.

Let us look at those two amendments. Motion No. 1 is an amendment from the government to reverse a motion sponsored by the Progressive Conservatives at the committee stage which would in fact deal with the concern raised by many witnesses before our committee pertaining to confidential business information. We tried very hard in our committee, and the amendment from the Conservatives did just this, to ensure that industry would not use these provisions of the act to deny necessary information to consumers and to prevent individuals from taking the necessary precautions.

The original amendment actually attempted to narrow the definition of confidential business information to ensure that the public good was preserved over the needs of industry. What do we have today? An amendment from the government to negate that work.

Frankly, it is hard to know how this is even in order. I accept the judgment of the Chair, but what was the point of all the work of committee? If even the little steps we were able to take were negated and pushed aside, what is the point of us even being here? What did we spend all those hours of work doing if it was only to see the government decide it was worthless and our contributions were meaningless?

The second motion before us today, if we can believe it, in fact reverses an amendment at our committee that called for a process to ensure that the new pest controls act would be reviewed by the House of Commons as opposed to the original intent of the government to have it reviewed by either the House of Commons or the Senate or both.

● (1615)

We took the position, justifiably so, that this is a matter for the elected representatives of the country. The review of something as important as the pest control act should be brought to the House and we should have a chance to verify its effectiveness and to make necessary changes depending on the results.

What do we have here? An amendment that goes back to the original and says that the act will be reviewed by a committee of the House, of the Senate or both Houses. I cannot believe it. These are simple little steps we are taking to bring some sense to this place and the government vetoes them each and every time.

Just on that point, the government originally called for the act to be reviewed every 10 years. We expressed our concern about that provision to begin with because 10 years is an awful long period of time. We wondered why the government was not willing to have the legislation placed under the scrutiny of objective eyes in a timely way so that we could make the necessary changes.

Do we think the government could accept the idea of a five year review period? Not on your life, Mr. Speaker. We got seven years. We made a little progress, did we not? We got a little compromise. In seven years from this day we will get a chance to review this legislation that impacts on the lives and health of Canadians. We are talking about pesticides. We are talking about products that are toxic. We are talking about products that cause harm to human health and well-being.

That is why the committee took this process so seriously. That is why we worked so hard to get changes. That is why we tried to get even something as simple as the precautionary principle entrenched in law, which has already been done. It was done when the legislation pertaining to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act was dealt with. At that time, parliament saw the wisdom of including within the law an actual provision to ensure that in terms of the whole framework of the law the precautionary principle or the do no harm principle should be the guiding way.

*Government Orders*

We in the health committee could not get that for the bill. It is gone. The government basically said “no more precautionary principle”. It is as if they are dirty words and we cannot say them any more. Every time we tried to make an amendment at committee to entrench the precautionary principle in the bill, we were shut down. The government said no, we cannot do it, it is not allowed.

Then we come to the review of the reproductive technologies bill, which is another piece of legislation where one would expect to see precaution entrenched in the law. The committee actually recommended that the principle be in the law. What did the government do? It took it out.

When we try to find out why, there is no answer. We asked if direction has gone out from on high to all departments that thou shalt not use the words precautionary principle. It would seem so. It would seem that the government has caved in to the demands of industry, to the absolute dictates of the corporate sector, which wants an unfettered marketplace, which does not want to have to deal with restrictions in terms of sale of products, which does not want to have to put labels on its products, which does not want to report to anybody, which does not want a transparent process.

The government, rather than being the body, the institution, that safeguards public health, is in complicity with the industry in stopping every initiative that makes sense in terms of human health and safety. That is what we are talking about.

That is why we are so outraged with the process today. We worked so hard to make the bill better, to respect the wishes of Canadians and to ensure that the government is doing its job, which is to make sure that the health protection of Canadians is its first priority, not the profit margins of the industry, not the greed of the corporate sector, but the health and safety of Canadians, and to take every step to ensure that Canadians are protected at all costs and that nothing is allowed on to the market unless it is proven to be safe.

That is why the precautionary principle is so important. It says that thou shalt ensure that all products on the market are safe. It should not be up to the consumer to prove harm. That is the difference, that is why it is so important and that is why the actions of the government are so wrong. That is why we oppose these motions and why we will keep fighting to the last moment for an improved bill dealing with pest control products.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will start slowly. But my speech may become more passionate later on.

First, our amendments were rejected because they were out of order and could not be debated. Motions Nos. 2, 3 and 4 pertain to the precautionary principle, which is a good thing when one has to make an important decision. The precautionary principle gives a direction when officials and an agency, which does not exist by the way, make decisions.

Lawmakers, and we are part of them, were providing guidance for future decisions. Previously, the legislation was reviewed every ten years. From now on, it will be reviewed every seven years.

Before I get to that, I will speak about the last motion, the amendment proposed by our friends from the government party. Members of the committee were taken in. I personally voted against that motion, against the proposed amendment.

However, our Liberal friends said “We agree with that. Let us remove the Senate and the joint committee”. They sought to please but knew full well that their motion would be defeated in this House. It goes against parliamentary tradition. So they made a correction. They were proud at committee. They boasted and said “Very well, we will give power back to the House of Commons”. However, they knew full well that the government would not allow it. It makes no sense. So they changed that.

Between you and me, we did not agree with having the House of Commons act alone. It is a prerogative and a tradition in the House of Commons. That motion will certainly gather support. But this proves that members of the Liberal committee, or I should say the Liberal members of the committee—

**An hon. member:** Same thing.

**Mr. André Bachand:** It is the same thing. My colleagues from the Bloc are correcting me, and I thank them for that. I was saying that the Liberal members of the committee get on any bandwagon, knowing that their work and their decisions will amount to nothing anyway. It is not only the opposition that was taken in; so were our friends across the way. They accepted an amendment, and were slapped on the wrist for it. The government told them “Do not do that. You have no right. We do not agree with that”. They apologized and promised to correct their mistake in the House. They will all vote in favour of Motion No. 7, despite the fact that all committee members approved the amendment. This is not serious. It is terrible.

People complain about the rigour of the committees. The Liberals, especially those in the back, close to the curtains, are saying that the members must have a role to play in committee. When they play their role, they get slapped on the wrist. Then, they say “We made a mistake. We did not think that this would make such an impact”. Perhaps they should read more about history.

That being said, let us talk about the second motion that was approved. It changes an amendment which we proposed. It is scandalous. Is it the lobby of big business that put their backs to the wall in only a matter of days?

What was said is very simple. There were two elements, clauses 43(4) and 43(5), which were to apply together as far as protection of confidential information is concerned. Clause 43(5) refers to components and then adds “of health or environmental concern”, and we are not doing anything to that. What is this bill about? Is it for businesses or individuals? All we did was add an and. The government's reply was “No, we are going to put back the or”. This gives an out to companies that do not want to make public confidential information that might have an impact on the environment and on health.

I recall certain Liberals on the committee talking about the necessity of “looking after pregnant women and unborn babies. We must think about future generations”. I think that thought was given instead to “present and future businesses”. It was simple and we are very much disappointed.

They were taken in as far as the Senate and the joint committee were concerned. This proves their inability to connect with reality. Now they are changing and heading off to spend the summer at home, saying "We were wrong, we would have liked to give the House of Commons more power but we are not entitled to do so".

•(1625)

Lawyers came before the committee, people who are experts on parliamentary procedure. We could have asked them the question but were told "No, it is fine. They are right and we agree." This is very disappointing. It has taken 30 years to review this legislation.

One thing is clear. There are advertisements on the radio and on TV, or in the newspapers, there are campaigns. They say "What do you have against bugs?" A person goes into a store and ask the clerk "What do you have against bugs?" meaning "to use against bugs" and the answer is "Nothing". "What do you have against dandelions?" "Nothing".

This has two meanings, since it can also mean "What objection do you have to bugs?" It shows that people are already starting to be more careful about the use of chemicals. Some will say that there are advantages to use, that is true.

The issue of cosmetic use and the issue of the precautionary principle were both rejected. All they wanted to do was bring the law up to date, but we are still ten years behind what the public wants to see, and what it already knows, ten years behind what the municipalities and provinces are doing.

I have said it often before and I will repeat it: the Liberals only have one single vision, one single strategy, it is for the Liberal party. They have no vision, no strategy for the country. Look at the legislative program, it is paltry.

In committee, people work like dogs to try to get some good work done. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens. All they want is to save this government and this political party.

With all due respect, Liberal members are simply machines; machines that say yes or no. Why did the committee members not stand up to the minister, who wanted to undo what they had voted on in committee? Why would they not stand up to her?

I believe that the time has come to reform the committee system, the House and parliament. However, more importantly, it is time to change governments.

For many people, Bill C-53 may not be a big deal, but again, this is ample proof of all the work that can be done in committee and all the trust that can be built in committee. There is another bill, Bill C-56 on reproductive technologies, being considered in the health committee. We will try to begin the debate before the House recesses for the summer.

When I look at the work that I did on behalf of my party, there were arguments for and against. We have been trying to build trust between the different opposition parties, and also between all of the parties, including the government party. Amendments have already been passed, and we have principles that we would like to discuss and adopt, if possible, in order to speed up the process.

### *Government Orders*

We know that clause by clause consideration is slow. It is very slow. We go about this in good faith. We wanted the labelling to be more complete, but we were defeated on this point. We forgive them. They have no vision, but they are forgiven for it.

However, when we are able to agree on an amendment, which is passed, we expect all of the committee members to defend this amendment, every one of them, from both sides of the House.

Unfortunately, once again, the relationship of trust that was established in committee disintegrated, and this does not bode well for the trust between the people of this country and the government for the next few years.

•(1630)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take the floor today in this debate on Bill C-53, an act to protect human health and safety and the environment by regulating products used for the control of pests.

It was high time, to say the least, that the House debated such a bill. We should not forget that this bill will amend an existing statute that was enacted in 1969, some 33 years ago, to regulate pest control in Canada.

Ironically, many scientists have stated their views, a standing committee of the House has examined the impact of pesticides on human health and the environment, and many reports have demonstrated a direct impact on the health of children, infants and pregnant women, but the government has waited 33 years before introducing a bill to regulate the whole sector of pest control and pesticides.

It is all the more surprising since the environment commissioner has stated clearly enough her assessment of pesticides management in Canada. She said that more than 6,000 pesticides are available on the market, with 500 different active ingredients, and that the great majority of them have not been re-evaluated in Canada for many years. Some said they have not been re-evaluated since 1988.

These pesticides were still on the market for the public to buy, without any re-evaluation, and having been registered on the basis of 30 year old data, old analysis schemes, and old public health protection benchmarks. They are available on the market, but we do not necessarily know the impact they can have on the health of Quebecers and Canadians, and on the environment.

We said from the outset that we felt Bill C-53 was a step in the right direction to make this necessary reassessment of pesticides that are currently available on the market. At the time, we also indicated that this review of the existing legislation, through Bill C-53, should allow us to set up a process in keeping with the clearly stated criteria that were the object of a consensus a few years ago within the Standing Committee on the Environment. These criteria were based on the development of alternatives in the fight against pest in Canada.

This review of the bill was going to allow us to ensure that new means and tools would be put in place to control pest while protecting the environment.

*Government Orders*

It was under these circumstances that we proposed amendments in committee. Earlier, my colleagues from the NDP and the Conservative Party spoke eloquently about the strength of the Liberal majority, which fundamentally rejected the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

**An hon. member:** It was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

• (1635)

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:**—indeed, among others, the parliamentary secretary, who was acting as the government's puppet. He listened to his officials, but he was very far from listening to what the public really wanted. What people want is a process and tools to reduce the use of pesticides in Canada.

However, I must point out that this bill and the current initiative must not lead to a ban of pesticides. Let me explain. It is not that I do not think that pesticides must eventually be banned, in three or five years, but this must be done in the respect of the various jurisdictions.

We on this side of the House believe that the federal government's responsibility regarding pesticide management is limited to the registration and marketing of the products. We also believe that the provinces are responsible for managing the sale and use of pesticides, and that the municipalities have a responsibility regarding the implementation of certain rules or provisions adopted by various levels of government. In the case of municipalities, it is toward the provincial government.

I stress this point because a number of rulings have been issued. I am thinking for instance of a judgment concerning the town of Hudson. The supreme court supported the town of Hudson regarding the implementation of a bylaw banning the use of pesticides.

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** For cosmetic purposes.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Of course, for cosmetic purposes, as my colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve just reminded me.

However, let us keep in mind that those supreme court decisions are based on the fact that municipalities are under the Cities and Towns Act of Quebec and the Municipal Code of Quebec. It is therefore under Quebec legislation that the court supported the decisions of municipalities to prohibit the use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes.

What does the present situation require us to do? It requires what the government has decided to do, that is set up in Quebec a committee, a working group on this issue and develop a policy, which, hopefully, will be tabled soon.

What did this working group, the Cousineau working group, say? Many things. It came to the conclusion that the Government of Quebec wanted to eliminate the use of pesticides within five years in the case of lawns and within three years for trees and shrubs.

More basically, the working group recommended the implementation of a pest management code under which a national standard would be established in Quebec for the use of pesticides. This national standard, which would be the result of a consensus, would be implemented by the municipalities in Quebec.

I now come back to what I was saying earlier, which is that the federal government most certainly has an important role to play. We are disappointed because the government refused to support the Bloc amendments designed, among other things, to develop organic agriculture in Quebec and provide financial incentives, as is currently being done in Europe. The government opposed the establishment of a program proposed in committee by the Bloc Québécois.

Moreover, the Bloc Québécois had proposed to speed up the implementation of biopesticides registration. As we know, there are at present only 30 biopesticides sold on the Canadian market, compared to 150 in the United States. On this side of the House, we would have wished to speed up the implementation and registration process of those biopesticides, in order to have real pest control providing for the use of alternative solutions.

• (1640)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair)** 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 Yorkton—Melville, Gun Registry; the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Wharf Maintenance; the hon. member for St. John's West, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

I was going to give the floor to the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, but before doing so, I would like to give it to a new member of parliament, the hon. member for Windsor West, whom I welcome to the House.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your indulgence as well as that of everyone here today. It is a privilege and an honour to speak today to report stage of Bill C-53 and the amendments to this important bill. Many parliamentarians have worked to update the bill but my fear is that without the input and amendments that were defeated at committee all the work will be for nought.

Although I have had the opportunity to ask questions in the House this is my first opportunity to recognize the results of the May byelection. As New Democrats we were successful in obtaining the seat of Windsor West, and I feel compelled to recognize the support and confidence that was placed in me. I would appreciate the indulgence of the House in this.

As members know, Bill C-53 is the Pest Control Products Act. The amendments related to the campaign in which we said the environment and health care played a significant role in our community.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of all my supporters during the campaign. My heartfelt thanks go out to them for the work they did on a day to day basis. My family, my wife Terry Chow, as well as my father, mother, sister and brother have helped on all my campaigns in the past. I appreciate their ongoing support during this transition period.

*Government Orders*

Others who have assisted me are my extended family, relatives, and friends in general. I was fortunate enough to have the support of volunteers from Windsor West and abroad, which is important for our community. I got a chance to learn about other communities and they got a chance to learn about Windsor West and the issues we face.

I also acknowledge the labour movement of the city of Windsor. Its leadership, members and retirees all played an important role in the election. They have also had an influence on environmental policies which relate to Bill C-53.

I had a difficult time even considering running in the byelection. Prior to seeking elected office in the House of Commons I represented ward two in the west part of the city of Windsor where I was elected in 1997 and returned in 2000. I was also a youth co-ordinator at the multicultural council where I helped youth at risk who had lost their way find employment and return to school. I appreciated those experiences but the Liberal government's lack of action and political will and its inability to enact legislation that would mean real and substantive change compelled me to seek the seat of Windsor West.

It is this point which brings me to Bill C-53, the Pest Control Products Act. It is an example of the government's lack of political will because it is vacant of real substantive change.

In Windsor West and Essex County we are faced with some of the most deplorable rates of cancer, respiratory diseases and birth defects in the province and the country. A recent health study by James Brophy and Michael Gilbertson compared Windsor's rates of cancer and other diseases with those of 17 other areas in the great lakes region. The study found evidence of a connection between the environment and health.

The sad reality is that much of the degradation comes from pollution from the United States where we have limited control. This has been compounded by Canada's abysmal record on the environment. We have been seeing a funding freeze that makes Brian Mulroney an environmentalist compared to the current Prime Minister.

**Mr. John Herron:** He was.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Yes, absolutely. It is proven by fact. However we have no credibility to tell the United States to clean up its environment and stop the pollution that is killing Canadians when we have a far worse record.

Despite the problem, Windsor city council with the support of citizens has taken action and shown leadership that relates to Bill C-53 and pesticide use. Whereas Bill C-53 is vague and provides limited direction, the city of Windsor has shown responsible government through comprehensive community input and the ability to take action. That is the real failing of Bill C-53.

When looking at our reliance on pesticides and their negative impacts on health and the environment one must wonder why it took so long for the government to update the Pest Control Products Act. It was passed in 1969. Ironically, I was born in 1968 so I have lived all my life under this bill, a bill with a real connection to our health and welfare. It has taken this long to update it. I am concerned it may

take 20 or 30 years to do another update even though we are talking about potentially 7 years.

One of the reasons I have reservations about the bill is that approximately 140 amendments were put forward at committee stage to address its problems. With two minor exceptions they were all defeated. Ironically, this defeats some of the committee work we have heard about from my hon. colleague today. It undermines the parliamentary system.

The defeated amendments were tabled in response to the input of witnesses regarding: the precautionary principle; pollution prevention, which is important because preventive measures can save money, health, and more importantly, lives; use and risk reduction; cosmetic ban; labelling; and independent science based research. These have all been abandoned. It is a sad commentary on a government which is bowing to industry as opposed to its citizens.

● (1645)

To say that those issues cannot be entrenched in the bill really bugs me. The city of Windsor's plan and government which take action demonstrate that political will and public consultation is meaningful and can have results. The city of Windsor introduced a best management practices committee for pesticide reduction. The action plan is an aggressive reduction of pesticide use for cosmetic and non-essential purposes with the goal of eventual elimination.

There has been the immediate elimination of the use of pesticides. A committee has been struck to report on an annual basis. This is really interesting because the report from the federal government will go back seven years, yet a municipality can report back in one year. We know what the federal government has done to municipalities over the last several years, having put them under the thumb of downloading and cutting resources and giving them no guidance.

Also important is the ongoing involvement of the private sector, public sector, labour, landscapers, gardeners, horticulturists, and commercial care specialists. That demonstrates there is an important role that all these partners can play. It is made easier by having books and educational material available so the public can make educated decisions. The failure of the bill is it does not provide an opportunity to make sure that the public is well informed to make conscious decisions and more important, move toward the solutions that they seek.

Our main concerns with regard to pesticides are simple. Pesticides are designed to kill and are deliberately introduced to our environment and then into our food. That in itself should be reason enough to have at least the five years that was requested, not the seven years for examining the bill. Only about one per cent of pesticides actually reach their intended targets. The rest is released into the environment which affects humans and wildlife. We know the connection with our environment and our health care.

*Government Orders*

In Windsor West in particular with our high rates, it is very important that this is addressed because if these things are not tied together we will see continual degradation. With the seven year lapse in reviewing it, if harmful things are found, we will be bogged down in very comprehensive ways in trying to make improvements or to ban substances that are very important to act on. In the past it has taken far too long to address the use of DDT and other like substances in public areas.

In addition, many pesticides do not break down. They accumulate in living organisms and affect the reproductive and immune systems of humans and animals. Once again Windsor and Essex county has the highest rates of birth defects in that area according to the Gilbertson and Brophy report. If we do not address the pesticide use in our community, we will see that continually entrenched in our environment.

That is why we cannot support the bill as it is. The amendments that were talked about, especially the 52 that were proposed by the New Democratic Party, were very important to address.

• (1650)

**Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my compliments to the member for Windsor West on his remarks on this legislation. Although he was not a member of the Standing Committee on Health, it is obvious that he has a fair amount of institutional knowledge on the file. He raised a lot of the salient points that should be considered in the bill.

I had the privilege but also the arduous task of sitting on the environment committee in 1999 when we undertook a one year review of the pesticide management regime. An all party report was tabled. The committee heard from numerous stakeholders, not just environmentalists but health care professionals as well as the participants of the Pest Management Advisory Council itself.

There were aspects we agreed to in that review of the legislation. To summarize, clearly when we are evaluating toxicity for pesticides or any particular toxin, there has to be a margin of safety under consideration that would take into account the health of the most vulnerable of our population, they being pregnant women, the elderly and children.

Mr. Speaker, you were a very active participant in the election campaign in November 2000. It is always good and healthy for us to see what was in the platforms of our competitors. There were three particular planks in the Progressive Conservative platform in November 2000.

Essentially the platform outlined that a Progressive Conservative government would table new pesticide legislation that would modernize the existing 30 year old legislation. We give kudos to the Government of Canada for adopting another Progressive Conservative initiative, very similar to what was done with respect to free trade, deregulation, tax reform, privatization and winning the war on inflation. We know the Liberals are not capable of coming up with their own ideas so the taking of our ideas is more than welcome.

I applaud the Minister of Health for tabling new legislation in the early weeks of her taking over that file. We said at that time that exposure levels and toxicity of pesticides would be evaluated with consideration to the effects on our most vulnerable populations.

We also want to highlight the second aspect, which is a cornerstone of what the all party committee flagged in its report of June 1999. There has to be public disclosure of what the formulants are, those ingredients other than the active ingredients of pesticides.

Numerous individuals who are concerned about pesticides in the environment recognize that quite often the formulants are actually more hazardous to human health than perhaps the active ingredient itself. That is why there has to be full and public disclosure.

We are also advocate trying to have a public awareness campaign, almost to the degree there is now in educating Canadians about the health implications of cigarette smoking. We need to show that there is a cumulative effect of adding more pesticides into our environment. We need to foster a culture of reduced reliance on pesticides and have a more integrated pest management approach.

Speaking directly to the motions, I am quite concerned about Motion No. 1 moved by the governing party, the Liberal Party of Canada. It has essentially gutted a Progressive Conservative amendment that was supported almost unanimously by both sides of the House at the committee stage.

• (1655)

They are the democratically elected individuals of our country who have said in good faith that this makes sense. They are educated parliamentarians who have listened to witnesses and understood that there has to be disclosure of substances that are in the pesticides themselves. This reflects on the issue of formulants.

The Tory amendment would have specified that confidential business information should be the only information legitimately withheld from the public. All other information regarding health effects, environmental impacts and efficacy are defined as in the public interest. Essentially we are saying that the amendment specified exactly what information is to be kept confidential. The public has the right to be informed of the rest. All members of the committee supported that amendment.

I compliment the member for Winnipeg North Centre who serves as the health critic for the NDP, the Canadian Alliance which stepped up to the plate on this amendment and the learned Liberal members, but here we are now pulling it back. We are pulling back an amendment that Liberal members supported, including the government representative for the ministry. We find that to be quite sad.

Before us are three motions that essentially speak to the precautionary principle. The precautionary principle is an international concept which says that the preponderance of evidence, the weight of evidence shows that there could be a detrimental effect to the environment or to human health. When factoring in the application of a particular substance, a very strong precautionary approach should be taken into account.

*Government Orders*

This is what we had in 1987 when we adopted a protocol on ozone depleting gasses done by the Progressive Conservative government led by the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. It was also the same precautionary principle that was adopted by the United Nations where the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney played an immense role in the 1992 Rio earth summit in that regard. It is a concept that by definition is used in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We see it referenced in section 20.2 of the proposed act.

We are calling on the Government of Canada to utilize it when it makes decisions. Whether it is the re-evaluation of an existing pesticide or the proposed registration or application of a new pesticide, we need to ensure that we take a very strong precautionary approach. That is the minimum that we owe Canadians.

It provides a clear transparency about how the Pest Management Review Agency utilizes the precautionary principle. It told us that the precautionary principle is utilized across the board in its decision making process. The witnesses had said that they asked for it. If it actually uses the precautionary approach, why not enshrine it in the act? Why not make it a duty? Why not make the Government of Canada accountable by having a clear standard? It makes a whole lot of sense.

I would also like to speak in support of Motion No. 5 moved by the New Democrats. They point out that we need a national pesticide use and sales database and a national pesticide use survey. Canada is the only OECD country without a national pesticide sales database. The only other major industrialized country that does not have a database on the use of pesticides is the Czech Republic, which was mentioned by the auditor general just a few years ago. Motion No. 6 moved by the New Democrats speaks to the same issue.

The final motion we would want to support but we would have preferred at least a five year review as opposed to a seven year review is that moved by the Liberal government to ensure that we do not have a 30 year old act again.

Kudos to the government for revising an act that is 30 years old. It is sad that it is not pioneering. We are discussing a mediocre bill which deserves mediocre support.

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as members know the bill updates legislation that was approved over 30 years ago. Since 1990 actually, there have been several recommendations on how to update it. For instance, there were the so-called blue book, the purple book as well, and the 1999 report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. They all formulated ideas and recommendations to improve the Pest Control Products Act, which we are now amending with the bill. All these efforts have been useful over time in producing the bill that is before us for discussion and in strengthening the old legislation.

I would like at this point in the debate to commend the chair of the health committee for not rushing through the bill, but for having listened to a wide range of witnesses and for adopting, with the help of committee members, a good number of amendments which definitely will strengthen the legislation.

It is a great pleasure for the members of the environment committee who worked on the committee's report entitled "Pesti-

cides. Making the Right Choice for Human Health and the Environment", which as we know was published about two years ago, to see the following amendments being passed by the health committee.

First, there is the fact that the words "acceptable risk" are clearly defined. Second is the inclusion, even if in a narrow scope and manner, of the very important precautionary principle, in clause 20, I believe.

Third is the fact that formulants are now included in the definition of a pesticide. It is a very important step and a breakthrough in committee. Fourth, the aggregate exposure and cumulative effect now have to be considered in the assessment of risk and in the re-evaluation and special reviews.

Fifth, there is a parliamentary review every seven years from now on. We also suggested a shorter period, nevertheless it is still good stuff. Sixth, the annual status report will also include registrations and lower risk products.

Seventh, the protection of children by way of a definition in committee is extended also to future generations, a general principle of capital importance. Eighth, the review of lower risk products will be expedited. Ninth, there is now stronger language favouring alternative products and also favouring strategies as defined in the preamble.

These are definitely positive improvements.

There are still some shortcomings. First, for instance, there is no statutory mandate given to the pest management review agency, which we very warmly recommended.

Second, there is no inclusion of the substitution principle, therefore there will be no requirement to deregister older products as newer and safer ones come on the market. Third, there is a broad definition of what constitutes confidential business information. It remains as it is in the old legislation.

Fourth, there is no requirement for a sales database, but I hope this will be resolved by additional funding for the chief statistician. Fifth, there is no requirement to label toxic formulants, contaminants or microcontaminants.

• (1700)

Finally, there is no phasing out of cosmetic pesticides, a measure that was proposed by our colleague from Montreal West, I believe, in her private member's bill, which actually was unanimously accepted by the House some months ago. It is another shortcoming of Bill C-53 that the cosmetic use of pesticides is not included, but one draws comfort from the fact that the supreme court last June set a precedent by saying that yes, the municipalities do have the power to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides, and yes, the public interest can and should be served by municipalities. Therefore the legislation somehow opens up or definitely makes room for the municipalities to take the initiatives.

*Government Orders*

It is very heartening to see that municipal elected representatives have not been bamboozled by the pesticide industry's public relations campaign every spring and that today over 30 municipalities across Canada have banned the cosmetic use of pesticides on private property and in some cases also on public property. It is also heartening to know that here on Parliament Hill pesticides are not used on the lawns.

In this connection also one has to say that the pesticide industry, in an attempt to introduce its products to the market, uses abbreviations and names which remove entirely the notion that what is being offered is actually a pesticide. We have fancy names like 2,4-D, which is a fancy abbreviation to convince the potential consumer that it is not a chemical that has danger for children and pets on the lawn and that it can be used safely. The fact is that every form of pesticide, whether it is described as mild or not, is a killer. If it kills insects, it contains substances that in certain accumulations and with a certain intensity can be very dangerous to human health, particularly to infants, to living beings of a smaller size and to adults in certain instances.

Therefore one can ask the question: What is wrong in having on the front lawn some beautiful, nice, yellow dandelions beautifying the landscape? There is evidently a cultural fixation here, particularly in suburban Canada, that the lawn has to be perfect and that it cannot contain anything but the blade. I hope there now will be a changing culture over time whereby we will see yellow flowers on front or backyard lawns and people will not consider them to be bad, considering that they are also part of the natural habitat and so on.

To conclude, the bill tells the manufacturers of pesticides that the government does recognize the fact that pesticides, which are euphemistically called pest control products, are actually dangerous substances and they should be used rarely and with extreme care. Particular care ought to be given to the training of the people using them, particularly in agriculture through the WHMIS program. It is good to know that in the bill there is a clause containing a measure that was firmly and in a very eloquent manner proposed by the member for Ottawa West when we had the hearings in committee when writing the report on pesticides a couple of years ago.

• (1705)

We hope that the industry will not spend money on promoting through advertising ideas that attempt to convince the public of the innocuousness of their products. I think that Canadians are now better informed than ever before.

Finally, let me say that the bill does have great potential. It is most definitely badly needed as an improvement over the 1969 legislation.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we do not have a problem of co-operation and we are very happy to work together.

I would like to thank the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie for his work in committee. I have often had the opportunity to say that it is in parliamentary committee that members show their real potential.

I will have the opportunity to get back to this, but we were disappointed by the fact that, although more than 150 amendments were moved by the opposition parties and by the government, all the amendments moved by the opposition, except for a few, were rejected. I think that a public policy bill, I would even say a public health and environment bill, such as the bill on pesticides, should not result in the kind of rather petty and mean spirited party politics the government has resorted to, through its parliamentary secretary and this unfortunately too silent Liberal majority.

This being said, the Bloc Québécois has chosen to quickly support passage of the bill. All members of this House know well that this legislation was long overdue, since 1969, in fact.

The member for Windsor West says he was born in 1968. It would be a lie if I were to claim the same, but we know that the act has not been reviewed since 1969. There are 6,000 pesticides on the market, with over 500 active ingredients. It is understandable that all those who are interested in the environment have indicated some concerns.

What is the issue at stake? In Quebec for instance, we learned that one person in two uses pesticides for cosmetic purposes, for no other reason than to have a greener or more luxuriant lawn. The use of pesticides is bad for the environment. It has repercussions all along the food chain. The government's slowness to act is unacceptable.

There is one other significant figure. I read that pesticide sales for horticultural use between 1992 and 1996 rose significantly, by 60%. When the statement is made that municipalities and local communities are closer to the people, it is interesting to note that the movement to ban pesticide use for cosmetic purposes came initially from the municipal and local community level.

It went right up to the supreme court. Pesticides fall under several jurisdictions. Retail sales are a prerogative of the provincial government, but everything to do with registration, access by consumers and retailers, pesticide classification and labelling, is a federal responsibility.

The hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie will agree with me that a number of witnesses who came before the parliamentary committee wanted us to know how dysfunctional the PMRA is, how inefficient it was, how much time it took to register products, and how dubious the judgment used in making decisions was.

There is, however, one positive measure. One of the reasons we support the bill is that I understand that, without a true joint registration process with the United States, when a manufacturer files a compliance notice and application for registration, it will be possible to avoid starting from scratch and to instead take inspiration from what has already been done, from studies and monographs which may come from the U.S. or other countries, instead of having to start from square one. We like to think of this as one element of many that will help speed up the registration process.

*Government Orders*

•(1715)

We want very much to see the registration process speeded up, because there is the whole issue of biopesticides.

We recognize that there are pests in the environment, that a certain number of them must be eliminated, and that products must be used. But we are saying that there must be ecological concerns, and the whole area of biopesticides could make it possible for environmental concerns to be better addressed.

I would like to speak about a number of amendments put forward by the Bloc Québécois. Once again, it is rather sad to see the partisan antics of this government.

In this regard, I draw attention to the Minister of the Environment. There is one good thing about him; he trains at the gym with me. He is in fairly good physical condition, and he will need a lot of energy to convince cabinet to sign the Kyoto protocol.

The best thing he could do for the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, who celebrated his birthday yesterday, the best present he could give him, would be to convince cabinet to sign the Kyoto protocol without further ado. Let us make the connection between the Kyoto protocol and everything going on with pesticides.

First, a number of witnesses told the committee that there are products which have been around for 20 or 30 years and which have not been re-evaluated. We are therefore asking that these products be re-evaluated within five years. I believe that the amendment put forward by the Bloc Québécois mentioned 2006 at the latest.

We were surprised to see this amendment defeated. This could put Canada and Quebec in an extremely unfortunate situation.

The Bloc Québécois put forward several amendments, which would make it mandatory to re-evaluate by 2006 all pesticides registered before 1995, without exception. We understand the whole logic behind re-evaluating pesticides.

There are perhaps alternatives now on the market which would be less harmful to the environment. We understand that this may not have been the case in 1979, in 1983 and in 1988. But in 2002, with the help of technology and research, these are perhaps alternatives.

I know that one of the Scandinavian countries automatically requires that old pesticides be eliminated. The member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie could tell me whether it is Sweden or Norway. Nonetheless, there is one country which automatically requires that old pesticides be replaced by new ones, which are less damaging to the environment.

The amendment moved by the Bloc Québécois regarding this mandatory re-evaluation was inspired by what is being done in Scandinavian countries. Again, it is unfortunate that the government chose to adopt a totally partisan attitude, because the bill would have been greatly improved had the government voted in favour of the amendment by the Bloc Québécois.

Regarding another amendment brought forward by the Bloc Québécois, we think that the act should be subject to a review. In fact, most acts that are voted on here are subject to a mandatory

review, whether it is the Employment Equity Act or the Assisted Human Reproduction Act.

The assisted human reproduction bill contains a provision that requires a three year review of the act. It would have been interesting to see the government follow the same logic with this bill. It is important to review legislation in areas where technological advances occur at a rapid pace.

Initially, the government wanted a ten year review. However, a lot of things can happen in ten years. I think the parliamentary secretary will agree with me on that. Ten years is a long period. It is two mandates, or three mandates with this Prime Minister, since he calls an election every three and a half years. In any case, no one knows what the future holds. It will be interesting to see what happens in February.

•(1720)

In closing, we brought forward an amendment calling for a five year review. It was a good compromise between a ten year review and the yearly review proposed by the New Democratic Party. We were sad to see that the amendment was rejected. However, we will continue to work hard to improve this bill, which is very important for public health and for the environment.

[English]

**Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in support of this legislation. I thank all hon. members who sat on the health committee with me for their work in making changes to this bill. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Health for recognizing that members in the House saw that the bill needed some changes. The minister was very good to work with us in putting forward recommendations.

I would like to remind all hon. members that five amendments came from opposition members and were accepted by the government. They include the preamble, which encourages alternative approaches, and the mandate of informing the public, which we wanted to ensure was increased. We also accepted reviews from other OECD countries and the cancellation of the consultation on the policy codes of practice; and for greater certainty the protection for children that it extended to future generations.

Government members put forward amendments dealing with the definition of acceptable risk; the definition of formulas; expediting the evaluation of reduced risk pesticides; and the recognition of the importance of dealing with minor use pesticides and dealing with them expeditiously.

This committee work has showed that members of parliament working together can put forward amendments and put forward a bill representing the interests of all Canadians across this country, whether members of an environmental group or farmers. That is what this bill does.

The bill would aggressively modernize the Canadian pest management legislation. It would safeguard Canadians and the environment while ensuring that our nation's farmers would have access to safe pesticides which would ensure an abundant food supply and allow them to compete with other farmers around the world.

*Private Members' Business*

Bill C-53 furthers three important goals designed to benefit all Canadians and it respects what Canadians have been telling the government.

First, the Pest Control Products Act would strengthen protection for Canadians and their environment. This act would specifically protect segments of the population who are most vulnerable to health risks created by pesticides such as infants, seniors and pregnant women. It would also require the Minister of Health to consider a margin of safety, an increase of tenfold, when evaluating products designed to be used in and around homes and schools.

This bill would also place an extra premium on human health by requiring the Minister of Health to account for the cumulative effects of pesticide use and its exposure. This measure would ensure the protection of Canadians from all possible negative consequences of pesticide exposure and use.

Second, the act would strengthen the post-registration control of pesticides. Under Bill C-53, pesticide producers would be required to report any adverse health or environmental impact created by their products. The act would also require that older pesticides be re-evaluated 15 years after they were first registered. This re-evaluation process would ensure that we would continue to use the latest scientific information and data when determining which pesticide products remain on the market. It would also give the Minister of Health authority to remove products from the market when the producer or the pest management product fails to supply re-evaluation data.

The bill would also dramatically increase maximum fines for the most serious violations. Violations may be punished by up to \$1 million in fines and I believe these penalties should deter people from using unregistered pest management products or registered products used in an unlawful manner.

● (1725)

Finally, the bill would make the registration process of pesticides more transparent. It would also encourage public verification of the work of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. This is something for which all groups have been asking. The bill would ensure that we could watch over the work being done at the PMRA. It would also establish public registries that would contain detailed evaluation reports of registered pesticides and reading rooms where people could go in and look specifically at the data the PMRA uses to make its decisions.

This increased transparency will build public confidence and will provide Canadians with the knowledge that we have some of the safest food in the world and that we have agencies to ensure that that continues to be the case.

While the health committee recognized that the pest control products had potentially adverse human health effects, it also recognized that pesticides contributed greatly to the quality of life and the strength of the Canadian economy.

Bill C-53 and the regulations would provide Canadian farmers with better access to safe pest management products being registered in other developing and developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain and the OECD countries. Canadian farmers can compete head to head with the Americans but they need the same

products to do so. The act and the regulations following it would allow Canadian farmers access to these products and allow them to do it in a safe and timely manner.

Directive 2002-02 of the PMRA extends the NAFTA joint review programs for reduced risk pesticides to submissions made solely to the PMRA. By adopting this reduced risk criteria used by the USEPA, the directive harmonizes and moves toward harmonization of the registration process between our two countries and will encourage more pesticide use within Canada and safer at reduced risk.

I want to conclude by saying that members of parliament were allowed to listen directly to their constituents and put forward their concerns. On my part that would be the farmers in my community and across the country. The government allowed us to make sure that those concerns were put on the table and to make the changes needed to ensure that all Canadians, whether an environmentalist or a farmer, had a voice in this debate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I wanted to speak to Bill C-53, and I am happy to be able to do so briefly today.

In any event, I believe that I will have the opportunity to come back to it and to express my opinion on the bill now before the House. I will probably have the opportunity to express my opinion and talk about my experience to those who are listening to us.

What I wanted to talk about today is my personal experience with pesticides, as I was the mayor of a municipality for a long time. I wanted to indicate what I have accomplished. That would have given the people who are listening today an actual example of this. I will, however, have the opportunity to come back to this.

● (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The hon. member will have nine minutes left when the House resumes debate on this bill.

It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ)** moved that Bill C-404, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (mail contractors), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker it is a pleasure to rise today to speak in the House before my colleague, the member for Champlain.

In his riding, there are many letter people delivering mail in rural areas. We can see them, on rural routes, stop at every mailbox and put the mail in. This bill concerns these people specifically.

*Private Members' Business*

Let me explain my reasons for introducing Bill C-404 and the working conditions of these people, most of whom are women. In closing, I will describe how their working conditions are negotiated and their agreement with the Canada Post Corporation.

There are 6,000 rural route mail couriers and suburban service contractors in Canada and, as I said, most are women. Their swages is often below minimum wage. They have no job security and are not entitled to employee benefits. Because of subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act, they are not entitled to collective bargaining. They cannot unite to face their employer.

At the outset, this is unhealthy and unusual. You will understand why, Madam Speaker, and I am convinced that, as a woman, you will understand the request that I am making here on behalf of the vast majority of women who work as rural route mail carriers.

What does subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act say? It says that for the purposes of the application of part 1 of the Canada Labour Code to the Canada Post Corporation and to officers and employees of the corporation, a mail contractor is deemed not to be a dependent contractor or an employee within the meaning of those terms in subsection 3(1) of the code.

What does that mean? It means that part 1 of the Canada Labour Code, which deals with the acquisition of bargaining rights and regulates the collective bargaining process, applies only to employees of the federal public sector, under the definition in subsection 3(1) of the code.

There court decisions deal with the status of rural route mail carriers as employees under the Canada Labour Code. In 1987, the Canada Industrial Relations Board, or CIRB, ruled that rural route mail carriers were employees.

However, the federal court later supported the position of the government and of the Canada Post Corporation by ruling that subsection 13(5) had specifically been included in the Canada Post Corporation Act to prevent rural route mail couriers from being considered as employees.

We can see what use the Canada Post Corporation has made of this court decision. In some cases, rural route mail couriers are treated no better than animals.

Why does subsection 13(5) deny rural route mail carriers such a fundamental right as the right of association, since the freedom of association is already protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Why is it that in their case, because of this legislation which favours a crown corporation, those rights are being denied?

In 1980, the then minister responsible for Canada Post, André Ouellet, who, by some strange coincidence—there are many happy coincidences—is now the president of the Canada Post Corporation, said that subsection 13(5) was necessary to preserve the financial health of Canada Post.

•(1735)

At the time, we all remember, Canada Post was racking up a deficit year after year of several hundreds of millions of dollars. However, we know that since 1995, Canada Post has been making a profit and is paying handsome dividends to the government.

Between 1995 and 2000, \$260 million have been paid to the federal government. Mail is a money maker for the sole shareholder of the corporation, which is the federal government.

Are Canada Post and the government not saying that rural route letter carriers are contract workers, and not employees? Letter carriers on rural routes are not contractors. I will explain why.

Their contract with Canada Post forbids them from working for other companies while they deliver the mail. Therefore, they are not able to deliver, in their car or truck, other products, other pamphlets, or ad-bags. They work exclusively for Canada Post. They cannot serve any other master than Canada Post.

Canada Post determines the sorting and delivery deadlines, and the delivery order. They cannot start their route at one end and return, or the opposite. The route is determined by Canada Post, and they must adhere to it strictly.

The number of returns to the post office and the way the mail must be handled and delivered are also regulated by the Canada Post Corporation. Letter carriers on rural routes must hire their own replacements, not because they are contractors who manage their own work, but because their contract requires that they find their own replacements when they are sick or on holiday.

Canada Post has complete administrative control over the daily work of rural route letter carriers. Canada Post does not simply give them the mail and let them deliver it as they see fit. It imposes a series of rules on how the work must be carried out. Furthermore, it also supervises them directly.

In some post offices—I am referring to rural areas here—even if it is not in their contract, they are told they must clear the snow around rural post boxes. They are not paid for it.

Often, when a Canada Post employee who is responsible for sorting the mail is absent, sick or not at work for some reason, the rural route mail courier has to sort the mail himself and prepare his delivery, without being paid for doing so, when this is absolutely not part of his contract. Otherwise, he might incur the wrath of the postmaster and often of the Canada Post Corporation immediately afterwards.

According to the Organization of Rural Route Mail Couriers, the president of the Canada Post Corporation, André Ouellet, is hiding behind parliament—and I believe they are right—by saying that he cannot do anything because the act that governs him prevents him from acting. We will remember that he himself introduced this legislation and had it passed when he was the minister responsible for the Canada Post Office.

The government's position is reflected in the answer given by the minister responsible for crown corporations, the current Deputy Prime Minister, to a question asked by one of my colleagues from the New Democratic Party on April 25, when he said “the hon. member knows that Canada Post Corporation is an arm's length crown corporation. I do not direct it as to how it manages its day to day operations”. He was talking about the corporation. It is not so much at arm's length, since the legislation that governs it originated from here and was passed here. The arm's length or non-arm's length relationship is highly questionable in this case.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1740)

We know very well that the federal government has always called the shots when it comes to the Canada Post Corporation. When the federal government got tough with the Canada Post Corporation in the past and told it to start making money, that it was tired of carrying it, the corporation had to knuckle under.

Suggesting that there is no connection between the Canada Post Corporation and the federal government is hardly an indication of goodwill and sincerity. We all know that Canada Post is the exclusive property of a single shareholder, the Government of Canada.

What are we asking for on behalf of these workers, most of them women, in Bill C-404, which I have introduced? The Bloc Québécois is asking that rural and suburban route carriers be exempt from the provisions of paragraph 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

This would enable them to join forces, to take stock, which is perhaps what is scaring the Canada Post Corporation, that they are human beings, that they have a right to earn a decent living. In the world of today, in 2002, one cannot treat workers this badly, as though we were living in the 19th century. These people have obligations like everyone else: they must make a living, raise a family, feed their children, put a roof over their heads and clothes on their backs.

It would seem that, for the Canada Post Corporation, these concerns simply do not matter. The only thing that counts for the Canada Post Corporation and its current president, and I really hate to say this, but it is true, is making money. Making a profit justifies everything. We on this side of the House cannot accept this.

About two years ago, a similar bill with basically the same object was introduced in the House. I remember that the bill was rejected by a vote of 114 against 110. Four government members had made the difference. As is often the case on their side, several government members had followed the example of their leaders, who had risen first. When a minister rises, the others follow suit without asking any questions, without even knowing what they are voting on. After the vote, everyone went home. On the way to the West Block, at least four members asked me "What did we vote on? What were the implications?"

I told them, and they replied "Ah, if only I had known". But not knowing, they harmed people who have a right to earn a decent living.

The worst in all this is the malice displayed by the Canada Post Corporation when the time comes to renew contracts. I hope that the term is not unparliamentary, but it is totally disgusting.

The rural mail contractor who buys a car or a small truck must make payments over a four year period, but his contract is only a three year contract. Canada Post is well aware that the contractor has to make payments for another year. Before his contract expires, when it is time to renegotiate, the contractor is told "You know, there are seven, eight, nine or ten people who want your contract, who are eyeing it. If you do not take a pay cut, you will lose it". Rather than

lose everything and end up in dire straits, the contractor agrees to a pay cut.

At Canada Post, some people make it up the corporate ladder by stabbing in the back poor people who earn minimum wage. Allowing this is unworthy of a government. It is even more unworthy of a corporation like Canada Post, which is an employer. Such an attitude is unspeakable.

●(1745)

Unfortunately, by using their majority, the Liberal members of the government in office prevented this bill from being made a votable item and, unfortunately, it cannot be voted on.

However, today's debate may at least develop an awareness among Liberals who may be too cold-hearted these days, although not with their friends from Groupaction and Groupe Everest, where millions and hundreds of millions fly like there is no tomorrow. Yet, these same Liberals refuse to give the minimum to people who work so hard to make a living.

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, that is a long title and I am also the minister responsible for crown corporations which is one of the reasons why I am the guy in the barrel this evening to debate the bill.

I want to respond to some of the comments made by my hon. colleague about this issue. On the surface one might agree with what the hon. member has said if there was some validity to it in terms of the treatment of rural mail deliverers and rural postal workers. If we were to suggest that somehow they were being underpaid, undervalued, badly treated, not provided with proper training or supervisory skills, not provided with a proper wage, or proper compensation for fuel, then there would be reason to support the bill. There are those that would suggest that somehow that was happening, that Canada Post did not feel they were worth worrying about. However, that belies the facts of the situation. It is not the truth when it comes to the relationship that Canada Post has with rural contractors.

We should first understand the word contractors. These are people who use this to supplement the family income in rural Canada. They bid on a contract and they are awarded that contract. It is a part time job requiring about four hours a day. Often it is a job that can be done within reasonable proximity of their home so that they can deliver the mail and return home to tend to either the chores of the family or whatever it is that needs looking after. They need a little bit of flexibility. When we compare it to an urban mail service, it is not like they are walking down the street with hundreds of homes filling up mailboxes or in the case of newer communities, going to central mailbox delivery facilities within the community and filling up the slots.

*Private Members' Business*

We are talking about rural Canada where it is sometimes necessary to drive great distances to deliver the mail or get a parcel delivered. It requires a different approach. The real issue here is not the working conditions of the rural postal contractors. The bill should be renamed because it is a bill to increase the membership in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. In reality that is what we are talking about.

There are thousands of rural contractors in Canada. If they were all brought into the union and paid monthly union dues it would substantially increase the revenue for the union and increase the membership. In union politics, which I know a little bit about having been raised by a national director of the United Steelworkers of America and a vice president of the Canadian Labour Congress, I understand the importance of union dues and the importance of expanding the union base and membership.

In reality, that is what this is about. I do not have a problem with union officials trying to do this. I support the right of labour unions to be able to organize and to expand their particular area of membership whether it be in the same field or as in the case of the auto workers. Many of us had lunch today with Buzz Hargrove, he may be running for some obscure office, that announcement has yet to make the front pages, but one never knows. Only 25% of the people who are members of the Canadian Autoworkers union are in the automobile business. They have changed their approach recognizing the change in industrial and commercial Canada. They have gone after other industries where organization was not heretofore a reality.

I believe that organized labour adds tremendous value to our country. I support the right of men and women to work, to organize and to get together to fight collectively through bargaining agreements or, if they need to, through the use of work action and things of that nature.

• (1750)

There is an old adage: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I have yet to see anyone point out to me any rationale that would suggest that the system currently in use by Canada Post is broken.

Members should take a look at the success of Canada Post since it was made a crown corporation in 1981. It is quite a remarkable success story. Prior to 1981 the federal taxpayer had subsidized Canada Post by some \$4 billion. That is quite an outstanding amount of taxpayers' money. Since that time Canada Post has returned to the government coffers in excess of over \$300 million in revenue.

If I were a union leader in CUPW I would say that a lot of that is due to the hard work of the men and women in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. I acknowledge that. A lot of it is also due to the change in style of management and that as a crown corporation Canada Post is able to go out and compete and find new ways of doing business. Few people realize that Canada Post is a 51% shareholder in Purolator. Canada Post is into the business world.

Members opposite, particularly in the official opposition, would scream if we did it any other way. I would as well. This has been a lesson in how government can work better and more effectively. I must say that when I put an envelope in a red box with a 48¢ stamp on it, and send it either across the street, across town, across the province, or across the country, and it arrives within a reasonable

period of time in good shape, that is tremendous value for the dollar. It is a real success story.

Recently I had the privilege of travelling to Madrid to meet with the postal operations from Central and South America, Spain and Portugal, all these Spanish speaking countries who get together on a regular basis and share best practices and new ideas in postal delivery. The post office today is not the traditional way of delivering the mail. It is e-post. It has expanded into the electronic world. It is package and parcel delivery. It is just in time.

If hon. members want a fabulous experience they should go to Canada Post's head office right here in Ottawa and take a look at the operation. If they want to see the impact in rural Canada, there is an electronic map of Canada that is extremely large. For example, it shows when a truck breaks down on the Trans-Canada highway outside The Pas, Manitoba, or anywhere in the country. A yellow truck flashes on the map and a front-end vehicle is sent out to pick up the truck within minutes. It is astounding to see this operation. It is very high tech and something of which all Canadians can be proud. It even has 28 airports on the map. If there is a 10 minute delay it shows a yellow airplane flashing; if it is 30 minutes it is a green one. If the flight is cancelled it is red, so the mail can be shifted just like that and to ensure that it gets to where it is intended to go.

Canadians can be proud of Canada Post. The people who work for Canada Post, members of CUPW and management, can and should be proud of the success story. In Madrid, all of the postal operations from South and Central America, Spain and Portugal wanted to hear how Canada had turned this previously heavily subsidized corporation around and made it into a modern success story that is delivering its product at an extremely reasonable price, turning a profit in favour of the taxpayer. What a fabulous story. It is not broken. The bill would try to fix something that is not broken and is totally unnecessary.

• (1755)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I do want to get into a discussion on the bill sponsored by the member for Chambly. I would like to give a little history lesson first because people see the bill differently in different parts of Canada.

My constituency has 87 post offices. Approximately 12 of them are located in houses, in small rooms with separate entrances, providing a service to a small community. There is no question in my mind that if we were to make those facilities compliant with the bill I am afraid that would cause Canada Post to close these small centres.

*Private Members' Business*

I have never talked to any individuals who operate these small post offices who had ever indicated in any way that they wanted to do anything else but place a tender and operate out of a small room. There is no demand out there, as the hon. member from the government side has just said, to make changes to that. None whatsoever.

We still have contracts for those people who would carry the mail in these remote areas. When these contracts go out people bid on them and the lowest bid is not always accepted. The Bloc member said that somehow they are told that they would have to lower their bid in the bidding for Canada Post contracts. That is absolutely false. I know it as I have helped many of these people prepare their bids.

The conditions of the bid include the mileage, the route, the time and everything else. They know how long the contract will be and when the contract will come to an end. They can either reapply and re-tender it. The idea that was raised in this House that somehow the tenders are looked at first and then negotiated to take the lowest tender after the tender process is absolutely not true.

The hon. member who just spoke from the government side did raise an interesting point. He said that we get the mail in reasonable time. I would like his definition of reasonable. I used to get mail from Ottawa delivered to my home more quickly when the CPR carried it than at the present time, so let us not say it is reasonable.

I have great fears that if we were to take all of Canada Post and put it so that all employees, even for only a few hours a day, came under a contractual arrangement we would ruin service to the rural areas. I am sure that would happen. Instead of having a daily mail service, it would perhaps be cut down to two days a week.

While the idea of the bill may have some merit, speaking from rural area Saskatchewan and speaking on behalf of the smaller post offices, I am afraid we could not support the bill even though it was votable.

The people who render the service in rural Saskatchewan do a tremendous job. The poolrooms are no longer the social centres. The post offices in rural Saskatchewan are the social centres of the community. For that reason, to destroy the operation of the post offices that now exist, at least in my area, under different contractual operations, would be a blow to the communities.

• (1800)

For that reason of course I cannot support a change in the present arrangements that Canada Post has with the smaller areas.

In the larger areas, I am not disputing, in any way, CUPW's operation. I am not disputing the arrangements that it has for mail contracting. I am not disputing the arrangements that Canada Post has with airmail or having the trucks deliver to central points.

What I am disputing is the government, or Canada Post as a corporation, trying to put something in these smaller areas that simply will not work in rural Canada. I know it will not work because I live in rural Canada and smaller areas are not asking for it. I have lived in a rural area for years. We have 24 truck deliveries and about 80 post offices. No one has ever asked for a change in what we now enjoy.

For rural Saskatchewan, those places outside the city, and for smaller places from coast to coast to coast, all the bill would do, if it were a votable bill and it came into effect, is cause Canada Post to bring poorer service to rural Canada, including Saskatchewan. Therefore I cannot support the bill.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here once again to debate this important issue of providing rights to rural route mail couriers.

As was mentioned in previous speeches, I had a private member's bill that was virtually the same. It was debated in the last parliament. I was very optimistic at that time that the bill had support on all sides of the House but in the final vote, as some members may remember, the count was 114 against and 110 for; in other words, at that time we lost the vote by 4 votes. Two people voted the other way. We were very disappointed but we were committed not to let the issue drop.

In spite of what the member from Mississauga would have us believe, the issue is about the workers' rights, not about any one union trying to expand its membership.

Rural route mail couriers are the only group of workers in the country who are specifically barred from free collective bargaining. I should point out that free collective bargaining is a right and a freedom guaranteed to all Canadian workers under the Canada Labour Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and all international conventions and covenants of all sizes, types and shapes. Therein lies the rub.

When the Canada Post Corporation Act was implemented in 1980, the corporation did not want these employees to be viewed as employees for the purposes of the Labour Relations Act so it put in a clause that would specifically bar this group of workers. It says that even though for all intents and purposes these people look, walk and act like employees, because in fact they are employees, from here on forward they will be considered independent contractors and therefore not subject to the Canada Labour Code.

That is simply not true. I have been in labour relations for much of my working life and there are a series of tests in law that one must meet to be considered an independent contractor. At best, these workers are dependent contractors, wholly dependent on one source for all of their earnings and income. What makes it completely unfair is that the Canada Labour Board ruled in their favour and said that they were wholly dependent and therefore employees. However because of that one clause, that one provision in the Canada Post Corporations Act, they could not avail themselves of all the rights that other workers enjoy.

It is a complete red herring to say that it is CUPW trying to expand its membership on an organizing drive because nothing in what the rural route mail couriers have said even mentions any specific union. They might form their own association but they do want the right to bargain collectively, and implicit with that right comes protection under the Canada Labour Code regarding strikes, lockouts and the use of arbitration and mediation. All those rights stem from the definition of being defined as an employee.

*Private Members' Business*

I worked very closely with the rural route mail couriers over the course of these many years. I opened up my office to them so that they could come to Ottawa and lobby on the Hill. They worked out of my office for two weeks while they came and visited members of parliament to try and explain to them the inherent unfairness of this. They are the only group of workers in the country who, for purely economic reasons, are barred from the right to organize, the right to bargain collectively and all the other rights that stem from that.

There is no justification for that other than economic. André Ouellet, the president of the Canada Post Corporation, has admitted that it was the corporation's motivation in 1980. At that time, the Canada Post Corporation was hundreds of millions of dollars in debt. I do not think its operating deficit was that much but it did have an accumulated debt of that much. It was simply trying to streamline its operations by not paying fair wages in rural Canada.

Fair wages benefit the whole community, whether it is a rural community or an urban community. No one can deny that it is unions that have elevated the standard of wages and working conditions to create the middle class which makes Canada great today.

● (1805)

Even the member from Mississauga grudgingly admitted that the unions had played a role in elevating the standards to the middle class, but yet we now have a disparity. We have a group of employees delivering mail in the city who are making, on average, \$17 or \$18 an hour, about \$35,000 a year. It is not a fortune but it is a fair and living wage. However we have a group of employees in the country whose average take home pay, under the current contracting system, is less than the minimum wage paid to a McDonald's employee.

The current contracting system has been abused. The member from Saskatchewan, who spoke just prior to me, claimed that he knew of no abuse. Well many of the almost 7,000 rural route mail couriers on contract have come to me with graphic examples and illustrations showing how the contracting system has been abused, in that for the same contractors to keep their contracts they get a phone call from Canada Post telling them that there is an awful lot of interest in their contracts and that for them to be guaranteed their routes they had better lower their bids a couple of bucks, and so it is jacked down again.

Those contractors have to pay for their own fuel, gas, insurance, car and all the other expenses that an independent business person would have to pay. They do not receive any benefits. They do not pay into a Canada pension plan, UI or worker's compensation and they receive no sick days, and it is all because they are not deemed to be employees for the purposes of the act. However, instead of their salaries going up with the cost of living and cost of inflation, they are being negotiated down. That is not a free tendering contract system. That is interference, dominance and abuse of power for Canada Post to call the people and tell them that if they want to keep their contracts they will have to take a little less.

When the Canada Post Corporation Act was first created over 20 years ago some of the rural route mail couriers were keeping their heads above water. However some of them are getting less now than they were then, for heaven's sake. Clearly the system has failed them.

It is like it has been throughout history. When a group of workers did not get to share in the benefits of this great nation, they were motivated to come together, to act collectively and to form their own association.

The rural route mail couriers have never said that if they were granted the right to organize and to bargain collectively that they would join the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. They may join the Canadian Autoworkers Union or form their own inhouse association for collective bargaining purposes. We do not know. It is a complete red herring to assume that it is just the Canadian Union of Postal Workers that is trying to expand its membership.

I thank the member for Chambly for raising this important issue on behalf of working people around Canada. It is at their request that we are keeping the issue alive. I am disappointed that the reason the vote on my bill lost was because of deliberate misinformation being spread by that side of the House. Everyone knew that we were only talking about rural route mail couriers being allowed to organize and bargain collectively. They took it to mean that all mail contractors would be included, in other words airline and trucking companies that had been contracted to carry mail on behalf of Canada Post.

That was never the purpose or the point and we had made that abundantly clear. However at the 11th hour, even though we had enough Liberal MPs willing to vote for us, especially those from rural Canada who knew the reality of rural route mail couriers, they were interfered with and misinformation was spread that it would have been a huge complicated thing that would involve trucking companies, shipping firms and airlines. That was nonsense and tripe.

All we are talking about is an issue of basic fairness to correct an historic injustice perpetrated by André Ouellet himself. We want the minister to intervene and to order and direct Canada Post Corporation to extend to rural route mail couriers the same rights and privileges that all Canadian workers enjoy and the protection of the Canada Labour Code. It is the very least we should be able to expect. It frustrates me that year after year goes by and we have yet to make this important step.

● (1810)

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Chambly for bringing forward the bill. I also want to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre who just spoke and had the same bill in the previous parliament, which at that time was votable. It is unfortunate that this bill will not be votable tonight.

In fact, if you listened carefully, Madam Speaker, the last time this bill came before the House as presented by the member for Winnipeg Centre it lost by only about four or five votes. There is a big interest in this issue, rightly so. I guess there is that interest simply because there is a great injustice out there in terms of how employees are treated within the same corporation.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Not employees.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** The parliamentary secretary had his say. I will go into a bit of a rant on what he had to say a little later if he would be patient enough to listen to me for a minute.

Perhaps I will get into my rant now while he is on a roll. As for the parliamentary secretary, imagine: this is the city mouse delivering a message on rural mail couriers. This is a member who represents Mississauga West, one of the richest ridings in the country. He would not recognize rural Canada or rural poverty if he stumbled over it.

I want to take exception to a few of the things he said. To begin with, the people who deliver mail in rural Canada are hard working and do a good job. There is absolutely no difference between what they do and what the urban couriers do in that place called Mississauga West which the parliamentary secretary represents in the House of Commons. The only difference is how they are paid. The rural mail couriers are basically working for minimum wage. I have some facts, Madam Speaker, which I will table in the House with your permission to prove that.

I want to refer to a ruling by the Canada Labour Relations Board. It was a decision in 1987. The decision emphasized the point that while Canada Post has divided its operations into urban and rural services, the evidence brought before the board showed that there were no clear boundaries. Not only are RRMCS, the rural route mail couriers, "integrated into the overall post office mail delivery and collection plan", but also nothing "greatly distinguishes the manner in which they perform their function from the manner in which the functions are performed by letter carriers". That reference is from the CLRB decision, board file 530-1218, rural route mail couriers. On April 29, 1987, this decision was rendered.

I guess the rest is academic. We only have to listen to members on this side of the House, who I think have really grasped this issue and understand it.

Again to go back to the parliamentary secretary, and this is something that he will learn not to do, he is used to shooting from the hip. We do give him credit. He is a great performer, but when one is representing a minister in the House and the Government of Canada that person should not be shooting from the hip. That individual should use a little bit of fact to emphasize the point if there is in fact a point to make.

Listen to this one. I will quote the member with regard to rural mail couriers. There are 5,000 of them out there and, by the way, two-thirds of them are women. The parliamentary secretary stated in the House that they are out there only to supplement their incomes, saying that they work perhaps, and that is the word he used, perhaps, four hours a day and do reasonably well financially.

His interpretation of the world is based on that old movie *On Golden Pond*. He is a cottager up in Muskoka where the steaks are thick and the beer is cold. If he accidentally runs into some of the rural poor driving down the highway, he would not—

• (1815)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Well, Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel:** Shut up and sit down.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Madam Speaker, I will not shut up and sit down. I do not think that personal attacks are appropriate here.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Madam Speaker, I—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Would the hon. member please sit down?

Colleagues, I think we all know what language is appropriate for the House. I do not think that I as the Chair should be the one to tell you what language is appropriate.

We will resume debate on the private members' business that is before the House, please.

The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Madam Speaker, the beer is cold and the steaks are thick on golden pond. That is exactly where his cottage is and he cannot deny that.

He said that the workers work perhaps four hours a day. They are reasonably well paid, he said. Then he said they can attend to their chores when they return home, because most of them are women and they go home to do chores. That is an insult to rural mail couriers, because they are hardworking. In fact they are the working poor. The evidence is here that will prove that. He got on to this tirade about how this is just another union movement. That is absolutely false. It has nothing to do with a union in a sense. It has everything to do with fairness for workers who basically do the same job as their city cousins. That is it.

The previous critic, from the great riding of St. John's West, who is now sitting behind me, wrote to André Ouellet, the president and chief executive officer of Canada Post. I will tell members what he said, because this is the basic honesty that I think can come only from the Conservative Party. I, along with this member and others, am taking credit for this, for changing our position on this, because at one time we had a ridiculous position on it, which the government now maintains. It is the position it inherited from us, among other things, which it kept and did not change.

The member basically made three points to the president of Canada Post. He wants the rural mail couriers to be entitled to "more fair and equitable wages and allow"—fairer, that would be a grammatical error that I did not commit; I am just quoting from the letter—"collective bargaining...to improve wages and working conditions". Remember, this is authored by a man from Newfoundland.

A third point, and the most important, is the repeal of subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act. That would eliminate the disparity between the city mouse, as exemplified by the parliamentary secretary, and the country mouse that we on this side of the House are attempting to defend.

*Private Members' Business*

Madam Speaker, I would suggest that you carefully read the blues tomorrow yourself to realize how far off base the parliamentary secretary is on this issue and reflect on what we are saying on this side of the House, because our parliamentary language was concise, was precise. Nothing unparliamentary was said. Government members simply do not want their own words thrown back at them in the House during debate. That is what the issue is.

The fact of the matter is that we come to the House to defend citizens of this country when they are being treated unfairly. One might say that internationally we do that and we have a proud history of doing that. When we see an injustice or unfairness in Canadian society being exercised by Canada Post, it is incumbent upon us as elected representatives to do something about it, to bring it to the attention of the House and to bring it to the attention of the government so that the Canadian public understands the level of unfairness that is being exercised by Canada Post.

Canada Post has had some success stories. That is one thing I do agree on with the parliamentary secretary. It has had some success.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Get your own material. Quit using mine.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel:** You shut up.

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** The fact is that in the 21st century the way it is treating rural mail couriers is not right. It is not fair. There is a sense of fairness in Canada which I think has to be exercised by that crown corporation. It is something that can be done and it should be done. We support the rural mail couriers and we want the government to do the same.

• (1820)

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be brief. I think this legislation is very well intended. My fear is that however well intended it is liable to do damage to the very group it is trying to help.

I do come from rural Canada. I live in a small village in rural Ontario and I am very familiar with the rural mail couriers. I am very familiar with the fact that they are overburdened. The proliferation of direct mail advertising, for instance, particularly after the changes in legislation in the last few years, has resulted in an enormous burden on the rural mail couriers that operate out of my village.

However, there are two things I would like to point out to the member who is promoting this legislation. One is that in my community not all the rural mail couriers are in favour of what is proposed in the bill and the effect that would occur. The whole idea of this amendment, which would essentially allow rural mail couriers to organize, is in fact resisted by many of the people in my community who actually would prefer open competition. Their complaint is basically that Canada Post has been applying a very hard-nosed attitude to rural mail couriers.

I think another way should be sought to treat the rural mail couriers more fairly, primarily because the rural mail couriers are an important part of the character of this country. In every province, Quebec, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, or wherever, the rural mail couriers delivering the Queen's mail are an important part of our national identity and we need to support them.

The difficulty I see, Madam Speaker, is simply this. If the bill were to go through it would make the delivery of rural mail more expensive. I think what would happen is that Canada Post would get out of the business and it would go to independent couriers who would undercut and deliver the mail at a much lower price and the rural mail couriers would disappear altogether.

I have a lot of difficulty. I express my support for the intention of the legislation but I am very worried that it would have a negative effect.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments made by the members for Winnipeg Centre and for New Brunswick Southwest and, above all, I would like to thank them for their support. I thank them on behalf of the rural mail contractors, for the sympathy and the compassion they have shown toward their fellow Canadians. It is to their credit.

I will not speak of the member for Mississauga West. I will not say what I think of him. I will not quote his words. Because it would not be parliamentary language, I will not say that I think he is a boorish man. I will not say so. I will not say either that he is a mercenary who has always defended the indefensible. I will not say that he supports all causes, even the most objectionable. I will not say that. I will not say that is heartless. I will not say what he is.

Referring to him, the member for New Brunswick Southwest referred to a city mouse and a country mouse. As far as I am concerned, we can forget about the city and the country, and I would not have referred to a mouse, but to another rodent.

Having heard this man talk on and on and throw tantrums for the nine years I have been in the House, and considering that I am a member just as he is and that we sit in the same parliament just makes me sick. It really makes me sick. He does not have any sympathy for other human beings. He only has one rule, which is to defend a party that is indefensible. He would never have said to his constituents during the election campaign what he has just said now. He would not have dared to say to postal carriers what he said a while ago.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** The same thing.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel:** He is a mercenary for all causes. He is a hatchet man. He is an ill-mannered man.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Order, please. I know it is late and members all passionately want to put their arguments across. I only ask that members keep their composure, because there are people watching. The hon. member for Chambly.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel:** Madam Speaker, I have a hard time controlling myself in front of such a man, but I will tone things down.

This man, with his attitude, his allegations and his behaviour, is unworthy of sitting among us. To think that he represents the party in power and, what is more, is the parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for the Canada Post Corporation.

*Adjournment Debate*

[English]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** What kind of crap is that? What kind of a guy are you to say stuff like that?

[Translation]

**Mr. Ghislain Label:** Can you not make this ill-mannered person be quiet, Madam Speaker? Please silence this boorish man.

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

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Order, please. Members from both sides should refrain at all cost from attacking one another in the House.

[English]

We have all agreed that personal attacks are not to be levied in the House of Commons where we have respect for one another. I would really enforce that rule, please. The hon. member for Chambly has one minute.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ghislain Label:** Madam Speaker, in closing, I will just address myself to those members who have no respect at all for Groupaction and Groupe Everest, those companies that pocket fantastic profits for doing absolutely nothing, but who still respect other people, workers, human beings, men and women who honestly earn a living, and all those who voted for them and sent them here. I ask for the unanimous consent of the House in order that this bill be declared votable.

• (1830)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Is there unanimous consent to make the item votable?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

## GUN REGISTRY

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, on May 2 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice gave a most unsatisfactory answer to a direct question. The RCMP has provided reports documenting hundreds of thousands of errors in the gun registry. I again ask my question. How can a garbage collection system like the minister is running be of any benefit to the police?

Last week the parliament secretary contradicted the documented evidence from his own department and the RCMP by claiming that

99% of all firearms were correctly registered and 99% of firearms licences correctly issued.

On May 22 the justice department, in response to one of my access to information requests on error rates in the gun registry, stated:

The error rate for applications received up to July 18, 2001, was 90% of a total of 362,375. In addition to errors detailed in Appendix A, 42% of firearms registration applications contain errors in the firearms description, in comparison to the Firearms Reference Table...The sum of the errors exceeds the number of applications received because the application is only counted once even though it may contain multiple errors.

On April 9, 2002, in response to our access to information request, the RCMP provided the cold, hard statistics used to calculate the justice department's 90% plus 42% error rate in firearms applications. As of July 18, 2001, the RCMP's Canadian firearms registry had received 362,375 firearms registration applications. The RCMP provided a two page document listing 60 different types of errors. Amazingly this RCMP document records a total of 970,647 errors.

Here are some of the more common firearms application errors the RCMP documents: 226,024 applications required the firearms owner's licence numbers; 88,886 applications were awaiting payment while the funds for 23,211 applications were not acceptable; 48,282 applications did not have the firearms make, while for another 40,528, the make was invalid; 79,456 had an invalid model description; 71,539 required a client match; 59,640 had address errors; 56,374 required the calibre for the firearm; 34,830 did not have the number of shots; 18,434 did not have a serial number; 16,313 did not have the barrel length; and 20,978 had not been signed.

The minister and the parliamentary secretary would have us believe that in the 11 months they have fixed almost a million errors in these 362,000 applications and have stopped clients from making similar errors on the other 3.4 million firearms applications they received since. In another 11 months, through another access to information request, as has been happening continually over the last six or seven years, we will find that is not true. The minister's claims stretch—

• (1835)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

**Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on the firearm registration process and to reinforce the government's commitment to public safety. We have become accustomed to the hon. member's frequent allegations about this public safety initiative and I intend to respond to this one as we have with all others.

The hon. member is alleging that the firearms registry is of limited use to the police. Let us first be clear that this public safety program is much more than a gun registry. It is a multi-faceted, practical approach that addresses the prevention of firearm death, injury and crime deterrence. That is why Canada's law enforcement community recognizes and supports the firearms program as an important public safety initiative.

In its testimony on Bill C-15B we heard the law enforcement community reaffirm its support for this program and its essential crime fighting tools. The Canadian Police Association and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police outlined the significant public benefits available through this program, which combines the screening of the applicants, tracking of firearms and minimum mandatory sentencing to help deter, prevent and prosecute firearm crime in Canada.

Regarding the questions of the hon. member about errors in the system, I want to emphasize that errors reported to the Canadian Firearms Centre to date represent a tiny fraction of the firearm documents that have been issued.

As recently as April 27 of this year, 99% of the firearms in the Canadian Firearms Registry system were correctly registered according to identification and classification as required under law. Also, 99% of the licences were correctly issued to the right person living at the address stated with the appropriate privilege and safety training. There may be a small number of entry errors for which we have no statistics but when these are reported, they are dealt with promptly in co-ordination with the client. Firearm owners should verify the information on their firearm documents and contact us immediately at 1-800-731-4000 to report any anomalies and have the situation rectified.

There are currently 2.1 million individuals in the firearms database and firearms owners have been sending in their registration applications in unprecedented numbers. As with any other high volume operation, it is only natural to expect a small degree of entry error. That is why we remain vigilant and have recently made some improvements to further minimize the potential for error.

Over the past few months, the Canadian firearms program has completely restructured the registration process and implemented rigorous measures to ensure the integrity of the information. When the personalized registration application is returned for processing, the form is scanned including the bar code that identifies the licence holder. Manual data entry is eliminated which minimizes the potential for error.

Unquestionably, this program has been beneficial to the Canadian community at large. We believe it is an excellent program and it is working well. We believe that the errors that the member refers to are errors of at least a year ago.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Madam Speaker, they are errors that have not been corrected. I will take one of the alleged facts that has been used here and that is the 99% success rate with regard to the addresses.

As of February 21 of this year, the department reported it had mailed out 1,625,915 envelopes to licensed firearm owners as part of its free registration program. However we also found out that 38,629

of those envelopes had been returned to sender by Canada Post Corporation. So much for the claim that 99% of the licensed firearms owners are living at the right address. They have lost track of these owners despite the fact that there is a penalty of years in jail if within one month they do not—

• (1840)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Paul Harold Macklin:** Madam Speaker, I think it is clear that the member has stated before the House that the data he used in most of his intervention was really based on July 2001. The statistics that I referred to are statistics that are up to date and represent great improvements that we have made within the system.

The hon. member represents a party that has done everything possible within the House to stop the streamlining of this process and the making of this process more efficient. This was by the stalling and filibustering on Bill C-15B which finally forced the government to enter into time allocation to effectively bring it to a conclusion and advance it to the other place.

We are very pleased that we have now done so. It is now in the other place and we will see more benefits accruing to the legitimate firearms owners in Canada through that streamlining process. We look forward to having many registrations that will go through without error.

[*Translation*]

#### WHARF MAINTENANCE

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am sad to have to rise again today to speak about this issue, which I have raised on several occasions over the last few weeks and which has not yet been settled.

Let us review the facts. There is a ferry between Trois-Pistoles and les Escoumins that links the South Shore to the North Shore. The wharfs are the property of the federal government.

Over the last five years, the federal government has been wanting to divest itself of these wharfs. It negotiated more or less positively and actively to transfer these wharfs to the region. It knows full well that it would cost \$5 million to renovate each of the wharfs.

Last year, we learned that there was a major problem with the wharfs and that they could be washed away if repairs were not made, which the minister recognized when he answered my question.

Indeed, a few weeks ago, Transport Canada decided that the ferry could not dock in les Escoumins because the wharf was not safe and could be washed away by the current.

I find this situation totally unacceptable. In the end, the government is being a bad owner in this case. This is not a partisan issue; I am not trying to pester the government. It is a fact. The federal government has defaulted on its responsibility to maintain these wharfs properly.

*Adjournment Debate*

This situation does not penalize the federal government, particularly the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Justice who are responsible for Quebec. It penalizes those workers who have lost the seasonal jobs they were expecting to have this year.

We are waiting for an answer from the government to know whether or not the summer 2002 season will be saved, whether or not the government will decide to invest the \$10 million required to renovate both wharves.

I would like to know if the parliamentary secretary is aware of the impact that this has on those who are losing their jobs, on the tourism industry, on bed and breakfast owners, for example.

Many European tourists take the ferry when they arrive in Trois-Pistoles or when they leave Trois-Pistoles to cross the river and go to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. Now people have started to hear that the wharves need repair. They can no longer use the ferry there and have to go to Rivière-du-Loup or Matane to cross the river.

This is very important for our region and it has serious repercussions on tourism. A decision to save the 2002 summer season must be made in the next few days. Will the parliamentary secretary finally give us an answer?

For around ten days now, each day department officials and the minister's office have been telling us "The solution will be announced in two days, two more days". We still have no solution. People are affected by this situation.

The local elected officials, the reeve of the regional municipality of des Basques, the mayor of Trois-Pistoles and labour representatives will be here on Friday, because they cannot bear the situation any longer.

All we need today is a decision to the effect that the wharves will be renovated this year in order to allow us to benefit from the tourism season and that there will be a permanent decision, that the wharves will be divested to the region, which will obtain them under advantageous conditions. I think that it is very important that we receive this message as quickly as possible.

For now, the whole tourism season in our region is in jeopardy, specifically in the MRC des Basques, which is unfortunately one of the poorest regions in Quebec.

Will the parliamentary secretary assure me today that the work will in fact be done, that the tourism season will go ahead and that both of the wharves will be expected to last some thirty years?

• (1845)

**Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I know he is very much aware that there are several places where ferries can cross from the south shore to the north shore.

There is, of course, the Rivière-du-Loup to Saint-Siméon ferry. I know Saint-Siméon very well because my parents were born there, and just hearing the name brings back happy memories. Then there is the Rimouski—Forestville ferry, and the problematic one, Trois-Pistoles—Les Escoumins.

In April, Transport Canada representatives discovered it had become extremely dangerous for the ferries to use this dock. Tourists

would be at risk if the ferries were allowed, if I might put it that way, to dock there.

A meeting took place in early May between the shipping company, Navigation des Basques, confirming the vital importance of suspending activities. Obviously, it was not any great pleasure for our departmental employees to have to ask the minister to suspend commercial activities in a location where, as my colleague has just said, 80% of the traffic is tourism related, and has a spinoff effect on our small communities.

There are no easy solutions. In the very short term—and I look forward to see the most recent reports which we will soon have—there are various possible solutions. There are scenarios under which an investment of a few hundred thousand dollars could be made.

However, we could not resume operations in the very short time. It would not be possible before the month of August.

As my colleague pointed out, there are considerable costs involved in the almost complete renovation of the wharves. If I remember correctly, this would be a \$10 million to \$12 million project. It requires some study and reflection. Under this scenario, according to the information I have, the wharves would have to be closed for at least two to three years.

In a nutshell, the motivation of the Department of Transport and especially of the minister, with whom I had the opportunity to talk about this issue yesterday, is strictly a matter of safety. We cannot risk allowing operations between those two municipalities, Les Escoumins and Trois-Pistoles, and exposing local and foreign tourists to accidents. We would be accused of not having taken our responsibilities.

Meanwhile, there are of course short term alternative solutions. We could, for instance, use the ferries between Rivière-du-Loup and Saint-Siméon or between Rimouski and Forestville, or the Matane ferry. I know it is not the ideal solution, but people are on site trying to find a solution.

I am very much attached to this area. It is located very close to the mouth of the Saguenay fjord, which is now a Canadian national marine park. There are more and more tourists going there.

The bottom line is that we are very aware of the importance of the matter raised by the hon. member, but there are safety considerations involved. There are very short term deadlines. It would be difficult for us to invest \$600,000 or \$700,000 knowing that operations could not resume tomorrow morning.

There is another possible solution. We will allow our representatives from Transport Canada to pursue negotiations with local authorities.

I thank my colleague for having raised this matter tonight.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Madam Speaker, although I have only a minute, is the parliamentary secretary aware that the full and complete responsibility rests with the federal government, as the owner, because they were poorly maintained?

*Adjournment Debate*

The government cannot say this happened only at the end of the winter. It had known for some years that the life cycle of the wharfs was coming to an end. Indeed, if there are solutions that can be achieved by this summer, they must be implemented. As for renovating in the medium term, I believe it is appropriate for the federal government to do so.

If it is not possible in the short term, can it commit to compensate the company, the affected workers and the regional tourist industry? It is not with the other ferries that the government will compensate the salaries of those who lost their jobs for this summer and the income of those who are losing business in the tourist industry.

This is totally unacceptable. When someone behaves as a bad owner, they must pay the price. Is the federal government willing to take responsibility? If it cannot ensure a season for the coming year and particularly the renovation in the years to come, will it compensate the region adequately?

• (1850)

**Mr. André Harvey:** Madam Speaker, I can say that our department officials are looking closely at this issue. We discussed it yesterday, and you can be assured that we are aware that, in our small communities, such an issue must be considered as a major issue that is essential to their development.

There is, of course, the safety principle. We cannot always afford to say yes, when we know very well that we may put the safety of tourists at risk. I hope that we will be able to find a solution that will be satisfactory to all the stakeholders in the area, whom I want to thank. All the stakeholders in the area are co-operating with our officials and representatives. I hope that a solution can be found that will allow us to authorize commercial operations in the long term.

## CANADA CUSTOMS AND REVENUE AGENCY

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Madam Speaker, I had difficulty with the answer of the minister responsible for Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

The minister recently issued a proposal to supply office supplies to all offices across the country. In other words, she called for a blanket proposal to supply regular office materials to every office Canada Customs and Revenue Agency operates. Only companies like Staples or Grand & Toy would be able to handle such a huge tender, both of which are huge American based companies.

Over the years the department has called local tenders at the provincial level for supplies to local offices. This gave small businesses across the country the opportunity to compete. Government always brags that small business is the engine that drives the country. The Prime Minister stands and brags about all the new jobs that are being created. Besides the few being created by the government slush fund, most are created by small businesspeople investing their own money. What breaks does government give small businesspeople? All it does is give them increased bureaucracy, high taxes and all kinds of red tape.

What can government do to help? Besides cutting bureaucracy and red tape, lowering taxes and providing incentives to invest and create jobs, when the opportunity arises it can give small businesspeople opportunities to deal with government. The dollars the government spends to purchase supplies are taxpayer dollars. They

come from the pockets of Canadians, many of whom are the same small businesspeople who are asking for help.

The minister said doing it this way makes it more convenient for the office and the taxpayer. The taxpayer might save money if the one big bid was a bit lower than the combined lower bids. However the dollars that are made go elsewhere instead of being reinvested to create opportunities at the local level and increase the tax return.

Who are we supposed to serve, the people in the minister's office or the business people across the country? I think the voters will answer that one.

[English]

**Ms. Sophia Leung (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for St. John's West for his concern.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is committed to providing the best possible service to Canadians. In order to do this we must be efficient and fiscally responsible in the way we operate.

With respect to office supplies, the CCRA plans to simplify and streamline its ordering process through partnering with a single supplier. As my colleagues are aware, the CCRA took full responsibility for its contracting activities after becoming an agency in 1999. With this responsibility comes an accountability to make decisions that are in the best interests of all Canadians.

Through a process of internal and external consultation and researching best practices, we have concluded that a single supplier is the best option for the agency. It will allow the CCRA to leverage its buying power and in turn pass along overall savings to Canadian taxpayers. This initiative is part of the CCRA administrative reform and renewal that has been identified as a main objective in the CCRA's corporate business plan. It is in line with the corporate goal to provide responsive and reliable services at an affordable cost.

We are aware of concerns about the impact such a partnership could have on small businesses in communities across the country. It is for this reason that the notice for proposed procurement allows smaller suppliers to form partnerships with larger suppliers. As well, prior to posting the notice on the MERX government electronic tendering system, a draft of the document was posted to allow for industry feedback. Recommendations received from this draft posting as well as from internal and industry consultations were taken into account in the drafting of the final notice for proposed procurement.

The CCRA will be awarding a contract to the company that best meets CCRA needs in the best interests of Canadians.

*Adjournment Debate*

The CCRA recognizes that it must take full advantage of any and all opportunities to provide Canadian taxpayers with the best value for their tax dollars while still providing the excellent service they have come to expect. That is the motivation behind becoming an agency. The CCRA is taking full advantage of its flexibility to explore new, more cost effective and efficient ways of serving the Canadian public.

• (1855)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Madam Speaker, I do not believe what I am hearing. I am sure the hon. member does not agree with a word she said because she is an hon. member and is very concerned about her constituents. Unfortunately she had to read what was prepared for her.

There is no way a large company, an American company in particular, is going to return to this country the type of benefits we could derive from having small businesses benefit from the tender calls. The jobs that are involved are local and the revenues that are made are put back into the system.

Efficiency is only efficiency for the government. It is no help at all to the working class and small business people of this country. The

government is going further and further away from its own people in relation to all its tenders.

Our postage stamps are made in the United States. It does not even have the nerve to put "made in the United States" on the back so when people lick the stamps they see it.

• (1900)

**Ms. Sophia Leung:** Madam Speaker, the CCRA aims to provide Canadians with the best services possible. In order to do this, CCRA operations must be carried out in a streamlined and cost effective manner. It is for that reason the CCRA has made administrative reforms and has a renewed corporate objective. Awarding a contract for office supplies is a prime example of how we are changing the way we do business to pass on savings to the taxpayers.

I thank the hon. member for his concerns.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** 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 7.01 p.m.)

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